



To Doris

Today is a very special day.
We are celebrating Doris Howell's 90th birthday,
although the birth date that is true,
is not today but it is December Two.

Today, Doris, you've been elected to the nineties' elite
who seem to move at a different beat
with canes or walkers but best on feet
that may hurt like hell but still a treat.

It has been said, "old age are the golden years"
but I want to tell you, as I shed some tears,
these years are not golden but made of brass,
gravity takes over and everything sags;
frankly, my dear, they're a pain in the ass.

But how dare we speak with unseemly levity
what needs to be recounted with some brevity
of a 90th birthday, truly venerable,
replete with many deeds, all commendable.

Let's skip to when your thirst for knowledge
was your motive to enroll in college,
entering a world where men held rule
hindering your entrance to medical school,
where you found, to your chagrin,
gender differences seem to begin.
"Be quiet, just be seen" said the male voices,
"we make the rules and set your choices."

A personal note, Doris, just between us:

Our paths were alike from the very start,
bereavement in childhood left its mark.
We struggled to fulfill our vision of a life
of knowledge, outreach, and without strife.
Parallel but separated by time and locations,
I, too, felt some of your joys, even your trepidations.
It was not easy to maintain a pleasant face
living through hurts with a measure of grace.

We followed our hearts, played our parts,
did what we could to emphasize the good,
learned that of our gender we were the first,
glad we did well and were not the worst.
Hoping the bubble would not burst.

The proper gift for a birthday as a flower
but 90 would be more like a bower;
instead we give you a bouquet of nine
each a symbol of a decade in real time

Doris Howell, we honor you today,
not only for what you have done
your best by far
as healer, teacher, mentor, leader
but because you have won
our love and affection
by being just who you are.

Now all that is left to say
"Happy Healthy Birthday"

Bea Rose 11/09/13

