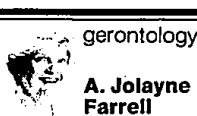


Why older ladies hide their ages

Dear Jo:
My grandmother won't tell us her age. She'll just say she is an octogenarian. Exactly what does the mean? And why do older people, particularly women, make such a big "thing" about keeping their age a secret?

Miss E.A. Curious Grandchild
Dear Miss A.:
Disclosing a woman's age, back when your grandmother was a "girl," was considered improper. "They" (whoever "they" were) used to say, "If a woman will tell you her age — she'll tell you anything." So I guess that's still her way of dealing with the subject to this day.
By saying she is an octogenarian she is letting you know that she is between the ages of 80 and 89. This is just one of the five aging subgroups — those between the ages of 70 and 79 are referred to as septuagenarians; those between 80 and 89 are nonagenarians; those between 100 or 109 are centenarians and those from 110 and 119 are centodeniarians.
It isn't only older people who won't disclose their ages. Perhaps it has something to do with our youth-oriented society.



gerontology
A. Jolayne Farrell
Dear Mrs. H.:
Thank you for your letter. It is unfortunate that your mother's melanoma went undetected for so long. Observations and reporting of scalp conditions are included in the curriculums of all reputable hair-dressing schools.
Your letter reinforces the fact that the sun is the skin's worst enemy. One out of every seven North Americans will develop skin cancer in his or her lifetime — a shame when it can be prevented.

How to order Buckman book
Michigan readers have been unable to locate a book mentioned in Jolayne Farrell's Oct. 20 column — "I Don't Know What to Say" by Dr. Robert Buckman, a cancer specialist. It's a guide to conversing with the dying.
The University of Toronto book store will take telephone orders with credit cards. Call the university at 1-416-978-2011 and ask for the book store.
Mrs. H., Michigan reader

Growing threat: plastic trash

Second of three parts about plastics and their effect on our environment.
The current plastics proliferation is having a dual impact on our environment.

First, many of the chemicals used in the manufacture and processing of plastics are highly toxic (poisonous). This results in hazardous wastes, toxic emissions and discharges of toxic chemicals into nearby waterways.
Second, at the end of the lifetime for this throw-away plastic packaging and products, these materials become "post-consumer" trash ending up along the roads as litter or contributing to our overflowing solid waste landfills.
AS CONSUMERS, we don't think of plastics as toxic simply because by the time they reach us — they're not.
However, the ingredients in plastics production have dangerous properties to those who work in plastics factories or those who live near a plastics factory.
In 1986, 20 chemicals were cited by the EPA for having generated the



Terry Gibb
A recent study commissioned by the EPA found that plastics accounted for 9.6 million tons or 7.2 percent by weight of our municipal solid waste. Over half of this, 5 million tons, was plastic packaging.

THE 7.2 PERCENT by weight figure at first seems like a small percentage of the total solid waste. In fact, the plastics industry quotes that figure to show "how small" the plastic disposal problem is.
However, because plastics are so lightweight, it is estimated that plastics actually make up 25-32 percent in volume of our trash.
Currently, as with all our trash, 85 percent of all plastics are landfilled. Within the next few years, that will change because usable landfill space will be filled. There are three alternatives to landfilling plastic: source reduction, recycling or incineration.
NEXT WEEK: The alternative disposal methods for plastics.
The Consumer Mailbag answers your questions. Address mail to The Consumer Mailbag, Concern Detroit, 1 Kennedy Square, 4th Floor, Detroit 48226.

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