

Gym Rat Rantings

by Bob Ring



The Problems of Getting Older

Health problems of older age are the “pits” aren’t they? First it’s the illnesses – heart conditions, cancer, pneumonia, arthritis, osteoporosis ... The list goes on and on. And as we age we are more prone to injuries like broken bones from falls or running into something. Then there are those uncomfortable medical procedures like colonoscopies, that invade your inner body; MRI’s that enclose your entire body; and treadmill stress tests, with parts of your body wired for surround sound. And hospitals! Many of us have spent more time in hospitals in the last three years than we did the previous 60 years!

How are your teeth doing? Are they still your natural teeth? Remember fluoride? Did fluoride prevent your cavities, bridges, or crowns? Have you found yourself trying to brighten your smile with special tape or bleach-filled teeth molds? Do your gums bleed?

Can you still see OK? At night? Do your eye-glasses have separate lenses for long distance, driving, reading, and finding your shoes? Do you see spots before your eyes? Seeing ghosts or pink elephants? Do you still drive? Should you?

How about your hearing? Do you miss parts of most conversations? Do you have conversations? Do you have a hearing aid? Should you?

Is your mind still sharp? Do you still do your own taxes? Pay your own bills? Do you understand your medical and drug insurance policy? Does anyone understand your medical and drug insurance policy? Do you still work that daily crossword puzzle? The “hard” sudokus? Are you always worrying about your cholesterol, blood pressure, heart rhythm, or hair color? Are you depressed? Do you depress others? Do you experience “senior moments?” Would you remember them if you did? Tell the truth now.

Do you have to be careful with your diet? Having more indigestion and elimination problems? Is your stomach always growling? Producing more gas than Exxon Mobile? Had an embarrassing accident or two or more?

Do you still sleep through the night? Do you occasionally sleep through the day? Do you know the difference?

Do you remember what sex was? Is it a distant memory? Does your nightstand contain Viagra and lubricating lotions? A copy of “Idiots Guide to Sex over 50?”

Do you feel like you’re becoming a “drugee?” Do you use a giant-size weekly pill dispenser? Do you take more pills per week than your age?

How's your cardio stamina? Your strength and balance? Are you losing energy? Is that why you come to the Fit Center?

Ah, the Fit Center. Look around you. We are not alone! Collectively we have experienced "all of the above" old age issues. Thank goodness none of us has been affected by everything, although some of you have certainly had to face more than your fair share.

But you know what, you're here at the Gym, trying to maintain or improve your health – perhaps returning after a serious medical condition. You care about yourself!

In my Building Bones class alone, I see Francis L, back from a broken hip; Anne W, back from open heart surgery; Ann G, back from lung cancer; Ralph I, carrying an oxygen tank; and of course my Pat, back from breast cancer. I can't tell you how inspiring these people – and their positive attitudes – are to me, and I suspect to all of you too.

Regina Brett, a columnist for Cleveland, Ohio's *Plain Dealer* newspaper, sums all this up:

Growing old beats the alternative – dying young.