

## Natural Allies

My white-haired father was recently seated in a department store, waiting patiently for my mother who was wrapping up her holiday shopping.

A little fellow, about three, noticed my dad and shyly approached him. Grinning, the boy engaged him with small talk and inched closer. After a pleasant conversation, the boy was called by his dad, who was ready to leave the mall. As he walked off, he asked, "Dad, was that Santa?"

Amid the flurry of activity, these two gentlemen had found a bit of time and space to enjoy the moment. Unbothered by the commotion of the crowd or the deadline demanded by the calendar, they were able to focus entirely on each other. This small incident reminded me how much young children and older people have in common.

While the Big People in this world have a long list of things to do, both young children and the elderly have the perspective to just be in the moment.

Young children haven't yet shouldered responsibilities which require them to always be looking forward. They don't have to plan for tomorrow or next week or next year. Their tasks are related to what new experience they need to master at this very moment. They bring their full attention to the present, undistracted by thoughts of tomorrow.

Older people have lived that frantic life of always forging ahead, mentally beyond the current time and place. They have now come back to the point where they began, appreciating the moment and whatever treasures it may hold. They have learned that every day is a gift, each one passing in the blink of an eye.

Our little ones and our elderly share another significant trait. They are both somewhat minimized by our society. Great-grandparents and great-grandchildren may not be heard when they contribute significant ideas. Even though they possess the wisdom of age and the clarity of childhood, they are often undervalued.

So they find in each other natural allies. While the world rushes by, they gravitate to each other with a giggle and a wink. They understand on some level that the Big People often Miss the Point, and they enjoy this secret they share.

Miles often separate children from grandparents. Many children have limited experiences with people older than their own parents.

Parents might do well to seek out some older friends and invite them to dinner. Your children will love hearing about how different life was when they were children. And they can enrich the circle of love which supports your children's

development. Because they are rarely with little ones, they will be awed and adoring of your child's antics and abilities.

And don't be surprised if, when you go to clear the dishes, you hear some giggling in the dining room.