



The Chatterbox

Something to share at every age

BY BETTY KAISER
For the Sentinel

Last week I celebrated another birthday. I use the term “celebrate” loosely. In this seventh decade of life, I am struggling with enjoying aging and the losses that accompany it. Yes, it’s true. I just exposed the elephant in the room. The truth is that aging gracefully is an art that many of us have yet to master.

Some things don’t bother me at all. I enjoy having young people open heavy doors for me at shopping centers and saying, “After you, ma’am.” A senior discount at restaurants is nice. It’s great that I no longer have to pop out of bed at the crack of dawn to be at work by 7 a.m. And I’m happy if I’m not invited to every party in town.

I started turning gray at 40, so I don’t even miss my beautiful black hair with red highlights. At this age our hair all looks alike anyway—except for the ‘natural’ blonds among us. In fact, I joke that when my friends together we look like Q-tips! And while I’m not happy about my wrinkles, I’m not contemplating plastic surgery.

I am, however, being pulled kicking and screaming into an era of less energy and forgetfulness. Or, as I believe Erma Bombeck (my all time favorite columnist) said, “Of all the things I’ve lost in life, I miss my mind the most!”

Isn’t that the truth? Once we reach the age of 70, most of us look back fondly on our golden years. The years in which we remembered everyone’s names and wondered what the heck was wrong with our parents, who struggled to remember names of people and places. “Oh, that was Virginia, don’t you remember?” we would piously spout.

Now we are the ones struggling with memory lapses. My husband and I often have a conversation that goes like this:

Me: “Yesterday I saw the girl with six kids that we went to church

with in Ventura.” Hubby: “Who was that?” Me: “Oh, you know, she had long red hair and lived near us.” Hubby: “I have no idea who you’re talking about.” Me: “Of course you do. Kathy used to babysit for them. Her husband was a pharmacist.” Hubby: “Oh, yeah, his name was...I forget.” Three days later we remember that her name is Jan and his name was Bob. Frustrating.

I suppose that turning 100 years old is something to get excited about. As a reporter, I covered many a centenarian’s birthday. Most of them seemed quite content to just “be.” They are happy to look at where they’ve been and reminisce about the good old days with anyone who cares to listen. Their contribution is wisdom.

Fortunately, I’m not there yet. I often say that I am in the middle age of old age. Mentally I’m pretty active. I’m always planning our next trip, keeping up with what’s going on in the family, volunteering, teaching and writing. Physically, I’ve really slowed down. Exercise no longer consists of a three times weekly aerobics class and seven-mile hikes or bike rides. Now I have a stretching routine, walk the dogs over to Wilson Creek Park and hop on my stationary bike.

I’m not alone in my aging frustration. Many others wonder if there is life after 70 or 90. Surely there is something more for us to do than watch TV. It can’t be too late for us to make a contribution to the greater good of mankind. So when are we “too old”? At what age do we sit back and say, “I give up. Let someone else do the work?”

Tucked away in a book on my desk, I found this list of famous people who didn’t know it was time to stop being creative or sharing what they do best when they turned the corner into old age:

At 81, Founding Father Benjamin Franklin engineered the diplomacy that led to the adoption of the U.S. Constitution.

At 82, Winston Churchill wrote the four-volume work, “A History of the

English Speaking Peoples.”

At 82, Leo Tolstoy completed “I Cannot Be Silent.”

At 83, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe completed “Faust.”

At 88, Cellist Pablo Casals was still performing cello concerts.

At 89, Pianist Arthur Rubinstein gave one of his greatest recitals in New York’s Carnegie Hall.

At 90, Cubist and collage artist Pablo Picasso still drew and sculpted.

At 91, Samon de Valera served as president of Ireland.

At 93, George Bernard Shaw wrote “Farfetched Fables.”

At 98, Renaissance master Titian painted “Battle Lepants.”

At 100, Grandma Moses was still painting. She began at age 76!

