

What is our concept of “old?” in regard to human beings? There can be a variety of answers, some more meaningful than others. And, we are prone to make snap judgements in regard to this question. “Senior citizen” is a term I have always found offensive, along with its shortened form, “Seniors.” And, that designation means different things, depending on the situation. It used to be for people over 65, therefore eligible to have Social Security. Then, it dropped down to 60 when many men and women retired at that age. Now, some people quit jobs at even younger ages. Are they Senior Citizens now? I sometimes judge “old” by how I am treated. Gray hair leads to well-meaning but unacceptable—to me, at least—offers of help. “Can I carry that for you? Do you need help with that?” These are questions that are increasingly a part of making any purchase that is weighty or large. My standard answer is, “Thank you, but as long as it is no heavier than a bale of hay, I am fine.”

All of us remember thinking, when we were little kids, that teenagers were old. As teenagers, anyone over thirty was positively ancient. Couples with small children view fifty-year old parents as old. And those same fifty-year old soon to retire individuals see the over sixty-five crowd as “old.”

I have come to the conclusion that a person is old when they are ten years older than me. We are remarkably inflexible in regard to our views about aging and yet our assessment of that same issue changes constantly. This is a very curious aspect of human behavior.

We are hearing a lot about aging these days in regard to politics. Why is this such an issue? Joe Biden is 80. He has presided over one of the most successful four years of legislative actions that have provided programs that are actually helping people. He is running for re-election against a man just marginally younger who has spent his life thinking and acting only in his own self interest—abusing women, refusing to pay workers, cheating people who put money into an “education” at his “university,” and most recently, endangering our most necessary alliances in this uncertain and dangerous world.

President Biden has knowledgeable people around him that are doing the work of a sensible administration. If he is fortunate, he will be in good health for another four years. If he is not lucky enough to live to an older age, that is what the office of Vice-President is for. William Henry Harrison died after just thirty-two days in office in 1841. Zachary Taylor died in 1850, also from natural causes. Abraham Lincoln was assassinated in 1865. James Garfield was shot by an assassin in 1881 and died after two months. William McKinley lived only a little over a week after being shot. Warren Harding died in office after suffering a heart attack. Franklin D. Roosevelt died in office from a cerebral hemorrhage in the waning days of World War II. And John F. Kennedy was shot in November of 1963 as he rode in a motorcade in Dallas, Texas. All of these Presidents were succeeded by their Vice-Presidents, and the country did not collapse. Those who were second in command assumed the duties of President of the United States, and the country carried on, did not fall into disarray, and life went on. In the unfortunate case of the death of any President, our Constitution has made adequate provisions. We should depend on that. As of now, the choice is between two men who are both considered “old” by anyone under sixty. One is a responsible, capable person who has led the country well for four years. The other is a person who failed the country during the Covid crisis, who makes irresponsible statements regarding our allies

and our position in the world, and who denigrates and dismisses immigrants to our country— a land where all of us are immigrants. He is also a person who promises to punish anyone who does not agree with him. Of course, there is also the small matter of several criminal indictments — for inciting an insurrection against our government, for refusing to give back secret documents that he later shared with others, and for paying hush money to Stormy Daniels. And then, there is the defamation of E. Jean Carroll and the ongoing difficulties with the State of New York.

Remember, “old” is not a designation of incompetence. There are other reasons for rejecting a political candidate. Read a little history.