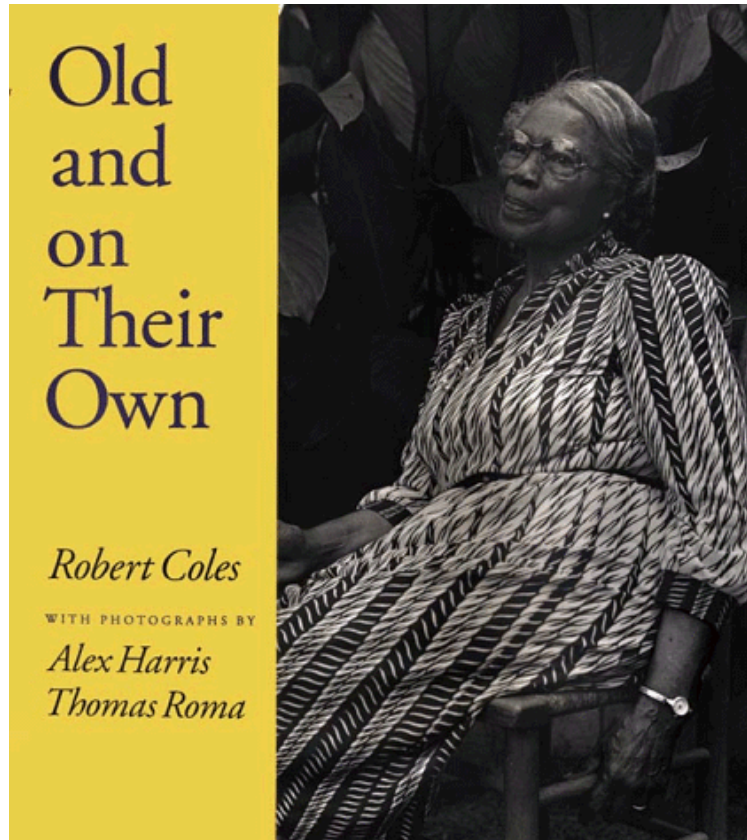


Old and on Their Own

Robert Coles M.D.

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Robert Coles M.D. : Old and on Their Own before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Old and on Their Own:

1 of 4 people found the following review helpful. Awesome!By Dorothy ChanceYes, the author does let us see into himself, but does not deign to "interpret" the men and women who inhabit these pages. Old, old age is a stage of life who's voice we all need to heed. Hints at the kind of life lived "being" rather than "doing" can lead us all to a kind of "spirit" long held "other" and thus leaving us deprived of the balance of long life's wisdom.This book is a gift.

Long recognized for his work with young people, the prominent child psychiatrist and Pulitzer Prize-winning author Robert Coles explores the lives of the elderly in Old and on Their Own. Dr. Coles introduces us to eleven men and women over the age of 75 living on their own. These older Americans share their thoughts, memories, aspirations, and worries, and tell us what it means to be old. Their stories are full of humor and hope, told with courage and dignity. The photographic essay by Alex Harris and Thomas Roma provides an important visual dimension to this book. Harris photographed in Durham, North Carolina, and Roma in his native Brooklyn. Whether rural or urban, black or white, rich or poor, these elderly people emerge as strong and inspiring individuals who deserve our respect and admiration, and who show us how to live our later years to the fullest. 40 photographs

From Publishers Weekly Harvard psychiatrist Coles, author of the acclaimed Children of Crisis series, here inquires of 11 men and women, all of them over 75 and living on their own, "How are you getting on?" Although several of the people are upbeat and only a few are grumpy, the atmosphere of the book is one of depression, and that mood has robbed Coles of the kind of optimism that marked his studies of children. "It's living with trouble, lots of trouble, that's what old age is all about," one woman tells him. One man, who suffers from high blood pressure, heart disease and diabetes, observes: "You never do know if you'll see another day, so you never do relax and just live, the way other folks do," a sentiment shared by another man: "The doctors say I'm depressed, but I tell them no, I'm realistic." The women, by and large, are less melancholic, more positive and cheerful, as witness one 83-year-old who briefly became an alcoholic following the death of her husband and now deals with her "metaphysical anxiety" with ballroom dancing. As they recount the routine discomforts of an aging body—"trouble passing water, bones creaking"—they are very aware that "it's all winding down." Clearly, aging is difficult to accept, and not much easier to read about, though some may find comfort in knowing that they are not alone. Photos. Copyright 1998 Reed Business Information, Inc.

From Kirkus sA series of lengthy and for the most part unrevealing interviews with men and women from 75 to nearly 100 years old, that tells the reader more about the author's attitude toward aging than it does about being "elderly." Psychiatrist Coles (The Youngest Parents, 1997) achieved his reputation with revealing interviews of children that led to such celebrated works as Children of Crisis and The Moral Intelligence of Children. He has recently moved on to a fascination with the technique of documentary writing and photography. A grant from the Commonwealth Fund attuned him to aging in place, specifically nine men and women who have lived at least three-quarters of a century and remain in their own homes, not in nursing homes. His charge is to explore how these subjects deal with their lives. Most of them are waiting for death, starting with a near centenarian who sees only "shadows and more shadows," ending with a couple who've had "sixty-five years of a rocky, troubled life together. To his credit, Coles struggles to put aside his psychiatrist's tendency to diagnose depression, for instance, in men and women who seem caught up in memory and are unwilling to engage the world. He tries but does not always succeed in getting out of their way, letting them define their own lives. One 83-year-old widow stands up boldly for her choices: After her husband died, she began to drink, she stopped drinking to take dance lessons at Fred Astaire (because she loves dancing, not to fill empty time), she now has Parkinson's but will stick with Astaire until she graduates and who knows if there will be any dancing where I'm headed! The substantial section (41 pages) of duotone photographs by Alex Harris and Thomas Roma is essentially without context: The images tell us perhaps sufficiently that age has many faces. Raw material, badly in need of the kind of shaping and informed interpretation that Coles admires in the works of documentary writers like James Agee and George Orwell. -- Copyright 1998, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved. ...beautiful people ... in [a] beautiful book. -- The Nation, John L. Hess