

## An Ode to "Geezers"

Some of us are members of what Tom Brokaw defined as "The Greatest Generation." Others are members of the "Silent Generation." Still, others of us are aging Baby Boomers.

We are "Seniors," "Senior Citizens," "old folks," "geezers," "honorary members," "over-the-hill," "has-beens" - - or whatever label you want to hang on us.

On veterans day and at other occasions you honor us and remember some of our accomplishments. You have us stand to be honored and we like that! You let us put on our old uniforms (when we can still get in them), and put us in parades.

You tell us that we are doing pretty good "for our age!"

We "pop" a lot of pills, just to stay that way.

All of us appreciate "being honored!"

What we are craving for, and want more than honor, is to be "listened to." As did Rodney Dangerfield, we just want a "little respect." We want someone to just "look us in the eye" and give us an honest handshake (or a fast high five) and really listen to us!

Let me share some of the "joys" of geezerhood - -

1. You approach a fast food counter and all of a sudden you become invisible. It is usually a teenager who will mumble something to you (that you have to have them repeat, so you understand it). They will never look you in the eye and will be doing something else all the time you are trying to give them your order. You will tell them that you want "fries" and then they will ask you "do you want fries with that?". They will have you repeat your order when they have just flawlessly taken an order from a mumbling teenager. Hey, it is best to wait on them to ask you their own questions!

I won't even go into the horrendous outside order speaker boxes and the way they are used by people who won't even speak into a microphone (or be carrying on a conversation with someone inside and completely miss your order).

2. You approach a bank teller to conduct your personal business while they conduct an "on going - never interrupted" conversation with a fellow employee. She finally looks you in the eye at the end of the transaction and says "thank you for choosing \_\_\_\_ Bank!"

3. You approach a hardware clerk in one of the big box home improvement stores only to be made feel like someone who just crawled out of the woodwork.

4. You are chosen to hold a church position or be on a church board or committee or task force. They appreciate you coming, but they really want you to just sit in a corner and behave yourself. After all, your ideas are too old-fashioned to work anymore and you never have any new ideas. You only become important if they need your support or vote.

5. If you come up with an idea they politely listen to you (sometimes!) and then go on with what they were already planning to do.

6. 30 and 40 somethings don't have much time for you. You are too much like their parents and grandparents! They are mostly just polite and sometimes tolerant but you are never taken seriously.

An Epilogue - -

We "geezers" desperately want to be a part of the main-stream, not just the side channels. We do not want so much to be honored as we want to be just "listened to" and taken seriously. We want someone to "look us in the eye".

We may not know the latest "in words" that your generation uses or have the same issues to deal with in our personal life - - but, maybe, just maybe, there is something in our warehouse of experience that you could use. Sometimes we will offer without being asked - - but only because we want you to know where the "land mines" are.

We do not want "honorary" positions or to be put on the shelf. We will not demand that it be done "our way" - - but we do want to be really heard and taken seriously in the debate. We do not want to have to "buy in," we want to be "included in."

Our society has spent a lot of time and efforts in finding ways to "warehouse" people. As one "geezer" I do not want my mind and experience being "warehoused." I want to be "used up" not "rusted-up"

Our prayer is that moment-by-moment that the - -

Spirit of the Living God, will fall afresh on us melt us, mold us, fill us, and use us!

A Jim Lane Commentary  
November 13, 2001