

DePuy's Views

Growing Old Is Not Hard To Do

by Dr. Hadley S. DePuy

It's not hard to grow old if you understand the Robert Frost poem that goes:

"Forgive, oh Lord, my little jokes on thee,
And I'll forgive thy great big one on me."

I'm never quite sure what God's big joke is but as I grow older I seem to catch glimpses of it all the time.

Like the way I thought as a kid in Ellenville. Watching adults lumber their way through a spring day and sometimes even taking a nap on purpose, I swore that I'd never sleep in the daytime when I was a grown up.

And as an adolescent in *Ellenville High School*, I vividly remember the raging-of-hormones stage when I knew with the certainty of youth that, once I was safely married, I'd be making love all the time.

And as a young professional, I was sure that retirement programs and life-long security were just not important. A career that promised a 20-year retirement seemed like a life sentence – I'd be stuck there 'til at least my 40s.

I was so certain about many things in those days:

That the Almighty may not be;

That my college fiancée would make a perfect life-time mate in spite of friends' objections;

That I'd become a mini-celebrity in some field;

That life would always treat me reasonably well;

That I'd always scorn those who gave up the poetry of higher calling to become embroiled in business;

That I'd always be totally opposed to conservative political views; and

That ambition, energy, intelligence, and good fortune were my tools for the future.

It wasn't the details of my expectations that were part of God's joke. It was the certainty with which I held them. The joke with my convictions is that every one of the

things I was most certain of has reversed or double-reversed itself in my life.

And I've been the richer for it.

To me, the most amazing part of the joke is that I'm now laughing, too. All the things I was certain about, the things I knew I would always or never do are keys to some of my greatest delights today...

A well-deserved luxurious nap;

A rewarding second marriage;

Enough difficulties in life to make me grateful for life's many blessings;

Having an understanding that it's not being successful, but being faithful to your beliefs, that are the important tools for the future.

Consider this – Growing old may not be hard to do when you finally realize that the seeming contradictions in life actually make the most harmonious and often humorous sense. For example:

As a kid I looked forward to staying up late and watching all the TV I wanted. Today, it's a joy to read and fall asleep early.

In those days, I thought I'd have parties all the time when we had "our own place." Today, I resist having company except family.

When I was young and thin I couldn't afford the wardrobe that was top drawer. Today, I could maybe afford them and no longer feel a slave to fashion.

Back then, I thought I'd spend all our money on travel and adventure because a house was just a shell for sleeping in. Today, I'm so fond of my home I enjoy watching TV in the kitchen.

It hasn't been a joke ON me... it's been a joke FOR me.

Growing old is not hard to do when you remember you are living inside God's joke. It's not important that we don't quite get the joke but that we understand the message –

No matter how far down or high up you are, the hand of God can reach you.

(Dr. DePuy dedicates this column to his family – Marianne, Allyson, Guy, Craig, Mary, Luis, and John.)

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