

Stop counting!

By Constance Scrafield

In the beginning, our lives are measured in weeks, then months for a long time: we are 'two and a half' (or less), holding our baby fingers up to demonstrate, with a degree of clumsiness, the complicated math.

After that, our age is a constant subject of opening remarks with people, specifically grown ups, apparently obsessed with the subject of age in tiny persons. By the time we reach the increasing maturity of seven or eight, the question of age falls away as a primary point of interest in favour of our superficial lives with regard to education, hobbies and ambition.

From then, we can rabbit on aimlessly about ourselves, our foolish view of the future and our denial that we have to actually do anything by way of work to achieve it, as though all our dreams will fall into our laps until the adult is numbed over and dashes off looking for adult conversation, which, in the end, might not be so different.

Really, by the time we are in our late teens, early twenties, the issue of age is as small as it has been so far, more as a meter of achievement, still in regard to education, work, ambition and notice of having arrived at a more realistic point of view about it all. Even still living in our childhood home might only be a matter of poor luck or compatibility with our early environment.

Age and our dwelling location are not as counter-definitive as they used to be.

Then, somewhere along the line, the subject of age drops blissfully away. It is ridiculous, irrelevant or just bad manners to ask the age of a real grown-up ? you know ? a person in his or (especially) her thirties, forties, fifties even, until somewhere somehow, 55 began to qualify as a senior.

Now, that is probably the fault of the trend to seek out 'Freedom 55' which was a popular chant in what? the '70's? The call of the parents of the 'Boomers'? Those post-WWII party animals who worked very hard, their childhood years being spent in the dark time of the 30's and the war over the seven terrible years of 1939 to 1945.

By that time, they were in their late teens, getting married, some rather young and having children right away.

It was a time to grow up fast ? there was a lot to do. So, the postwar parents were fruitful and multiplied and those children ? the first generation to have a silly name as has every generation since, (for heaven's sakes) are the Baby Boomers, born loosely between the mid 1940's to about 1964 ? in case you wondered if you qualify. However, those dates are rather indefinite if you are on the upper end and want to opt out.

It has been a time of growth for many slippery slopes: the Baby Boomers also worked hard but they made and are still making such a mess, inherited, to be sure, from the consequences of the ignorance of the previous century, when the technology of war intensified dramatically and insanity got a firm grip on the minds of almost every person in power; when gain became a goal in itself without any regard whatsoever for the long term.

Speaking of long term, the boomers are living long-term and age has once again become an obsessive subject. What to do about the fact that there more old people than there are enough younger people and public money to care for them?

I heard a segment on the radio the other day about how dementia and the like can be reduced and avoided by 30%: by older people taking care of themselves: eating well, keeping their brains and bodies active. It was presented as a scientific discovery, as though these were new ideas.

A friend of mine in her 70's was asked her age by a new acquaintance; my friend told her and then, said, 'And if you treat me like an old lady, I'll put my foot up your?'

Getting old is not, in fact, in law, a crime. It is long since time we stopped counting so hard and making decisions about older people based more on their numbers than on themselves.

At any age, it is time we all realize the payback of not taking care of ourselves and knowing the days of regret at our bad eating habits and sloth are coming.

For those older people ? whatever you think they are ? get off their case about age and go back to conversations about ambition and the future.

We all need to be reminded of our worth and we all need to remember the worth of others. Forget age ? it is frequently completely beside the point.