

Finding companionship

Melanie Ann Schaeffer wants her baby boomer characters to be vibrant, and not relegated to what is “appropriate” for older people. She says she does this by having them reflect her own values of living life to the fullest.

A conversation with Melanie Ann Schaeffer

How does age affect character development?

Melanie Ann Schaeffer: I think there was a time in this country, and maybe it’s still there and I don’t realize it, when, as people aged, their viability, their worth, their significance, was diminished. And because of everything the baby boomers have done to shake up the world, I think that has also shaken up perceptions of what baby boomers are, what “old people” are, if I may use air quotes. And I want my characters to reflect those kinds of people, who are not giving up on life.

My personal philosophy is one I’m putting into my characters, is that I want to wring every drop out of me before I die. I want to completely use myself up and have that rich experience of life. And I want my baby boomer characters, in my writing, to be like that, too. You know, not relegated to what was considered appropriate for older people before. [...]

[...] I believe that a lot of people in the boomer generation who’ve retired have re-focused themselves, and so I do that to my characters as

well. I re-focus them. And I refocus them to public service. My second novella, Liz was working at a food pantry in Chester County, Pennsylvania. She was invited up to Wells River, VT, to help start one. It was a temporary move, which the romantic hero tried to make permanent.

I'm looking for things that my baby boomer characters can do that pay back. You know, when you're young, and you have these little kids, and you're working, because that's what my generation did, and that's what my characters have done, you didn't have time for the public service. [...]

[...] They have that sense of obligation to community.

How do the characters you read or write about reflect your own values?

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