

# IN MY OPINION

Caroline Porter

## Ready or not, here we come

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In this next century, we will all be affected by the expected burgeoning population of people aged 65 and over. According to data projections provided by the U.S. Bureau of the Census, from 1989 to 2045 this population will increase by 31 million people, with the biggest blast beginning about 2012. Unfortunately for the older women of this country, the 31 million includes 18.3 women and 12.6 men. Bummer.

Along with this staggering information comes discussion of the many issues resulting from such a demographic change. People of all ages should make use of the tremendous amount of information available on workable ideas for retirement, health care services and special problems of older people. For those retirees who aren't literally fighting for their lives, there is all sorts of advice, humorous and otherwise.

Geriatric specialist writers tell older folks to pursue interests they've had for a long time, get proficient at things that interest them, consider some pursuits that may offer extra income and enjoy a life without many of the pressures from earlier life. Retirees are told that positive steps toward contentment and confidence include: "simplify your life, weed out unwanted things and boring and irritating people, don't be a slave to trivial details, value your talents as an experienced individual with seasoned judgement, be tolerant and flexible, keep active, take an interest in others. Don't be a crab, live in the past or complain about ailments or catalogue their dreary details. And the main piece of advice: *Humor is a lifelong friend.*"

Apparently the transcendent need of the older person is the need to be needed. I happen to think this is true for all of us, and I've always believed that a good way to keep healthy and happy is to help and have a positive interest in other people. It's amazing the good that comes to us when we aren't sitting around feeling sorry for ourselves. The modern adage, "Get a life," is not a bad idea.

Writers in the know also observe that retirement years are particularly difficult for men, even though many women today have also spent their adult lives working outside the home. Leland and Lee Cooley say in their book *The Retirement Trap*, "women make friends more easily than men, adapt to change more easily and on the whole, women are better in a crisis." The Cooleys also note that the wives of most men aged 65 and over tend to be younger and healthier than their husbands. They are active and may have difficulty adjusting to their husband's retirement if he becomes dependent on them for companionship.

Their advice for retirees? "Take care of yourself, get exercise, meet with good friends, don't always talk about the weather and your grandchildren. Don't make a decision about where to live because of family — they might move. Take time for decisions, keep birthday celebrations small, don't let people impose on you. Be firm with guests and family."

One of my favorite clippings: "Age Old Truths to Sit and Ponder"

- age is a question of mind over matter — if you don't mind, it doesn't matter.
- Youth is wasted on the young
- Never trust anyone under 30
- Living long is the best revenge
- The perfect age is when you're old enough to know your limit and young enough to exceed it.



- You can still have great sex when you're old. You won't want to, but you can.

- The secret of staying young is to find an age you really like and stick with it.

And in a book called *Complete Guide to Retirement* are some wonderful guidelines about your children and your money.

- 1) Never tell your children how much money you have.
- 2) Never tell your children for sure that you will leave them your money.
- 3) Don't let yourself believe your children are entitled to your money. They aren't.

- 4) Beware of jealousy among your children. If you want to leave your family intact, no matter if one has been better or worse than the others, you can't be partial with money. "Kisses, maybe. Money, no."

- 5) Give some money to your children in your lifetime if you can afford to, but never a major part of it and never on a regular basis, lest they begin to expect it.
- 6) Be careful about loaning money to a child. If the child is a good credit risk, he or she can borrow money from a bank. If not a good risk, why should you — and the other heirs-be patsies?

And as for the children and parents who are struggling with serious health and money problems, there's more help available than most citizens are aware. For example, on page seven of the Galesburg telephone book is a list of agencies with telephone numbers which serve Senior Citizens. When dealing with ailments of old age, proper diagnosis is so important, and Bridgeway Inc., 344-2323 has the staff to assess and refer people in determining the difference between Alzheimers Disease, depression and emotional problems, dementia, alcoholism, poor nutrition over-medication or some other physical problem. It's important to get a complete medical examination by one who does not dismiss complaints as "just old age." When in doubt, the Knox County Health Department can give advice and referral to other agencies.

Specialists in arthritis report that the following factors are nearly always present in arthritic cases: frustration, chronic anger, tension, apprehension, ill-will and habitual worry. Eminent psychiatrist Dr. Smiley (no kidding) Blanton says, "Anxiety is the great modern plague — thousands of people are suffering from ills caused by pent-up anxiety." The cure for worries? A positive mental attitude, (easy for them to say), helped by prayer, logical thinking and the habit of positive thinking.

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