

## Ageing disgracefully

Alan Bornefeldt

There are mornings when I stumble out of bed and stagger to my feet. I may give the appearance of having a drunken hangover. The alcohol addiction was tossed away many moons ago. Arthritis in the spine and worn out knees are a nuisance but I'll not allow such petty ailments to get the better of me. I've got no intention of ageing disgracefully.

After giving myself a quick rubdown, I have a conversation with the parrots and pat the shaggy old dog. Creative flair and stimulating hobbies are much better medication than any prescription drug. Will I surf the internet for historical articles, potter in the garden, make a clay sculpture, play the piano, listen to music or read a book? Isn't it terrific to have a variety of pleasurable pastimes?

When I've the necessity of visiting a friend or relative at a hospital geriatric ward, I'm struck by the contrasting patient attitudes. Some speak of what exciting things they are going to do when discharged. Others give medical staff a harrowing experience complaining about the mildest discomfort and are well on their way to ageing with hatred and bitterness.

Like many workers, in my late twenties, I was intolerant of the behaviour and reactions of a few office colleagues. Seated opposite the senior H and R man, I fired off my complaints. He listened for a while before stopping my tirade with a disarming pat on the head.

"Yes it's so easy to find the faults in others because none of us is perfect. I'll set you a challenge before agreeing with your request for a transfer. Look for their good qualities. It'll strengthen your mind and you'll become a happier and more pleasant person to work with and have around."

Thanking him for his advice I returned to my desk. His words left their mark and have been a great backstop throughout the years.

As we age, it's vital that we become patient listeners. We've been blessed with two ears and one mouth. Those of us who dwell with some ache or pain should "give up the organ recital" and give our hang-up a rest.

Life is short and there's so much beauty to experience. Plants, animals, reptiles, birds and insects possess so many fascinating characteristics. Caring for others and getting in touch with the creative side of our character assist our spiritual and emotional well-being. Let's go down this path and avoid the possibility of wasting our senior years and ageing disgracefully.