

## Aging Gracefully

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*Winner: First Place*

Aging is a challenge at best. But to be asked to endure it “gracefully” is a bit much.

For one thing, my gait is not graceful. Depending on the arthritic incursion of the day, I may sidle crabwise, clump, limp or lurch.

When pain stabs my hands I drop my coffee and utter loud colorful words. My attitude isn't graceful either. Over my eighty years I've tolerated frequent frustrations and disappointments and the world's refusal to behave as it ought. I believe I have been very patient and have tried to improve things and “brighten the corner where I live” as some fool has suggested.

But gradually the Sunday comics have shrunk to a few pitiful pages not funny and mostly incomprehensible. Everybody everywhere talks loudly to everyone else on a cell phone. All over my house are tiny colored lights in little boxes that suddenly emit warning beeps, peeps, buzzes, whines or piercing screeches. (Frozen burrito done? House on fire)?

As I stumble about, tripping over my oxygen tube, searching for the source and cause of the alarm, I cannot help thinking of Dylan Thomas's poetic rallying cry for us beleaguered ancients: “Do not go gentle into that good night! Rage, rage against the dying of the light!”

I have waited decades to finally enjoy some recompense for the vicissitudes I experienced in my youth. Since I would have become wrinkly but adorable, I opined, I could whack people in the shins with my cane if they murked up my serenity. “How cute,” they would smile when I uttered volcanic rumblings. But, actually, I don't much care whether “they” like it or not—I am pretty tired of trying to figure out what the heck is going on around here.

A newspaper headline announces “Pair Trek for LGBY Youths.” What the heck does that mean? And what is “bifidus irregularis” and why should yogurt have it and why would I even want it in my yogurt?

Why don't people speak up? I puzzle, hearing a TV pitch for a “zucchini trimmer,” and finally realize they're talking about a “bikini trimmer.” Whatever that is. The financial analyst discusses “gerbil goods” which turn out to be “durable goods.”

It's hard to make sense of tweedles and blobs and weees and wyefyes and blue teeth and have to sit around and pretend to enjoy the company of people who supposedly speak your language when you don't and they don't. Familiar words have new meanings, and new words, if they're spoken clearly enough for me to hear, are drawn from a metallic world of cryptic technology where robots intone biorhythms.

So maintaining dignity and serenity is more than I can manage. On the other hand, rage is equally taxing. What I CAN manage is to realize that my every day produces its own humorous possibilities. There they are: the bizarre, the ironic, the hilarious, the amusing, waiting to delight my heart.

So I plan to exit laughing. But not just yet.