

AGING GRACEFULLY

By: Darlene Lovato

As I thought of the subject of this essay I wondered if there are some who might consider 'aging gracefully' to be an oxymoron. For I never really thought of 'aging' and 'graceful' in the same sentence. However in the word 'graceful' I do think of beauty. And I know age can be beautiful. Not the beauty you think of in a young, fair-haired girl with bright eyes and rosy cheeks, but the beauty of life. In its learning and in its peaceful tranquility. Fused together by wisdom, experience and caring.

I am so grateful that in the 21st century we have transformed our attitude toward aging. I think about my grandmother and the almost prehistoric attitude toward aging of her time. The lack of enthusiasm in living, as though old age was just a resting stop between life and death. With my mother there was some progress, but she felt her latter years were somewhat mundane, even with family near.

At 70 years of age, I feel I have even more of an optimistic attitude and drive. I find new hope in each day. I try not to perceive life as a sad rerun but to participate, be a part of it. I need to be able to hope, live, enjoy, love. To find pleasure and fulfillment in all things. To age gracefully.

For me, aging gracefully is to be able to marvel at a glorious sunset. Or enjoy the sweet sound of a songbird at Dawn. Joys that are there for everyone if they will simply take notice.

For me to be able to have all of my senses awaken in spring. Its sounds, its sights, and its fragrance. Just to watch the dance of a crocus or daffodil in its new birth from winter harshness. I love to feel the cleansing of a spring rain shower and to smile at all of nature's awakening.

For me these are pleasures to enjoy, the kind of non-material treasures that are of great worth, not of silver or gold.

This then makes me aware that there is no reason for me to have to look for a pot of gold at the end of the rainbow. The rainbow itself is worth more than gold.

I feel every day should be a new birth for me, no matter what my age. Each day I should reawaken to the wonders of life, learning to enjoy life itself gracefully.

This then for me is not having to be an absolutely perfect person .the most talented, the most beautiful (as the world sees beauty) .but to be the very best me that I can be. To not set goals based on others' expectations or even my own youth. But goals predicated on who I am, what I have been, and what I may still become.

For me this is aging. But it will be with vitality, with pleasure and with much happiness. It will be aging gracefully.