

Aging Counterclockwise

by Nancy Martz

Mark Twain alleged that "we would be infinitely happier if only we could be born at the age of eighty and gradually approach eighteen." When I consider how forgetful I am at my current age, I shudder to imagine my mind at age eighty and wouldn't want to drag it back to burden a younger body. So at least in my case and on this subject, I beg to differ with Mark Twain.

The difference between my mind at age eighteen and my mind now is that I could remember where I put my watch and earrings back then without ransacking the same drawers two and three times before discovering the sought objects on my person . Then, I didn't leave my purse for a few hours in the shopping cart at the big box parking lot. Nor did I need to write down appointments and meetings and repeatedly consult the calendar throughout each day, and even then arrive a night late as I did recently for a sold out event.

One area where I might excel over an eighteen-year-old is in the emotional realm. Now, I can laugh at my foibles and admit them publicly. In fact, lately I find that I am laughing at myself with

increasing frequency. And I can literally forget and therefore forgive, and even enjoy the outrageous conduct of others. It allows me to appreciate almost everyone of unremarkable or miasmatic behavior, except for over the edge wing nuts who I think are just plain mean. But for most others, I can readily allow them to use either their youth or their age as an excuse for infractions and pathology.

Perhaps another area where I could overtake an eighteen-year-old in competition is in the arena of omniscience. Most of the know-it-alls I've encountered are either in their teens or along the fringes of my extended family. I have learned that, as John Wooden puts it, "It's what you learn after you know it all that counts." And what I've learned is that knowledge is the key to ignorance. The more one acquires, the more there is to acquire, and therefore, the less one knows in lieu of the vastness of the yet to be known. On top of that numbing concept, facts often change in time, and history is always evolving as we look back with errant and discriminating minds. Nothing is ever the same today as it was yesterday, and even the certainty of that is in doubt.

So what could I offer to an eighteen-year-old body now that I've admitted I'm a forgetful advocate of farce who contentedly suffers fools and who knows next to nothing? Better I reject the notion of youthful beauty and omniscience and stay in a body that is as slapstick as my slant on things.