

Living On Purpose

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Aging wisdom for young-at-heart

Growing old is not a disease but it can be painful.

At the breakfast table my son and I were discussing the haircut I had just given him the night before. After his insightful comment that cutting hair didn't hurt, he unknowingly wined me, when after scanning my hairline, asked, "Daddy what does it feel like to be bald?"

Half of me laughed. Half of me winced.

It seems like yesterday when as a kid I thought my dad was an old man. Now I've joined the ranks.

It all happens so fast! Nobody warned me that time accelerates. In my childhood I thought that next week was forever. In my rebellious teen years I felt indestructible. In my 20s the pace began to quicken. Now Mid Life is more than a definition of a crisis. It's the sobering reminder that life is half over. And they tell me that the wagon rolls faster going down hill!!

Twenty-nine and holding becomes 39 and holding and then we just lose our grip.

Television commercials don't help. Ever take note of who's acting? The real live ones are always stunningly beautiful, young and full of energy. The real appeal beyond the product-pitch is how you can be like them.

Why is getting old so painful? There are more than 4 billion peo-

ple on this earth. Every single one of them is aging and yet we are made to feel guilty if it's happening to us.

I think the pain of aging comes from two sources:

- A growing recognition of our mortality. Some people manage to live a very long time, but sooner or later we all kiss this world goodbye. Those who are not sure of what's beyond the grave will obviously try to put off that irreversible event.

- A deep (often hidden) displeasure with the quality of our lives. Throughout most of our adult lives we bury these thoughts and pretend that everything is great and we wouldn't change a thing. Most elderly folk, however, will admit that they would make sweeping changes if they could do it all over again.

Some have said "I would take more risks." "I would make my family my priority." "I would be less selfish." "I would learn to love people more." "I wouldn't abuse my body." "I would get to know God."

Growing old doesn't have to be painful. You can make the most of life at every stage — even if you have a receding hairline. Israel's King David hit the nail on the head when he said, "Lord teach us to number our days so that we may apply our hearts to wisdom."

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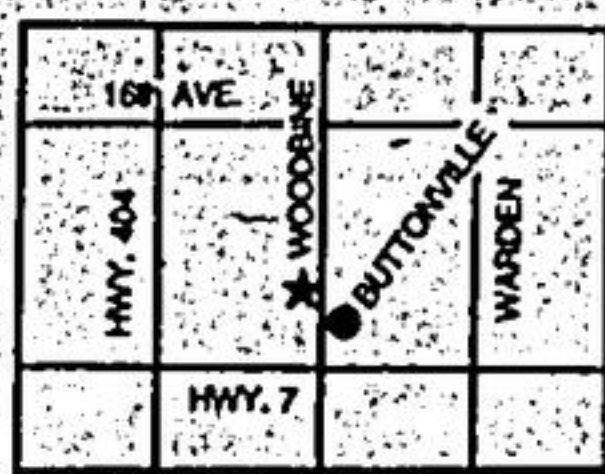
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