

When your pink triangle has gray roots: the pros and cons of aging gay

by Art Greenwald
Special to Q-Notes

Someone somewhere once snidely suggested that the only sadder state than an aging homosexual is an "old queen without money."

Well, arguably. But the notion of the senior gay male as a tragic, lost and discarded soul given to digging deeper into his pockets for love and company comes rather overstated. Attitudes are a' changing and with gayby boomers graying at rapid rates, growing old and gay may not be as forlorn a prospect as you may have once feared.

Still, in a visually fixated culture in which value is narrowly defined by looks, many older gay males find themselves huffing, puffing and grunting overtime at the gym, recklessly dieting and relying on gimmicky, pricey cosmetics or risky surgery. Some, however, yield to more realistic images over the vigorous de-

mands required to compete with youth.

While nature claims no exemptions for sexual orientation, studies show that gay men after 50 have a tougher time dealing with aging than straight, single men. Though there's more sex availability for gay males, they don't date as often nor attain as much satisfying intimacy. And, unlike gay men, who seem allergic to those of similar ages, older straight males report less qualms in connecting with 50-something women and beyond. Also, according to the studies, the average straight woman would marry or date an "arthritic, balding man with a pot belly, narrow shoulders and varicose veins, providing he was "kind, caring and made her laugh," a laughable tradeoff few gay males appear eager to test.

No doubt, there are the obvious downsides to growing older, gay or straight, but you cannot ignore the pluses, white and nodadic nose hairs not withstanding. Unlike myself — and

I suspect most of you reading this — some wisely favor a calm acceptance of the aging process, armed with a fitting, though crass response to nature's unwelcome assault on our bodies: "If you're about to be...well... you know, then why not just lay back and enjoy it?" Here are the pros and cons of aging gay:

PRO: Acquired wisdom, insight, experience and prospective. You now see the bigger picture.

CON: You cannot see as well as you used to and the bigger picture looks bleaker every year.

PRO: You can draw on rich memories to help you past the hard times.

CON: You are having trouble remembering.

PRO: You know with certainty that whatever you achieve will be through sheer blood, sweat and tears.

CON: It really sucks no longer being able to trade off on your youth.

PRO: You can regale upstart gays with stories about the 'good ol' days when being gay was exciting, daring and mysterious. You were part of a unique and forbidden underground society.

CON: No one cares.

PRO: If you've acquired a hearty savings over the years, you can indulge your want to date 18-20 something guys.

CON: The price keeps rising and there are no senior discounts given.

PRO: You can attend senior gay groups at your local GLBT community center, where you'll meet some great, gregarious guys and enjoy camaraderie and commonalities.

CON: Ultimately it will degenerate into a cranky, bitter, bitch session about "the way we were."

PRO: Young gays will address you as sir, a surefire sign of respect and reverence.

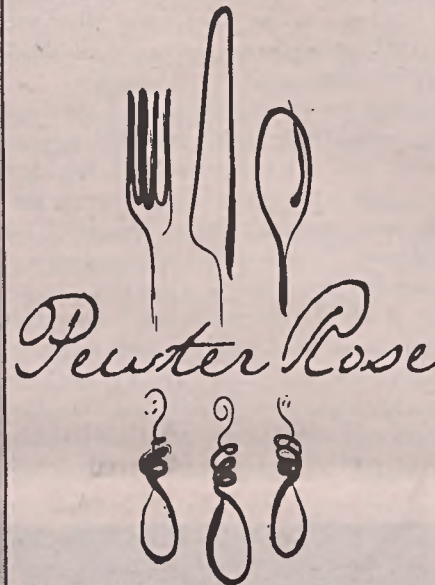
CON: They'll also refer to you as "John"
See TRIANGLE on next page

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