

It's all in the mind

Old age doesn't overtake you. It gushes and stampedes and gallops and all of a sudden you are trying to find your dentures while your eternally young wife spoons cod liver oil down your throat.

It takes an almost inhuman deceit, but I find it quite easy to ignore the gray hairs, the creaking bones, or the preference for checkers over kissing. What the hell! Age is not a physical thing. It is the spirit of the thing. The heart of the thing. And as long as my mind stays vibrant and questioning, as long as my heart sings at the sight of children at play, or as long as I can debate the bad effects of marijuana with a group of college kids...well...age hasn't been victorious after all.

Whenever I present this argument my conscience always screams, "Amos Holmes, what a colossal liar you are."

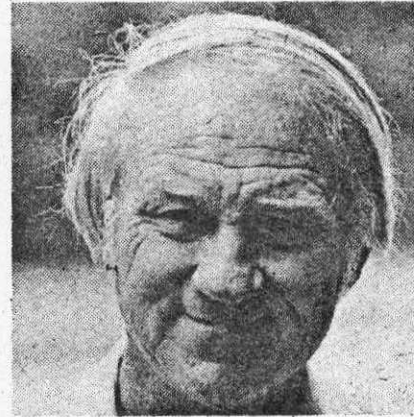
And my conscience is right. I AM a liar. I can cut it any way that pleases but the fact remains that I have entered that group known as the older generation.

A few minutes ago I sat reviewing my life. The progress that has been made and the changes that have taken place. And I felt absolutely ancient.

I remember the old man that came around each evening, when I was young, to light the lamp in front of my house. He climbed a

Country Philosopher

Amos Arthur Holmes



ladder, took out his matches, and soon the street was illuminated. It is so hard for me to realize that they were, in my time, actually using gas to light the city streets. You can easily associate gas lamps with Abraham Lincoln but it is so disquieting when I realize I can associate them with Amos Arthur Holmes.

We didn't have refrigerators. We had ice boxes. Each day a wagon, pulled by a horse, would stop in front of the house and the iceman would cut off a chunk of ice and carry it into our kitchen. All the children in the neighborhood loved the ice wagon, especially in July and August, because as soon as the iceman disappeared into the house we would race to the wagon and steal small chunks and shavings. We would then run down the street as if we had just filched the secret to

the hydrogen bomb.

Of course television was unheard of and so the radio was our greatest source of entertainment. The entire family would sit in the living room, never taking our eyes from the radio set, and be thrilled and enchanted as Jack Armstrong once again fought the sinister threat of injustice.

I remember visiting my aunt and uncle's farm in Virginia. We drew water from a well and carried that water in buckets to the kitchen. The stove wasn't electric, or gas, but wood burning. I don't know how those women cooked on such a stove but they accomplished miracles. The food was delicious and the pies and cakes were heavenly. There wasn't any electricity on the farm so we used kerosene lamps. There was no bathroom and we walked half a mile behind the house to use a slanting structure that had the added excitement of being infested with crawling things and

flying things.

I can remember, back in those times, church services where you didn't find even one single hypocrite. I remember milk shakes that cost five cents and streetcar rides that cost a dime.

I remember that sex was never talked about and how backward we accused each other of being. No dirty movies, or books, and yet sex was exciting and clean and beautiful.

I remember when getting involved in your neighbor's need was an obligation pleasantly fulfilled, when people actually smiled at strangers, and where discipline was as essential as love in the raising of children.

Remembering all these things makes me ancient. I am quickly becoming an antique. A collector's item. Spider webs crossing my brain and moss clinging to my body.

But I deny the age that hovers and threatens. By golly... I'm not going to let myself become old. I'll turn up my stereo and listen to hard rock. I'll read my pornography, wear my flared pants, and dance the Bump with a thousand pretty girls. I'm going to live, kick up my heels, and raise all kinds of hell.

But first, to be on the safe side, I think I'll take a swig of this here Geritol.