

Don't Act Your Age

by Harvey Nowland

The Bible says, "Both the gray-haired and the aged are among us." (Job 15:10)

For some of us it's even truer than it is for others. When others see you acting your age, how old do they think you are?

Legendary baseball pitcher Satchel Paige reached the major leagues at an age when most pitchers have given up pitching. In 1948 at the age of 42, Paige signed his first major league contract with the Cleveland Indians. Critics called him the oldest rookie in baseball history. Even though his actual age has been debated, nevertheless he pitched in the majors until he was almost 60!

The issue was more than Paige's age. He was the American League's first black pitcher. Cleveland Indian owner Bill Veeck said that if Satchel had been white, he would've been in the majors 25 years earlier. It's claimed that more fans saw him throw more pitches in more places for more seasons than any other pitcher then or now.

Satchel was well known for his "master maxims." His most famous was, "Don't look back, something might be gaining on you." And his favorite response to questions about growing old was, "Age is a question of mind over matter. If you don't mind, it doesn't matter."

How does that line up with your philosophy of aging? Now, being a major league pitcher until you're 60 is probably not your dream job. But the point is that age really is a question of mind over matter. And you can be sure that if you dwell on your age and you do mind, then it will really matter.

Doris Day once said, "The scariest part of middle age is the knowledge that you'll grow out of it." So, why not just face up to the fact that we're all in the same boat when it comes to aging. We experience altered body composition — causing uneasy tendencies for body parts to shift — weak bones, skin changes, altered appetites, poor sleep, lessened cognition, reduced energy levels, low sex drive and lower metabolism, sometimes all at the same time!

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Even if you have health concerns or physical restrictions, you can do better with a positive attitude about aging. President George Herbert Walker Bush skydived on his 80th birthday! You're probably not considering that on your next birthday, but how about not acting your age once in awhile?

And while I'm at it, how do you behave? Do you act your age, or do you act older than you are? Acting older was OK when you were 18, but not now. As a baby boomer, are people astonished to discover that you're a grandparent simply because you act half your age?

If not — that is, if you haven't astonished someone lately — do something you've never ever done. Buy a bicycle (you might even want to consider riding it). Learn to play tennis, bocce (look it up), golf or rugby — OK then, not rugby. Develop a hobby that keeps you active, become an advocate for children, sign up for a 5K walk for breast cancer or get active with recreational opportunities in your church or community.

Perhaps the best of Satchel Paige's master maxims is: "How old would you be if you didn't know how old you were?" Mull that over. There's a lot more to it than you might think.

The point is this: Even if you're not that young, consider thinking and acting as if you are — and live a little. After all, the question is, how old would others think you were if they saw you acting your age?

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