

Human Values in Aging Newsletter – July 1, 2009

AARP Office of Academic Affairs
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OBAMA MEETS PURPOSE PRIZE WINNERS

On June 30, President Barack Obama met at the White House with winners of the Purpose Prize, the award from Civic Ventures given to outstanding individuals over the age of 60 who are taking on challenges to make society better. The half-dozen Purpose Prize winners who met with Mr. Obama are social innovators engaged in "encore careers" offering solutions to problems ranging from rural poverty to infant mortality and environmental protection.

For more on Civic Ventures and the Purpose Prize, visit:
<http://msg1svc.net/cdafp/185269/64/50738/5401/0/T/vgjd.html>

THE ASTONISHMENT OF AGE

When my friend's mother developed dementia, he was discouraged that each day she seemed to be losing so much.

Then he remembered a saying from Taoism: In the way of learning, each day we gain more and more. In the way of the Tao, each day we have less and less.

So often we go through life, hoping that enlightenment is "right around the corner." Somehow, like a mirage on the horizon, the future recedes and remains out of our grasp.

Or do we perhaps have the wrong idea about what spiritual "progress" might mean in the first place? Is the goal to become enlightened or to accept a truth about our own "clouding?"

Toward the end of a long life, in his eighties, Carl Jung wrote in the final words of his autobiography, MEMORIES, DREAMS, REFLECTIONS, where he invokes the founder of Taoism:

"I am astonished, disappointed, pleased with myself. I am distressed, depressed, rapturous. I am all these things at once, and cannot add up the sum. I am incapable of determining ultimate worth or worthlessness; I have no judgement about myself and my life. There is nothing I am quite sure about... When Lao-Tzu says 'All are clear, I alone am clouded,' he is expressing what I now feel in advanced old age..."

Perhaps we all need more astonishment at everyday life.

Remember the saying of the architect LeCorbusier: "Less is more?"

Jung's autobiography (edited by Aniela Jaffe), MEMORIES, DREAMS, REFLECTIONS (Random House, 1965) is available in many editions.

On the many-sided aspects of Jung and his influence, see also:

<http://msg1svc.net/cdafp/185269/65/50738/5402/0/T/vgid.html>

WHAT'S YOUR QUESTION?

A wise Rabbi used to tell his followers they needed to find the answer to all their questions within themselves, not from him.

But his followers would never accept this message, so they always came back with more questions for him.

Finally, he set up a booth with a sign on it: "Any Two Questions Answered for \$ 100."

Before long one of his wealthiest followers came along and decided to ask two important questions. He paid his money and asked the Rabbi, "Isn't \$ 100 a lot of money for only two questions?"

"Yes," replied the Rabbi. And what is your second question?"

For more teaching stories, see STORIES OF THE SPIRIT, STORIES OF THE HEART: Parables of the Spiritual Path from Around the World, edited by Christina Feldman and Jack Kornfeld (HarperSanFrancisco, 1991).

THIRD ANNUAL POSITIVE AGING CONFERENCE

The Third Annual Positive Aging Conference will be held Dec. 7-9, 2009 at Eckerd College in St. Petersburg, Florida.

Conference themes include: Life Transitions, Holistic Health Care, Building Community, and Artistic Creativity.

For details about the Positive Aging Conference and how to participate or submit proposals for sessions at the event, visit:

<http://msg1svc.net/cdafp/185269/66/50738/5403/0/T/vgjd.html>

CELEBRATING POETS OVER 70: Call for Poems

Tower Poetry Society and the McMaster Centre for Gerontological Studies are soliciting poems written after the age of 70. Selected poems will be published in a jointly sponsored anthology. "Celebrating Poets over 70" will be the tenth volume in the Writing Down Our Years series published by MCGS.

A maximum of four typed poems may be submitted. Send poems and a 50-word biography by email to Ellen Ryan (ryaneb@mcmaster.ca) or by mail to: "Celebrating Poets over 70," Tower Poetry Society, c/o McMaster University, 1280 Main St. W., Box 1021, Hamilton, Ontario L8S 1C0.

Individuals with poems selected will receive a free copy of the anthology. Due date is November 15, 2009.

BOOKS OF INTEREST

GLORIOUS ADVENTURE, by Carter Catlett Williams (Pioneer Network in Culture Change, 2008). Recommended by Gene Cohen and Bill Thomas. For details, visit: <http://msg1svc.net/cdafp/185269/67/50738/5404/0/T/vgjd.html>

VALUING OLDER PEOPLE, edited by Ricca Edmondson and Hans-Joachim Kondratowitz (Policy Press, 2009). For details, visit: <http://msg1svc.net/cdafp/185269/68/50738/5405/0/T/vgjd.html>

ELDERWOMAN: Reap the Wisdom, Feel the Power, Embrace the Joy, by Marian Van Eyk McCain (Findhorn Press, 2002). For details, visit: <http://msg1svc.net/cdafp/185269/69/50738/5406/0/T/vgjd.html>

WEB SITES TO SEE

WHAT MAKES US HAPPY? For an answer, based on the Harvard Grant Study of lifespan development, read the article in the June, 2009 issue of the Atlantic Monthly at: <http://msg1svc.net/cdaftp/185269/70/50738/5407/0/T/vgjd.html>

WHAT IS THE GOOD LIFE? For an answer look to the stories we tell ourselves through "Entangled Narratives: Competing Visions of the Good Life" available at: <http://msg1svc.net/cdaftp/185269/71/50738/5408/0/T/vgjd.html>

PURPOSE IN LIFE. "Finding Meaning and Purpose in the Second Half of Life" is the theme of the July issue of "Itineraries," the publication of Second Journey. To read all about it, visit: <http://msg1svc.net/cdaftp/185269/72/50738/5409/0/T/vgjd.html>

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

JOURNALING IN WILDERNESS: Elderhostel Program (June 28 - July 3, 2009). Elderhostel is offering "Write for Life," a week-long exploration of journaling, including dimensions of self-care and Native American spirituality, in the setting of Yosemite National Park. For details visit: <http://msg1svc.net/cdaftp/185269/64/50738/5410/0/T/vgjd.html>

INTERNATIONAL AGING: 19th IAGG World Congress of Gerontology and Geriatrics (July 5-10, 2009, Paris, France). <http://msg1svc.net/cdaftp/185269/65/50738/5411/0/T/vgjd.html>

GENERATIONS UNITED Conference (July 27-31, 2009, Washington, DC). Generations United's 15th International Conference, "Because We're Stronger Together" is held at the Hyatt Regency Washington on Capitol Hill. For details visit: <http://msg1svc.net/cdaftp/185269/66/50738/5412/0/T/vgjd.html>

POSITIVE AGING: (July 13-17, 2009, Cape Cod, MA). The Cape Cod Institute and Robert Hill present "Positive Aging: A 21st Century Approach for Transforming the Challenges of Old Age." For details visit: <http://msg1svc.net/cdaftp/185269/67/50738/5413/0/T/vgjd.html>

CONSCIOUS AGING: Forgiveness. (July 29, 2009, Seattle, WA). "I Forgive, I forgive, I forgive" is Part 3 of the Conscious Aging Workshop Series sponsored by Elderwise at 1820 E Pine St, Suite 201, Seattle WA 98122. Workshop is facilitated by Sandy Sabersky, Director of Elderwise and a Certified Sage-ing Leader. For details, call (206) 325-0471.

