

## Growing Old

As we baby boomers get older, nothing smacks us in the face more than our own mortality. Getting older is no fun! As part of the aging process, we deal with our own aches and pains, but there is nothing like caring for an elderly parent to make you pause and think. Recently, I was taking care of my 73 year-old mother after knee replacement. As I sat in the hospital for nearly a week, then the rehab facility for 5-6 hours a day, I couldn't help but notice all the people around me. There was the ancient man across the hall that never woke up, and the ladies who didn't know where they were, all these once vibrant people now living out there lives day by day.

Some had no visitors for days, nurses feeding them, bathing them and changing them. It was downright scary! I looked around my mom's room and all I saw was one small dresser and a tiny closet, I began to think about my possessions. If this was my final destination, where would all my collectables go? The irony is those "things" you work so hard for don't matter, they won't keep you company or give you comfort and they wouldn't even fit in the tiny little drawers of the dresser.

I know my Mom was glad to have us all there, my sister and brothers too. We gathered around to encourage her recovery. She is doing great and was released to go home. The reality is we all grow old, our body parts give out and our health fails. We can only hope that we live a healthy, happy life surrounded by people we love and who love us. That is the kind of "stuff" we should accumulate and won't take up space in the tiny drawers.

More importantly, when we encounter older people, we should treat them with the respect and compassion they deserve. They were

young once and made many contributions along the way and should be treated with dignity.

One day, we will all go down this path. I like to think that karma will run its course and the people I cared for will visit me. I hope the love that I tried to give to others throughout my life will come back to me when I get to that small room with the single bed and one dresser.