



Sunday, 13 March 2022

Staying Young Part 1

On Sundays, we generally have a Jack Benny-related post. This one is only tangentially involving him and it's split into two parts because of its length.

This appeared in newspapers in August 1974, four months before Jack died. It talks about aging, society and attitude. Jack is briefly quoted in both parts. At the time, he had no idea cancer was killing his pancreas. The age-busting opinions in the story would not have done anything about it.

Ageless stars think young

This is the first of two articles on The Power of Egoeotric Thinking — How the Stars Stay Young

By MARILYN BECK

By Gannett News Service

HOLLYWOOD — They seem to stay younger than Springtime, as ageless as a painting by Gainsborough, or a Michelangelo sculpture.

It's plastic surgery, you say?

Yes, frequently. But it's more than that. And it's that "more" which provides classic textbook examples of mind over matter — the power of egocentric thinking. That scores of filmland septuagenarians and octogenarians don't look their age is one thing. That they don't act or feel their age is quite another.

True, cosmetic surgery flourishes in Southern California. But surface appearances don't count for much — not where it matters.

The awesome fact is that underneath the facelifts and beneath the hair transplants are minds and bodies that refuse to grow old.

The show business capital is alive with patriarchal and matriarchal figures whose vitality — and sensuality — belie their chronological years.

For some of them it's a childlike refusal to accept that the aging process which besets others will ever beset them. And how easy it is for them to feel that way: the aging comedians encouraged by audience approval to play onstage and on-camera Lotharios to ingenue co-stars; the faded actresses who begin to believe retouched 8x10 glossies are accurate mirror images, that newspaper articles and studio biographies describing them as "young" and "beautiful" are no more than honest.

"You say something often enough and you begin to believe it," says Jack Benny, who's been saying he's 39 for the past 40 years. The record books list the ageless comedian as 80, but in his heart he stopped getting older when he reached what he considers the maximum time of youth. He walks a little slower now and uses a hearing aid. but his wit and his mind are as sharp as ever, and he continues to thrive under a heavy concert and television appearance schedule.

"I actually do feel I'm 29 years old — and that feeling is what's kept me young," he says.

Gloria Swanson not only doesn't feel her age — she doesn't believe it.

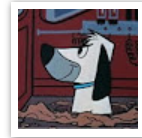
She describes her life: "The most active of anyone's I know — a five-ring circus, with always something going on." She still accepts acting assignments and speaking engagements, oversees a lucrative clothing business, and is constantly on the go from her Palm Springs home to her Manhattan apartment to her villa in Portugal. "I feel young. In my heart I am young" she says.

Pat Collins, who bills herself as hypnotist to the stars, so firmly believes that filmland personalities have found the secret to continuing youth, she exhorts students to follow the star's examples.

"Tell your body it is young," she instructs students under her hypnotic influence. "Concentrate on thinking young — as the stars do. Will your face to be wrinkle-free, your organs to be young again."

The walls of Ms. Collins' Sunset Strip Celebrity Club are lined with blown-up portraits of personalities who have taken part in her sessions. She tells the story of one middle-aged woman who took the youngagain instructions so literally that her monthly menstrual cycle began anew — several years after she had gone

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through the menopause.

Geriatricians don't scoff at the mind-over-matter theory. Helen Hayes maintains a hectic pace.

After all, they've been telling us for years that we're only as young as we feel. And nowhere more than in Hollywood are there more illustrious examples of how effectively the theory works.

Gloria Swanson was 74 years old when she undertook a demanding tango number last year for a guest shot on the Carol Burnett Show. According to choreographer Ernest Flatt: "She was absolutely incredible. She never let up during five long days of grueling rehearsals. Her strength and stamina never wavered."

Cary Grant is 70. He not only doesn't look it, he doesn't act it. Just ask any of the young n' lovely lasses he dates. Just ask Maureen Donaldson, the 20's writer with whom Cary is currently involved. Just ask Grant himself his virility is a source of soaring pride.

Bob Hope turned 71 on May 29. He spent the day as he spends most of his days — rushing between airports for flights that would take him on a round of charity and concert appearances.

I've seen Hope put in a 16-18 hour work day and never show the strain, while those around him — a fraction of his age — were ready to collapse from the pace and the pressure.



JACK BENNY over 30 years. Little change in appearance; none in attitude

The list goes on and on, those filmland famed ones in their twilight years who are advanced in age, but active as youngsters — and children at heart.

Mae West is 82, and still hands out invitations to "Come up and see me sometime." Marlene Dietrich is 69, and continues to show off her famed "gorgeous gams" to concert audiences. John Wayne is 67, and hops off his trusty steed just in time to plan pre-production for his next cinema adventure. Groucho Marx is 83, and though he looks it, he manages to keep up with the social-professional pace set for him by Erin Fleming, his in-her-30s secretary manager/girlfriend/companion.

