

# A Story a Week ...

... from woodblock printmaker David Bull

## This Old Man

If any of you have been reading my 'Hyakunin Issho' newsletter, you might have noticed the recent item I included mentioning that my elder daughter Himi was expecting a baby this coming autumn. This is of course a huge milestone for her, one that is going to change her life completely and permanently.

I wonder though, how the arrival of this first grand-child is going to change me? On the face of it, not much will change for me directly; Himi and her husband are planning to set up housekeeping in Vancouver in Canada, a very long way from here, so I won't have much contact with my new grandson (they already know it will be a boy). I am planning to visit them in September, hoping to be there at the time of the birth, but will soon have to return to my home in Japan.

But even though this event won't have much of an impact on my daily affairs, might it have an impact on my way of thinking? After all, sometime this autumn I will become a card-carrying official undeniable grandfather, and I honestly don't feel quite ready for that role! It took me quite a long time to learn how to be a 'father', and now suddenly, only 23 years after that, I am going to have to learn a new part in the play!

From the point of view of the children who live in my neighbourhood, there is no problem. As far as they are concerned, my full white beard already puts me into the 'old man' category. They don't call me 'grandfather'; they have something better - I am known as 'Santa Claus'!

So if my outward appearance is already suited to this new role, I guess the only thing left to change will be my behaviour. I am going to have to learn how grandfathers behave. Hmmm ... let's see ... perhaps something like this?

"Why, you kids these days have things easy! Back when I was a little tyke, if we wanted to change the channel on the TV, we had to get up, walk across the room, and turn a dial!

"When my mother brought margarine home from the supermarket, it was white. If the family wanted to eat yellow margarine, we had to open up the little packet of food colouring that was enclosed, and mix it in by hand until the colour changed!

"The first person who opened each bottle of milk got to drink the special cream section at the top; whoever came later got only a thin white liquid ...

"Families these days get their newspapers delivered by adult deliverymen; when I was 13, that was my job, delivering more than a hundred newspapers every day!

"We didn't have any of these 'ball-point' pens; at school I had a bottle of ink in my desk, and when my pen became empty, I had to refill it myself!

"When we were in the car and it became too hot, we had to manually crank a handle round and round to make the window open!

"When you want to visit another country, you just jump on a plane, and you're there in a few hours; back in my day we took an ocean liner to get across the sea, taking a whole week!"

Are you bored yet? You are? Hey, maybe I'm going to be good at this grandfather job! :-)

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