



Walter Brennan as TV's Grandpa McCoy.

A favorite "old" actor looks at the exciting years after 65 and says: *Retire?— sure, but not from life!*

by Walter Brennan

Star of "The Real McCoys" (ABC Television Network, 8:30 P.M., Thurs., EST.)

I WAS 65 YEARS OLD in July, but I'm not planning to retire. Luckily, I'm in a business where nobody tells me I have to retire; but most Americans don't have that choice.

Some people are happy in retirement, and quite a few aren't. I'm convinced that those who are finding good living after 65 have learned that it's one thing to retire from a job, but something else to retire from life.

What gives me the right to talk like this? Well, I certainly qualify as a Senior Citizen—both as Walter Brennan and as Amos McCoy in "The Real McCoys" on television. Then, too, I've been playing old men since I was 30, and I've learned a lot about them during those years.

One thing I've learned is that people have it within themselves to make the years after 65 productive and satisfying—even though they feel they've been forced out of a job at the peak of their abilities. It's essential, here, not to keep looking back with nostalgia or bitterness—or ahead with fear. The more positive older people can keep their outlook, the more positive and helpful will be the attitude of everybody else.

I know this isn't always easy—but it's certainly worth a try; and the rewards are great.

Here are six concrete ways to develop this positive attitude:

1. *Look for things to be grateful for.* It's impossible to find happiness or satisfaction when you're feeling sorry for yourself. If you spend the same time dwelling on things you can be thankful for, it can change your whole life. I remember a time when I thought our children weren't paying enough attention to us, and I brooded about it. Then one week I did a McCoy show built around this problem—and I realized how busy young people are in setting up a home and raising small children and getting out once in a while with people their own age. So I quit feeling sorry for myself and started appreciating the efforts the kids were making—and we all felt better.

2. *Concentrate on giving, not getting.* Older people have much to contribute to the world around them, and I don't mean money. I'm talking about



Sharing a joke brings a laugh to Walter Brennan, Academy Award-winning actor, and his wife Ruth.

a lifetime of experience and wisdom and skills. There's a market for these things—in your family, your community, your country—if you are willing to offer yourself with no strings attached.

3. *Cultivate a sense of humor.* I can't think of a single thing—except faith in God—that can do more for you than a lively sense of humor. This means being able to take an objective look at yourself—and trying not to be overly sensitive. Sometimes older people translate everything into terms of their own hurt feelings—usually when it was never intended that way at all.

I remember quite often seeing some of these young squirts in movies and television barge ahead without asking for advice or help I could give them. This used to bother me—but no more. These youngsters see me in an entirely different light than I see myself. This is natural and normal, and I quit being sensitive about it long ago.

4. *Give your children their complete freedom.* It does neither parents nor kids any good for the old folks to depend on their children long after they should have their freedom. I don't feel my children owe me anything. They provided my wife and me with many years of satisfaction when we were raising them. Now they're raising their own families—and they should have the freedom to enjoy them.

5. *Don't hold grudges or resentments.* Nothing can eat away at happiness like resentment. I know

a lot of Hollywood old-timers who resent the money being made from their old films on television. I don't feel that way at all. I think the people who risked their money to make these movies in the first place have a right to the extra profits. I was well paid for my work in these films. True, I'm not turning down the extra royalties, since the pattern is to pay the performers as well as the producers; but I'm not one of those who demanded it.

6. *Don't compromise your religious and moral principles.* Problems appear much greater to older people at night, when the world seems to be closing in about them. I wake up frequently at night, but instead of experiencing fear and uncertainty, I use this time to talk with God. I can ponder every word, and I never fail to gain increased strength, inspiration, and understanding from these moments.

We don't need slogans about the "Golden Years" and "Senior Citizens" to make the years after 65 exciting and fulfilling. All we have to do is reverse a current trend of thinking that has us all mixed up. Let's stop conditioning ourselves for old age when we're young. Instead, let's switch the process and condition ourselves to youthful thinking at every age.

I'm convinced this is the answer to many of the problems we're having today with our older generation.

COVER

Mary Eleanor Browning's cover photo is a study in restraint. No self-respecting kitten can resist unraveling a ball of yarn for more than a moment or so.

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