

Dealing with Doddering, the Diminished Thing

06-06-2025, for The Daily News

I've lately come face to face with the reality that when one is in his 88th year, slowing down is a visitor who needs some getting used to. In fact I may just have to consider making doddering a new life style. Robert Frost's oven bird has lately been chirping at me loud and clear: "The thing he sings in everything but words/ Is what to make of a diminished thing."

And Andrew Marvel's warning also comes to mind: "But at my back I always hear/ Time's winged chariot hurrying near." It seems the Holy Spirit is reminding me to slow down, "ponder the path of my feet," and learn to enjoys all the benefits of being "old." That's a tough lesson for a natural-born multi-tasker, who starts twitching the minute he sees an old lady at the check out counter rummaging through her over-stuffed purse.

But I have issues of my own. This morning it took me 5 minutes just to pick out a shirt. And when I finally decided on one, I reminded myself, "Do you think anybody besides Audrey cares weather your clothes match? Hell, WalMart shoppers these days dress like they're on the way to a scavenger hunt or masquerade ball. So nobody really cares how I dress, "except my wife, except my wife, except my wife."

Thanks Hamlet, I needed that echo from your play. "Life" and wife really amount to the same thing, though, and Audrey's main advice for me is "make sure it's buttoned it up straight." I've had to re- button twice this morning. Got to learn to do it in the mirror.

But doddering has its advantages. This morning, down on the balcony, fishing, I had pretty good luck and was faced with toting a heavy bucket full of

fish, two rods, and my long handled net up that long stair to my car. Out of nowhere, a really impressive young guy skipped down those stairs asking me if he could help me carry up my stuff.

“Son, I said, I’d appreciate that.” He said his name was Buckholtz. “From Hankinson?,” I said. I didn’t hear his first name; I’m just going to remember him as St. Jeremy, a descendant from that huge Hankinson family, whose good deed I’ll not soon forget. Friends with Grace get “benefits.”

Later, I stopped at “Econo,” and one of their workers came out with a cart for me to hang on to walking in. I must have been creeping mighty slow. and besides, I probably smelled of fish. I love so many of the of the Econo Foods work force; they treat me like royalty, that kindness goes a long way.

So, some say I’m getting old. What else is new? I’m learning to appreciate my extra years considering the passing of so many brilliant young people these days. The loss of our tremendous past representative, Cindy Schrieber-Beck has really come as a shock.

I’ve hunted with her late husband Gerry, whose brilliance as an aviator and a human being I’ve often admired. And now the loss of Cindy, easily his equal, as a multi-talented brilliant woman with a “we can do it” attitude? That’s a hard pill to swallow. I think if President Trump had known her, he’d have instantly found a place for her in his cabinet. He seems to have an eye for spotting talent.

Now, when I take my daily ride down old Cty. 9 and past the Riverside Cemetery, I’ll whisper a little prayer of thanks for Cindy and Gerry, together again at last. What a pair for young people to have as role models. Wahpeton was mightily blessed to have been chosen by them to be their home.