

The Bathroom Reader

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“Outside of a dog, a book is man’s best friend. Inside of a dog it’s too dark to dark to read.”

Groucho Marx

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Reuben Dahvid**

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Welcome To Your First Medicare Physical

(And other annoying aspects of the next half century of life.)

All the women I spent my lascivious teens daydreaming about are now sexagenarians. What the hell happened?

It happens to us all. The year's progress and before we realize what has happen the passage of time has placed us in a new designation: Senior Citizen.

Remember your first annual physical after you reached the age of fifty? You thought it would be routine like all the ones you've had year after year. It's was not. You feel fine though, except for the requisite forty-five minute wait past your appointment time and your butt falling asleep. When you finally get in to see the doc you might mention a slight ache or itch or bump or some other minor change in your appearance that you've recently noticed.

The response from your GP is, "Well, you're over fifty now. These are natural occurrences for your age. Your body is changing."

Is he (or she) serious! That's all they've got? I have a master's degree in aerospace engineering that says my comprehension is well beyond the middle school level. Even someone who barely escaped high school with a diploma can recognize condescending medical speak when they hear it. That's what you get, though, condescending medical BS that tells you what you already know. You're getting older. A human physiological phenomenon that begins from the day you're born. It's unavoidable and the alternative is unacceptable.

When you hit your mid-sixties you are eligible for the "Welcome to Medicare Physical." That's the actual title used by the government. They want you to know that, even though they have been siphoning

funds from your paycheck for years under the guise of Medicare Deductions, this one is free of any charges. Just this visit, however, so get yourself a Medicare Supplement policy; the premium of which is on you. What a treat!

Prior to my first (and last) free physical, because of my age, I found myself in a medical insurance no-man's-land. Kinky Friedman said it best; "I'm too young for Medicare and too old for women to care."

The day finally arrived for that one doctor's appointment that surreptitiously moved me into the "older generation" category. This is a distinction as nebulous as elder, senior, and a host of other misnomer groupings. It's not middle-age but it's not geriatrics either. Let's call it the Early Bird Special Zone.

An attractive young woman from the doctor's staff called my name and led me to the inner sanctum. A labyrinth of small exam rooms on either side of a large hallway. We stop and I am asked to step onto a scale so she can record my weight and height. She speaks softly and smiles as she looks at me. *I'm still a charmer, there is no doubt*, I thought.

Then she said, "How are you today honey?"

Now I know I've still got it. She called me honey. I mean can joint checking be far off, really? She led me to one of the exam rooms and told me to take a seat. "I'll return shortly," she said and left with a smile and a wink to retrieve the doctor.

I could hear her in the hallway greeting another patient as they passed each other, "Good morning honey, how are you today, she said?"

"I'm fine thank you Louise darlin'," the man said, "and how are you?"

She called him honey! He called her darlin'. He knows her name!

It's over between us. Come to think of it she might have been a little too young for me. I've got socks older than her. Oh well, back to reality.

A tech enters the exam room (not Louise). The doctor has yet to make an appearance. "May I ask you a few questions?" She inquires.

"Sure," I answer, thinking they will be the same questions I've been asked annually for twenty years. They are not.

At this point, and in the ensuing years, the questionnaire will come from software companies who take directions from Medicare bureaucrats. Your personal physician is required to ask these questions and submit them with your health report in order to get paid. It's not their fault. They would just as soon not have to complete the mounds of paperwork and required electronic transmissions. This is the flow and you're expected to go with it.

The questions are tailored to post-sixty patients. They are, for the most part, irrelevant, inconsequential and downright insulting. I group these timewasters under the heading of *Old Fart Questions*.

Example 1: "Who is the current President of the United States?"

My response: "Next question."

Example 2: The tech says, "I am going to name four colors, then ask another question and go back to the four colors and you will repeat them to me."

To which I reply, "I don't think so."

Example 3: By now the tech's frustration meter is in the red zone. "Do you feel hostility toward anyone?" She asks.

To which I respond smiling, "Oh no, not even the mouth breathers who formulated this questionnaire."

If you reply to questions you feel are blatantly inappropriate and unsuitable, in this manner, there is a high degree of probability you won't hear them again.

Patients in a younger age group receive an entirely different and innocuous set of annual inquiries. Their day will come. It always does.

Conclusion:

What happened to my heartthrobs? They did get older but they're still beautiful and my heart still beats a little faster when I see them.

Thank you ladies for yesterday's daydreams and today's memories.

To all of you, women and men, approaching the "Welcome to Medicare Physical," you no longer have to "go with the flow."

You are the flow.

END

