

Old Friends

I often find friendship with old people. If they've used their minds and cultivated their souls, they have depth of experience and humanity rarely found in younger people. They've usually cleared away most of the garbage encumbering human relationships and operate more directly from the core of their existence.

Purl was eighty-two when we became friends. He was slower moving than some, but he still took care of himself. He cut and split, loaded and hauled his own firewood and put up extra so he could help someone in need.

He was slow to take up his part of a conversation, not because there were gaps in his mind, but because his experience was eighty-two years deep. When you've lived through two World Wars and the Great Depression, when you've lived that long and observed carefully, there aren't any more instant responses and simple, quick answers. It may become apparent that much of life does not come to answers, to resolution.

He was a man of good humor because he knew that most of the burning questions, in a hundred years, would make little difference, that it was the good feeling between people, the common human experience that mattered.

Valida was seventy-eight when she castigated Bob for his language. "You say fuck and cock and cunt as swear words, and you debase the language and the human, sexual expression of love when you do. These should be beautiful words, expressing a beautiful experience, not words that express ugly emotions. You'll be unable to have any really deep and creative sexual experience until you clean your language and your mind."

She stopped him cold. He thought of her as an old, somewhat shrill-voiced woman who was in the environmental group because she loved flowers and trees. He didn't know she still saw more potential in the human race than he had yet imagined.

He was fighting and hating the sons-of-bitches who mess up the earth. She was trying, with love, to disarm the forces that would destroy the earth, while recognizing the humanness and the potential for good in every individual.