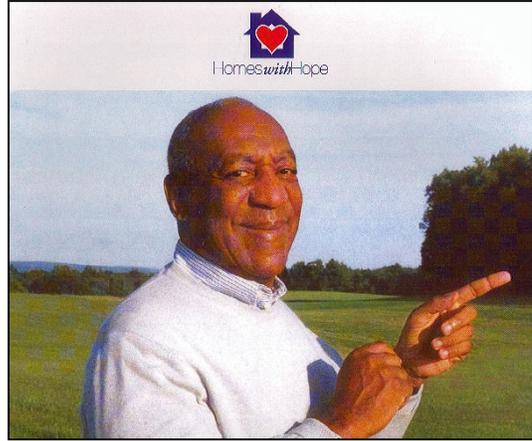


ON AGING AND KNOWING WHEN TO QUIT.

Bill Cosby came to entertain us, but ...

by Vic Berez

Last Sunday we attended a performance by Bill Cosby, always one of my favorite entertainers. The show was in Connecticut where we're spending some time enjoying our oldest grandsons. Actually, it was a very busy weekend. Saturday afternoon we spent watching the boys play in two soccer games. Saturday evening we attended my high school class' *70th Birthday Party* ... that's what initially got me thinking about aging. Sunday, after church (and a great sermon themed on Rogers and Hammerstein's *You'll Never Walk Alone*) we visited my fittest friend in the hospital, where he was recovering from triple-bypass surgery ... producing more thoughts on frailty and aging.



Later, it was the Cosby benefit on behalf of *Homes with Hope*, a Westport interfaith housing association – which I'm sure does a lot of good stuff. [I'll leave until another time the concept of holding a benefit in the city of Bridgeport, where poverty and homelessness are endemic, for a Westport charity. For those who don't know the area, read *Westport* as the privileged centerpiece of the Connecticut *gold coast*.] Let me continue to digress.

Two celebrity entertainers who are about my age, and who I have greatly enjoyed over the years are Roger Whittaker and Bill Cosby. In the 70s and 80s we attended several Roger Whittaker concerts ... he was great. Four or five years ago, we again attended one of his concerts ... back home in Florida. Let's just generously say his *voice lacked the range of total color needed to make it consistently interesting* ... yes, I'm a Harry Chapin fan also. He's dead, enough said. We still listen to Roger Whittaker's great recordings, but that last performance will remain in our memories. He was getting old and didn't know when to quit.

Back to Sunday and on with the show! Out came Cosby, but not with the bounce in his step that we saw in a live performance twenty years ago or in hundreds of TV shows. He shuffled out on the arm of an escort, practically fell into a chair, where he remained until the performance ended. He noted through his *shades* that cataract surgery a week earlier hadn't turned out as promised. Most of his *shtick* was a long rambling homily on family, aging, and how things were better in the old days. Yes, there were moments of very good-natured humor. But, all too often it was hard to discern whether the audience was laughing with him or at him. He ended with the same old *dentist routine* that I remember from the show two decades ago. Like all of us, Bill Cosby is getting old, and I'm afraid he also doesn't know when to quit.

I came to the show expecting to take notes on Cosby's uniquely funny and perceptive views on the issues of race and education for this blog posting. I came away with one quote on my pad: "Don't worry about senility, when you get it you won't know it." All too true. But, even if I don't know it, I hope someone tells me when it's time to quit. Bill, Roger, Harry ... all great entertainers who ...

... left me thinking of my own frailty and mortality.