

Retirement Musings

Retirement is such a two-sided coin, you know. It is a release from the confines of dailiness and structure — more spare time. But its evil cousin also appears: Who am I now? What will I do with this time? How will I value what has come before? No one really wants to become invisible.

There are more of us, you know:

- . We wonder if defying aging in various cosmetic ways will prevent us from disappearing. With Western society's relentless worshipping of youth and beauty, where do we fit? Our slightly wrinkled countenances belie a continued interest in our place in the scheme of things.

- . We wonder if we have raised our children well or what happened to cause the troubles we see around us.

- . We insist on being healthy, being busy, being aware of the world around us. Restless rest.

- . We find it hard to let go of things and people, even as it happens more frequently, needing that tension for reassurance.

We are becoming a collective -- people who are seekers still, who are remembering dreams of youth with fondness and renewed determination; we continue to want our place in this youth-obsessed frenzy. We, too, are young in this next cycle of life which offers a promise of wisdom, of humour, of skills that have not evaporated. We do not want to be the recipients of benign neglect.

But how do we move on? How do we go forward, given the push/pull of our desire juxtaposed with "supposed to" at our age. Changing the framework, but not the desire to be in the world for ourselves and for others. We have the strength and courage of experience, the longevity of networks of people who have come and gone in our lives. We have the time and space to offer to a

cause, to our dreams, to having a vibrant, active pattern that feels good.

A body of knowledge is beginning to appear on bookstore shelves, coming out of the mouths of experts on the speaking circuit, as well as on Internet sites, trying to understand the phenomenon of conscious aging.

So ...

- . Let us not get lost in the classification, in the desire to find the desired path, the nirvana in a package.

- . Let us be still and listen to our hearts and plan our paths to suit ourselves. In a world where outcomes and objectives are the desired norms and heart stories are on the fringes of many lives, what will our new stories, our new patterns, be?

- . How can we creatively compose our lives, given that creativity lives within all of us?

- . How do we live with our changing bodies?

- . We have a need to be responsible, but for what and who?

Why is it so difficult to let go?

Because ...

We are like lapidarists — experts on precious stones and the art of cutting and engraving them. Our lives on earth change and continue to do so. In fact, we are in a permanent state of changing, refining until at last we shine forth, the smoother, more polished creature, set in the golden years, reflecting and attracting rays, a jewel of understanding and wisdom.

Who is the wearer? Who is the bearer?