

## AGING GRACEFULLY

By: Blain S. McClellan

My personal philosophy about aging gracefully is that I must keep busy in a graceful way rather than a dangerous way. If one really tries to keep himself busy, others will see you being busy and will want to “volunteer” you. If one wants to appear to be graceful in spite of one’s age, he must not appear to be too eager. You may feel flattered to be asked to do something that really requires a younger body. The dangers and pitfalls are many and none of them are very graceful.

Yet it really is true that staying busy has its advantages. There are so many classes available at the senior center. In the past few years I have participated in many activities. Line dancing and Latin American dance have kept me busy and are a lot of fun. Tai Chi promotes a certain amount of strength and artistry of movement. Spanish class stretches your vocabulary. Pinochle stretches your endurance muscles. It is hard to sit in a chair that long and pretend that you are having fun when all you really want is to get out of there. This is not very graceful either. But you learn to smile and say, “Congratulations, you’ve won again.” You’d like to tell them as diplomatically as you can muster where they can go and take their silly little cards with them.

There are many exercise classes. Some seniors feel that it is dangerous to exercise too much in these classes. Some have pulled hamstrings and have injured their muscles in a dangerous way. But all of these exercise classes are less dangerous than pinochle or bridge. With card games one always faces the danger that some crazy person will come unglued and start raging at you for no reason at all. You’ve simply broken one of their silly rules which you didn’t really care about in the first place. There’s nothing really very beneficial about playing pinochle and you could get yourself killed. Consequently, in order to be a busy senior, I’m going to have to learn to avoid the dangers of getting carried away with eagerness for volunteering and such things that can be dangerous. It’s like falling on ice. Falling anywhere is not usually done with much artistry or charm. In fact it can be downright embarrassing. It is also very dangerous and embarrassing to hurt oneself by lifting something one shouldn’t. That is what I did. I lifted something and tore my hernia. It would have required surgery but the examining surgeon said surgery would be too dangerous. There was the danger that an incision made on all that scar tissue from so many previous hernia repairs might not heal properly. And then there is the danger that the mesh, added in previous hernia repair, might move around. He said he didn’t know where it might move to. But he did know that it would be embarrassing both to me and to him. Hernias are very embarrassing and dangerous. They are definitely to be avoided if one wishes to age somewhat gracefully in the 21 century.

In conclusion, I believe that the key to graceful aging is to remain very active. Don’t let yourself go to seed. But you must avoid the dangers. And there’d be the rub. By remaining active you often put yourself in harm’s way without realizing it.