

Old Age Is Another Country: A Traveler's Guide

Page Smith

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Page Smith : Old Age Is Another Country: A Traveler's Guide before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Old Age Is Another Country: A Traveler's Guide:

2 of 5 people found the following review helpful. Nothing SpecialBy John A. LefcourteI read a review of this book in "The Week" and, because I'm turning 69, I thought I'd see what the author had to say as the book sounded good. I was very disappointed. Nothing novel or particularly insightful. Some of the issues are dated but many are still true today. Not bad writing and pleasant enough but I can't recommend it.The author's central theme is that the knowledge and experience of the old people in this country is wasted and that retirement is over-rated and a waste of time so people should keep working and not retire. I think he is very naive in this regard, he appears to have been lucky enough to find a career that he enjoyed, was good at, and was reasonably lucrative. He seems to believe that people should only work at jobs that they enjoy. Unfortunately that doesn't take into account the situation that most people find themselves in, working at a job only because it puts food on the table or for the benefits that it provides.He also doesn't seem aware of the normal disabilities that come with old age, loss of memory, coordination, strength, etc, which also limit one's ability to keep working.6 of 6 people found the following review helpful. Wisdom, common sense, humor - an excellent primer on old ageBy Timothy J. BazzettNoted historian Page Smith wrote this sometimes humorous, sometimes serious, and always thoughtful look at how America treats and uses (mostly does NOT) its older citizens back in the early 90s when he was himself in his mid-70s.Smith tends to put little credence in all of the official pronouncements from "experts" on aging or all of the university degrees and courses on same, saying -"Go and talk to

your grandmother or your aunt instead. She is better than the best textbook. She has lived a life and, with a little urging, she will be glad to share it with you."The chapter called "Wife to Mother" is absolutely hilarious, in which Smith, using his own long marriage as an example, tells how women with a "surplus of mothering instinct," finally have no one but their long-suffering and obviously imperfect husbands to use that instinct with. Think Earl and Opal from the PICKLES comic strip. In another chapter on "Retirement" Smith shows his near prescience in a dream he had: "It was 2010 and I was a spry nonagenarian. More than half the nation was retired and the United States was a wholly-owned Japanese subsidiary." Hmm ... change that to Chinese-owned, and he wouldn't be far off. In a penultimate chapter called "Surprised by Joy" (taken from a C.S. Lewis book), Smith reflects on the joy and wonder of old age, noting "... the whole process of having and raising children which my wife and I took more or less in stride without any particular reflection seems in retrospect quite an astonishing experience, and seeing our children in turn raising their children more astonishing still." Well said; well said indeed. There could perhaps be added a final postscript to this thought-provoking book about our final years on earth. I'd call it "Mr Smith Goes to Heaven." Because reading this book, Smith's last one, was made even more meaningful and poignant to me by knowing that Smith died the same year OLD AGE IS ANOTHER COUNTRY was published. He was 77. I'll note here that I am 68, and had little trouble identifying with most of what Smith wrote here. I intend to pass it along to my mother, who is 95. I'm sure she too will find much here she will recognize. This is simply an excellent book, for young and old alike.- Tim Bazzett, author of the memoir, BOOKLOVER

Noted American historian Page Smith provides a travel guide to the unknown country of old age, a collection of essays designed to show the young what lies ahead of them and stir them into changing society so that when they reach their "golden years," age prejudice and disrespect of elders will be a thing of the past.

From Library Journal Smith (Rediscovering Christianity, St. Martin's, 1993) feebly attempts here to define and confine the experience of growing older. The author's thesis is not clearly specified, however. Chapters "Naming Old Age," "Guidelines," "Retirement," and "Death, Joy, and Love Are the Answers" reflect only fragmentary feelings and information, thus leaving readers without a context to support a definition of the aging process. Facts presented appear to reflect Smith's personal biases, with sweeping generalizations based solely on the author's individual experiences. In the chapter "The Old and the Medical Establishment," Smith briefly treats such a complex topic by blaming the medical profession for failing to respond to human inevitabilities. Any of the chapters could be eliminated without affecting the thread of the narrative. Smith fails to chart the course through the world of aging. Not recommended. Linda Malone, DePaul Medical Ctr., Norfolk, Va. Copyright 1995 Reed Business Information, Inc.