

**THE JOY
OF
GROWING OLD WITH GOD**

YAV PUBLICATIONS
ASHEVILLE, NORTH CAROLINA

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We are especially grateful for the artistry of Vern Hippensteal who has lent us not only the cover art but also renderings from two of his other pieces, reproduced here in black and white with two of his poems.

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O give thanks unto the LORD; for he is good;
for his mercy endureth forever.

1 Chronicles 16:34 (KJV).

Teri Pizza, Project Coordinator for
The Joy of Growing Old with God

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FOREWORD

Over the last twenty years the median age of America has increased 4.3% to 37.2 years old as of 2012. Those between forty-five and sixty-four now compose 26.4% of the population. America is aging at a rapid rate and more and more people are assessing what this means for their life. With the average retirement age in America being sixty-two, many Americans have over eighteen years to contemplate the meaning of their retirement and “senior years.”

This book, *The Joy of Growing Old with God*, captures the reflections of several people who have found joy in the aging process. The authors wanted to provide a story that would encourage and inspire their children, their children’s children, and others of the joys they were experiencing as they passed through this time in their life. An AARP Magazine article, “The Good Life” stated, “The older you are, the more likely you are to value religion, says a new Pew Research Center survey, ‘Growing Old in America.’” The authors in this book found this to be the case in their lives and therefore chose to focus their reflections on how their relationship with God has influenced their perspective of these years. Their stories grow out of their eyewitness

accounts and experiences that they hope others will find meaningful.

These authors believe that age strips away the pretense of younger years and leaves bare the soul that is happily ready to listen to its Lord and Master. Even though the latter years may be filled with some medical issues and other challenges, these authors believe that their lives now are bigger, better, and more profound than they were when they were younger. Through these letters, poems, testimonials, and essays, they share the spirit and enthusiasm they have for life with God in their later years.

Any profits from this book over the costs of publishing will be donated to public libraries for the purchase of children's religious storybooks.

*—Rev. Ronald Lukat
Gatlinburg Presbyterian Church*

Lucy Neeley Adams

Year of birth: 1934

Age at writing: 75

Current residence: Lake Junaluska, NC

Occupation: Homemaker and Author

Lucy Neeley Adams and her husband, Woody, have been in the ministry for over fifty years in Middle Tennessee churches. They have also been missionaries in Korea and New Mexico and served on a college campus.

Their children, John, Scott, Ben, and Joy have blessed them with fourteen grandchildren and three great grandchildren. Lucy loves music and is the author of the book 52 Hymn Story Devotions. Her website is www.52hymns.com.

Religious Affiliation: Long's Chapel United Methodist Church.

Personal Scripture:

The thief cometh not, but for to steal and to kill and to destroy; I am come that they might have life and that they might have it more abundantly. *John 10:10 (KJV).*

REMEMBERING MY DADDY – WADSWORTH BURNSIDE NEELEY

September 23, 1890 – February 20, 1968

Lucy Neeley Adams

The last day I saw you, Daddy, you were in your hospital bed. That was an unlikely place for you to be because your life had been so full of manual labor. Your snow-white hair and your baby blue eyes reminded me of your very active years.

That busy life began quite early didn't it? As the oldest child you had to assume much responsibility at 12 years of age when your mother died. In fact, I believe your broken heart never really healed. Her pictures look lovely as well as loving and you were that special first child. Your father, who was very busy in his ministry at various churches, needed and trusted you to take care of your younger brother and two sisters.

Thank you for the many stories you told me. When you rode your horse, Dixie, to the neighbors' barns to pick up slop for the hogs, it must have been a terrible job. But the amazing experiences you told were always interesting. It was hard for you to tell about Dixie's death from "blind staggers."

I treasure the story of your receiving another horse that you trained. I never tired of the many times you recounted the history of your wonderful Prince Maxwell—"the horse that could see-saw, kneel down, get a shoe shine, and tell the time of day by your own watch." I usually saw a few tears in your eyes as you remembered that happiness.

