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██████████ UNDERSTANDING AGING
12/07/92

INTRODUCTION:

*Very good job!
(see comments on back of last page.)*

I chose to interview my aunt, Pat ████████ who is my mother's older sister. She is a bit reluctant to give her exact age but by all accounts she is 65 years old. She was born and still lives in St. Louis. She grew up in North St. Louis. She was the second of three daughters born to my grandparents, Margaret and Harry Francis Joyce. She noted that my grandfather had a number of jobs including a bartender, police dispatcher, and barge worker. She said my grandmother was primarily a homemaker but did work in the War Plants during W.W.II. She is married to my uncle, Ed ████████ and is the mother of my cousin, Patrick ████████. She works with my uncle who is self-employed in the heating/air conditioning business. Her responsibilities include taking care of the accounting aspects of his business. When she is not working, she and my uncle spend much of their time racing and training thoroughbred racehorses throughout the country. She also enjoys traveling and spends a good part of her time in their second home in Clearwater, Florida. I think we both enjoyed doing these interviews and it was a good excuse to get together for lunch and talk. I never really had to worry about establishing a rapport since I have known her my entire life. What follows is a summary of the series of interviews I did with my Aunt Pat. I have tried to organize my questions into various categories particularly ones that our textbook used as well.

CHILDHOOD:

Question: Describe what things were like when you were growing up as a child.

Very good introduction

My aunt's response to this question generated a lot of memories of "fun" activities that she participated in as a child. She said that she enjoyed playing ball in lots and on the playground at Webster School. She remembered playing tag in Jackson Park. She also recalled roller skating on city sidewalks and said that the shop owners would give her and her friends a penny when they went past. She also remembered living with relatives when her mom was sick and going to their clubhouse in Valley Park (which seemed really far at the time) and walking through cornfields, eating corn along the way. She also remembered the polio scares and was taught not to go swimming in lakes for fear of catching this disease.

ADOLESCENCE:

Question: What were your high school years like?

My aunt graduated from Laboure High School which is now Northwest High School. She told me that she never really studied in high school and remembered flunking history twice. She also said that it took her and three of her friends five years to graduate from high school. She said that they went a half a day during their last year and had no homeroom. As a result, she remembered skipping school to go to the movies (only 50 cents). She said the theaters would change movies three to four times a week. She also said they liked to go to Dangers, a coffee shop, and Crown's Ice Cream Parlor. She also remembered trying to smoke in the bathrooms at school without getting caught. She liked going to dances and basketball games. She said that she had a crush on one of the players named Marvin Talgader. During this time, she worked as a waitress for Miss Hullings.

ADULTHOOD:

Question: How did you meet your husband?

She said that Ed lived around the corner from her and she was friends with his sister. She said that my uncle sent his sister to ask her out. He was a little older than her and had just gotten out of the Navy. She said that her friend, Marie ████████, had liked him, too.

Question: What did you like to do on dates?

My aunt remembered going to dances and house parties, and admitted "drinking alot". She also remembered going to clubs in East St. Louis. She said they also went to the Polish Falcons for dances and ate at the Parknoor Restaurant when it was on Kingshighway. She said that on dates, everyone used public transportation and tended to do things in their own neighborhood.

Question: What have been your favorite years so far? Why?

My aunt said her favorite time was in her early twenties when she got married and had children. She noted that the holidays were particularly nice while her children were young. She really enjoyed raising her children. (I should note that my aunt lost one of her sons in an accident. This is a very painful memory and one that I did not bring up during the interviews.)

Question: What types of work did people go into?

It is interesting to note that when I asked my aunt this question, she immediately differentiated between men and women. She stated that most women went into secretarial jobs and took shorthand and typing in high school. Few women went to college. She said that men tended to do alot of manual labor or factory work. She noted that few went to college, but she did remember the GI Bill helped some men after they got out of the service.

Question: What event (-s) in history do you remember vividly?

When she was younger, she remembered the end of W.W.II and VJ Day. She said she went to a parade downtown. She also remembered the deaths of FDR and John F. Kennedy as events that stood out in her mind.

Question: What major scientific changes have you noted in your life?

She said that the major event she remembered is man landing on the moon. She also cited other inventions such as color television, video-cassette recorders, and compact disc systems. She also said that there have been many improvements in automobiles.

Question: What is a typical day like for you?

Her first response to this question was "chaos". She said that she gets up in the morning, drinks her coffee and usually does paperwork for the business. Next, she said she runs errands for the business such as going to the post office, bank, etc. She said she sometimes meets friends for lunch. She noted she keeps busy and seldom watches television.

RETIREMENT:

Question: When do you think that you will retire?

My aunt said she might retire next summer but noted that she may have to keep working "because her husband wants her to".

Question: How would you like to spend your time when you retire?

My aunt said she would like to spend more time in Florida --going to the beach, sunning, seeing the dog races, and shopping. She would also like to spend time decorating her second home in Florida.

