

Creative Expressions

Inspiring vibrant and positive aging ∞ Promoting participatory arts ∞ Engaging civic stakeholders

The Official Newsletter of the Creative Aging Calgary Society

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You're Looking Very Well

A book review with reflections: "You're Looking Very Well: the Surprising Nature of Getting Old" by Lewis Wolpert, Faber & Faber, UK, 2011.

Old age ain't no place for sissies'. This quotation by H.L Mencken is used by Lewis Wolpert as a sub-heading for a chapter on 'Caring' (p.191) in his recently published book: "You're Looking Very Well: The Surprising Nature of Getting Old" (Wolpert, 2011).

I, as an octogenarian now past the other side of 85, have been constantly surprised at my own ageing and its goings-on amid the various demands this stage of my life has made, and keeps on making, on my physical, intellectual and emotional strengths in the process. Moreover, I must admit to being further surprised (and a little apprehensive) when I learn from Wolpert that, on account of staff shortages in many care homes for the elderly, both Japan and Norway are considering the use of robots which monitor and interact with patients as a solution to this problem. My apprehension in this matter keeps me thankful that I am

still able to live self-sufficiently in a one bedroom apartment in a Calgary seniors' condominium.

A developmental biologist and Emeritus Professor of Biology as Applied to Medicine at University College, London, England, Lewis Wolpert (also an octogenarian, p.3) has scaled down Shakespeare's familiar seven ages of man [and woman] and supplanted them with four ages of his own which, he asserts, covers the span of our lives on this planet. The first three listed by Wolpert are straight forward enough: childhood, active adulthood, and maturity. What he counts as the fourth age, he categorizes as: 'you're looking very well' (p.3).

This phrase also serves as the title of Wolpert's book in which he makes the point that old age is not easy to define. Ageing is a biological phenomenon, he says, which brings about physical changes in our appearance and causes our friends to remark for want of a better reaction: 'You're looking very well.' (pp.2-3)

As to the question: Why do we age? (p.6), Wolpert writes that we cannot discount the key roles which evolution and sex play in our understanding of why we age since 'evolution is concerned only with reproduction, so does not care if we age after having successfully reproduced.' But we might want to consider the phenomenon that ageing, in Wolpert's words, 'is not programmed in our genes like normal growth; on the contrary, there are genes which try to prevent it.' (p.6)

Wolpert reminds us that we have a propensity for living longer now aided by biology as well as advances in modern medicine which have given us vaccines and antibiotics, better sanitation systems, better nutrition, and altogether better life-styles which successfully prevent infectious and parasitic diseases causing premature deaths. However, there are problems encountered by the increase in age of the population at large and how to address these problems has become a global challenge. Wolpert notes that Age UK, the largest organization *continued on page 2...*



OF SPECIAL INTEREST

- Creative Aging Calgary Society 3rd Symposium ~ April 26, 2012
- Submissions to our newsletter are welcome! See page 4 for details.
- Watch for our next issue in March 2012!

Looking Well...

from page 1

focusing on later life in the United Kingdom, has set out five important areas to deal with it: money matters, well-being, care at home, work and education, and finally leisure. (p.219)

Wolpert asks: 'How long can we, and should we, live?' (p.115) Myths and legends about longevity and immortality have preoccupied humanity for a very long time. Biblical claims for extremely long lives abound: Adam lives for 930, Noah 950, and Methuselah 969 years. (p.117) However, as Wolpert also notes, the Bible, in Psalm 90, verse 10, also sets human lifespan at a more realistic level of threescore years and ten with the possibility of reaching 120 years as given in Genesis. (p.116)

The question of whether immortality (or even extreme longevity) would be a benefit to the human race or a disaster is debatable and not one to be glossed over. And even if we live greatly extended lives, Wolpert wonders 'whether our youthful looks [can] be maintained?' (p.144)

Efforts to hide and prevent ageing are by no means a modern obsession. To this end, in Ancient Egypt cosmetics were applied to face and eyes. Various herbs and plants and honey were used in devising anti-ageing treatments together with body oils which were used as moisturizers. Cleopatra went in for lactic acid skin peels so she would appear more beautiful. (p.144) Today, world-wide industries offer a whole range of creams and lotions and cosmetic surgeries promising the look of eternal youth and involving costs of billions of dollars. In spite of it all, Wolpert writes: '... there is as little real evidence for the benefits of agents that prevent facial ageing as there is for medical treatments.' (p.152) He sums it all up in the words of Lucille Ball: 'The secret to staying young is to live honestly, eat slowly, and lie about your age.' (p.155)

