“What do you plan to do with this story?” the editor and conference guest speaker asked Doreen after reading her article.

“Maybe, I’ll write a book,” she replied.

Doreen, a vivacious 72-year-old, later told me she hadn’t considered writing a book before that moment. “Those words surprised me!” she said at the writer’s conference where we chatted. She then let me read her delightful account of her grandson Cory. During our conversation, we discovered we both had collected cute anecdotes from children. It wasn’t long before we decided it might be fun to write an inspirational book together with our quotes from “the mouths of babes.”

Although Doreen hadn’t written a book before, she wasn’t new to writing. She had taken some writing classes and had been published in several magazines.

Doreen writes, but I later found that’s not all, she also swing dances. It wasn’t long after we met she invited me to join her for dance lessons. I watched in awe as Doreen gracefully danced to the fast-paced music. Meanwhile, I’d stumble and apologize to my dancing class partner, “Oops… I’m new at this… thanks for your patience.”

Always energetic, Doreen would cheer me on, “There’s a dance next month, put it on your calendar.” She’d call to remind me, and I’d drag myself there, afraid of looking foolish, but happy to have fun. I enjoyed the several classes I took, but mostly I enjoyed Doreen’s spirited outlook on life.

Life, however, wasn’t always fun for Doreen. Her husband became ill and passed away in his fifties, shortly after Doreen had decided to go to school. She then graduated at age fifty-two from MEDEX Northwest, and became a physician’s assistant. She practiced medicine in Alaska, Seattle, Ethiopia, and SE Asia where she served four years on a medical team in a camp on the Thai/Cambodian border. Other mission trips included Mexico, Israel, and the Philippines. Upon her return, she joined the University of Washington faculty and lectured in their PA program. There she chaired several courses and served as advisor to students. In 2003, Doreen was awarded a Humanitarian Award by MEDEX Northwest Alumni Board.

This remarkable mother of three, is a grandmother of nine, and now is a great grandma too. Residing in Seattle, Doreen technically is retired, but she's far from finished with life. She dances several times a week. And yes, we did write and find a publisher for our book. I feel fortunate to have found such an inspiring friend and coauthor whose motto is, "It's never too late to be what you want to be."

When not busy providing great service at Fairwinds-Brittany Park (a retirement community that just happens to be filled with fun, vibrant people – just like Doreen) Barbara enjoys writing and someday she would like to take more dance lessons so she stops stepping on toes.
bkoshar@leisurecare.com © 2012 Barbara Koshar