

The Brunswickan

Canada's oldest official student publication

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OPINION...

IN PRAISE OF AGE
 By DAVID S. GORHAM
 (short commentary)

Age is our dawning horror that we wish to hide; shunt it into the old back railyards of decay and dilapidation. Our North American ethos points a finger at age, mocks it and ignores it. Generation gaps are natural, but what exists at present in our society is more than subtle misunderstanding and contrast. There is a disgust and often a hatred of age, and I think this says something very profound about our modern culture and ourselves. Whatever bigotry exists on this planet begins as a sickling seed in all of us. We fear that we shall become the object of disgust, decay and uselessness that seems to afflict the manifest view of old age.

At present the worth of age is seen as a bundle of discardable negatives. It is physical decrepitude, intellectual stagnation and the long fever at the end of life. Perhaps these perceptions and attitudes are derivative of our own consumer society. You see it bought as a baby, you love it as a child and respect it as a grown human being. But once its parts run down and the wheels come off that once shiny toy, it is ready for the scrap heap. We fail to see the worn charm in that once beloved object that comes with the layered and blended years; the memories vested in childhoods and the simple truths that may be imparted by those memories.

This is the alternative view of age, the view of the senior citizen as a national and world treasure. The esteemed view of age is one where the aged are seen as reservoirs of vast experiential wealth.

All around us are living historical oracles who can relay the dusty grit of the Dirty Thirties, the realities of war, or just the simple truths garnered from a well wrinkled voyage through time's forge. We value and cherish our heritage as reflected in worn wood, rusted metal and chipped china. We revere the graceful beauty of those carefully crafted and sculptured older homes that creak with age, but none the less speak with a thousand voices and bear the mark of a proud master builder.

It is long past the time that we put the same value as a culture, in those people who have walked the earth through fires and trials, that we put in the transitory flickerings of television's babblings. We must talk and listen with those among us who may have some premonition of what is to result from our present actions. They may know what is to follow, and warn us of our worst folly.

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