

ARE WE THERE YET?

By: Donna Russell

As I closed the last drawer of my desk, picked up my purse, and closed the door to my office for the last time, the thought hit me “Now what? Where do I go from here?” I had spent the last thirty years at this desk helping others through the transition of working moms to that of stay-at-home grandmothers.

I thought of the frequently asked question from those who are going somewhere “Are we there yet? When are we going to get there?” It is a question typical of children headed for picnic places. It is also a question of adults moving through the years of life. “When are we going to get there?” I had come to the realization that “Life is a journey and not a destination.” It is a journey that we should enjoy and not always asking “when are we going to get there?” Not only was I now unemployed, but also a single-white-haired great-grandmother! After a few months of adjusting, I wandered into my local senior center. I was greeted by a matronly woman (who later I learned was the manager of the center). Sitting behind a small walled desk was a bright-eyed twenty-year-old receptionist, who reminded me of my granddaughter, who giggled at the mere mention of my being a senior citizen. Before long I was ushered into the dining room, where I was invited to could join the others for lunch. I was served a colorful tray on which was “dry meatloaf, over-seasoned gravy, cold potatoes, shredded carrots and raisins (not my favorite) and red Jell-O.” Nothing like the lunches I was used to. Bu I tried to make the best of the lunch, and enjoyed the conversation with the others at my table. It wasn’t too long after this that as I continued to visit with the participants, that I realized that most of them were lonely and in dire need of someone to just talk to and to listen to them. To make a long story short, I found that I was gaining more from the service to others than they were getting from the small service I was offering to them. As I continued to go to the center, I became more and more involved in the ins-and-outs of just what the center offered for these seniors and I became a volunteer. I found that what we as seniors need in the loneliness of our older years, is what we needed in the uncertain years of our youth, a sense of belonging, an assurance of being wanted. . .not merely a room in a building, but room in some one’s heart and life.

It has been said: “He, who is afraid of doing too much, seldom does enough.” We cannot go back to the morning hours of our youth, but we can help others to live in the warm glow of a sunset made more beautiful by our thoughtfulness, our provisions, our activities and our love. I like the statement that “When life gives us difficulties, the important thing is, does it make us BETTER or BITTER? ‘And when life hands us lemons, it’s up to us to make lemonade. We are each given twenty-four hours a day and how I use them is up to me. I cannot allow “the clock and the calendar to blind me to the fact that each moment of my life is a miracle and a mystery. Life itself is a miracle and a mystery. Sometimes it may not be too important what I do with each moment, but it is the sum of the twenty-four hours that matter. Most of us resent sudden change, but by small steps we may arrive at the same destination. A step at a time is a well-known technique. Many things are accomplished with one step at a time. I knew that if I didn’t take the first step, I would never take the second, and if I don’t take the second step I will be bound by my unwillingness to go forward. Every time of life has its problems, and its compensations. Youth has its problems and so does old age. But we live through each part of life only once. We

can't go back. Instead of wishing that any part of it were over, we should find some sweetness and accomplishment and compensation in every hour. Don't wish for each part of life to pass quickly. Despite all the problems and the pressures, enjoy the journey. It's a good world and a good life. I like what Abraham Lincoln said, "I do the very best I know how — the very best I can; and I mean to keep doing so." I realized that if I simply don't do my best then I don't primarily have the interest of others in mind. People need other people as a performer needs an audience. People need to know that others are dependent on them, waking for them, pulling for them, and expecting much of them. I know that I do better when I know that there are others who expect more from me. It isn't natural for anyone to be running around without any ties or attachments. I know that I need to be somewhat responsible to someone else all the time to keep me at my best. To be able to close each day with a sense of accomplishment is one of the greatest assets and privileges of my life, one that entitles me to a sound sleep and great satisfaction of a day well spent. Many centuries ago it was said: "To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under heaven; A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant and a time to pluck up that which is planted. . . a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance...a time to keep and a time to cast away.. There is a time. For every purpose and for every work." (EccI 3:1,2,4,6,17,215.)"

Each day brings its own activities, its own changes, its own uncertainties and decisions. Not for any of us is life always controllable or predictable or safe or certain. We have to adjust to changes. We have to learn to live with uncertainty. We have to acquire the courage to live life as it is, and not as we wish it were -- for no day proceeds exactly as it was planned. Fortunately we have all seen the sign "Subject to change without notice."

As I remember my impressions of other people, I ask howl would want to be remembered by those who matter the most. Will it be the way I have lived from day to day? Whatever I do, whatever I am, whatever I think, whatever my actions are and attitudes all add up to the way I will be remembered. We cannot go back to the morning hours of youth. But we can help the seniors to live in the warm glow of a sunset made more beautiful by our thoughtfulness, our provisions, our activities and our love.