

GROWING UP

By Mike Harris

Since we are all seniors sitting here we are mute testimony that chronologically we have grown up. We probably have all heard "What goes round comes round." That implies that each of us has just about made the complete circle.

We come into this world dependent and much as we hold it off we end up dependent. I look at life's cycle in stages, from the beginning to the arrival of the teens our physical bodies lay a foundation for physical growth. While this is taking place something else starts developing, namely a sense of competence and independence, fostered in varying degrees by our parents and inherited genes. From our teens through the years into our fifties most of us grow mentally and emotionally. These are our productive years. These are what I like to call our glory years.

I do not know the extent of others' beginnings but I have been told that mine were unusually lucky. My parents were real good at the skill of parenting. Knowledge was imparted with love and discipline. Early on work ethic and teaching were taught with skill, patience, and forbearance. My parents, as far as I can remember, never raised a hand in anger; punishment by disapproval and denying of privileges and pleasures were the tools of training and punishment. Early on, in spite of a mischievous nature, I must have stretched their patience to a near breaking point more than once.

When at the age of seven, while on the farm after being told not to play in the car, I disobeyed. The key was in the car, I turned the key, the transmission was engaged, and the car took off down across the field over a stonewall and hung up, front and back wheels off the ground. My father came running, picked me out of the car, stood me up and reached into the car, turned off the key, looked at me and said, "It's as much my fault as yours, the key should not have been in the car, and you were told not to play in the car, we will talk about this later, go on home." I never got a licking, but I sure got a talking to.

Shortly thereafter we moved to New York City, a whole new world, a new educational experience. Street smarts and survival. High school in the city, graduation, C.C.N.Y at night, learning a trade, and prospering. At age twenty one a full fledged cutter with a union job at ninety dollars a week. Family ties reinforced by both parents. Employer shuts plant, no job.

One very hard year, learn a new trade in the same industry by networking. New job that leads to more money and foreman of a team. Temptation and starting to stray from my normal behavior pattern. The good lord and Uncle Sam step in. Three and half years of army and continued growth and a return of my senses. More normal living, marriage, children. Sixty years with only three and a half bad ones at the end.

Now I join with the rest denying dependence, putting it off and on, hold so far so good. Thanks for the writers club and your forbearance and your help in staving off the closing of the circle.