

Middle-aged Angst or Words from the Crossroads

We are the middle-aged:
Too young for senior discounts
Too old to be asked for an ID.

Our mistakes are as clear as red wine on white linen
and not yet faded into wrinkles.

There is no sympathy for us.
The young blame us for our choices
The old dismiss us with a wave
and say, "Be glad you have your health."

So we huddle with peers over
heart healthy dinners
confess high cholesterol
share herbal secrets
and care options for our parents.

We adjust our diets for a slower metabolism
Ponder health screenings
and wonder if ignorance really is bliss.

Our slow fade is as real as
a new strand of gray and the
mounting magnification of reading glasses.

We've learned to preserve memories on hard drives;
preserve our memory with crossword puzzles.

Six-letter word for Security: M-i-r-a-g-e, Mirage

With savings as substantial as sandcastles
we grapple with
planning for the future or seizing the day.

We wonder if our children
will be more angry if we lean on them
or leave them
for a place
where survival is more affordable.

We pray health insurance endures
until Medicare locks in and
hope it holds out
until we kick off.

We wonder if our nursing homes
will play the Stones.

Nine-letter word for future: U-n-c-e-r-t-a-i-n, Uncertain

When we were very young
we learned we could be anything we wanted

No one told us
no matter the choice
we must be marketers,
business managers, financial planners and investors.

We smile at gray-haired baggers
Imagine being forced into a downsized life
Feel lucky to reel in a paycheck
Take comfort in reports of a skilled labor shortage.

Some hold infants
grateful to negotiate a last shot
at parenthood and
hope to still have their driver's license
when their children earn theirs.

Others welcome grandchildren,
imagine watching them grow
And hope to always
recognize them.

We recall the subtle shift to the groove found
when we traded ideals for mutual funds
masked racism with political correctness
failed to end war
couldn't even legalize weed.
And when did we become so cautious?

More frequent than striving to improve
we plot to maintain.

Emily Thornton Calvo
www.emilycalvo.com

Our homes are stuffed with
baby books, travel mementos,
yearbooks and photos
that document our lives
and buried under
baby books, travel mementos,
yearbooks and photos
from our parents bequeathed
--the fallout of their falling apart--
and we feel obliged to accept.

Like them, we pass on legacies
under the guise of recycling
to children trying to create their own.

Four-letter word for Memory: G-i-f-t, Gift

Our advantage is the clarity to
remember youth
 plagued with insecurity and overconfidence
 in all the wrong places
and maybe another 25 years
 to embrace a last chance
 a mad dash
 to prove our relevance
 to share what we've learned
 to make footprints in cement
 much like we did as children.