

# When You're So Old

by Robert Mealey

My friends quite often ask of me,  
why does an old man plant a tree?  
It grows so slow it will not pay,  
a profit for you anyway.  
Then why in storm and winter cold,  
do you plant when you're so old?

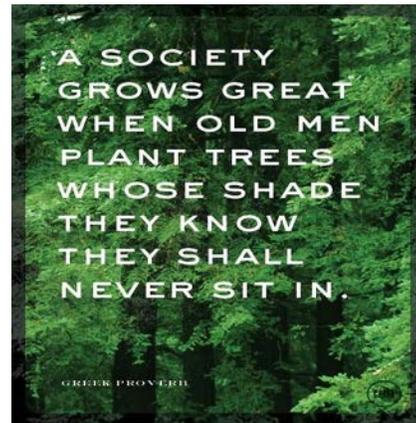
Answers seem hard to define,  
when muscles ache and they are mine.  
But I just cannot stand to see,  
a space where there should be a tree.  
So that in part as years unfold,  
is why I plant when I'm so old.

I know that animals, bugs and things love trees,  
and so do such as go on wings.  
So creatures wild that benefit,  
is one more reason I can't quit,  
from planting trees while I can hold,  
my planting hoe, though I'm so old.

They say that those retired from labor,  
should fish and play and talk to neighbor.  
They say also that folks in leisure  
should do the things that give them pleasure.  
And so the thought on which I'm sold,  
I'll plant some trees though I'm so old.

As time goes on my trees will grow,  
so tall and clean and row on row.  
The furry folk will have a home,  
the birds can nest and kids can roam.  
All of this, as I have told,  
because I planted trees though I'm so old.

And then there is my family,  
young folks who will follow me.  
I'd like to leave them with some land,  
stocked with trees and looking grand.  
These gifts I value more than gold,  
so I plant some trees though I'm so old.



And taxes too, for schools and roads,  
with jobs and lumber for abodes.  
I won't see these things, I won't be here,  
but in my mind it's very clear.  
The words of some who could be polled,  
might thank a man who is so old.

Man should be proud of what's his own,  
and how he's managed what he's grown,  
But management must be begun,  
by planting seedlings one by one.  
And so my pride I will uphold,  
I'll plant some trees though I'm so old.

So when my friends ask of me,  
why does an old man plant a tree?  
Perhaps the lines above explain,  
how aching back and limbs in pain  
may by commitment be controlled,  
to plant some trees though I'm so old.

*Bob Mealey retired from the Forest Service in 1973, and spent much of his time creating and managing the Mountain View Tree Farm located on 580 acres near his birthplace. Bob served as a president of the Oregon Small Woodland Owners Association and was named Oregon's State Tree Farmer of the Year for 1989, then Western Regional winner. Bob estimated that he personally planted nearly 90,000 conifer seedlings on the family tree farm since his 70th birthday.*

