

Older but Wilder

Effie Leland Wilder Laurie Allen Klein Illus.

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In her third book, Wilder has responded to her readers' request for another novel of what it means to live life at the fullest for Hattie McNair and her fellow residents at Fair Acres Retirement Home. Miss Hattie has just returned to the home after enduring a knee replacement—she compares her P.T. (pain and torture) therapists to drill sergeants in the Marines.

The pace of Wilder's writing is enlivened by her humor and spirit and enriched by her wisdom to handle the challenges of aging. There are hilarious changes some of the residents make, such as using the stove oven to store extra shoes or the burner holes for potted plants. The sadness of losing one's friend between dinner and breakfast is a hard reality in a place like this, but then there are fresh starts—one resident wins a huge cash prize and donates the money for the swimming pool they have all longed for.

Wilder has been rightfully praised for her gift as a storyteller. She has not only raised children, but has been active in civic affairs, has self-published a number of books, is an accomplished musician, and is the recipient of numerous awards. Her first novel was published when she was 85 years old and is now in its sixth printing. Wilder lives at the Presbyterian Home of Summerville, S.C., and draws on her own experiences for her fictionalized situations and characters. In a gentle way, she pokes fun at growing older, but you know that life at Fair Acres is very real.

PAT WOLFF (September / October 1998)

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