

in the class of 1967 put us all just a bit ahead of the Boomers: we were a transition cohort from the old Yale to the new. And now we were living in a world we could never have imagined.

I think of my beloved mentor, the late Prof. Rose Dobrof, founding Editor of the *Journal of Gerontological Social Work*. As Rose neared the age of 90 she told me "I've become what I used to teach about." So it is for this gerontologist: I feel as if I've spent most of my life preparing for old age. And now I find it surprising, paradoxical, filled with discoveries, something unknown to me. I recall the last lines of Jung's autobiographical *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*: "I am astonished, disappointed, pleased with myself. I am distressed, depressed, rapturous. I am all these things at once, and cannot add up the sum." And I'm only 72! Thank you, my readers, for letting me share this journey with you.

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GREAT LIVES IN AGING: James Birren

I had the great privilege of getting to know Jim Birren when we spent a sabbatical year together at the Andrus Gerontology Center of USC, an institution he founded. Jim was among the greatest gerontologists of our time, and his own time reached back to when he was present at the founding meeting of the Gerontological Society of America (GSA). Jim was author of countless academic articles, a leader in the psychology of aging and editor in chief of the *Encyclopedia of Gerontology*. But this last role doesn't begin to suggest the astonishing encyclopedic character of his mind. I flew from the East Coast to attend his retirement party at USC and I talked to him a bit about his plans. I wondered: How does a master gerontologist approach his own old age? His answer surprised me: like Star Trek, he would go boldly "where no man has gone before."

After his retirement, Jim went beyond the empiricist psychology he had cultivated for so many years. He turned to "guided autobiography" and, literally, wrote the book on that subject. Jim outlived his beloved wife Betty and died at the age of 97. How appropriate that nearly a third of his own life was spent in the old age he studied so deeply! But more than longevity what stands out is the creativity of his later years, when Jim pursued the question of wisdom that had fascinated before his own retirement. In this respect, he joins a few other great psychologists (e.g., Jerome Bruner, Leon Festinger) who took the risk of venturing into the unknown in their later years. Jim Birren remains an inspiration to us all.

Editor's Note. This is one in a series of articles, inspired by the BBC Podcast Series, "Great Lives." I've been prompted to write these because I was surprised to discover students who had never heard of Bernice Neugarten. There

are others, like her, profiled in this series, such as Robert Butler, Maggie Kuhn, and Robert Kastenbaum. All are people I met or knew personally, all now deceased, all whose Great Lives in aging gave us a legacy to be remembered with gratitude.

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HELEN LUKE

"The ego will endure the worst agonies of neurotic misery rather than consent to one minute of diminishment of its sense of importance.

The coming to consciousness is not a discovery of some new thing; it is a long and painful return to that which has always been.

The inner story, though the same in essence for all, is always single and unique in each human being, never before lived and never to be repeated."

From "Old Age is a Crown Instead of a Curse in Helen Luke's Beautiful Hands" at:

<http://www.jungatlanta.com/articles/fall06-old-age.pdf>

"Here are the proper occupations of old age: prayer, which is the quickening of the mind, the rooting of attention in the ground of being; song, which is the expression of spontaneous joy in the harmony of the chaos; the telling of old tales, which among all primitives was the supreme function of the old, who passed on the wisdom."

- Helen M. Luke

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EXPERIENCE TALKS

"Experience Talks"-- Well, I don't mean just life experience, but the radio show of that same name, hosted by Prof. Connie Corley in Los Angeles. Among the distinguished people interviewed on the show have been Larry Brilliant, M.D., who met with Ram Dass's guru, Neem Karoli Baba, who advised him to eradicate smallpox, a project which would carry out for several years. Brilliant would later become chief executive for Google's philanthropy foundation. Another person interviewed was Bill Thomas, M.D., founder of the Eden Alternative and the Pioneer Movement for culture change in long-term care. Other guests have included Marianne Williamson, Lawrence Ferlinghetti, and Mark Nepo. You can listen to podcasts from many of the great people interviewed over the years on "Experience Talks" at: <http://www.experiencetalks.org/audio-archives/>

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WORLD CONGRESS on Gerontology & Geriatrics

The International Conference on Gerontology & Geriatrics (IAGG) takes place in San Francisco, July 23-July 27) and features many events of interest to readers of this newsletter:

Humanities & Arts Sessions. Promoted by the Humanities & Arts Workgroup, many humanities and the arts sessions will be presented at the World Congress, often taking place in the same room.

Legacy Film Festival on Aging (July 26). Films will highlight people facing challenges with creativities, courage, humor, and grace.

Age Stage: Creativity in Aging Events (July 24- 25, 2017) . Performances and presentations centered on aging. More details at: <https://www.iagg2017.org/images/documents/agestage.pdf>

For more Humanities & Arts, Legacy Film Festival and Age Stage, visit: <https://www.iagg2017.org/program/humanities-and-arts>

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WEB SITES TO SEE

SPIRITUALITY. The most recent issue of the Journal of the Life Planning Network is devoted to the theme of spirituality and later life. Read it at: <http://files.constantcontact.com/552dc6c5001/38ad574c-b0e5-48cf-a11c-bda58ee18e98.pdf>

AS TIME GOES BY. Ronni Bennett's blog, "Time Goes By: What It's Really Like to Get Old," has been an indispensable resource for us all. Now Ronni has shared with us her experience of her current struggle with cancer, so keep her in your thoughts and prayers. More at: <http://www.timegoesby.net/>

COMING OF AGE. A valuable organization for positive aging: <http://comingofage.org/exciting-news-about-aging-a-new-theory-of-lifespan/>

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