



A little girl gets a sewing lesson from her grandmother. Such scenes are the exception rather than the rule today. The multi-generation family familiar to rural America has been largely replaced by urban families in which the elderly usually live apart from their children and grandchildren.



Vitality is reflected in the face of this old woman. Although most people fear aging because we tend to associate it with such unpleasant symptoms as senility, poverty and sickness, there is strong evidence that those who make the effort to "stay young" can remain mentally and physically youthful into the 70s and beyond.



John Jenkins sits alone in his home in Grogmore, S.C. He is ill and can't go out for food or firewood. So he sits in the cold and waits for help. More than 25 per cent of the nation's elderly live along.

Photos by RNS

ilities for the elderly in Sun City, a unique community for retirees in are 25,000 of them, must be or have a mate who is 50 years old or and loneliness. The senior citizens of Sun City can and do enjoy more al facilities.

pe for the Aged

s." it stereotypes of arily on pictures he more typical gerous. She says ating a nation of ar of aging and at the negative l by the tendency h, and to stress senior citizens' isters with drab, h canes, depres- ee rich reaction- such bad share? facts about the Americans over ey are definitely ly believed. De- of the aged see d are integrated e in severe need cent years. But Rockwell image- zed, does not e ng older, a great e able to "take it e with the philo- hn LaFarge, who mity. On the con- human life that loes every other

human life phase . . . It enjoys its own dignity, its own privileges and character."

The view that a majority of the elderly are relatively happy may come as a surprise to most people, but recent studies appear to support this position.

Louis Wilker of the New York City office of Aging said, a just completed study of the aged poor in the city surprisingly revealed that more than 75 per cent of them described themselves as "very happy" or "fairly happy." Most of them said they had satisfactory relationships with relatives, friends or neighbors.

In this regard, he said, it is very important to "keep the realities of the aged straight. Negative stereotypes can be very harmful." When younger people tend to feel sorry for the aged and stay away from them, their attitudes are reflected in the self-image of the elderly.

Sociologist Neugarten says that studies of large and representative samples of older persons now go far toward exploding some of the outmoded images of the aged.

"For example, old persons do not become isolated and neglected by their families, although both generations prefer separate households," she said in an article in *Psychology Today*, Dec. 1971. "Old people are not dumped into mental hospitals by cruel or indifferent children. They are not necessarily lonely or desolate if they live alone. Few of them ever show overt signs of mental deterioration or senility, and only a small proportion ever become mentally ill."

The crucial point seems to be that many of the problems associated with old age are not so much the result of aging per se as they are of other factors — deep-rooted poverty, urban decay, inflation, crime in the streets and personality traits.

Most of us can accept in older people the common physical characteristics of aging such as grey hair, wrinkled skin, slowness of movement. It is when we see older people oppressed or suffering that we become alarmed.