“Gray Hair and Silver Linings” was an editorial by Frank Bruni published in The New York Times on Sunday, November 9, 2014. As my hair is silver and my 65th birthday is in the rear view mirror, I read this article with great interest and downloaded it for future reference.

The author recounted a “wake-up” episode he experienced in the waiting room of a dermatologic surgeon anticipating the removal of his skin cancer. While awaiting his turn, he took the time to observe the other patients in the waiting room who were reminiscing about their skin cancer scars that they attributed to too much tennis and golf. This experience caused the author to become introspective and reminisce about his own physical and emotional aging. He juxtaposed his “lost ambitions” and “lost margins for error” to the gains in perspective he gained with aging. Age causes some of us to expect less of others and ourselves. It is a time when many of us have developed a more mature perspective and try to overlook flaws, pettiness, and disappointments while stressing pleasures and successes.

What does this have to do with the WDS and Dermatology besides the fact that the article was written after a visit to the dermatologic surgeon?

The WDS is an organization dedicated to mentoring and helping its members become and remain successful. I know of no other organization whose motives are as pure and transparent. Within the inner workings of the WDS which I have been privileged to experience as a past Board member, I did not witness any pettiness, disrespect, or competition. The women and men I observed on the board were all about supporting the membership, providing mentoring experiences, and supporting research as well as educational and community events. I have been impressed that despite the relative youth of the WDS (“born” in 1973 and therefore only 43 years old and not yet eligible for senior citizenship) these lessons did not have to be learned but were innate and have been part of the core WDS mission since its inception.

In Dermatology, we deal with aging of the skin, hair and nails. Some patients have little tolerance to these normal physiologic changes we all must endure if we are lucky enough to grow old. For some of these patients, their lack of tolerance for the aging process needs to be balanced with an appreciation for all the good that comes with age. Although many of us suffer from regret for mistakes of our youth, silly misunderstandings with friends and relatives, words of love and caring not said to those who are no longer with us, and even squandered opportunities, aging affords most of us a perspective that causes us to enjoy every day joys. Our Town, a play by Thornton Wilder puts this on display in the last act of his play. Emily, a key character, has died and is being buried. She is given the opportunity to relive part of one day in her life despite being advised not to do so by the other souls in the cemetery. Emily revisits the morning of her 12th birthday and observes the scene. For the first time she notes her parents’ youth and the beauty of her family as well as the transience of everyday family life. Emily appreciates the mundane everyday life which she failed to do at the time.

In conclusion, bravo to the WDS for its inherent maturity despite its youth. And next time we are injecting fillers and muscle relaxants, we should try to talk to our patients about the positive aspects of “maturing” rather than just treating the wrinkles.

Jane M. Grant-Kels, M.D.
Co-Editor IJWD

http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.ijwd.2016.08.001
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