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LIFE'S JOURNEY IS FILLED WITH CHANGES, CHALLENGES

**AMY E. MORGAN -**

Thirty-nine years old. I was sure I'd avoid the kind of reminiscing that surrounds a milestone birthday, yet I found myself smack dab in the middle of it. I'm viewed as a youngster by anyone over 60, and as approaching old age by anyone in their teens.

To party stores and card shops, I'm the cash cow of many birthday milestones to come that herald the "over the hill" party themes.

To my parents, I'll always be the baby.

I just feel like "me." I'd go so far as to say I didn't have any feeling one way or another about it. Was I missing something? Why do so many people fear or regret this birthday?

My son turned 13 two days before my birthday. We joked that he was entering his teenage years, and I was ending my 30s, and what different years they were to share.

Worried that I was upset about turning 39, he told me the way he sees it: People aren't over the hill until they're being lowered into the ground. With a true teenager's energy, he sees the whole thing as an upward journey. I don't know that I care to see it as all uphill, but a journey? Absolutely.

Still worried that I was missing something, I started to wonder. Where have I been and where am I going?

My short 39 years condensed: I had a happy childhood with more ups than downs, am blessed to have been married to my soul mate since I was 20, and became mom to a premie -- who at 13 stands taller than me -- when I was 26.

I'm lucky to count on one hand a number of true friends. And I have continued to develop my passion for writ-

ing, which, I am proud to say, has resulted in a few of my pieces being published.

I have owned four cars, one house and, last Christmas, got the coveted tennis bracelet (a long-standing request with my soul mate). Notwithstanding the 10 pounds I would like to lose, I'm in good health, and so is my family.

So far, so good. It's easy to look back. But I have to admit, I didn't have a clue as to where it all was going. A lot coincides with my 39th birthday. We're two days into the teenage years in our household, my husband just graduated from college and began a new career, and I'm actively pursuing my writing. That's the big stuff.

Add to that the everyday mix of going to work, running a household, being a parent, sharing equal partnership in a marriage and generally taking care of business, and it all adds up to a busy life.

Thirty-nine. It's not so unique. People turn 39 every day. But I'll only do it once. What's it mean to me? Being over the hill? Or, after all, just another day? I'm choosing just another day.

I'm glad I did end up reminiscing though, because I discovered a secret. All of the things in my life were full of changes and challenges. And growth. Each one building on the other. I've always thought I didn't like change; even been known to actively avoid it.

Who knew that after 39 years, I would wake up and find myself energized by the changes that I see on the road ahead? Amazed to be so incredibly content with the life I have, and yet so excited by the challenges I face.

I can't imagine things getting better than they are now, but I sense somehow they will. Just a little ways down the road.

I am 39, after all. I'm ready. Let the journey continue.

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**AMY E. MORGAN**

COLUMN: MY VIEW

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