

# AGING

WITH A  
LAUGH  
AND A  
PRAYER

**BERNADETTE MCCARVER SNYDER**

**TWENTY  
THIRD** *23rd*  
PUBLICATIONS  
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*I dedicate this book to my thought-full,  
ever-encouraging friend, Teresa Coyle,  
who convinced me I could write this book, and to  
my youth-full, ever-positive editor, Paul Pennick,  
who convinced me I could get it published!*

**Second printing 2010**

TWENTY-THIRD PUBLICATIONS

A Division of Bayard

One Montauk Avenue, Suite 200

New London, CT 06320

(860) 437-3012 or (800) 321-0411

[www.23rdpublications.com](http://www.23rdpublications.com)

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Cover image: ©istockphoto.com / YinYang

ISBN 978-1-58595-736-1

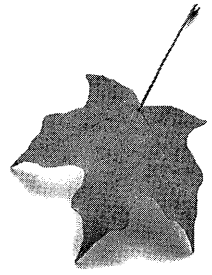
Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: 2008943612

Printed in the U.S.A.

# CONTENTS

|                                 |     |
|---------------------------------|-----|
| Author's Note                   | vii |
| Introduction                    | 1   |
| Laughter is the best medicine   | 3   |
| The man in the red hat          | 5   |
| Betwixt and between             | 8   |
| Prime time                      | 12  |
| Tap dancing into retirement     | 16  |
| Inventing a life                | 19  |
| The sandwich generation         | 22  |
| A guy's look at age             | 25  |
| The French connection           | 29  |
| Cleanliness is next to...       | 32  |
| Help wanted! A caretaker found! | 35  |
| You've got mail                 | 39  |
| It's a mystery!                 | 43  |
| A mind makes itself             | 46  |
| It's in the book                | 49  |
| Never on Sunday                 | 52  |
| The greatest consolation        | 56  |
| Dear diary                      | 59  |

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| Books, paintings, and a houseboat                    | 62  |
| Have weapon, will travel                             | 66  |
| In the news  | 69  |
| We live on a lot of hope                             | 72  |
| From suburban priest to urbanite                     | 76  |
| A “model” for aging                                  | 79  |
| An “event-full” life                                 | 82  |
| Don’t be afraid                                      | 86  |
| When one hundred is a plus                           | 88  |
| It’s a capitol idea!                                 | 91  |
| Keeping track of the “kids”                          | 94  |
| A big man—in every way                               | 98  |
| The moon on a snowy night                            | 102 |
| A doctor’s prescription for aging                    | 105 |
| What’s in a name?                                    | 109 |
| A tutor, prayer partner, and<br>eucharistic minister | 113 |
| Who, what, when, why?                                | 116 |
| Smile—Ike’s taking your picture                      | 120 |
| A highly regarded nap                                | 123 |
| Sunshine, eggs, and Mexican memories                 | 127 |
| Would you like to ride a camel?                      | 131 |
| Seniors helping seniors                              | 134 |



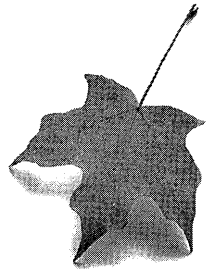
## AUTHOR'S NOTE

All the stories in this book are about real people—some I have personally interviewed, some I have read about, some I have heard about through friends. I hope they all will be interesting and maybe inspiring for soon-to-be-seniors, seniors themselves, and those who live with or care for seniors.

In order to protect everyone's privacy, I chose not to use real names. So if you think one of these stories sounds familiar but the name doesn't fit, it could be the story of someone you know or it might just be the story of a senior with a similar life experience. Each story inspired a short prayer of thanksgiving for wisdom shared or insight gleaned.

I admire and am grateful to all who shared their stories with me and think their responses shed new light on this sometimes troubling, yet sometimes very joyful, "third stage of life."

*Bernadette McCarver Snyder*



## INTRODUCTION

**W**ho? Me? Write a book about aging? I don't know anything about that!

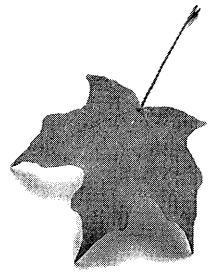
Well, maybe I know a little about it. Most adults know a little because they have older friends or relatives. And now I hear that soon one in five Americans will be sixty-five or over, which means there will be seventy-seven million in what is euphemistically known as the "third stage of life." It's a new Millionaire Club! And every member has a story to tell!

Maybe I wasn't listening carefully before but since I've reached the stage where I qualify for a senior discount, I've started hearing stories from people I know, have met or have heard of—and I have been inspired and enthused! Now I'm eager to share them with you.

The "senior moments" I've collected present folks of various ages who have unique approaches to the plus and minuses, perks and possibilities of aging. I hope their experiences will be "teaching moments" for you as they were for me. Their ideas just might offer a lifeline of new insights, directions, and options for dealing with this new

“third stage of life.” And, yes, the stories include more chuckles than tears.

Whatever stage of life you have reached, I hope you’ll find this book full of ideas for accepting and appreciating each day with a laugh and a prayer.



