

We The People
Program 216 August 15, 2016
We the People **Seniors Week**



Good day to you. This week is Seniors week and a time we should all celebrate the privilege it is to have aged. The Council for the Ageing have launched a new idea or initiative if you will, called **Death over Dinner**. This initiative encourages people to have conversations about end of life at the dining table rather than when it's too late. Now this is of course sensible but I'm not sure it's the right topic for seniors week or the dinner table as most of us have no intention of dying. I for one am opposed to the idea of perishing and I expect many others are as well. I know it's a serious and terminal challenge but during Seniors week I think the celebration of life should be the focus. In any case none of us know when our time is coming although the odds are greater as we age. Dare I say life is terminal anyway so just get on with it.

Consider for a moment the likes of Hilton Redding the founder of 4CRB, at 86 he is still contributing and making a positive difference. Take Peter Steele who will sail around the world solo at 81 to raise funds to save the Koala. Peter is a person of integrity and still appreciates a pretty woman. How about John Glenn the astronaut who blasted into space for the second time at age 77. If there are examples of active older men there are even more of notable senior woman. Think about Judy Davis, Jackie Weaver and Sigrid Thornton as priceless older thespians or the local and dedicated wild life activists Lyn Ogden, Sally Spain, Rose Adams and Lois Levy. To this add the indomitable Karen Scott, Eleanor Hanger and Robyn Cox, all senior women most worthy of recognition. Where would we be without all these iconic elders. My lovely lady Anna walked the Milford Track, the Routeburn and the Kepler Tracks in New Zealand one after the other and she shares the love of bush walking with many mature women. Anna still finds me attractive but that's more a statement about her eyesight than healthy desire.

Norwood Thomas hadn't seen the love of his life, British nurse Joyce Morris, since he had to say goodbye to her for the last time at a train station in London in 1944. The young couple were forced apart by war, with Norwood Thomas leaving to fight at the Battle of Normandy before returning to his home in the USA. But in July this year Norwood (93) and Joyce Morris (88) were reunited for the first time after she tracked her former flame down and arranged to Skype him. 'Tell me. Do you see me' he asked. 'No, I can't see properly she said. 'Well, I'll tell ya, I'm smiling,' he told her. 'I'm sure you are,' she said, laughing. Age shall not weary them nor the years condemn.

Now I know perfectly well good health can enrich our lives and poor health can drag us down. This is life's great conundrum at any age and it becomes more of an issue as we grow older. Youth is the gift of nature, but age is a work of art. How's this for mature female wisdom....." **As I grow older, I pay less attention to what men say, I just watch what they do**". I guess if your right minded then older adults are just **obsolete children**.

While I'm taking a very positive view of age this seniors week I must also report some disturbing facts. Far too many older Australians live in poverty, some are lonely and some challenged with physical or emotional problems. As a nation there is a growing social displeasure at the presumed cost of aging and to those who think that way you are not only wrong you are stupid. The Australian senior woman bore this nation and we the seniors put mega billions of dollars back into society through volunteering, through providing a home for children and grand children and through supporting all kinds of social and environmental initiatives. Look no further than 4CRB to see just how much good is done by those at the higher end of demography. The list of achievements goes on and on in later years and the working generation today should take heed because we are now a large enough bloc to vote governments in and out of office. There is nothing more dangerous than a grumpy senior.

So this seniors week celebrate life and celebrate all your achievements no matter how small. This week demand to be heard by your local politician and ask them what they think about ageing and how they are going to make your life better. During seniors week remember the wisdom of Mark Twain who said..... **"Wrinkles should merely indicate where smiles have been"**.

Until next time this is Kent Bayley.