

Who Wants to Hang Out with Old People?

It's not that I don't like old people. I like old people fine. In fact, I am an old person, and some of my best friends are old people. Old people have had a tremendous impact on the world we all live in today.

You may think they did a good job, or you may think they did a bad job, but my belief is that the old people of today – including me – did the best they could under the circumstances, and should be given the benefit of the doubt.

I make this disclaimer because what I am about to say could be taken the wrong way, especially if you are an old person of sensitive nature. I mean you no offense.

Here it is.

I have always been mystified about what people do at the Senior Center. Almost every town I have ever lived in has a Senior Center, and I have this picture in my mind of old people, sitting around, playing checkers, maybe drooling a little bit, and once in a while loading onto a van for a trip to a funeral for one of their pals.

I am sure this is neither an accurate nor a fair picture. I am sure that if I ever went to a Senior Center, I would find many very nice mature folks gathered together doing ...

That's where I am confused. Just why are they there, and what are they doing?

I know what you are thinking. Why don't I just go in and see? There's no guard at the door.

It's a good question and one that I have asked myself. I think the answer is that once I step inside the door, I am afraid I might become one of them – a Senior Center person.

I don't mind getting older. I don't mind getting the cheap tickets for movies or a discount on my hotel bills. In fact, having lost friends and loved ones over the years, I greatly appreciate being one of the survivors despite the aches and pains that come with the passing of time.

But I don't want to be a Senior Center person. I have this creepy feeling that once you become a Senior Center person, you have stepped off the platform and started the long slide to death.

The next thing that happens is you find yourself in elder day care, then they put you in a home and complete strangers are changing your diaper. Relatives start calling you once a year to wish you well, just so they can mark you off the list and enjoy their Christmas holiday without guilt.

After a few years of that you die, which considering what went before doesn't seem all that bad.

I do realize that my fears about this are totally unfair and probably unrealistic. Maybe what's really going on at the Senior Center is mature folks are sitting around drinking big pitchers of Margaritas, eating peanuts, throwing the shells on the floor, and talking dirty to one another.

I hope so, but I think it's doubtful.

I know a bunch of older citizens, but not one of them has admitted to me that they ever went to a Senior Center. They are mostly getting older, enjoying life, and understanding that eventually they are going to die.

I'm not crazy about that last part, but I can live with just about everything up to there.

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