



A

Little Book

About

Friends



Earle Gray

LITTLE BOOKS

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Canadian Speeches

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A faithful friend is a strong defence: and he that hath found such an one hath found a treasure. Nothing doth countervail a faithful friend, and his excellency is invaluable. A faithful friend is the medicine of life; and they that fear the Lord shall find him. Whoso feareth the Lord shall direct his friendship aright: for as he is, so shall his neighbour be also.

*King James Bible,
Sirach (Apocrypha) 6:15-17.*

Wither thou goest

Entreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following thee: for wither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge; thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God: where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the lord do so to me, and more also, if ought but death part thee and me.

No friendship story tells of stronger bonds than that of Ruth for Naomi, her mother-in-law. Both are widows. Years earlier, famine had driven Naomi and her husband from their home in Bethlehem to Moab, where she suffers the loss of her husband and two sons, including Ruth's husband. Now aged, still a stranger in a strange land where they worship a different God, Chemosh, Naomi determines to return to Bethlehem and her Israeli God, Jehovah. Ruth goes with her.

King James Bible, Book of Ruth 1:16.

Two are better than one

Two are better than one; because they have a good reward for their labour. For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow but woe to him that is alone when he falleth; for he hath not another to help him up. Again, if two lie together, then they have heat but how can one be warm alone? And if one prevail against him, two shall withstand him; and a threefold cord is not quickly broken.

King James Bible, Ecclesiastes 4:9-12.

Walk beside me

Don't walk in front of me, I may not follow. Don't walk behind me, I may not lead. Walk beside me and be my friend. *Albert Camus (1913-1960), French author.*

House by the side of the road

Let me live in a house by the side of the road
Where the race of men go by-
The men who are good and the men who are bad,
As good and as bad as I.
I would not sit in the scorner's seat
Nor hurl the cynic's ban.
Let me live in a house by the side of the road
And be a friend to man.

I see from my house by the side of the road
By the side of the highway of life,
The men who press with the ardor of hope,
The men who are faint with the strife,
But I turn not away from their smiles and tears,
Both parts of an infinite plan.
Let me live in a house by the side of the road
And be a friend to man.

These verses by U.S. poet Sam Walter Foss (1858-1911) were framed in a sampler that hung in the living room of the house I grew up in. It was a house by the side of a dirt road, filled with pot holes and ruts, that served as the highway along a stretch of less than 50 miles of British Columbia's Pacific coast, between two deep inlets, seldom disturbed past our house by more than a dozen vehicles a day. We knew as friends almost all who passed by, most on foot.

A Golden Chain

Friendship is a Golden Chain,
The links are friends so dear,
And like a rare and precious jewel
It's treasured more each year...

It's clasped together firmly
With a love that's deep and true,
And it's rich with happy memories
and fond recollections, too...

Time can't destroy its beauty
For, as long as memory lives,
Years can't erase the pleasure
That the joy of friendship gives...

For friendship is a priceless gift
That can't be bought or sold,
But to have an understanding friend
Is worth far more than gold...

And the Golden Chain of Friendship
Is a strong and blessed tie
Binding kindred hearts together
As the years go passing by.

Helen Steiner Rice (1900-1981), U.S. writer of inspirational and religious poetry and prayers, businesswoman and lecturer. Some seven million copies of her poetry books have been sold. The Golden Chain of Friendship.

Friends are like snowflakes

“Friends are like snowflakes: beautiful and different,” read the sign at the Starbucks coffee shop on Forty-Second and Sixth in New York City, writer Adam Gopnik reported in the *New Yorker*, January 3, 2011.

But Gopnik wondered, “Are snowflakes really different—or, rather, how different are they really?”

He set out to find the answer and discovered that snowflakes “start out more or less the same.” In the clouds above Wisconsin, Nancy Knight, a cloud scientist with the U.S. National Centre for Atmospheric Research, in 1988 photographed two “identical snow crystals, hexagonal primisms, each as like the other as one twin to another.”

But snowflakes change as they fall from the clouds, as people change as they go through life.

Gopnik concludes:

“The sign in Starbucks should read, ‘Friends are like snowflakes: more different and more beautiful each time you cross their paths in our common descent.’ For the final truth about snowflakes is that they become more individual as they fall—that buffeted by wind and time, they are translated as if by magic, into ever more strange and complex patterns, until, at last, like us, they touch the earth. Then, like us, they melt.”

