

Ginny and Greta, who are choosing carefully, taking on consignment on a 50-50 basis, and hoping for good and known brands. (We saw a barely worn pair of John Meyer pants for \$10, which gives you an idea of how it works.)

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Who's that guy in the supermarket who knows with a flick of his calculator brain which of those nine sizes and colors of pickles is the best bargain? It's the retired man, whose meanderings in a grocery store have been few, but whose financial decision making has been, until this moment, on a far heavier level.

PKS is home to many retired people, and to quite a few middle agers\* as well. We recently bee-lined to the library for some material on manifestations of and treatment for the "disease".

We found that, first of all, women, as a rule, have the easier adjustment to make, since the change isn't as traumatic for them. You kind of knew that, didn't you? Their patience with their men is the biggest challenge.

And women agonize and groan anyway about what bugs them, while men often retain pretentiousness in an effort to cover discontent or insecure feelings. Experts suggest they would feel better if they could admit to themselves and to each other from time to time that they're bored or grumpy or cross with their wives, or really missing their old jobs.

We got thinking: boy, are we lucky if we can learn that taking ourselves seriously isn't nearly as important as taking someone else seriously and letting him know it. Or that laughing at ourselves can be a splendid and refreshing release from tension. Like not being ashamed to tell somebody that last time you took the dog for a run, you got half way down the front walk before you discovered all you had with you was his leash. Or - like one friend with fast failing memory syndrome calling another, with similar symptoms, upon her return from a journey abroad: "Quick!" cried the first, "tell me all about your trip before you forget!"

And we're smart if we stop wanting to be identified with what we did or do, and concentrate on what we are. We'll like ourselves more if we forget the old power struggle and sink our energies into repairing deck railings and cracking crabs, while shrugging off regrets about things we never did or got. One beautiful PKS day at a time, folks. Sure, we fear ~~death~~, we fear loneliness, we fear helplessness, but fear doesn't stop those things from zooming down on us, so it behooves us to zero in on living and enjoying each other while we can, not allowing ourselves to become preoccupied with pettiness or to wallow in malfunctionings of our bodies.

And you know what else? We can defy tradition and find it not as painful as we had suspected: we can try spending Christmas in Malaga, or take a shower in the late afternoon instead of in the morning, or put water chestnuts in our turkey dressing even if Grandma never did. If we can let changes into our lives gradually and gracefully, we won't be as hurt by them as the guys who insist on trying to maintain rigid control of everything around them. The classic example is the people who go to Europe for the first time when they're 65 and discover they can't sleep anywhere but home or eat anything but steak and fries, and are miserable on lumpy pension beds, trying to digest osso bucco.

The other day Ruth Gordon, outstanding Broadway actress just turned 80, was heard to say she figured one way to stay popular though aging was "don't tell anyone your troubles!" Kind of a cute new way of accentuating the positive!

Plenty of stuff to read on middle-to-late folks can be found at the Carteret County Library. Three books we were pleased with were:

The Wonderful Crisis of Middle Age by Eda LeShan  
Threshold: The First Days of Retirement by Alan H. Olmstead  
Retire to Action: A Guide to Voluntary Service by Julietta K. Arthur

You younger readers can file the preceding paragraphs under "W" for wastebasket, or maybe save them to read when they're yellow and you're mellow.

\*Of the 312 registered voters, perhaps about 200 are over fifty. Make up your own minds about where middle age begins!