

Proof of Age

There used to be a song that went “Darling, do you remember when,” and every verse ended with “if you remember, then you’re much older than I.” The further we are over the hill though, the more we brag about being older, not younger, than everybody else. We feel we’ve earned bragging rights when there’s nobody older than us left on our Christmas card list. I am now so old that every year on my birthday I get a letter from the trust company with which I have a small annuity, asking if I’m still alive.

Mind you, they don’t put it quite like that. They say they are verifying that I’m still at the same address and ask me to fill in and return a form in their postage paid envelope. They want to make sure it’s my signature on there. The amount they pay me monthly is not going to bankrupt them, but I took out the annuity when the interest rate was ten and a half per cent, and that rate is locked in for life.

Here at the Tower there are lots of other people my age and older. Some of them also get annual letters like mine. I suppose one can’t blame the trust companies for hoping that one of these days our addresses will have changed to the local cemetery.

In case you're wondering where you rank on the oldster scale, here are some tests. Do you remember spoon jars, those cut glass containers full of teaspoons kept handy in the middle of the dining room table? How about silent movies, with a piano player emphasizing the action on the screen? Do you remember life before zippers, when skirts and pants were done up with buttons, and when all women's clothes buttoned at the side or the back?

And let's not forget hayrides and sleigh rides—behind a horse, that is, not a tractor, and on a pile of hay, not seats. If your memory stretches back that far you're as old as I am, and if it goes back even further, I'll concede bragging rights.