

The Mud Derby



AS THE MUD FLEW and the F-150's engine roared, the question occurred: What does it mean to "grow old"?

The adventure started when my Aunt Anna heard what her grandnephew was planning for his high school graduation party. Instead of the usual open house, he planned a demolition mud-derby behind his home.

It was too much for my aunt to resist.

Needing a car, she placed the following ad in the local paper: *WANTED: 68-year-young great-grandma needs cheap running car for a mud derby, good brakes preferred, don't tell Grandpa!*

That ad was too much for her older sister, my Aunt Martha, to resist. So the next day, a new ad appeared: *WANTED: 70-year-old grandma needs a cheap running old car that will outrun the 68-year-old great-grandma's car at the mud derby.*

That ad was too much for my 64-year-old mom, the youngest sister, to resist. So the third day, appearing below both of the above, came a final classified: *WANTED: Two un-motorized wheelchairs to carry the grandmas off of the mud derby. The younger, sensible sister.*

With the date of the derby nearing, the wheels were in motion. Aunt Anna procured a 1991 Astro van with more than 335,000 miles, to which she strapped a mannequin in a rocking chair.

Aunt Martha arrived with a son and grandson, each with their own beaters.

And my mom? Forgoing the wheelchairs, she arrived with an old farm truck decked out, Beverly Hillbillies' style, with garage sale signs, old boots, and life vests—and a scarecrow buckled in the passenger seat. The newspaper sent a reporter to cover the senior carnage.

The Saturday dawned under water-laden clouds, leaving the track covered in dewy grass and globs of mud. Wary of the conditions, my mom asked my wife and me to join her in her truck. So we found ourselves sandwiched next to a scarecrow, with the pop and hiss of old engines cranking around us. As the flag dropped and the race began, there was the question: What does it mean to "grow old"?

The passing of the years causes our bodies to change. But what does the passing of the years do to our souls? What should it do?

The Bible speaks of our need to "become mature" (Eph. 4:13) and to "put childish ways behind" us (1 Cor. 13:11). We are to

"grow up" in Christ. But does "growing up" in the faith mean "growing old"? Does "letting go of childish ways" mean letting go of childlike qualities such as imagination, creativity, and the wonderful capacities to play, risk, and laugh?

Sitting in a rusty pickup, I decided that the answer to those questions is a resounding no. For it was none other than Christ himself who said, "I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God *like a little child* will never enter it" (Mark 10:15).

We are to be mature kingdom citizens, yes. But in our maturity we are to be as children.

So maybe three decent, proper CRC grandmas rolling around a mud track with peach-fuzz-faced young men is a good object lesson. Growing up in Christ doesn't mean sitting back in your rocker. Sometimes it means strapping the rocker to an old van. And gunning it. Amen. ■



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Laughter is
carbonated holiness.

— ANNE LAMOTT