



## **Aging Gracefully, Warily**

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By Eleanor Rodgeron, MD

Anti-aging is the latest fad in classic and alternative medical literature. But there is no such thing as "anti-" aging, is there? Anti-aging is not like anti-war, or anti-sepsis. War becomes peace, bacteria and viruses are killed.

Aging proceeds. Live forever on this planet? Impossible, so far.

Nevertheless, while we are here on earth, what can be done about it?

Grow old along with me,

The best is yet to be,

The last of life for which the first was made.<sup>1</sup>

With little conscious help, life expectancy has lengthened (count the number of senior residencies and care centers). Many illnesses have been eliminated. There have been improvement in what we eat and health advice is freely given. Life expectancy will be longer still when routines are followed earlier.

I have a big dog, Michael, a few gray hairs on his chin. From puppyhood he has been fed well-balanced dog food, low-calorie, and given thyroid for a small deficiency, glucosamine for an early joint injury, pills to control intestinal parasites, and vegetable oil for a shiny coat. He is exercised daily and lives in a caring household. He has a yearly physical and the shots necessary to protect from communicable diseases. He is attaining a pleasant old age.

To age gracefully and productively, humans must pursue well-balanced diets with calories, vitamins and minerals and continue their activities and the love of living. He who is of a calm and happy nature will hardly feel the pressure of age, but to him who is of an opposite disposition youth and age are equally a burden.<sup>2</sup>

The length of life has a connection with the way it is lived, as has been brought out in the investigation of groups of centenarians. Also, long life spans may be ordered by family genes, although definite proof of the gene connection is lacking. Still, longevity can be aimed for by perking up interest in life and current happenings. Start from babyhood with the diet and shots and loving surroundings. Continue through the middle years. Happy old age has a good chance to follow. While young, we tend to think little about prolonging life. Why wait to reach retirement or suffer a serious illness to begin to count the time?

Intelligence and reflection and judgment reside in old men, and if there had been none of them, no state could exist at all.<sup>3</sup>

To conclude on a practical point, try to settle estate assets without worry and with adequate provision for heirs. And be warned! Assurances can be modified, laws

manipulated, trusts changed.

For example, a non-revocable trust was set up in 1978, with income to go to the immediate survivor and the final residual to the remaining heirs. Twenty-two years later, the state Legislature revised the Uniform Principal and Income Act so that 90 percent of the income from various properties should become part of that non-revocable trust — untouchable.

The 1978 trust had specified that the entire income should go to the survivor. Now the 100 percent was reduced to 10 percent! This change had originally been set up legally and in good faith, but it turned out not to be set in gold.

Before relaxing, be wary. Setting up a trust may not be the way to go.

ebr8809@aol.com

<sup>1</sup> Robert Browning, Rabbi ben Israel

<sup>2</sup> Plato, The Republic, Book 1, 329-D

<sup>3</sup> Cicero, De Senectate, XVII

Sierra Sacramento Valley Medical Society  
5380 Elvas Avenue #100 • Sacramento, CA 95819  
916.452.2671 PH • 916.452.2690 FX • Email: info@ssvms.org

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