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**Connecting**
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The wrinkle on aging: Her husband's youthful looks

THERE'S A SLIGHT PROBLEM in our house, and I'm sorry to say that it's hereditary. I'm going to look older. I know I am. I can already see creases in my forehead and lines around my eyes, especially if I stand in the bathroom in the sharp light of late afternoon and stare at myself in the mirror. To my astonishment, I find that I no longer look like a schoolgirl.

My husband, on the other hand, cruelly refuses to age. He's 36, three years older than I am, but the truth is, he looks no older than 28. He jokes and calls me "young stuff," but when I hit 40, I'll be lucky if he looks 30. As middle age sets in, it's bound to get worse. If he's anything like his father — and he is — he just won't look any older.

His hair might turn white, like his dad's, but his face will stay so youthful that people will assume his hair is prematurely gray. Long after most men have retreated to golf jackets and polyester pants, he'll be trotting around in a pale pink cotton polo shirt and jeans.

I'M DELIGHTED ABOUT this. I swear I am. I mean, who wants to have a paunchy old codger around when you can be married to someone who remains puckishly boyish? My husband is in possession of a full head of bouncy curls. His skin is unlined and soft. His cheeks are rosy at all times. He never has circles under his eyes, no matter how hard he works. Put it this way: He looks a whole lot better than I do first thing in the morning.

Now, once in a while, I get depressed about this discrepancy, and travel to the cosmetics counter of some department store, where I make a major investment. I buy a \$30 bottle of overpackaged goo and rush home to apply it. I have at least 20 such bottles on the shelves above my bathroom sink, all of them with different purposes. There is the stuff for eyelids, the stuff for lips, the stuff for cheeks, the stuff for forehead wrinkles. The stuff for dry skin oily skin and combination skin.

Three bottles of makeup base, for different seasonal conditions. Blush and eyeshadow, eyeliner and lipstick. Two types of mascara. There are three kinds of sunblock. Most critical is the fat tube of Retin-A. (One day, I am sure, someone will discover that this white ointment not only makes your skin smooth, but also causes your lips to fall off.)

On Ron's sink, there is no such clutter. There is a pump bottle of Noxzema, which he uses if he gets a sunburn. Once in a while, he asks to borrow my "conditioner," by which he means my moisturizer, and I quiz him for five minutes about the exact cosmetic he requires.

"For heaven's sake," he eventually says, "just give me something with oil in it." Sorry, I say snidely, I don't use anything with oil. Collagen, or Vitamin A, perhaps — but no oil.

What I am saying here is that it is only a matter of time before I look like Ron's mother. Not his actual mother, please note. She, too, is blessed with nearly eternal youth, or perhaps it is just a high level of skill with the makeup brush. I don't think it takes an acre of face powder, though. I really think it's genetic.

I USED TO GUFFAW when my mother's friends talked about how much they wanted to have eyelifts and facelifts. None of that stuff was for me, I said. I would grow old grandly, I insisted, like Katharine Hepburn and Georgia O'Keeffe. I would be proud of my wrinkles; they would reflect my rich and fascinating life.

Well. Now I don't know. But I can easily imagine what the last straw will be. Many years from now, we'll be sitting in a playground somewhere, grandchildren dangling from our elbows. I'll be 70. I'll be what they call a handsome woman of a certain age. Ron will be 73. He'll look 50. Some sweet young thing will come bouncing up to us. "Are you having a good time with Daddy and grandma?" she'll ask the kiddies.

And I'll head for the cosmetics department once again. ■

Cathryn Ramin's column appears on Mondays and Thursdays.