

On aging

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ME (MOTOR AND EMOTER)

Once I had to ask the grown-ups what we wanted to
do and why,
But then knew instantly how to do it.
Now I know what we want to do and why,
But must ask the children how to do it.

I have always thought one gets only
So many synapses in a lifetime.
The young waste them all on
Memory motoric, while aging shifts them wisely to
Philosophy limbic.

US (SENSORY)

Time was we ate Veg-All from a can
And folded back only half of the tin foil to expose
The Salisbury steak (but not the peas)
In the days before microwave ovens.

Who would have thought that someday we'd eat fish
only known to Food Network?
(What is barramundi anyway? And where did it swim
when it lived?)

We recycle plastic and plug our cars into the wall.
We like our doctors rested, supported, socially well-
adjusted
With global and family sensibilities.
We no longer eat our young or throw them to the
wolves.

We are learning, bit by bit, to find Kandahar, Tikrit,
and Sana'a on the map,
To spell Peking with a "B" and Bombay with
an "M."

Now in this well-past-adolescence of our lives,
We are hoping we begin to learn what it is to be
human
And become.

THEM (MEMORY)

My life is divided into three places.
The place where I no longer know the names on the
plaques on the wall,
The place where I still know the names on the
plaques on the wall,
And the place where I do not yet know the names on
the plaques on the wall.

The people in the middle place are my family of
sorts.
We laughed, cried, celebrated, worried, and got an-
gry together.
They left for good and then I did for a while.
But they and I left pieces behind, making the middle
place somehow
Special for a moment.

In time, I will no longer know the names on the
plaques on the wall
In the middle place. And the third place will become
filled
With the names of my family
As the snapshot moves forward.

Neurology[®]

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Neurology 2012;78;1188

DOI 10.1212/WNL.0b013e31824f8114

This information is current as of April 9, 2012

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