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## On Becoming Ninety: A Plainsman To His Great Grandson

Marge Cooke Porteus

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I'm ninety years today.  
Georgia, Tennessee, then seventy years here  
Where I've lived even before there was a town.  
You come too.

I'll sit on this bench  
Against the building;  
It'll protect me from the wind.  
I'm tired, but I'll sit tall.

This is the old men's corner  
As seen in every prairie town.  
See, I'm the only one  
To brave the wind and dust today.

Here come those kids in a car.  
They screech to avoid a dog.  
Kids make a lot of noise, go fast. . . .  
Now, when I was a boy.

When I was a boy,  
I'd ride slowly into town and  
Then spur my bay and shout  
To let them know Hank was back.

All I wanted as a youth  
Was a speedy horse, a gun, a fancy shirt.  
I guess today is much the same —  
A speedy car, a horn, a fancy shirt.

Here comes old Littleman.  
He'll share our bench; he's my friend.  
I've shared the Indians' confidence  
Longer and stronger than most white men.

He was the first Indian,  
A silent, blanketed creature  
Who appeared when Pa staked his claim.  
We have been friends since that night.

There's the banker.  
He'll stop to pass the time.  
I only go in to cash my meager pension,  
But years ago I was a big account.

Did you know I had owned a bakery?  
I built it with love and labor.  
On the day of final payments  
The bank closed its door.

Only your great grandmother's understanding,  
Her sympathy and deep love  
Helped me keep my courage,  
Helped me keep my head held high.

Now, I look with pride  
On a life well-lived,  
On six children well wed,  
And grandchildren and great grandchildren.

Ninety years well-lived.  
Son, we'd best get the mail and go  
Or Great Grandmother will start to fret.  
She says I'm too old to mosey down.  
You come too.

## On Becoming Ninety: A Plainsman To His Great Grandson

— Marge Cooke Porteus

— a tribute to the late Henry Cooke, the poet's  
father —



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