Of course, ageing really begins when we are quite young and, as Wolpert notes, there are few 40-year-old tennis champions (p.3). Since tennis is a sport I follow faithfully on television, it is a marvel to me (at my 85+ age) how nonchalant all these athletic, super-fit young men and women seem to be in the face of such a brief span of fame and fortune as championship tennis offers. What are their lives after "retirement" at 40 from professional tennis, I wonder? Because as Wolpert puts it: 'With mental activities, there is usually a much less dramatic decline with age than with physical activities.' (p.35)

How productive can the old still be, Wolpert asks? And he goes on to observe that '[p]oliticians can continue to be active until rather old, some might say too old.' (p.35) Scientists often do their best work when young but there are exceptions. (p.35) And many writers, painters, and sculptors retain their skills in old age and quite a number have produced their best works in the last fifteen years of a long life. (p.35) Yet there is no denying there are many physical and mental problems linked to old age and we need to look at how the old actually live. (p.49)

Nobody wants to be old and Wolpert thinks the most important question is: 'Can one *enjoy* old age?' (p.50) Ageing is much more than an innate physical process since it reflects patterns and choices made at individual and societal levels and, although research on ageing has expanded significantly, compared with certain other fields of medical research this topic is relatively neglected. But, as Wolpert urges: 'Please keep remembering that research world-wide has shown that we are least happy in our mid-forties and happiest in our late-seventies, and even older.' (pp.239-240)

Book Review by Esther Harris

At the onset of World War II on September 3rd, 1939, Esther Harris was, at age 13, evacuated from London along with 3 million other children from across the UK under the code name: Operation Pied Piper. Esther's article of the same name was published by The Calgary Herald, September 3, 2009. In 1955, Esther immigrated to Canada with her small daughter and her husband, a former RAF pilot, and continued her formal

... Save the Date

The Creative Aging Calgary Society presents the 3rd Creative Aging Calgary Symposium

Date: Thursday April 26, 2012
Location: Ross Glen Hall,
Mount Royal University, Calgary, AB

Keynote Speakers:

~Jeff Nachtigall~

Jeff Nachtigall earned his Bachelor of Fine Arts at the University of Regina in 1993 where he studied printmaking and sculpture. He employs an intuitive method of mark making; obsessively layering colour, line, and shape until a recognizable image appears. Nachtigall's subject matter is catapulted from the seeming chaos of the subconscious, to centre stage of the picture plane. The result is an engrossing and sometimes raucous ride down the back alleys of popular culture and contemporary art.

In 2006 Nachtigall developed an "Open Art Studio" model at Sherbrooke Community Centre, in Saskatoon, Sask. His innovative approach and philosophy has helped revolutionize the traditional clinical approach of art therapy and push the boundaries of art in health care. Nachtigall is the inventor of the Mobile Painting Device (MPD) which turns a power wheelchair into a giant paintbrush, giving people living with neurological deficits opportunity to express themselves on a very large scale. Nachtigall currently lives in Saskatoon. For further information visit www.sherbrookecommunitycentre.ca/main.php?id=3566.

Continued on next page ~ Save the Date

education in Canada, finishing with her Master's thesis from Concordia University, Montreal, 1968. In recent years Esther has been working on an extensive collection of poetry (as yet unpublished) entitled: All Things Considered, which can be read as a reflection of a busy life.

Lost and Found in Cyberspace: Subscriptions and RSS Feeds

My name is Sharon Wildwind, and I have a foot in both the creative and the aging camps. By day I am a certified geriatric nurse, working in long-term care. I am also a writer and artist. I have spent a lot of time on-line, much of it lost in cyberspace. Not lost as in 'truly engaged', although sometimes I am. More lost in terms of 'what the heck am I doing here? How did I get here, and lacking a pair of ruby slippers, how am I going to get home again?'

One goal I set for myself this year was to learn how to use the Internet more effectively. This month I've written an introduction to subscriptions and RSS feeds, both features which can bring information to you from the Internet rather than you having to look for that information yourself.

