



Christine Yorath – 60 up & the future

by ListysDad 15 July 2013 In Articles

Interview by Justine Brooks

'Retirement is something other people do' says Christine Yorath, property developer, entrepreneur, mother of four, grandmother of four, as she reclines on a plush cushion strewn sofa in the salon of her glamorous north Leeds home.

'I've never thought that I would retire,' she continues, and smiles. 'Actually, when I turned 60, my son Jordan asked me if I was going to retire. I said I would possibly get some hens and a greenhouse.'

Christine, who lavishes much care and attention on the three Suffolk hens her children, including eldest daughter the TV journalist and radio presenter Gabby Logan, gave her for her 60th, explains.

'I expect to live another forty years. That's a long time to live with no income.'

Like many entrepreneurs, Christine was hit hard by the recession and consequently wouldn't be able to retire even if she did want to.

But she has always been resourceful. At 19 she became a beauty therapist in a Harrogate salon where she beautified local wealthy and landed women. When, at age 21, she made the decision to leave in order to fit around her husband, footballer Terry Yorath's work, many of her customers came with her and her first business was born. 'I set up on my own doing mobile beauty therapy in Harrogate, North Leeds and the affluent villages in between.'

It was when the couple moved to Canada, where Terry played with the Vancouver Whitecaps, that Christine became involved with Metrin, a company which makes a range of skincare products. She and daughter Gabby currently own the company's UK branch, and Christine runs the company from home. 'I have customers who have been with me for over twenty years who wouldn't use anything else on their skin,' says Christine – and if Christine's own beautifully radiant skin is anything to go by, the products must be good.

It wasn't until she was 39 that Christine decided to start investing in property. She'd done an interior design course in Canada and had the skills she needed to buy, do up and then sell at a profit. She quickly grew her business and, through contacts, soon joined the world of property development. 'I was building, and any profit I made went into the next site. I was borrowing money from the bank, too.'

This business model proved difficult when recession hit in 2008 and like so many others Christine found herself at the mercy of banks who were quickly changing the rules. 'Everything crashed very quickly' she said 'and it couldn't have come at a worse time in my life.'

Meanwhile, Terry had started divorce proceedings. The couple had separated in 2003 and a settlement was reached based on Christine's pre-recession business accounts, adding greatly to her already difficult financial challenges.

'Throughout my marriage to Terry I was always the one managing the money. Even when he was earning a lot, he didn't manage the money, and so when the marriage came to an end there were no financial surprises for me – some women don't have any idea of finances and if their marriages fail they can be unaware of how things work, well it wasn't like that for me – it had always been left to me to pick up the pieces!'

Christine readily admits that the divorce was unexpected. 'Most of my married life was happy ... I really expected to stay married until death. Of course there were trials and tribulations, but I didn't expect to be divorced. I thought that as we got older we'd travel together and enjoy our grandchildren.'

Now, even though she confides that she has begun dating again, she says, 'When I got on the plane to visit my holiday flat in Spain, it sometimes felt like there were 52 couples and Christine travelling ... sometimes it's really difficult not having the comfort of a soulmate or a partner.'

That said, she says she's just as self reliant as ever. 'I have great friends, a great social life and strong relationships with my family. I now have a lot more freedom and independence than I did when I was married, and actually that suits me.'

So at a time of life when many people are waiting to settle down into babysitting the grandchildren, going on cruises and doing the crossword, Christine Yorath has gone through a divorce, built and sold a lettings business with son Jordan is still running her make-up business and is contemplating her next business venture. (She does babysit too and recently sailed across the Atlantic with a group of friends). She still has unsettled issues in her property development business, but her priority is just to keep her head above water, service her loans and look for new opportunities.

'The sadness for anyone of my generation who was hit by the recession, is that because of the age we're at we don't have the same sort of opportunities to come back as if we were 40. Age shouldn't matter, but I believe it has taken the spirit out of us. I would so love to have less responsibility!'

So what's next for this energetic sexagenarian? 'I would really love to do more with Metrin' she says, 'I feel it's a business I haven't really concentrated on properly and it really is a fantastic product.'

Whatever Christine decides to do with her next 40 years, there is one thing for sure, talking to her brings home that whatever it is she does we're sure it will done with glamour, Yorkshire grit and determination.

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