

AS ONE AGES ONE SEES

by Ivy Pate Estrada

I observed the woman smiled in response to her recognition of a solution not reached; a disagreement unresolved; the other party's refusal to listen to the details she explained; in response to the question she heard and thought too ridiculous to answer; in answer to the question she heard whose purpose seemed only to suggest a conclusion; when the question she asked was not answered; and because the other party's attention waned while she expressed something important to her.

On the face of an old person, I now understand a smile can mean many more things than it did when that person was a child, a young adult or in mid-life. Is her smile strategic? Is it prudent? Does it signal acceptance, resignation, a sense of futility or a feeling of "never the twain shall meet?" Does it mean she feels she is dealing with circumstances that are clearly not following the plans in her head? Is she not bothering to negotiate or to expect certain scenarios or outcomes, and is she now simply smiling? And pondering further, is it possible that some people choose to smile long before others?

As I age, how clear it becomes that a gentle SMILE may signal much more than agreement, joy or pleasure.