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Keeping a Sense of Humor in our Sunset Years

Donna Messenger

When I was a kid my dad and I would race each other to each month's new *Reader's Digest* for all the newest funny stories. They had wonderful columns like "Laughter, the Best Medicine" and "Humor in Uniform." Plus, there were endless one- or two-liners at the bottom of articles that were placed there as fillers. They all made me laugh. I had to share them with my dad, who taught me how to laugh!

Laughter is indeed a good medicine, as Proverbs says. As we grow older, and as the aches and pains increase, it's easy to bemoan those signs of aging and lose the joy and laughter in our lives. In our "sunset years," it's important to keep our eyes on the future—the next life ahead of us. I'm sure many of you are familiar with the ministry of Joseph Stowell. He was president of Moody Bible Institute for many years and then later he was president of Cornerstone University in Grand Rapids, Michigan. I worked there for a decade before going to Ukraine as a missionary. Joe came along later to be the president there.

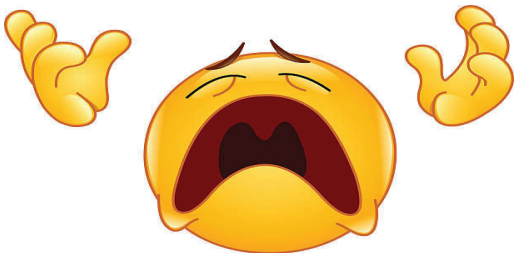
Once when I was back in Grand Rapids, I heard Joe on WCSG, the college radio station. He had a daily 5-minute devotional that ai happened to catch one day when he was explaining why our aches and pains and diseases increase so significantly as we age. He said, "If we stayed perfectly healthy and everything kept going so well, we would never want to leave this world." He went on to say that God allows these sufferings in our lives so that we will long for the next life. Which we do, don't we?

Recently, four dear friends of mine passed from this life into the next. I know they are now celebrating the life we can only imagine, but I miss them. For each of my friends, though, I have distinct "laughable" memories that I have celebrated in my remembrances of them.

We have a fun community here at Maranatha Village. Let's do our best to encourage each other by keeping a heart of laughter!

For Cryin' Out Loud

Jerry Webber



George Bernard Shaw, 19th century Irish playwright, was no friend to the Christian worldview. Controversial and often cynical, he nonetheless had it right when speaking out on senior humor. It was he who said, "You don't stop laughing when you grow old, you grow old when you stop laughing."

He further declared, "This is the true joy in life…being a force of nature instead of a feverish, selfish little clod of ailments and grievances complaining that the world will not devote itself to making you happy."

His point was pretty clear: no one likes a grump who fills every conversation with gruesome organ recitals and complaints about the hardships of aging. In various stages, we are each moving inexorably toward our appointed expiration date. A certain amount of pain and suffering are part of the process, but beyond the clouds the sun is always shining, if we will look for it.

Following is a less-than-complete list of descriptors that paint a painfully accurate portrait of life in the slow lane for those of us they call "seniors." If you find yourself there, laugh if you can, or at least crack a grin if no one's looking.

YOU KNOW YOU'RE GETTING OLD WHEN

- you've been there and done that, but don't remember what "that" was.
- people tell you how good you look.
- almost everything hurts, and what doesn't hurt doesn't work.
- you hear your favorite songs in an elevator.
- you're told to slow down by your doctor and not the police.
- you and your teeth don't sleep together.
- you try to straighten the wrinkles in your socks and find you aren't wearing any.
- your back goes out but you stay home.
- your idea of a night out is sitting on the patio.
- your idea of weightlifting is standing up.
- it takes longer to rest than it did to get tired.
- your address book has mostly names that start with Dr.
- you sit in a rocking chair and can't get it going.
- you sink your teeth into a steak, and they stay there.
- you wonder how you could be over the hill when you don't remember being on top of it.

Aches and pains are the inevitable lot of the aging, but for cryin' out loud, remember the words of the wisest man who ever lived: "A merry heart does good, like medicine [makes medicine even better], but a broken spirit dries the bones" (Prov. 17:22 NKJV).

Prayer for the Middle-Aged (and beyond)

Lord, Thou knowest better than I know myself that I am growing old.
Keep me from the fatal habit of thinking I must say something on every subject and on every occasion.
Release me from craving to straighten out everybody's affairs.
Make me thoughtful but not moody, helpful but not bossy.
With my vast store of wisdom, it seems a pity not to use it all, but Thou knowest, Lord, that I
want a few friends at the end.
Keep my mind free from the recital of endless details; give me wings to get to the point.
Seal my lips on my aches and pains. They are increasing and love of rehearsing them is
becoming sweeter as the years go by.
I dare not ask for grace enough to enjoy the tales of others' pain but help me to endure with patience.
I dare not ask for improved memory, but for a growing humility and a lessening cocksureness
when my memory seems to clash with the memories of others.
Teach me the glorious lesson that occasionally I may be mistaken. Keep me reasonably sweet.
I do not want to be a saint—some of them are so hard to live with but a sour old person is one of
the crowning works of the devil.
Give me the ability to see good things in unexpected places and talents in unexpected people.
Give me the grace to tell them so.

