

Aging Lifestyles: Reporter takes a gander at the geezers

by Joe_Volz

The local newspaper in my hometown, Frederick, Md., has just hired a college student, Kathy Carson, to do an occasional column on life as she sees it from the perspective of a 21-year-old.

The other day, she zeroed in on baby boomers, deploring the fact that "people focus too much on trying to stay young."

That's true enough, even though the quest for eternal youth is certainly not a new goal. Five hundred years ago, Ponce de Leon, while trying to find the Fountain of Youth, was killed by Indians in Florida. Come to think of it, that was one way to avoid growing old.

And of course, Kathy's elders, today's boomers - some are now 60 years old - have made quite of fetish of trying to stay young.

A decade ago, if Kathy had written her column on the Internet, she, no doubt, would have been praised by young readers, the vast majority of the Internet audience then, about how she had committed truth. Was really cool. Had made a totally awesome argument.

But guess who makes up an increasingly larger percentage of the electronic readers of the paper these days?

Kathy's elders - the baby boomers. And, she has just revealed a truth that many of them are grappling with. They are aging despite their intense efforts to stop the march of time. They can't dance all night anymore - or drink until the sun rises over Santa Monica Boulevard.

Clearly, Kathy is not impressed by these oldsters. She is particularly annoyed at one local 40-something singer.

"I have no problem with this guy performing the music that he likes," she writes. "I do have a problem with the fact that he looked like he raided his nephew's closet and played dress-up. There is a fine line between staying current with the youth culture and appearing to have a Peter Pan complex."

Well, that really irked one Internet Peter Pan, who scolded Kathy. He wrote, "There have been umpteen aging rock stars still performing as they did in the '60s, '70s and '80s, so what's the beef here? We marketed the culture of youth, beauty and celebrity, so is it any wonder the old folks generally are disregarded? Oh, so true. It seems like only yesterday that boomers, then in their 20s, were insisting that they couldn't trust anyone over 30." Another anonymous reader, whom I would guess graduated from high school about a quarter of a century ago, also objected to one of Kathy's comments - this one: "Youth is a wonderful gift but I think that we shouldn't lose sight of the fact that growing older is also a gift, not a punishment to be feared."

The boomer wrote, "Growing older is not a gift. It just tells you that you have less time alive." That boomer sounds like someone from the Greatest Generation or the Silent Generation. My, he must not be aging very optimistically. Maybe Kathy, you were a bit off base when you credited your boomer elders with acquiring wisdom with age.

Many boomers are too busy avoiding aging, instead of dealing with it. They haven't led the introspective lives that your philosophy professors are always talking about. They have spent more time complaining that those who still have youth are abusing it. Some of your gentle readers, often quick to brand today's youth as a bunch of thoughtless and indolent self-possessed kids, might want to examine their own lives once in a while.

Maybe, you can sponsor an intergenerational seminar at your school, Hood College, and invite some Boomers who have a positive outlook.

Keep up your thought provoking writing. Don't let grumpy, middle-aged geezers grind you down.

E-mail Joe Volz at volzjoe2003@yahoo.com or write to 2528 Five Shillings Road, Frederick, MD 21701.

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