

RELIGION

Advancing years have devastating effects

A little known speech by Henry Ford has a line in it that should bring comfort and assurance to older people.

Ford said, "You take all the experience and judgement of men over 50 out of the world and there wouldn't be enough left to run it."

Ford was probably somewhere past 50 when he made that wise remark, but in these days when highly-trained and useful men are being "laid on the shelf" at 65 (or even at 62 in some instances), that line should be brought out of obscurity and given more thought. It has special meaning for me, now that I've jogged past the half-century mark, and should remind those of us in Palm Bay that our greatest resources are those talented and gifted retirees who are moving— by the droves— into our community.

Many an active mind has been sentenced to the servitude of idleness simply because the calendar has turned a certain number of leaves, or because some other part of the body has begun to wear out.

It is an economic shame comparable to the drop-out who wastes the first part of his life instead of being forced by a

Perspective

by Jamie Buckingham

stupid rule to waste the last part.

There is no denying that advancing years, though, do have their devastating effects. And you don't have to turn 50 to realize it.

Several weeks ago I began to notice that my arms weren't long enough to hold a book at the proper distance when I was reading in bed. When I suggested to my wife that my arms seemed to be growing shorter, she nodded wisely. But instead of making an appointment with the arm doctor, I wound up at the eye doctor.

He patiently explained that after you hit 40 there are certain nerves and muscles that just don't stretch like they used to. The only solution — aside from an arm-stretcher — is glasses.

It's strange, isn't it, how things have changed. A friend was by the house the other day remarking how places are a lot farther off than they used to be, how cars are harder to

get into, and how architects are building staircases much steeper than when he was a young man.

"I've even given up asking my granddaughter to read the paper to me," he said. "She speaks in such a low voice I can hardly hear a word she says."

What really hurt his pride, though, was that the choir director never asked him to sing a solo, and there is no apparent disappointment when he doesn't even show up for choir rehearsal.

Singing, he lamented as he tried to straighten his false teeth which had somehow gotten twisted in his mouth, is like riding a bicycle. If you ever could do it — you still can. However, when I asked him what was wrong with his false teeth, he confessed he was having to use a 15-year-old set of spares until his new ones were repaired. It seems he had damaged them soon after his grandson had cautioned him against riding the boy's new 10-speed bike. Not understanding the new-fangled hand brakes, he was backpedaling furiously when he ran into a mango tree and busted his teeth.

The worst part of it, he said as he left the house, was his old teeth now prevented him from singing in the choir.

I returned to my easy chair, picked up the paper and reached for my glasses. It must be terrible to grow old. Thank goodness it'll never happen to me.