



The principal memory of the meeting for me is the renewed recognition of the extreme heterogeneity of older people. This admixture is a defined aspect of aging. I was made vividly aware again of this reality.

I was constantly attentive to the regular appearances on the TV screens of the gorgeous 71 year old Raquel Welsh who is dazzling.

On the other side were too many other 71 year olds in wheel chairs. All skin colors were there, all nationalities, all political affiliations. The tall, the short, the skinny, and too often, the overweight thronged the halls. There was immense good cheer.

We are all growing older undeniably. If the AARP is the face of aging, it wears it well. I hope that it will represent us nobly and in an enlightened fashion.

Editor's Note: I, too, attended the AARP national conference in LA along with my wife, daughter and son-in-law. It was my first AARP show. It was big, glitzy and packed with energy. Something everyone should attend at least once in their lives.

AARP 2012 will be held in New Orleans, September 20-22. It's never too early to sign up. Go to aarp.org/events. 1.800.883.2784.

AARP Up Close

By Dr. Walter M. Bortz II, M.D.

I returned last month from the annual convention of the AARP in Los Angeles. Along with 20,000 of my closest friends, we were immersed in a three day circus with many competing acts.

Hundreds of lectures and seminars overloaded a person's competence. Hundreds of commercial booths featuring everything from encyclopedias to corn plasters to travel deals were rampant.

Unlike last year when I was a featured speaker in Orlando, this time I had a specific political errand to urge AARP leadership to adopt a "health first, repair second" advocacy position.

Certainly the high point of this adventure for me was a conversation that I had with Jane Goodall who is one of my personal heroines.

She gave a Nature first lecture to the adoring crowd. I bumped into her on the floor later. We share African roots. She, of course, in Tanzania in Gombe where her chimps hang out.

I had checked the gorillas in Ruanda. We also shared a connection with the Leakey Institute for Paleontology in Nairobi where we spent most of a six month sabbatical in 1980 and a source of a portion of Jane's research.

The AARP session concluded with a Tony Bennet concert featuring Carey Underwood and Stevie Wonder to celebrate Tony's 85th birthday. If his vocal cords are rusting, I certainly can't detect it.

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