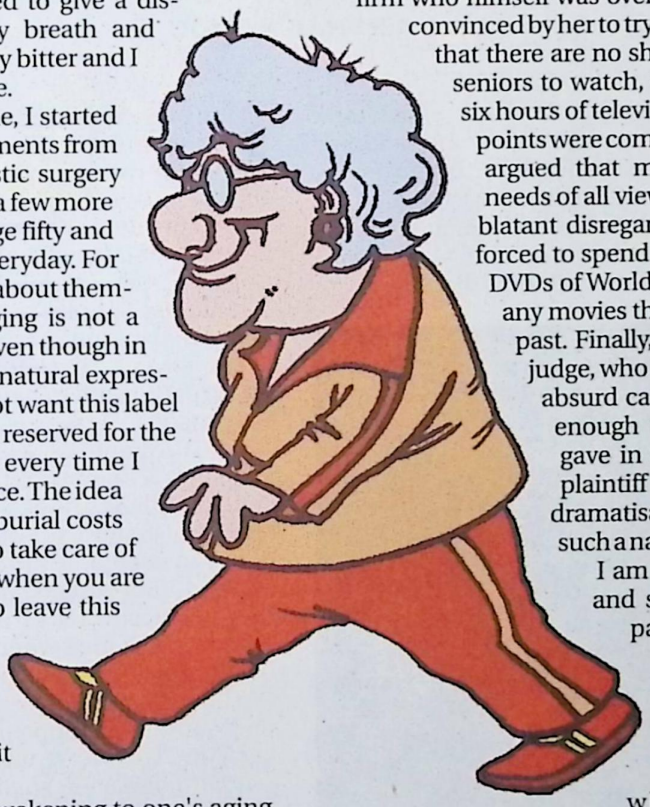
looked at the receipt and saw that he gave me a senior citizen discount. I was speechless and felt a little hurt. After finishing my coffee, I walked up to him and asked why he gave me a discount. After all I did not ask for it and demanded to know if I looked like a senior citizen to him! He sensed my anger and said, "Well I can see that we are from the same region and I just wanted to give a discount". "Liar", I said, under my breath and walked out. My mouth tasted really bitter and I decided I do not like coffee anymore.

During my lone walk back home, I started to think about my daughter's comments from a few months before. Maybe plastic surgery can hold off me looking my age by a few more years. More and more seniors of age fifty and above are taking advantage of it everyday. For some it is a necessity to feel better about themselves. The natural process of aging is not a pretty prospect for most seniors. Even though in America the word senior is a very natural expression, I do not like this word. I do not want this label in order to enjoy certain discounts reserved for the people who are aging. I stop cold every time I see an ad for a funeral cost insurance. The idea behind this is simple. An average burial costs thousands of dollars. The idea is to take care of your own burial and funeral costs when you are alive, so that you are not going to leave this burden on the loved ones. This may seem a little morbid but it is practical. I have this love hate relationship with the AARP magazine, always flipping through it when no one is looking.



One cannot ignore this rude awakening to one's aging process. With aging comes one's inability to make sound decisions. The elderly are often victimised by the predators of this society. We read horror stories about how they are getting ripped off their life savings. There are many ploys to dupe them into giving up their rights and dignity. The very vulnerable elderly, in some cases, are even getting murdered by greed-consumed family members or care givers.

In today's society, seniors are often ignored and made to believe that they are useless. Their age and experience count for nothing. Seniors start to view themselves as others do, i.e., as old and weak. Their mind often stays sharp but then slowly starts to degenerate, because they are made to believe they are unimportant. In many western countries elderly parents are shoved into nursing homes to live their golden years alone. The lucky ones with money get to go to the assisted living communities playing golf and taking daytime excursions with others their age. The poor and the sick elderly spend their days in state sponsored nursing homes where there are no perks, where they are often subjected to neglect and abuse. Such disregard for seniors is a shame! They are already forgotten here on earth . It is horrible but nonetheless a naked truth.

A few weeks ago I was watching an episode of Boston Legal (an Emmy winning show on TV for many years about a law firm in Boston), where an ex employee (now a senior) tried to bring a lawsuit for every imaginable discrimination against seniors. None of the young lawyers would even listen to her, let alone take her case. Finally, the head of the firm who himself was over fifty (a baby boomer) was convinced by her to try one case. They both agreed that there are no shows on TV appropriate for seniors to watch, who on the average watch six hours of television everyday. The lawyer's points were compelling and he passionately argued that media should cater to the needs of all viewers. As a result of society's blatant disregard for the seniors, they are forced to spend millions every year buying DVDs of World War II documentaries and any movies that they have enjoyed in the past. Finally, a neurotic, eighty year old judge, who initially said it was the most absurd case that he was unfortunate enough to sit through, reluctantly gave in and ruled in favour of the plaintiff (a senior). This is just a dramatisation. In real life things of such a nature hardly happen.

I am not going to be naive here and say that the care of senior parents should fall only on the children. I know in today's society it is not possible to allocate one's majority of income in caring for an elderly parent. That is where the government assisted living facilities come in (here in the West.) Not everyone is as lucky as my own mother. In her mid-nineties she lives with my brother at his house with round the clock nurses. Her every need is attended to by my brother and his family. The night I saw the episode of Boston Legal I stayed up awake in bed trying to remember my mother's face, albeit with some difficulty. I got up from the bed and went to the computer to look at her recent digital photo that was sent to me by my brother. Her face looked the same as I remembered. She is my mother and her face remains unchanged to me; only the lines on her forehead seemed a lot more numerable than before. I counted all nine of them; each for one decade. I can say with utmost certainty that she is one person that I know who has aged gracefully. Then and there I decided that I want to age the same way and will leave my marks on my forehead, for my daughter to decide whether I aged gracefully or not. But that is still a long way off. For now I am going to take each day with stride and move forward without thinking much about what is coming next. In years to come my own daughter may look at my photograph and count the lines on my forehead and decide for herself whether I lived up to the art of graceful aging.