

DRESSING UP

For the past seven years, my husband (age 75) and I (63) have been living in silence and seclusion, pursuing our own interests, usually dressed in pull-on cotton pants and loose overshirts. Ernie photographs birds, reads Shakespeare, and trains for race-walking in the Senior Olympics. I practice meditation, study William Blake, and create needleart.

But on Saturday nights we dress up and party.

In our separate rooms, we rummage through the remainders of our past business, social, and recreational wardrobes looking for odd, interesting, and unique combinations of apparel and accessories with which to delight, amuse, or at least surprise, each other. I brush out big my long white hair and clasp an ornament in it. Once in awhile Ernie shows up in a suit and tie, which he never wears otherwise, and somehow, without any prior discussion, I choose black and pearls. On big occasions--Winter Solstice, our wedding anniversary, birthdays--by agreement we go formal, Ernie in his tuxedo and I in an evening gown or full-length hostess skirt, with corsage and boutonniere. We play Dave Brubeck's soulful solo, "Just You, Just Me." And as we salute each other with our glacial martinis, we recite these lines by Lu Yu:

The clouds above us join and separate,
The breeze in the courtyard leaves and returns.
Life is like that, so why not relax?
Who can stop us from celebrating?

And here we are, celebrating our anniversary, all dressed up just for each other!

