



The Virtues of Aging

Reviewed by Frumi Rachel Barr, MBA, PhD

Author: Jimmy Carter

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Author bio and credits:

Jimmy Carter was the 39th President of the United States. In 1962 he won election to the Georgia senate and became Georgia's seventy-sixth governor. Jimmy Carter served as president from January 20, 1977, to January 20, 1981. Noteworthy foreign policy accomplishments of his administration included the Panama Canal treaties, the Camp David Accords, the treaty of peace between Egypt and Israel, the SALT II treaty with the Soviet Union, and the establishment of U.S. diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China. He championed human rights throughout the world. On the domestic side, the administration's achievements included a comprehensive energy program conducted by a new Department of Energy; deregulation in energy, transportation, communications, and finance; major educational programs under a new Department of Education; and major environmental protection legislation, including the Alaska Lands Act.

Author's main point: The virtues of aging include both the blessings that come to us, as we grow older and what we offer that may be beneficial to others. This book is his attempt to describe what he considers as the virtues of aging.

A few supporting ideas President Carter was 56 years old when he was involuntarily retired from the White House. In addition to dealing with the issues of suddenly not having a purpose or a job, this event was very public and very humiliating for him. In addition to these issues, he and Rosalynn were also facing potential bankruptcy and an empty nest.

After a grieving period (cocooning) they gathered courage to assess their talents, experience, and potential influence in affecting some of the social and political issues in which they had an interest. They began jointly to explore completely new commitments.

The book describes through anecdotes, the Carters' experience with the trade-offs of aging. Carter mentions the following points:

- The physical aspects of aging

- The prejudice that exists toward the elderly which is similar to racism.
- They recognize, that while their situation may be more public, they are subject to the same common question: "How could we ensure that our retired years would be happy, and maybe even productive?"
- So when are we old? When we think we are - when we accept an attitude of dormancy, dependence on others, a substantial limitation on our physical and mental activity, and restrictions on the number of people with whom we interact.
- The history of respect or lack of it for the elderly over time.
- Societal changes -life expectancy; technology; and retirement habits.
- The future's impending crisis and the impact of baby boomers. This is just an overview and better covered by Dychtwald.
- Successful aging.

Reviewer's recommendation: This is a light easy read. It reinforces many of the trade-off concepts and phases of aging that Frederic Hudson covers in *The Adult Years* and Dychtwald covers in *Age Power*. It wasn't one of our best required reading books but the fact that a former president wrote it made it more interesting.

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About the reviewer: Frumi Rachel Barr, MBA, PhD

Many CEO's find themselves asking "What now?" to sensitive situations that only an experienced former CEO can understand. Frumi is brought in to solve problems and often remains to work with you, as your confidante and secret weapon. She has an uncanny knack of getting to the heart of your corporate climate and maximizing your team's performance, profitability and sustainability.

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