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Getting a Passport to Eternal Youth

PAT STEGER Published 4:00 am, Monday, May 25, 1998

Dear Diary:

I know I shouldn't have laughed, but I couldn't help it. Now my dearest, oldest friend, Weezy, is furious with me.

There I was at her home in Sausalito, having an iced orange infusion, and she said, "I want you to look at my new passport photos."

I took one look, sputtered my infusion on her cat, Mousie, and then laughed hysterically. I'd just seen Mummy's new passport photo, and she looked younger and better, but I'm way too sensitive to mention that.

"Go ahead and laugh. Isn't it your turn pretty soon?" Weezy asked, somewhat maliciously.

Oh, dear. I quickly told her that the photo didn't really look that bad, and hadn't she just gotten over the flu when she had it taken?

No, she had been feeling great -- then, she said.

Well, I told her, I'd better get going so I wouldn't get stuck in the bridge traffic. "Be sure to show me yours when you get it taken," she told me as she waved goodbye. I think it was a wave.

Gosh, some people take things so seriously. I'll call her tonight after she's had her martoonie.

She doesn't have to use the photos she showed me if they upset her so much. She could have them taken again -- after she's had her hair and makeup done at [Joseph Cozza](#). It also might help if she took a chiffon scarf and wrapped it around her neck.

Weezy and I are about the same age. We got our first passports together for our first trip to Europe. She's right. I have to get my photo taken next week, especially if I'm going to Italy next month to stay with Jeanette and [Ed Roach](#) in their divine villa in Tuscany.

It's funny, we never used to think a thing about passport photos. You just ran into the nearest luggage store on Powell and had it done. Fine, great, but then all of a sudden when you're 44 to the government and 37 to the rest of the world, it isn't just fine, great.

Another friend of mine, FiFi, who is in her late 50s, says she almost fainted when she was handed her photos. The guy who owned the shop was so concerned he took them again, free of charge, and they were even worse. She said she just walked out of the store like a zombie and sat in Union Square, wondering about the [Keith Haring](#) sculpture and life. For the third try she had her hair and makeup done and finally got a photo she could live with for 10 years. She plans to recycle that one the next time.

I'll tell Weezy about FiFi. That'll make her feel better. Also, I'll remind her that the official stamp over the photo does help a bit.

However, when it's time for my close-up, Mr. DeMille, I'll be ready. At first, I considered using a photo of a model that I've been told I resemble but then that wouldn't be honest. So I've made an appointment with photographer Russ Fischella to take my passport photo.

He's the one who does all of those super-glamorous photos for the [Junior League fashion](#) show programs, the ones where you have to ask, "Is that so-and-so? I've never seen her look like that."

It will cost \$250 plus film and development expenses, but that also includes his doing the makeup, and I'll bring along a chiffon scarf, just in case. What if it doesn't look like me too much? Officials don't seem to look at your passport photos anyway. The only people who do are your best friends when they want a laugh.

I don't think I'll tell Weezy about Russ. I don't have to tell her everything, do I?

Love, Muffie

P.S. I've just called Mummy to find out who took her photo, and she told me she went to her favorite one-hour photo development shop -- and Ben, her pal who runs the shop, told her he could fix it up with his computer and only charged her \$40. Now wouldn't you think a good mother would share that kind of information with her daughter?

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