James Stewart, at age 66, still pilots his own racy Supercub airplane. George Burns, at 78, recently completed a one-man show at Los Angeles' Shubert Theatre. Henry Fonda, 69, continues with the gruelling grind of his one-man "Clarence Darrow" stage engagements — in spite of a pacemaker implanted in his chest following a collapse this spring.

Lawrence Welk, at 71, looks like a man in his 50's, and shows no signs of setting aside his baton — or giving up his popular syndicated variety show. And Helen' Hayes, 73, retired as First Lady of the American theatre only to set about a dazzling course in moviemaking, book authoring, starring in a television series, and making endless rounds of personal appearances. Last year, as a respite from the grind, she took time off for an adventure vacation which included hikes through the African jungle.

Miss Hayes has her own theory as to why she — and so many of her colleagues — have been able to thwart the passing of time.

"When you are on stage or screen portraying someone else," she analyses. "You can forget who you are — and how old you are. You're stepping out of your own skin for that period of time and I sincerely believe actors and actresses save themselves many years in that manner."

Perhaps it is as simple as that.

Perhaps that's why Cary Grant, at age 61, felt qualified to marry actress Dyan Cannon who was then 25 years old. At approximately the same time in his life, Grant was playing leading man to 26-year-old Samantha Eggar in Walk Don't Run. If he could run through such a portrayal why shouldn't he feel fit to walk into a real-life involvement with an in-her-20s beauty.

Certainly show business personalities abide in a society where the rules and order are unique. Where it's considered proper for men to romance — to marry — women young enough to be their granddaughters. Where it's considered chic for women to carry on affairs with men young enough to be their sons.

"I never think of age," Dinah Shore says. "I'm always surprised, in fact, to be reminded of it in print."

Dinah is going into her third year of a modern relationship with 37-year-old Burt Reynolds. Both insist their age difference has never been a factor between them.

"I'll read something about myself," says the youthful-acting, youthful-looking Dinah, "and think, 'Hey, can

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that be me?' I'm having more fun out of life than I did 10 years ago."

Indeed she is, as are scores of other Hollywood still-lovelies who believe age is a relative thing — and that they are only distantly related to the almanac figures listing their dates of birth.

Kaye Stevens commenced her love affair with Salinas, California, disk jockey, Sam "Johnny Kansas" Warner Hiatt, when he was 21 and she a decade older. Five years later, the romance — and Sam and Kaye — are still going strong.

June Allyson had stored up quite a few complaints against Glenn Maxwell by the time they divorced in 1964. But one" thing both agreed had never bothered them during their marriage was the fact Maxwell was eight years June's junior.

During the lengthy period June Lockhart was involved with pop singer Bob Corff, she taught him that, "My main thing is being a woman. That's all that matters." Ms. Lockhart was then 45 years old, Corff 23. She had convinced herself — and obviously her swain — that, "People are realizing older women who are active and involved can be interesting."

Interesting, certainly, is the relationship of 65-year-old Merle Oberon and 38-year-old Robert Wolders. The former film queen met the latest love of her life when she selected him as leading man for Interval (a film study of an older woman who falls for a young buck). Now, after a three-year period of nearly constant togetherness to test their compatibility, they are planning to become man and wife.

A May-September marriage has worked out handsomely for 78-year-old Ruth Gordon, and her distinguished 62-year-old playwright/husband, Garson Kanin. They'll be celebrating their 32nd anniversary this year and, according to "Garson, "Have never thought about the difference in our ages."

Age simply doesn't exist for many of them: for Polly Bergen, 43, who has recently become involved with a much younger man and who believes, "You're only as old as you feel — and I feel young;"; for Bing Crosby, 70, who has been married for 17 years to the former Kathryn Brandstaff, 30 years his junior; for Dean Martin, now married to a woman the same age as his eldest daughter.

You watch them in action and you've got to believe there's something to the theory that one is only as old as one feels . . . when you see sexagenarian swains romancing young starlets at Filmland restaurants . . . when you watch people old enough for old folks' homes live it up at late-night parties, guzzle booze with the gusto of someone who's just turned legal age, whiz down ski slopes or race around tennis courts with the strength and stamina of college athletes.

George Burns says he doesn't know how it is with his cronies, but with him the secret's simple: "I'm rich," he drawls. "I've hired someone to wrinkle for me." George is kidding. It's actually not quite as simple as that. Marlene Dietrich, Jack Benny, Bob Hope and George Burns play the concert stage while others their age play checkers.

Robert Young, Buddy Ebsen and Jimmy Stewart have been playing television heroes (working 12-14 hour days) at a time of life when many men are playing shuffle board. Lucille Ball, Gale Sondergaard, Molly Picon and Helen Hayes happily enlist for gruelling work assignments while most women their age do nothing more strenuous than babysit with grandchildren, — or great-grandchildren.

See part two [by clicking here](#).

Posted by [Yowp](#) at [07:20](#)



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