But heartbreak became a part of your life again didn't it Daddy? There was a day you had to pack the show away and go back home, never to return to the bright lights of the stage and the applause. A big hole was left in your dreams but you did a wonderful thing when you got home. You came back and married your sweetheart, Louise, who became my mother and taught Prince another great accomplishment. Each day when you told him it was time to get the mail he trotted the short distance to the post office. The postman filled the bag you had placed in Prince's mouth, put it securely between his teeth again, and he trotted back home. After knocking on the door with his front hoof, he would deposit the bag at the door and return to the backyard.

My ears, my heart, and my wide eyes always spurred you on to "tell it again, Daddy, tell it again." You never refused any invitation to tell that story except when you were in the latter years and were afraid that you would cry. I imagine you heard many times during your childhood the untrue statement, "big boys don't cry."

Thank you for filling my dreams with those memories of yours. Thank you for the

baseball games we attended together, the movies we went to, and the lemon ice cream we ate sitting at the table in Five Points. Thank you for letting me “go on the job” with you whether it was building, weather-stripping windows, or painting houses. I learned how to hammer a straight nail, how to use a screwdriver, and to sweep up the mess after sawing boards.

I am sorry that I was not an enthusiastic helper when I became a teenager. There were many new things on my mind. You remember that boyfriends became very important to me. You got angry at times but we usually worked through it.

So when I look at the little mountain summer home you built for our family at Lake Junaluska, I can see a few places where my handprints are evident. I love the places preserved in cement where we put the three leaves to represent the three ladies in your life, Mother, Margaret, and me. In fact, naming our cottage, “Mar-Luce” for us will always be a blessing from your loving heart.

Daddy, do you think that you pushed Margaret into performances with her singing and dramatic ability to fulfill your smashed dream of being on stage with your horse, Prince? Did you know that I wanted to be a star like the one you never got to be? Did you know that my dreams were frustrated because I didn't have the musical talent to do what Margaret did?

Now that I am older it is a huge blessing to know I only need to be who my heavenly

Father wants me to be. When I wrote about that in a brief devotional for the magazine *The Upper Room*, I was eager to show it to you the last time I saw you. It certainly brought laughter when you thought I had written the WHOLE magazine.

Age is a blessing when I remember my early years at home. I am thankful for a Daddy who loved me and protected me. I am grounded in the words that Jesus spoke to his disciples ...rejoice because your names are written in heaven. *Luke 10:20 (KJV)*.

Since you, too, were assured of that promise, we will be together again someday—at home—our heavenly Home. My dearest daddy, I love you!

[This story first appeared as an article on June 15, 2011 in *The Mountaineer* of Waynesville, NC, where Lucy Adams was a guest columnist.]

Teri Pizza

Year of birth: 1947

Age at writing: 64

Current residence: Gatlinburg, TN

Occupation: Retired Realtor

I count as my greatest achievements my marriage of nearly forty years, my two children, and the four grandchildren they have given me. I like to read, write, and garden.

Religious Affiliation: Episcopal

Personal Scripture:

Be still, and know that I am God.

Psalms 46:10 (KJV).

RE: GOD

Teri Pizza

Years have gone by and I have entered into my old age. The joy is that I am finding out more about my Resurrected God. Consequently, I am learning that old age is just a vehicle toward knowing my Lord, my Master, my Teacher.

He is about repair and renewal, restoration and reliance, refreshment and recreation. He is the reason for reconstructed lives, revived relationships, and redirected energies. He allows us to be recognized, regenerated, and rehabilitated. He is a remarkable and reliable God.

And, no matter what age His children may be; no matter what has transpired in our lives, He is relevant. No matter how far or how often we have turned away from Him, He is always ready to assure us that there is nothing man has done that God can't RE-DO & REDEEM!

For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, no principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor heights, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Romans 8:38–39 (KJV).