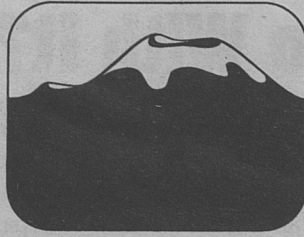


# opinion

## VOICES FROM THE MOUNTAINS

by jon appleton & carlos nakamura



# Love Across the Generations: a personal view - Part II

*This is a story with two perspectives. Last month we heard from Jon Appleton. This month his partner, Carlos Nakamura shares his views on the same subject.*

### Carlos's Story:

I do what I do. Period. I have always lived in the present. I was never good at planning ahead professionally, economically, or sentimentally. I don't have a savings account, a career plan, or any idea what my life will be in a year or two. Carpe diem. I take one day at a time and try to live each to the fullest.

Of course this attitude has put me into tight spots and probably will lead to others, but I can proudly state I've never had any regret, at least not for things I have done so far.

I remember telling Jon when we exchanged our first e-mail messages that I'm never afraid of making a bad decision — though I've done it repeatedly — but I am afraid of losing opportunities that might never come again. I'm afraid doors I never dared open might close and I will never know what was behind them. That sounds like the attitude of a stubborn child who, no matter what adults say, has to touch the stove to see if it is hot.

In my twenties, I never thought seriously about a stable relationship. The world seemed to demand my attention and interest with so many other things. So much to do and see — so little time. And sex...well, sex is not difficult to get when you're in your twen-

ties and in Brazil. Eagerness and enthusiasm compensate for lack of experience and technique.

But even then, I always felt something was not quite right about casual sex. Something was missing, something was incomplete. An orgasm is pretty basic; your five ol' friends can get you there as fast as any hunky porn star, sex-god, or buffed stud. It also spares you the embarrassing rituals of post-coital exchange of phone numbers never to be called.

What is really missing is affection, warmth, something that bonds two people and goes beyond those seconds when your balls pump fluids through your vas deferens. Lovers come and go, but friends stay with you, sometimes forever, because they compromise, care and like you for what you are, not for the size of your pecs or pecker.

Of course, I had to reach my thirties to realize this.

So here I am, in my thirties, realizing that a meaningful one-to-one relationship is important after all; that having someone who can be lover as well as friend can mean a great deal. Then crude reality dawned — very few are willing to commit in same-sex relationships. It would take a psychosexual thesis to hypothesize on the non-committing nature of gay men, and I was never much of a conceptual thinker. I am a pragmatist by nature, and empirical experience taught me that the earth would turn into a dark ball of cinders before I'd find a good match. But I had something worse than opti-

mism — I had hope.

And I had sleeping problems too, so I would spend nights surfing the Web, trying to meet interesting men. Some can be exquisitely precise about what they want; check personal ads to see for yourself. If you're a GWM, 25 y.o., blk., blue, 6'2", 170#, musc., non-smkg, grad. deg., someone is looking for you. Me? I can't even be specific when buying underwear. I've been a generalist all my life and that reflects my tastes in men as well. The things I sought in a potential partner were vague and hard to define. Maturity and sense of humor can never be described as specifically as blonde hair and green eyes.

To make a long story shorter, having met Jon online and exchanged a few e-messages, I saw he was a real person, not a nameless sexual member. That he was in Japan and I was in Brazil helped me think with the upper half of my body. After a while, we progressed to phone calls. Communication always flowed naturally; he made me laugh and challenged and inspired me intellectually and emotionally. I suppose that he has been married and raised three children made him all the more attractive. I always believed marriage improves the man — as divorce improves the woman. Maybe because men who have been married learned to commit, maybe because marriage gives them a broader, wiser view of relationships.

After a few months of virtual dating, we both crossed

oceans and finally met in Vermont. That was all we needed to decide to live together. Of course, there were all the usual fears and doubts when leaving your country, family, and friends to make a new start in a place where you don't know anyone and speak the language only to a certain degree. But I did it, and I'm exactly where I want to be, with whom I want to be.

The fears are never really gone, but they don't shape my life — my hopes do. The age difference is one of Jon's main concerns, but it has never been an issue to me. I've never stopped to think about it. I have good friends who are 19 and friends in their mid-fifties, and I can't say what they all have in common. There's just chemistry that works between us. They all have their qualities and flaws that makes a coherent whole.

As people have this balance in their personalities, they achieve the same kind of balance in physical attributes. I have met people with mental deficiencies who were extremely captivating through their warmth and good heart. I have read accounts filled with contagious joy, hope, and lucidity, written by people who cannot leave their beds. Just think of all the things Stephen Hawking has accomplished without command of his own body neck down. Even in the worst situations, you learn to live with dignity when you realize you are not alone and have something only you can give the world.

Death is something I don't

think about. As an atheist, I don't expect to find anything on "the other side". Everybody is going to die: you, the ones you love, the ones you hate, not necessarily in this order. What's the chance I'll die tomorrow? What about in the next few months? If ultimately each and every one of us will die one way or another, why bother with statistics? There's no way I'm going to choose friends or lovers based on how long they might live, though I try to make sure they exhibit life signs when we first meet.

Finally comes sex. I don't want to make too public a statement lest Jon become full of himself and start to brag, but frankly, sex has never been better. I'd say I've become much more sexual since I met Jon. Personally, I find monogamy a big turn-on; it's not sexual performance but the idea of intimacy, belonging. Having sex now is like having the circle closed, achieving a state beyond a physical discharge. I have often heard this from my female friends, but it is difficult to find the same attitude in men.

Having said it all I will finish by saying that after nine months, the only thing that still stands between Jon and me is Vermont's glacial winter. Wouldn't I look good in a mink coat? (Oops, I mean a down parka!)

*Carlos Nakamura was born in São Paulo, Brazil in 1966 and has lived in Vermont since 1999. He is a former dancer, a licensed architect, and currently a graduate student. ▼*

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