

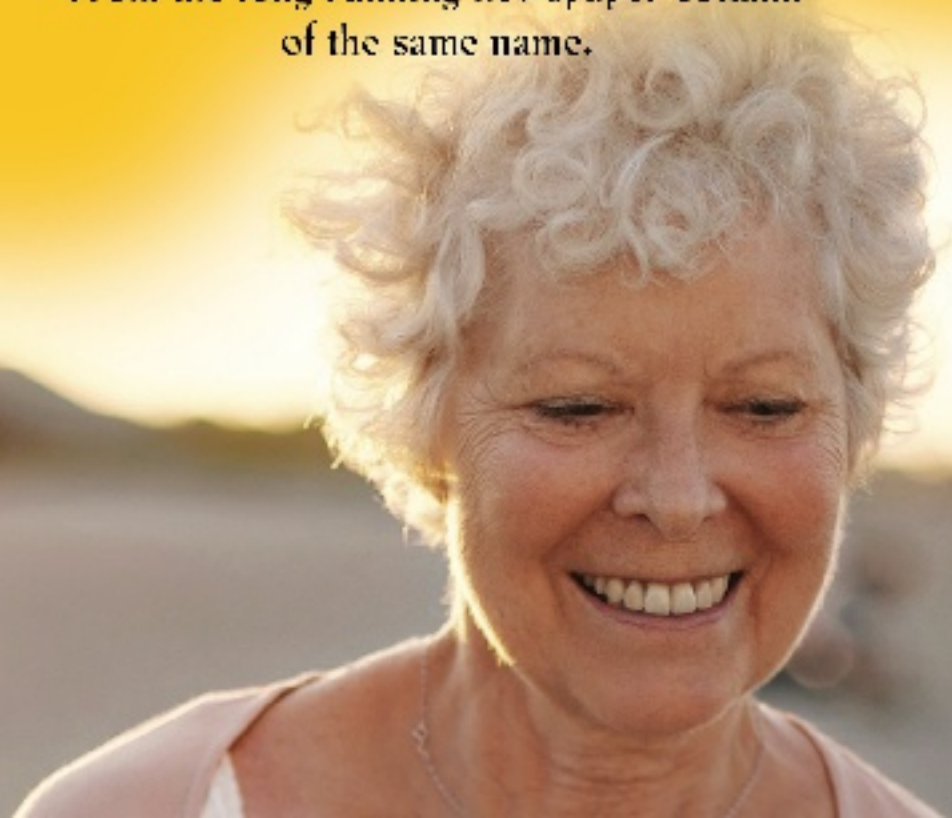
ANN G. THOMAS, ED.D.

# Unmistakably Old

*And doing pretty well, considering...*



From the long running newspaper column  
of the same name.





*From the long running newspaper column of the same name. Forty-nine previously published newspaper columns on navigating as an active and engaged old person who understands that the changes that come with aging are miniscule compared with the changes in today's world. The narrator is a self-identified Unmistakably Old woman, a humorous and poignant new character in today's book world. Her philosophy? Aging is an engine in motion. A drop of humor is the oil that keeps it going.*

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First Edition

## MY NEIGHBORHOOD BANK

Things in my community are changing faster than I am. Each week I make a deposit at my bank, and then cash a small check. The check is enough to cover breakfast with my friend and maybe a coffee or two, but it's not what anyone would call *living on the edge*. With such predictable behavior, there was no way I could have expected a problem.

Yesterday when I arrived at the bank, I noticed the tellers were all very young looking, and today wasn't *Take Your Child To Work* day. There was not one familiar person in sight.

A boy with a shaved head and an eyebrow ring waited on me. His nametag said Kevin.

I handed him my deposit, waited for a receipt, and then gave him my \$30 check, made out to cash.

Kevin stood, looking at the check with all the intensity of one examining a ransom note. After a long moment, he looked at me, focusing toward my left ear. "Do you have any identification?"

"Excuse me?"

"Do you have any identification?" His look shifted to my right ear.

"I noticed you've looked at my check."

He glanced at it again.

"The check has the same number on it as this deposit receipt. The one you just gave me," I added, in case he hadn't been paying attention. "If I were a crook, do you think I would deposit \$500 and withdraw \$30?"

He looked confused, but repeated, "Do you have any identification?"

"Kevin," I said, hoping patience and logic could sort this out, "Do you see my check is printed by your bank, includes my name and address, and says I'm a valued customer?"

He squinted before slowly raising his head. This time he focused on my chin. There was a mumbling quality to his voice as he said, “I don’t know you, so I need some identification.”

“Yes,” I responded, “we don’t know each other. Perhaps we never will. But I’ve been here since 1980, a year that occurred before you were born, which means you are the new person. Since I’ve been giving you money, perhaps I should ask you for some identification.”

Kevin turned to call for the manager, who arrived and listened as Kevin explained the problem. Unlike Kevin, she did make eye contact. Her eyes were not friendly.

“It’s a policy designed to protect you.” Her words were measured- perhaps she thought I was a bit slow. “We need to see some identification before we give your money away.”

I thought I’d try a different approach. “What have you done with the bank’s staff?” I asked. “I’ve noticed they’re missing.”

“We are the staff,” she answered in a strained voice. “If you’ll show us some identification, we can give you your money.” I knew she wanted a picture ID, but I wasn’t giving in that easily. I pulled up my sweater sleeve.

“All right,” I said in my best-resigned voice. “Here is my birthmark. No one else has one like it.”

By now Kevin was trying not to laugh, and I thought I might grow to like him. After all, hair will grow back, and a person can learn eye contact. I was pretty sure, however, that Ms. Manager and I would never become friends.

“A birth mark is not a proper form of identification,” she said.

“Of course it is,” I responded. “The police use it all the time. I’ve seen it on television. Birth marks and dental records are standard ways of identifying people.” By now Kevin was nodding in an affirming manner.

Ms. Manager sighed. “What about a PIN? We could identify you that way.”

“Are you trying to trick an old lady?” I asked. “I think you may have the real bank staff locked up in the vault, and now you want my PIN! Absolutely not! Maybe you should give me back my deposit.”

Ms. Manager took one final look at my account on the computer, and then said to Kevin, “Give her the \$30.”

“Thank you,” I said. “Will you be here from now on so you’ll be able to identify me?”

She was walking away at that point, but I swear I heard her mutter, “I hope not.”



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