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# EDITORIAL

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## *Happy Vacation*

July and August are the golden months, the time most of us joyfully leave our workaday world for a change of place or at least a change of pace. This summer, how about taking a holiday from the too-common notion that most of the older generation are frail, depressed, and deprived? Let's take a rest from studying and writing about the impediments of old age. If we spend two weeks exploring the strengths of the aged, we can turn the letters in the word *vacation* into an acronym for all that's bright and beckoning about the elderly, an acronym like this:

**V***aried*, the word for adults over 65, who are not alike as grains of sand but unique as individual snowflakes—the leaders who astound us with their energy, the leaners who challenge us to sustain and comfort, the spiritually tough, the sorrowful, the serene, the humorous, the dour.

**A***vante garde* of a new era in which the elderly by their numbers and with their resolve are swinging votes and changing laws; the only experts on aging, who can teach the rest of us how to age well.

**C***onservators* of learning and culture: the songs, art, poetry, drama, prayers, and dance that are our heritage from native Americans, Europeans, Africans, Asians, Hispanics, all the peoples who together have created and maintained this nation.

**A***ristocrats* of longevity, an elite corps, the first entire generation to live into the ninth, tenth, even the eleventh decade.

**T***empered*, tested by two World Wars, the Great Depression, prosperity, inflation, recession, and insecurity, these old men and women may be the only mentors wise enough to help us face today's dire uncertainties with equanimity and courage.

**I***mpatient* with what we, their health providers, term "minor annoyances": arthritic pain, nocturia, dentures that slip; endless forms to fill for Medicare, computer voices that only refer, never respond. Impatient, but organized within their health coalitions and aging networks to fight these "minor" annoyances.

**O***utspoken*, they state facts and voice opinions frankly, no longer constrained by social convention to disguise truth in the name of good manners, free at last to call a spade a spade, a fake a fake.

**N***ewcomers* to chronological old age, the first Americans fully qualified by experience to show us younger ones that if we stop dwelling on their problems and begin acquiring their strengths, we too may be blessed with long life.

*Gertrude H. Kelly*