

research in brief

New Breed of Old People

As a growing audience in need of Extension expertise, the over-65 crowd has been getting more attention in the journals, or perhaps as we get older we notice more of it. The Autumn, 1974, *Journal of Communication* devoted a large section to "Myths of Old Age" with a generous bibliography and emphasis on communication problems. Beth Hess

of County College, Morris, New Jersey, suggests that a new stage has been added to the lives of the older audience in our society.

She asks, "Since we have never accepted gracefully the physical changes of middle age, how can the transition to old age be anything but stressful?" Then she reminds us that, "Today's old people are the first to survive in large numbers into an old age of retirement from work and family roles, in fair health, and with a good deal of confidence in their capacities for coping."

Radio and television keep the old people informed on what's happening to everyone else, but information about the old people themselves fails to get attention in the mass media. She says the elderly are poor consumers of advertiser products, and they're poor copy because they remind us of role loss, deprivations, and ultimate demise.

Hess suggests that specialty magazines, such as *Modern Maturity*, can cover information about the elderly. Yet those of the younger set, who, by the way, are getting older, won't be getting the facts. "We are unlikely to find out more about what we refuse even to think of," she comments.

Her study shows a need for organizations, such as Extension, to program more information, role models, and positive images of the aging to all age groups.

"Stereotypes of the Aged." Beth B. Hess. *Journal of Communication*, XXIV, No. 4 (Autumn, 1974), 76-85.

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