— 17th century nun

Words of Wisdom

from

Uncle George

This is your old friend Uncle George. You may think I'm brash interrupting your reading of the *Trumpet* like this, but Miss Donna asked me to put some thoughts together with Proverbs 17:22 in mind. It reads, "A merry heart doeth good like a medicine."

Humor may seem out of place to some of the stoic, studious, sophisticated people among us at Maranatha Village, but I don't know how they handle old age without it. I keep my eyes and ears open around here and find reasons to laugh almost every day!

Like the other day when one old guy, thinking his wife was losing her hearing, decided to test her. She was busy preparing dinner in the kitchen, so he stood behind her about 30 feet and said, "Honey, can you hear me?" She made no response. So, he moved to about 25 feet and repeated, "Honey, can you hear me?" Still no reply. He closed to 20 feet, then 15 feet, repeating the question. Finally, moving within 5 feet he asked, "Honey, can you hear me?" She turned and said with exasperation, "For the FIFTH time, YES, I can hear you!"

Doctor's appointments are frequent activities at Maranatha Village. One of our ladies heard of a doctor who was known for extraordinary treatment of arthritis. He had a waiting room full of people when a little, elderly lady, almost bent over in half, shuffled in slowly, leaning on her cane. When her turn came, she hobbled into the doctor's office, and, amazingly, emerged within five minutes walking completely erect with her head held high.

Our friend from Maranatha, after seeing all of this, rushed up to the elderly lady and said, "It's a miracle! You walked in bent in half and now you're walking erect. What did that doctor do?" The lady replied, "Gave me a longer cane."

Keep on laughing . . . it's good medicine for us old folk. Remember, God has a sense of humor! He made giraffes, didn't He?

Uncle George

The Kissing Booth Legend

Linda Pyche

November 2022 — When John and I, the Volunteer Coordinators, received a volunteer form from a new winter resident who said he was a contractor, we immediately asked Brian (Village Administrator) if he had any special projects he would like to suggest. He quickly suggested a welcome booth. He wanted something that was wood, portable, and large enough to hold two people who could use it for handing out flyers, tracts, and information about the Village, especially for future activities in the community. So, when Jim Murphy arrived in the Village, he was given the idea, materials, and a place to assemble the newest project.

March 2023 — It was hoped that the project would be done before the 50th Anniversary, particularly to use it for the Legacy Stroll as an information booth for any of the public that would attend. When it was near completion, Jim was asked to move it to the land near the maintenance road at the beginning of the path around the lake where the Legacy Stroll was to be held. As he was putting on the finishing touches, some of the residents from the Manor came by to observe and asked what it was going to be. Jim jokingly said, "A kissing booth — any volunteers?" Two ladies raised their hands!

Jim shared the story with me and I passed it along to the Co-Chairman of the Legacy Stroll, Martha Martens. We both would be "manning" the booth that evening. The booth was decorated with a 50th anniversary wreath made by the Mendozas and had stools inside to sit on and tracts to hand out. Of course, its main purpose was to hand out the candles for the decorated bags that were being displayed on the path around the lake. There was also the opportunity for those who had not purchased a bag to get one from the booth.

Pastor and Jan Jeffers approached the booth to get their candles, so I shared the story of "The Kissing Booth" which brought a laugh to the crowd now gathered nearby. As Pat and Ted Wells approached to purchase their bag, Pat asked if she had overheard correctly that this new wooden box was a "kissing booth"? And amidst the laughing negative responses of those standing around, she then asked, "Why is my husband getting out his money?"

Later as Pastor and Jan were leaving, he was heard to say (because he shouted), "No, Jan, we are not stopping at the kissing booth. I'm tired and want to go home." Inside the booth was heard an exasperated voice that said, "I don't want to hear any more about this kissing booth. I'm not participating." To which the Pastor replied, "Well, I was working on it as an illustration for my sermon." "Then I won't be there on Sunday," was the quick retort — with a response of, "Then I can embellish it as much as I want!"

When the night ended, the booth was left to rest until the work crew could fold it and put it away to be worked on again another day. But the next morning at the Health Fair, Pat Wells approached me at the 50th t-shirt sale table and asked if I had seen the booth that morning. Apparently, someone enjoyed the story so much that they attached a cardboard sign to it that said, "Kissing Booth, Volunteers Needed."

February 2024 — the Welcome Booth was resurrected to be used as the entrance to the annual Yard Sale. The work crew set it up in a location that was sure to be noticed — underneath the sign that said, "Restroom."

March 2024 — Legacy Stroll — the Welcome/Kissing/Restroom Booth was set up at the entrance to the path so there would be a central place to collect candles for the memory bags. But the wind had blown it down flat. It was rescued and screwed into the fence post to live again.