In My Humble Opinion

by

Terry Holcomb

I was in the home of my good friend Jerry a while back when he was taking care of his granddaughter. While I was showing her the www.NeoPets.com site used by my granddaughters, a couple of younger neighbors came over to discuss a computer problem. They were hoping Jerry's son was there so they could ask him some technical questions. After expressing disappointment over the missing son, the granddaughter spoke up. "Why don't you do what my dad does when he can't figure out something on the computer?" "What's that?" they inquired. "Ask Grandpa," the girl said confidently!!!

And she was right. According to the Ohio Department of Aging, the number of seniors who now go online and use computers regularly has jumped 47% from 2000 to 2004. They go on to state that "wired seniors are often as enthusiastic (and as skilled) as younger users". This will change even more as the 'baby boomers (50-58) reach their sixties. Their group is very skilled and 62% are computer literate. (Pew Internet and American Life Project: March 2005 report.

IMHO we need to keep encouraging our peers to 'get on the Net". In addition to letting them know we are not ready to turn over the 'reigns of power" to the baby boomers and Gen-X kids, we need to do it for our own health and happiness. There are several reports (including a Pew report) that indicate that seniors who are connected are happier and MAYBE even healthier. Studies have shown that seniors who become isolated are also more likely to be depressed and inactive.

As we have shown in earlier articles the computer/internet link can be available to almost anyone. There are literally 100's of organizations (e.g. **GoldenBuckeye.com**) that provide help and relief for those with diminished health and handicaps. Try **http://www.seniors.org/resources.asp?id=919** for a good California site. It will lead you to 50 or more sites with information and/or direct help. I also recommend **www.seniornet.org,** a premier senior site.

All of this reminds me of a great computer scientist I met years ago. Navy Rear Admiral Grace Hopper headed Navy logistics out of Norfolk, VA. In 1966 she was forced to retire due to age. Within 72 days the Navy had over 800 failed attempts at getting a payroll software plan to work. They called her back for 6 months (1967). She retired in 1986. At 80 years she was the most honored and the oldest duty officer in the Navy. At 81 she served as a senior consultant to Digital Equipment Corporation. In 1991 she was honored with the highest honor in computer technology. She died in 1992 at age 86. This little (4'11" and 96 pounds) grey-haired lady showed us all that seniors still have a lot to offer. I am proud to have known her. A few years before her death I and a few professor friends were arguing about supercomputers. In ten minutes, with a few pieces of string and a farmer's tale about tractor usage… she set us all straight. I used her lecture for the rest of my career. We seniors still need to lead… show a computer to your neighbors. It may change their life.