

# The Asian Reporter

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**MY TURN**

■ **Wayne Chan**



## The not-a-surprise, surprise party

Last month I celebrated my surprise 50th birthday party.

Sorry, let me correct that. The party wasn't actually on my birthday, but a few days earlier. Also, it wasn't exactly a complete surprise, since my wife Maya asked me if I wanted to have a surprise birthday party.

You heard that right. Maya, the love of my life, one of the most impressive people I've ever met, also doesn't have a clue how to put on a surprise party.

If I remember correctly, the exact words she used were, "I know this is kind of awkward, but do you want to have a surprise birthday party next month?"

I believe my response to her question was, "Wait a second. Where's my notebook with my list of the lamest questions I've ever heard? I've got a doozie."

So, to be technically correct, last month we celebrated my "not-really-a-surprise, surprise birthday party (that wasn't actually celebrated on my birthday)." I know, not the catchiest name for a celebration.

Having said that, I had a blast. Most of my friends and family were there, and since my 50th birthday coincided with the Beatles historic show on the "Ed Sullivan Show," and with the Beatles being my absolute favorite band, everyone dressed in their best colorful hippy attire.

Everything was perfect, from the catered food to the tie-dye t-shirts to the endless run of Beatles music blaring in the background. Everything was perfect until ... well, until the cake was rolled out with a big lit "5-0" candle on it and someone asked, "So how does it feel to be a half-century old?"

I was speechless — not because I had nothing to say, but because of all the things going through my mind.

The idea of turning 50, the concept of turning 50, was just that — a concept. It's always seemed so far away, some distant milestone so far out on the horizon that it was something that I wouldn't have to consider for a long, long time. Turning 50 was something that happened to other people, not me.

It's not that I haven't put any thought into it. Of course I've thought about it. The problem is, what I've thought about my 50th year of existence has never been anything good.

By the age of 50, I figured I would have already broken a hip. I figured I'd be playing a lot of golf and all of a sudden decide that wearing purple-and-brown plaid golf pants was really fashionable. I envisioned myself chasing kids off my front lawn with a cane in one hand and a water hose in the other, and using words and phrases such as "highfalutin," "back in the day," and "dagnabbit!" a lot. I thought I'd have season tickets to see the opera every Sunday afternoon by now. I imagined I would have forgotten how to set the clock on my VCR, and worse yet: *that I still owned a VCR.*

The funny thing is, none of those things have happened. In fact, in the last year I decided to get back in shape and I've lost more than 30 pounds. I feel better and seem to have more energy than I've had since I was in my 30s.

Of course, I've noticed some changes. When I was in my teens, I could eat five pork chops and inhale a big bowl of fried rice and not gain an ounce. Now, if I open the fridge and happen to see a pork chop, I immediately gain three pounds.

As a teenager, I could play a three-hour tennis match without doing any warm-ups or stretching and then immediately go off to play basketball. Now, just to keep myself from pulling a hamstring, I stretch so much before tennis that I look like I'm performing the *Nutcracker* ballet wearing white shorts and a headband.

As I've grown older, I've learned not to sweat the small stuff. The saying "older but wiser" rings true to me. Maya and I are talking about places we'd like to visit in the next year. Our kids are growing up and big changes are on the horizon — college, marriage, and some day hopefully, kids. It's an exciting time for them, and for me as well.

I may be at the midpoint of my life, but in many ways, it feels like it's just beginning.

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