A friend in power

A friend in power is a friend lost... One friend in a lifetime is much; two are many; three are hardly possible... Friendship needs a certain parallelism of life, a community of thought, a rivalry of aim... Accident counts for much in companionship as in marriage. *Henry Adams (1838-1918)*,



*“My God, this is a
great country!”*

EARLE GRAY

About Canada. By Earle Gray. 168 pp. 17x20.5 cm. Illustrated. Indexed. Soft cover, \$17.95. Toronto: Civil Sector Press, November 2012. ISBN 978-1-895589-95-5.

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U.S. historian and essayist, son of the second U.S. president. The Education of Henry Adams (1907).

Grow old with me

Grow old along with me!
The best is yet to be,
The last of life, for which the first was made;
Our times are in His Hand
Who saith A whole I planned,
Youth shows but half;
trust God: see all nor be afraid!"

Robert Browning (1812-89), British poet. "Rabbi Ben Ezra," Dramatis Personae (1864).

Friendships are different

Friendships are different from all other relationships. Unlike acquaintanceship, friendship is based on love. Unlike lovers and married couples, it is free of jealousy. Unlike children and parents, it knows neither criticism nor resentment. Friendship has no status in law. Business partnerships are based on a contract. So is marriage. Parents are bound by the law. But friendships are freely entered into, freely given, freely exercised.

Stephen Ambrose (1936-2002), U.S. historian. Comrades: Brothers, Fathers, Heroes, Sons, Pals (2001).

Release your anger

I was angry with my friend:
I told my wrath, my wrath did end.
I was angry with my foe:
I told it not, my wrath did grow.

William Blake (1757-1827), English artist and poet. Songs of Experience (1794).

Why you should lie to your friends

Let enemies tell unfriendly things

Don't flatter yourself that friendship authorizes you to say disagreeable things to your intimates. The nearer you come into relation with a person, the more necessary do tact and courtesy become. Except in cases of necessity, which are rare, leave your friend to learn unpleasant things from his enemies; they are ready enough to tell them.

Oliver Wendell Holmes (1809-1894), U.S. author and physician, The Autocrat of the Breakfast-Table (1858).

The mistake of truth-telling

Do not mistake friendship for a license to tell the truth. More pain has been inflicted by indiscriminate truth-telling than by lies. Honesty too often means being hurtful and wounding. As long as you keep true counsel with yourself, it doesn't hurt if you dissembled with a friend. *David Brown (1916-2010), U.S. film and stage producer. The Rest of Your Life is the Best of Your Life (1993).*

True friends hard to bare?

Few there are that will endure a true friend. *H.G. (Henry George) Bohn (1796-1884), British publisher.*

Save your advice

Friendship will not stand the strain of very much good advice for very long. *Robert Lynd (1879-1949), Irish essayist and journalist. The Peal of Bells (1927).*

A lovely lie from friends

On my 50th birthday, my older daughter gave me a pin that said: 50 is nifty. I wore it to work that day, and what fun it was! All day, people kept saying things to me like, “Anita, you don’t look 50,” or “Why, Anita, you can’t be 50,” and “We know you can’t be 50.”

It was wonderful. Now, I knew they were lying, and they knew I knew, but isn’t that what friends and co-workers are for? To lie to you when you need it, in times of emergency, like divorce and death and turning 50.

You know how it is with a lie, though. You hear it often enough, and you begin to think it’s true. By the end of the day I felt fabulous. I fairly floated home from work. In fact, on the way home, I thought: I really ought to dump my husband. After all, the geezer was 51, way too old for a young-looking gal like me.

Arriving home, I had just shut the front door when the doorbell rang. It was a young girl from a florist shop, bringing birthday flowers from a friend. They were lovely. I stood there holding the flowers and admiring them, and the delivery girl stood there, waiting for a tip.

She noticed the pin on my jacket and said, “Oh, 50, eh?”

“Yes,” I answered and waited. I could stand one last compliment before my birthday ended.

“Fifty,” she repeated. “That’s great! Birthday or anniversary?”

Anita Cheek Milner, U.S. lawyer, humorist and public speaker, genealogist. From Chocolate for a Woman’s Soul, Kay Allenbaugh, editor (1997).

When a friendship is born

No birth certificate is issued when a friendship is born. There is nothing tangible. There is just a feeling that your life is different and that your capacity to love and care has miraculously been enlarged without any effort on your part. It's like having a tiny apartment and somebody moves in with you, but instead of being cramped and crowded, the space expands, and you discover room you never knew you had until your friend moved in.