I was wasting a lot of time checking sites or blogs daily, especially when some of the individuals and groups that interested me posted new material every day, while other people posted only once a month or on no schedule at all. Then I discovered RSS readers and subscriptions. Now new content comes to me as soon as it's posted instead of me having to go look for the content.

The Internet resources in the spotlight for this issue of *Creative Expressions* are:

- **Human Values in Aging Newsletter**
Topics: late-life creativity, spirituality, lifelong learning, and humanistic gerontology. Includes book reviews and links to conferences on these topics, as well as short inspirational pieces.
- **The Hartford Institute for Geriatric Nursing**
Topics: practice, research, education, and advocacy information related to geriatric nursing. The ConsultGerRN site contains self-study learning modules for geriatric nursing, including the Try This:® Assessment Tool Series: practical tools for geriatric assessment, and how to use those tools.
- **Pilgrim's Moon**
Topics: In the founder's own words: "Growing older on our own terms. A counterculture path for women." Thoughts and musings about the value of finding our own path.
- **Advanced Style**
Topics: A photo blog created by photographer Ari Seth Cohen in New York City, where he roams the city streets taking pictures of older people dressing well and being proud of who they are.
For a further discussion on RSS readers and subscriptions and information on how to link to the four resources that I've found very helpful, go to www.creativeagingcalgary.ca/WildwindRSSFeeds.pdf. If you ever find yourself lost on the Internet as well and either have questions or would like to suggest a

Cont'd from Save the Date! Creative Aging Calgary Symposium on page 2

-David Dworkin-

David Dworkin is a graduate of the Julliard School and Columbia University. He began his career as a clarinetist, serving as principal clarinetist for the American Symphony Orchestra. Later he was a maestro for orchestras across North America and abroad.

In his early career, he was devoted to working with young people. After "retirement" he reflected on the fact that he always felt energized after conducting, and noted that waving his arms and creating motion to music was a workout. So he built a fitness program, called Conductorcize™, around the high energy and intensity of classical music. Currently in his 80s, David continues to lead Conductorcize™ classes and share his passion with people of all ages. For more information about David Dworkin, visit www.conductorcise.com/maestro.html.

Concurrent Sessions

Workshops & Creative Expression Showcase will also be offered.

Details have been posted on www.creativeagingcalgary.ca. Registration opens January 26!

topic I might discuss, please contact me at cml@wildwindauthor.com.

Thanks and happy surfing, Sharon

Terminology Explained

- *RSS: Really Simple Syndication*
- *RSS reader: a way to have information come to you on the web*
- *Subscriptions: a way to get electronic newsletters*

Blogs (from the phrase web logs)	Electronic newsletters
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Published frequently; may or may not be on a set schedule • Each blog focuses on one topic • Promote two-way communication through comments and discussion • Use Internet links such as reposting, liking, and tweeting to encourage an ever-widening group of people to comment or join in the discussion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Usually published once a month or once a quarter • Transmit information in articles and time-sensitive announcements related to upcoming conventions or meetings • Mostly one-way transmission from the editor to the reader • Sent to a mailing list of people who have asked for the newsletter

Classifieds

See page 4 for information on classified advertising.



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Strategic Priorities**Advocacy**

Enhance awareness of participatory arts and aging programs with a variety of stakeholders

Practice

Foster connections between older adults, artists, professionals and interested community members

Research

Clearly communicate cutting-edge research specific to arts participation

Education

Share information about local arts-based programs and opportunities for learning

Governance

Generate an effective Board with membership that reflects our diverse community

Membership Info

Memberships are available at no charge online:
www.creativeagingcalgary.ca.

Members receive event and information updates as well as quarterly newsletters.

Volunteer Here

The Creative Aging Calgary Society is relatively new group and is seeking volunteers to help with our various committees. Please contact: info@creativeagingcalgary.ca for more information related to *Education & Programming, Communications, Membership, Sponsorship & Funding, Marketing & Promotion or Research*.

Submissions Welcome

Articles, book reviews, event and special interest items related to Creative Aging are all welcome. Please contact the editor at editor@creativeagingcalgary.ca for more information. Next issue: March 2012. Submission deadline February 15, 2012.

Your Business Ad Here

Business ads are welcome. Special introductory rate available: \$10/issue for 40 words (first ad free for members). Graphic ads, 1/8 page size, also welcome for \$75 per issue (members receive 20% discount). Please contact the editor at editor@creativeagingcalgary.ca.

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