Looking at the above list kind of makes me feel like a whiner. Sure I’m older and I can’t do the things that I used to do. But am I old enough to do nothing? Obviously not. Looking at the above list tells me that we have something to share at every age.

When we were young, we waited for life to begin. We were always looking forward to next week, next month and next year. Now that we’re older and have less time, our fountain of youth has changed. It is today. Our joys must be found in the moments of life.

The struggle against aging is futile, but we can still live a full life. As my husband likes to say, “Old age is putting on new wheels and going in a different direction.” I say that we just keep doing what we love...but at a slower pace.

My morning mantra comes from the Psalms: “This is the day that the Lord has made, I will rejoice and be glad in it.”

Can I get an Amen?

Betty Kaiser’s Chatterbox is about people, places, family, and other matters of the heart. Contact her at 942-1317 or via e-mail — bchatty@bettykaiser.com

Prospectors and Goldiggers Club awards announced

At its annual Sourdough Banquet on Saturday Jan. 10, the Cottage Grove Prospectors and Goldiggers Club celebrated a successful year that included its 50th anniversary of serving the Miners Breakfast on the Mountain on the Sunday of Bohemia Mining Days last July. Club President Bruce McDonald served as the emcee of the event. He shared some of the club’s early history and presented the awards.

Club members vote on two of the awards that recognize a Prospector and a Goldigger who performed above and beyond the normal call of duty in the previous year. The George Award honors a man and the Order of the Purple Garter honors a woman who has demonstrated a high degree of personal dedication and service to the club. This year’s winners were Joe Haskins and Sara Smith.

The Civic Pride Award is given to a local business or organization that made a significant contribution to the betterment of Cottage Grove or South Lane County. This year’s award went to Paul Tocco, owner of Buster’s Main Street Café. Last July, to celebrate the Golden Anniversary of the Club’s legendary Miners Breakfast on the Mountain, Tocco provided \$25 gift certificates, which the club offered to its 1008 diners for half price and kept the proceeds. The award also honored Tocco for providing a free meal for all veterans on the eleventh day of each month and for giving away \$25 gift certificates to each member of the 2014 senior class at Cottage Grove High School and Kennedy Alternative High School.

The final award given at the annual banquet was the President’s Award. President McDonald honored two of the younger members of the 55-year-old organization: Jeff Cook and Tracy Fetter.

At the banquet, McDonald’s shared some of the club’s early history. The Prospectors and Goldiggers Club was founded in 1959, as part of Cottage Grove’s local centennial celebration of Oregon becoming America’s 33rd state

on Valentine’s Day in 1859. The purpose of the club is “Prospecting better things for Cottage Grove.”

Following the successful Centennial Celebration, the club established the annual Bohemia Mining Days Festival, which it organized on the third weekend in July until it became its own organization. From its inception, the club membership has been by invitation only and designed to make community service fun. In its early years the club was for men only and operated in secret with members using nicknames, such as “Stinky Pete.” Later, members of the Goldiggers auxiliary group became full members in the club.

Ray Nelson, one of the original Prospectors, was a miner in the Bohemia Mining District and a visionary who had a passion for local history. In the mid-1960s, Nelson spearheaded the effort to save the historic Dr. Snapp House from a burn-to-learn exercise, so Lane County could build the Riverview Terrace Apartments on Main and River Road. The county sold the Victorian Queen Anne-style home, built by one of the town’s first doctors, for \$1 and it was moved a few blocks away to its present site at 360 S. River Road.

Nelson’s dream was to capitalize on the newly constructed I-5 Freeway and boost tourism by developing Prospector Park into a replica of early Cottage Grove that would include a general store, hotel, blacksmith shop, livery, etc. His dream could not be realized after zoning changes in the 1970’s designated the property’s location, at the confluence of Silk Creek and the Coast Fork of the Willamette River, as a floodway and prevented the building of additional structures.

Today, club fundraisers continue Nelson’s dream by maintaining the community’s only Victorian-era house open to the public and Prospector Park next door. The fundraisers also provide annual scholarships to Cottage Grove High School graduates seeking to further their education.

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