



## **AGING WITH GRACE – A Personal Reflection**

Aging is the last thing I want to do. And fortunately or unfortunately, aging will be the last thing I do! Methuselah can have his nine hundred years, unless, of course, he was still dancing and hugely enjoying life when his end finally came. If, however, he was confined to bed, unable to see and/or hear, unable to recognize those he loved, 900 years would not be something to desire! Happily, however, all of those who read this, and I, myself, will not need to worry about 900 years of aging. We all, of course, will age in whatever span of time we are granted by the One who created us.

So, if I will age, as I already am and have been, the question becomes: How shall I do so that will honor both the vitality and possibility that is still mine and honor the losses of body in a way that will prepare my spirit for its flight from time and space? That is my definition of aging with grace. Grace, in aging, is that sweetness of soul which holds liveliness and peace and dignity and a twinkle in the eye.

How, then, does that translate to dying one's hair, or going to dancing school, or doing water aerobics, or constantly complaining about the meals and help in the assisted living facility, or vowing to work until age 70 or older, or scolding one's children for not coming more often, or thoughtfully giving up driving, or continuing to do volunteer work or deciding that bingo is the game of the day? What should I do to age with grace?

Pondering aging and grace has led me to "Sonja's Seven Secrets" for a time of being old in human terms and being wide-eyed and young in God's universe:

1. Do all I can do with joy and without complaint. In fact, revel every now and again in doing something crazy or learning something utterly amazing or speaking some truth with courage that will cause people to shake their heads and wonder if I am "losing it!!!"
2. When I can no longer do something, enjoy the memory. Smile for what has been, and do not pity myself for what can no longer be.
3. Grieve for people, not for the bygones of things and activities.

4. Cultivate habits of the heart that make for joy—giving up hatred, expecting less from people, giving more to people, and meeting everyone with a smile.
5. Fill my mind with prayer and gratitude. Pray for every person who loves and cares for me, every person I love and care for, every person I ought to love, every person that is hard to love, every person that God loves—which is everyone! Gratitude is for the beauty I have been granted to feel and see, the peace I have been vouchsafed, the hope I hold, the joyful moments when spirits meet and eyes lock and we know we are linked, and the love whose power will, in the end, be victorious.
6. Do not worry about dyed hair or dancing with abandon. Whether I do or whether I don't, the important thing is what is happening to my inner being, not what is happening to my outer being. If my spirit is growing larger and more ready to meet my Lord, then I am aging with grace.
7. And finally, complete the most important tasks of living: say “I thank you” as often and fervently as I can; say “I am sorry” and “I forgive you” with freedom and without reserve, so that I can die as a healed and whole person; and say “I love you” to God and to all whom I meet, in order to enter heaven already prepared to live in and with and for Love forever!

Please join me in aging with grace, starting right now!

*--Sonja Griffith  
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Older Adult Month May 2008