

## Alexander's Album

by Clifford Alexander

### "WHY HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS NEED EDUCATION IN AGING"

Someone once said that "a little learning is a dangerous thing." Thread-bare as it has become, as long as it has validity, frequent usage makes it all the more acceptable. Gerontologists are using the expression to point out 1) that there exists a necessity for high school students to have a greater awareness of the aging process and 2) that this awareness training needs to be a guided experience.

The necessity for an awareness program is fairly obvious to one who watches TV newscast, read the front section of our daily newspapers, or observes on occasion the treatment of an elderly person as he/she shops at a supermarket. Each presentation, in varying degrees, relates abuses toward the elderly--murders, muggings, burglaries, thefts, insensitivities and indifferences. An older boy who attacks a less able younger child is labeled a "bully." Why hasn't society come forward with a name for a youth who attacks a helpless aging person? Is it because society does not want to deal with the plight of the elderly?

Perhaps the explanation for the neglect and exploitation of the aging rests somewhere in our basic philosophy of life in America. In the history of the world we are a younger country with the attributes of a young persons--independence, production-oriented, worshippers of physical vigor. The senior citizen has no show amid such a philosophy. In a sense he is un-American.

Furthermore, this very vitality of ours has produced technical advances that have enabled our citizens to live longer. Yet little has been done to insure these citizens of a concomitant "good life" as they live out these added years. When do we begin to open up this awareness of the aging process and aging problems? A logical place is while the entire student citizenry is still being formally educated--in high school. This would insure exposure to the greatest number of potential adults in impressionable years.

Attitudes need to be explored and misinformation corrected. Old age is frequently viewed as a period of eccentricity, of mental decline, of ill health, of forgetfulness and of inability to learn or change. The old are also lumped together as a group with fairly identical characteristics as are the very young at the other end of life's spectrum.

What approach is most likely to succeed in helping the adolescent become more aware of the problems and process of aging? Information or experience?

### "ROOTS"



Damon Evans (young Alex Haley) Debbie Allen (his first wife NAN) and Della Reese (her mother) are just three members of a star studded cast of performers that will be seen in "Roots: The Next Generation". The ABC Novel for television certainly one of the most eagerly-awaited television events will air Feb. 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, and 25. Pictured left to right Della Reese, Debbie Allen, and Damon Evans.



There are over six million more women of voting age than there are men.



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