

The Book That Gets Better With Age

By Tim Love

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**Do not go gentle into that good night
Old age should burn and rage at close of day
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.**

Dylan Thomas

INTRODUCTION

We had not seen each other in over a year. My good friend Bob Owens had come to visit, to play a round of golf on a sparkling, sunny day. Bob was best man at my wedding 25 years hence, and we had stayed in touch over the years, despite our family moving to Europe and various different paths each of our careers took over that time. We had not seen each other in some time, so we were really looking forward to a day off work and a day out on the golf course together to get caught up on life.

When I awoke that morning I was excited about being with Bob and catching up on the typical things we always talked about. Being close friends, we used each other to sound out many things we were encountering, like raising a family, adjusting to marital issues, challenges at work and career and just confiding in each other, like old friends do.

I had turned 50 years old the previous November, and Bob had just turned 50 that spring. We both had "friends" who told us we were "playing the back nine, now." So that day on the golf course was something we had been looking forward to for quite some time.

When I came down to the kitchen that Friday morning, I encountered a very angry and surprisingly exasperated Bob. He was in a hissy-fit, complaining and swearing and almost stomping his feet. I thought he might have hurt himself, with all the gesticulating he was doing. He really lost it. It concerned me to see him so upset.

I rushed into the kitchen and pleaded to know what the heck had upset him so much. Bob replied, "I can't stand getting older. I can't see without my glasses. And, if I can't find my glasses, I can't find my car keys. I can't read the damn paper. I can't stand getting older!"

It was in that instant, watching him searching his soul in misery, that something came to me. I said, "Bob, we are not going to talk about this. We need to make a pact between us, as good friends. We are simply not going to talk about what's bad about getting older. In fact, from now on, we are only going to talk about the things that get better with age!"

The look on Bob's face when I said this, could only best be described as totally stunned. He just stared at me. And, as the steam he had been building up started to abate, he seemed to relax a bit. Then he said, "Like what? What gets better with age?"

My reply was quick, "A day of golf with an old friend, like today. Aren't we lucky to have such a great day to look forward to? What could be better than spending time with each other on a wonderful day out on the golf course?"

Again, his look was as though still stunned. But, I could tell he was thinking and the rage was easing. I added, "Some people might say that sex is something that gets better with age. I've heard that some women feel this way, for example. But, any way you look at it is personal. In fact some guys might put a day of golf at number one, and sex, number two." That got a laugh, from Bob.

I told him the reason we needed to think this way was because we knew each other too well. If all we allowed ourselves to do, when we had these precious times to reconnect, was complain about or compare things that get worse as we age, then "We'll just turn into a couple of old men."

Bob and I agreed to drop the complaining, that we really were lucky to have such a lovely day and that no matter how we played, being together for a round of golf was just about perfect. The funny thing was, we never mentioned this topic again the rest of the day.

I have not forgotten. I have been keeping little notes on this subject ever since. Occasionally, I will ask a group at a casual social gathering, like during the after dinner conversation for their thoughts on the subject. I guess it is true that the subject of age does seem to be an ongoing topic for discussion, no matter how old you are, but it certainly does seem to crop up more as your generation of friends and acquaintances matures. I have found many willing suggestions. These are some of the more interesting ones I have gathered, thus far along the way.

Here are the suggestions, one suggestion, one page at a time:

CHAPTER 1: Truth Gets Easier

Tom Burrell is founder and CEO of Burrell Advertising in Chicago, the leading African-American advertising agency in the world. An elegant and thoughtful man, Tom, now in his early 60's, listened to me and then, looking directly at me, quietly and confidently said: "Truth Gets Easy."

When probed for further explanation, Tom, a gifted writer, simply repeated assumptively: "Truth Gets Easy. There's no reason to hold back any longer."

CHAPTER 2: Memory Gets Better

I know, this seems completely the opposite of what most of us actually experience as we grow older. However, I recently noticed something when talking to my 89 year old mother who is now living in an assisted care facility. Ruth Love, ever an amazing positive character, is seriously losing her memory capacity like so many aging parents. She forgets things within seconds, it seems, often repeating questions several times in once conversation. She will call me on the phone to say hello, forgetting that I called her earlier that same day.

There isn't any harm in this, when you think about it. As long as you she is safe and happy, there is actually some benefits regarding the status of memory. She doesn't get herself depressed or into a vortex of despair, because she quickly forgets. She doesn't dwell on disappointment she may have had during her life, because she can quickly forget them as they are recalled. As long as she sees her children, like my brother, who is my hero, who stops by to see her daily, she is fine. This brings her joy, even though she doesn't remember for very long, after these visits.

There is one thing she remembers to say, each time I ask her. When I say, "how are you doing?" she quickly says, "Well, I am feeling no pain."

What a blessing to be able to say this at 89, "I am feeling no pain." As long as she can say this in her cheery way, who cares that her memory is waning. We all know, it is physiologically natural for the min to lose some edge with age. Maybe, in a way, it is actually getting better.

CHAPTER 3: Paying Someone To Do Something For You

Like shoveling the snow in your driveway. Or, cleaning the leaves out of your gutters. Or, mowing the lawn. Or, what have you. Man, does it feel good to pay someone to do some of these things for you!

CHAPTER 4: Frank Sinatra & Cadillac Cars

I couldn't stand listening to Frank Sinatra in my youth. Cadillac's were for "old geezers who wear white shoes." Both seemed to be from another time and for a much older generation than mine.

Now, I know why. Frank's ballads seem to be speaking to me now, and the rhythmic tonality soothes me a world that seems to be out of control at times. Better yet, listening to Frank while riding in the solid, quiet embrace of a Cadillac is quite a special experience, like no other.