HEALTH:

Question: Do you have any health problems ? Are you concerned about your health?

She told me that she is not concerned about her health and that she is in good health.

Question: Do you exercise regularly ? Do you watch what you eat?

She said she doesn't exercise that often. She also admitted that she does not have to pay very close attention to what she eats.

Question: Do you go to the doctor regularly?

Again, she said she does not see a doctor on a regular basis--only for an occasional sinus infection.

ECONOMICS:

Question: What economic changes have you noted?

My aunt said that when she was younger she didn't have as much money but it seemed to go a lot farther. She believes prices have just escalated.

Question: If you don't mind me asking, how much did you pay for your first house? How old were you when you bought it?

She said that she and my uncle bought their first house when she was thirty years old. She said they paid around \$9,000 for their first house. She went on to say that a new car cost around \$1500 at that time. She said she remembered making around \$28.00 a week working full-time in 1947. She said a yearly salary might be around \$5,000.

POLITICS:

Question: What changes have you noted in the political system?

It is interesting to note that we had this discussion before the election was held. At that time, she had just voted an absentee ballot since she was going on vacation. She had voted for Perot because she did not want to be responsible for helping Bush or Clinton get into office. When I asked her this question, her response was "Hold your nose when you vote". She said that years ago everyone was registered and voted as party voters. She said she tended to vote a Democratic ticket because this party represented the working people. She said the politicians tended to talk more about the issues rather than the mudslinging she has observed in more recent elections.

Question: What politicians did you like/admire?

She stated that she really liked John F. Kennedy, FDR, and Harry Truman. She said she did not like Lyndon Johnson and thinks it has really gone downhill since him. She paraphrased JFK and noted that politicians in the past were interested in what they could do for the country ; not what their country could do for them. She mentioned that politicians took more pride in the country and were not so self-motivating and selfish as are the politicians of today.

Question: Do remember the first election you voted in?

She said she wasn't sure which election she first voted in but she thought it was for Harry Truman.

Question: How often do you vote? Do you follow politics closely today?

My aunt noted that she does not follow politics that closely. She noted that she votes mainly in the major presidential elections. She also said that when she was younger she was primarily a Democrat but now she doesn't vote for any particular party.

MORALS/VALUES:

Question: Have you noticed changes in society's morals? If so, in what way?

Out of all my questions, this one probably got the most emotional response. She said that we have gone from "heaven to hell". My aunt pointed out that "anything goes now" thanks to cable television and entertainers like Madonna. She believed that everything went downhill after JFK. She said values really changed and mentioned events like the '68 riots and Woodstock. She believes that younger people have become conditioned to these changes. She mentioned that today people frequently live together before marriage, and this was unheard of in her time. She noted that years ago, if a girl became pregnant when she was in high school, she was "ostracized". She believes that people today are selfish and to many people, a handshake means nothing.

Question: What values do you think need to be preserved today?

She said the world needs to get "back to morals". She believed that the world is a mess because of cable television and movies. She thought we need to have more respect for other people.

Question: Do you remember being exposed to a lot of crimes?

She said things are quite different now. She said crimes like child abuse or serial killers were not heard of in the past. She remembered that it was nice growing up and people kept their doors unlocked. She also said that people slept in parks in the summer because they didn't have air conditioning and no one bothered them. She remembered hearing about occasional murders or gangster related crimes in East St. Louis but this was about the extent of it.

Question: Do you consider yourself a religious person? If so, what types of religious customs do you practice?

She believed that she was a religious person. She said she does not go to church regularly due to her active lifestyle, but she helps friends, family, and the community. (My aunt and uncle help several charities including the Boys Clubs, Catholic charities, etc.) She said she prays on a daily basis.

MISCELLANEOUS:

Question: Do you have any heirlooms that have special value for you?

She valued things that belonged to her mom such as a decorated ring box and jewelry. She also valued her photographs of her mom as well as an afghan that her cousin had given her.

Question: Did you enjoy these interviews?

She said she really did enjoy these interviews and would like to do it again sometime.

CONCLUSION:

Overall, I found this to be an interesting assignment. In some ways, my Aunt Pat fits into some of the generalizations about older people we have described in class. For instance, she does have a second home in Florida which she visits frequently in the winter. She also tends to be more conservative than my generation and seems to place a lot of blame on society's morals on the media and entertainers such as Madonna. From the beginning of class, our text noted that people often have myths or beliefs about older adults which are simply not true. My aunt certainly disproves many of these stereotypes we discussed in class. For example, she continues to work even into her mid -sixties. (She and my uncle are self-employed which our text did describe is common among older adults.) As described above, she has a very active lifestyle. In addition, she is not ill and does not seem too concerned about her health or the fact that she is growing older. Moreover, she does not seem to have grown any more religious now. Lastly, she does not tend to vote in any particular "block" due to her age.

*Very good report,
(see comments on back
of page.)*

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was in
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Good
work
on this
assignment.*