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Java Talk
(for July 5 to July 11, 2007)

Every Age Is The Best Age

Great Expectations

In my opinion, identifying ourselves by our ages tends to limit the possibilities about who we really are. For example, there are charts describing chronological stages. These might be useful in some ways, perhaps helping us understand each other and the changes we might go through. We check these, to see how we should be, too, even though they are based on limited experiences and opinions that still suggest there isn't much to expect beyond our eighties!

In Canada, the average life expectancy is around 83 years. In early Victorian Canada, circa 1867, life expectancy was around 40 years, but this was a skewed figure because of the high infant death rates (one in five children died before their first birthday), so not including them, the average was supposedly nearer 60 years of age.

Language is always changing and today's ideas are often being clarified. Nowadays, because expectations are being exceeded, anyone who used to be considered old is now more likely to be described as "old", with punctuation marks indicating the inappropriateness of the term. In one article, Stats Canada describes "younger seniors, 65 to 74 years, versus their counterparts, who are 85 and over." Today, 60 is described as the new 40; and where the old charts would have these people retiring, they are becoming more likely to start a new career, head off to university, or even prepare for parenthood, even for the first time, with their "counterparts" leading the way to do even greater things.

As for myself, I prefer to keep my birth date a secret, as much as possible. Some time ago, I received the following note: "Happy Birthday yesterday, or is it still coming? Let me know. OK?" I answered that I hoped it was still coming; and that when I reached 120 years, I'd let her know the day.

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