# LAUGHTER IS THE BEST MEDICINE


A few years ago, when open-heart surgery was a relatively new procedure, Alice McGillicuddy spent some scary hours waiting while her husband, Bob, had his heart fixed. A couple of weeks after he had returned home to recover, Alice ran into a friend who had had the same surgery some time before. With a troubled look on his face, he said to Alice, “I want you to know that one of the side effects of this surgery can be depression.” With one of her devilish smiles, Alice replied, “Yes, I know. I am very depressed.”

Her friend’s mouth dropped and he started to mumble, “I meant your husband...” but then he realized she was kidding and they both laughed. However, it is true that when one spouse has a sudden medical emergency, it has a dramatic impact on the other spouse. Life changes. It’s usually a temporary change because of the need for therapy, new medicine, new diet, etc., but it can be challenging. Fortunately, Alice had a supply of laughs and a pocketful of ideas to keep Bob cheered—plus a flock of friends and family who flew in

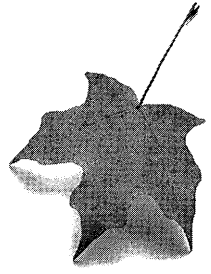


for visits, sent encouraging or humorous notes, brought in dinner, etc. In fact, with all that help, Alice and Bob were so *impressed*, they didn't have time to be *depressed*.

By the time most people near or reach retirement, they've had enough experience with the world to know that a few black clouds are inevitable, but those clouds often come with a bonus—the gift of understanding. Once you've survived a storm yourself, you have new sympathy for others' problems and you have the qualifications to reassure them that even black clouds keep moving and are soon gone with the wind.



Dear Lord, I know you don't have to worry about sending greeting cards but I do—birthday cards, sympathy cards, get-well cards. And I recently found one that I love to send to anyone with a solvable medical problem. On the outside, it reads, “Laughter is the best medicine” and on the inside it says, “For a small fee, I will come over and tickle you. Get well soon.” Maybe they won't think it is as funny as I do but it tickles me to put that card in the mailbox. Of course, Lord, you send the best kind of greeting cards, full of hope and cheer and love, but sometimes we aren't paying attention when they come and we toss them away with the junk mail. Forgive us, Lord. Teach us to pay attention. Teach us to be aware of the messages you quietly send us every day. And please always keep us on your mailing list.



# THE MAN IN THE RED HAT

Eddie Jameson always stands out in a crowd—in more ways than one. Whenever there’s a special occasion, you can’t miss Eddie because he will be the one wearing an Indiana-Jones-style felt fedora—except Eddie’s fedora is bright red! Eddie gets a kick out of wearing that red hat, but he would stand out in a crowd anyway because he’s a really great guy and has had a really great life.

Eddie was working in a defense plant in New Jersey making propellers for warplanes when he got drafted and saw action in the Battle of the Bulge. After he came home and got a G.I. Bill college diploma, he took a job as a newspaper reporter, then joined a public relations/fund-raising firm and traveled all over the country. He was offered a job as director of development at a large Catholic university and became one of the university’s first lay vice presidents. Whew! But he wasn’t finished yet. He left the university to form his own PR firm and when he finally decided to “retire” at sixty-eight, he moved on to a rather unusual retirement job.


Since Eddie had enjoyed bachelorhood and didn't marry until he was a bit past forty, he now had a "young" family of four adult children, eight very young grandchildren, plus his charming wife, golf buddies, and lots of friends to keep him occupied, but he still needed something to "do." Searching the classified ads, he found just the job he needed. His young family was shocked when he announced that he had found a part-time job as a greeter at a funeral home!

Actually, it was a perfect fit for someone with his background. With his New Jersey accent and an Irish wit, Eddie could talk to anyone so he felt he had found a "ministry" where he could help people by offering them an understanding, empathizing presence if they needed someone to talk to or to just share a cup of coffee.

He said whenever he had left a job in the past, he liked to have something "to look forward to" and this job made him get dressed up and get out several days a week, plus he made a little extra "project money" for his left back pocket. He said some of the children he saw at the funeral home just "made his heart sing," and he has great respect for the "saints" he has met during his life.

Just recently, at age eighty-six, Eddie finally decided to retire again because he had enough other things "to look forward to." He is one of a group of volunteers who read the weekly Catholic newspaper on tape for people who have sight problems; he is the designated driver for one of his daughters who travels by wheelchair and sometimes needs a ride to work or to meet friends; he swims

twice a week, likes to take his wife to matinee movies or out to dinner, has a lot of fun surprising and entertaining the grandchildren, often attends daily Mass, and always attends the monthly meetings of the local chapter of the Battle of the Bulge vets. Sounds like he's found enough to "do"—with or without the red hat—unless he starts looking at those classified ads again.



Dear Lord, the other day I heard someone talk about a "psychic" predicting the future and she said, "The only way to know the future is to plan it." Seniors don't have to do lots of long-term planning anymore like "what I'll do when I grow up," but short-term planning sounds like a good idea. If we always plan something to "do" tomorrow or next week or maybe next month, we'll always have "something to look forward to," like Eddie does. Lord, I know you have a long-term plan for me and I expect to enjoy that. Right now, though, I have lots of fun things on my short-term to-do list. Thanks, Lord, for that—and for all the doers like Eddie!