

Embracing the Signs of Aging

It's not easy to get old. It's easy to age; it's easy to grow a little older. Especially around those who are just a little bit behind you. Then you have the mastery, the x factor, the capacity to say, "I remember when..." and sound like you know stuff. In fact, last week I spoke with a man who was celebrating with his wife their 48th anniversary. Great, I thought. Well done. He asked how long we had been married and he was surprised we were at 49 already. I thought you were much younger than me, he said. So I took it all in stride, but felt good that we had made it to 49. And counting.

But getting old; that's another story altogether. I asked my dad once how he knew he was old, and he said, "When my mother passed away." That meant when Bubbe died around 1990 or so, and there were no other people from my dad's family in that generation that he and his siblings moved up a notch. Mind you, by then, both Uncles Archie and Ruben had passed, and a couple of the sisters-in-law. So ageing had some warning signs. And those signs are all around me.

So many of the Shawnee Mission East class of 1969 are gone now. Even lately, like Bob Levene last year and others who attended reunions. Last year some old mates of mine like Danny Kass and Dave Rabinowitz and Hyman Seifer passed. So it's people I knew. And then there are those

constant reminders on the television about celebrities who are in their 50s or 60s who died this week. I'm 74, so I feel it a little more closely than when I was in my 20s and 30s. Obviously.

But ageing includes memory loss, like trying to remember a word or a phrase, not only on Jeopardy during the taped show, but also in conversations. Or trying to remember the name of a book I just read or a person I just spoke with. I don't think I'm a candidate for the Memory Wing of the hospital, not yet, but I do feel like some synapses are not firing.

Other signs. I can't keep up with the physical pace of the world. I don't really have to adjust my speed to slow down on the highway; my car is already going slower than most cars around me. My old Type A personality which had a game of getting to a place in just enough time, now has to adjust to the new speed or lack of speed with which I'm going. I don't go up and down stairs like I used to go. Except on the pickleball court, I love to tear after a ball. Maybe there is something else going on with that. But for now, I'm slowing down.

I'd like to finish these books I've begun and keep my website up to date and podcasts functioning. But Neville's thoughts on one project a day are taking over my mental space.

Is ageing so bad? Not at all. I rather like slowing down. It's both sensible

and pleasant. And there really is plenty to do and to fill my diary. Now it's about pacing myself to be able to finish what I have begun. Like this project.