I still don't own a Cadillac. It still isn't my cup of tea. However, I recently needed to rent a car on a business trip. They were out of the normal models I rent and offered me a Cadillac instead. I must say, it sure seemed might fine cruising down the highway with Frank's "That's Life" blaring to the high heavens on the radio! Old Blue Eyes and Cadillac Cars go together like Oreo Cookies and a glass of milk. I still wonder what it is about white shoes?

CHAPTER 5: Drinking

This was a suggestion offered early on in my journey, offered by a client of mine. It rather surprised me to hear this suggestion from this seemingly reserved individual. When asked why, he replied: "I am drinking a better class of beverage these days. The wines are finer, the beverages, overall are sipped and savored. When I was young, we drank some horrendous things and often much too quickly."

CHAPTER 6: A Really, Really Good Belly Laugh

Go ahead, let er rip. It feels sooooooo good. And, now, all the health experts say it is good for you, too because it releases endorphins.

CHAPER 7: "Being On This Side of The Grass"

Answer to "What Gets Better With Age?" by a clerk at Motor Vehicles Bureau, after I had been standing in an interminably long waiting line one day.

CHAPTER 8: Saying I Love You

Got a phone call one day shortly after my earlier conversation with Tom Burrell, in Chapter One. He said: "Got another one for you ... saying I Love You."

When I asked for a little more perspective from this man of few words, he answered: "It was harder to express this when I was younger. Now, I don't want to miss an opportunity to say."

CHAPTER 9: Jimmy Berg's Perspective

"I am not sure I have a suggestion. But, it does bring to mind a story I once heard. It is about an old bull standing on top of a hill, when a young bull comes running up to him. The young bull excitedly says: 'Hey, see all those cows grazing down there in the valley below? We could just run down there and get laid any time we want!'

"To which the old bull, looking out of the corner of one eye, calmly replies: 'I have a better idea. We can just meander slowly down the hill and lay every one of those beautiful cows.'

"So, I think one's ability to seize opportunity ... gets better with age."

Jimmy Berg

CHAPTER 10: Facing Adversity

This one came in from another childhood friend of mine, John Flora. John is part of the foursome of childhood friends I have been fortunate to have stayed in touch with for over 50 years. John, Bob, Terry Demaline and I grew up and stayed close friends. We were classmates in grade school and teammates on the variety of sports kids played in a small town in Ohio.

We have had some hilarious discussions of some of the things that can get better with age. But, one day, John sent me this one. I guess he's right. Adversity is definitely not something any of us look forward to. Nonetheless, our experiences along the road of life do seem to allow us to face adversity and each new turn, better as we get older.

CHAPTER 11: The Front Porch

This one came in from a business colleague. She has been able to achieve a wonderfully successful career in a tough business like advertising, and she has managed to balance this with an adoring husband and two children.

Her suggestion: "sitting on the front porch in the evening talking with my husband."

CHAPTER 12: Pacing Oneself

You don't have much choice if you want to enjoy yourself.

CHAPTER 13: Dealing With Authority

My wife Kate came up with this one. She says it works both ways. For example, not letting someone's authority, like an officious sales clerk or administrator, frustrate you, or intimidate you. Also, understanding there are some people and some things you simply cannot change. So, you let them go.

Chapter 14: Siblings

CHAPTER 15: A Sleek Lady in a Short, Short Skirt, Or a Man With Tight Abs

I have heard this from a number of sources. Obviously, it can depend on one's preferences, but you seldom hear the opposite of this getting better with age.

CHAPTER 16: Disposable Income

This one is interesting to think about. One of the greatest fears older people have is whether their money will be sufficient. On the other hand, it could be that money, itself, gets more disposable with age. You surely cannot spend it, or take it with you after you're gone.

CHAPTER 17: Feeling Young

Christine Mueller, a business colleague suggested this one. When you are younger, you are trying to act older. Later on, when you let yourself feel young and let yourself act that way, it feels pretty darn good. We just don't seem to do it often enough, do we?

CHAPTER 18: Marriage

Marriage gets better if it starts out well, and you are to overcome the inevitable twists, turns and periodic wonderment that the grass may be greener, elsewhere. If not, then some folks might not agree with this one.

CHAPTER 19: Wearing Ugly Shoes

In our youth we seemed more concerned with style and appearance versus the comfort in things. As we get older one thing that becomes increasingly important is you want your feet to be comfortable. What's really cool is that people always notice now ugly your shoes are. As we get older people want to know what kind of shoes you are wearing. They know, the uglier they are the more comfortable they must be

CHAPTER 20: The Ability To Amuse Oneself

This submission came from my 18 year old son, Harrison. Harrison said: "When I was young, I was very impatient. It made it hard to spend time for very long without something to amuse myself." He told me he appreciates having a few moments now, when he can just sit quietly and relax and think.

He gets it.

CHAPTER 21: Losing Weight

I mean when you are really getting older.
Something to look forward to

CHAPTER 22: Sunrise & Sunset

Magnificent! Better and Better with each day. Take the time to notice

CHAPTER 23: Giving or Receiving Red Roses

Red Roses are always magical and
always appreciated

CHAPTER 24: (Rated the best suggestion so far)

Drive The Speed Limit

My friend Terry says he used to be in such a big hurry all the time. The other day, he was driving his pickup truck across town when he concluded, "it just felt right, to stick to the speed limit. What's the hurry?"

LOOK FOR "BOOK TWO,
GETS BETTER WITH AGE'

BOOK NUMBER TWO,
GETS BETTER WITH AGE,
COMING AS SOON AS I
GET MORE SUGGESTIONS.

EVEN MORE EXCITING!

(EACH BOOK TO COME WITH NEW SPACE AGE TECHNOLOGY GLASSES FOR ENHANCED
READER PLEASURE.)