Steve Tesich, Yugoslavian-born U.S. novelist and screenwriter. Reader's Digest, September, 1998.

When friendship disappears

When friendship disappears then there is a space left open to that awful loneliness of the outside world which is like the cold space between the planets. It is an air in which men perish utterly.

Hilaire Belloc (Joseph-Pierre Hilaire Belloc 1870-1953). French-born British writer. The Four Men (1912.)

The value of friendship

Friendship is to be valued for what there is in it, not for what can be gotten out of it. When two people appreciate each other because each has found the other convenient to have around, they are not friends, they are simply acquaintances with a business understanding. To seek friendship for its utility is as futile as to seek the end of a rainbow for its bag of gold. A true friend is always useful in the highest sense; but we should beware of thinking of our friends as brother members of a mutual-benefit association, with its periodical demands and threats of suspension for non-payment of dues.

Soap opera friends

Marriage, no extramarital affairs, a network of friends, and television soap operas are among the keys to a happy life, according to Michael Argyle, an Oxford University professor who spent 11 years studying what makes people happy. Money isn't an important factor unless you're very poor: those with middle incomes are just as happy as the wealthy, according to Argyle. "Satisfaction and happiness do not increase with income, unless you get paid more than you expected in the light of your education and job," Argyle said. He was surprised, however, to find that TV soap addicts are generally happy people. "People who watch soap operas seem to gain a great deal of happiness from that," he said. "One theory is that they... are making imaginary friends."

Source: Michael Argyle, Reuters, Toronto Star, October 5, 1998.

Grizzly's friend

Griz and Cat are the most unlikely of friends. Griz is a 225-kilogram grizzly and Cat is a stray kitten. Dave Siddon says the starving kitten wandered into the bear's pen at Wildlife Images, a refuge he runs. Siddon says he was sure the big bear would kill the kitten, but the bear pulled a little piece of chicken out of its food bucket and offered it to the stray. That was last summer. Since then Siddon says Griz and Cat have become the best of friends. They eat, play and sleep together.

Associated Press, December 17, 1995.

Friends in need

He was always there when he needed me. *An unnamed*

Indiana Republican politician commenting on Dan Quayle, former U.S. vice president and briefly in the running for the Republican nomination in the 2000 presidential election. New York Times Magazine, April 4, 1999.

If you lend a friend five dollars and you never see him again, it's worth it. A friend in need is a friend to keep away from. *Anonymous.*

A friend that ain't in need is a friend indeed. *Frank McKinney Hubbard (1868-1930), U.S. humourist. The Roycroft Dictionary (1923).*

Mirror to our heart and soul

The brevity of life gives a subconscious urgency to our desire to know ourselves. Dostoyevsky said that one of the greatest tragedies is that so many people live their lives without ever finding themselves in themselves. Perhaps this is what a friendship gives us. The real mirror of your life and soul is your true friend. A friend helps you to glimpse who you really are and what you are doing here.

John O'Donohue (1954-2008), Irish Catholic scholar, poet and philosopher. "Soul to Soul," Lapis issue #4, as adapted in Utne Reader, November-December, 1997.

More than intellect

Some people think only intellect counts: knowing how to solve problems, knowing how to get by, knowing how to identify an advantage and seize it. But the many functions of intellect are insufficient without courage, love, friendship, empathy, and compassion. We care. It is our curse. It is our blessing.

Dean R. Koontz (1945-), U.S. novelist. Strangers (1986).

A Friend's Greeting

I'd like to be the sort of friend that you have been to me;
I'd like to be the help that you've been always glad to be;

I'd like to mean as much to you each minute of the day
As you have meant, old friend of mine, to me along the
way.

I'd like to do the big things and the splendid things for
you,
To brush the gray from out your skies and leave them
only blue;

I'd like to say the kindly things that I so oft have heard,
And feel that I could rouse your soul the way that mine
you've stirred.

I'd like to give you back the joy that you have given me,
Yet that were wishing you a need I hope will never be;

I'd like to make you feel as rich as I, who travel on
Undaunted in the darkest hours with you to lean upon.

I'm wishing at this time that I could but repay
A portion of the gladness that you've strewn along my
way;

And could I have one wish this year, this only would it be:
I'd like to be the sort of friend that you have been to me.

Edgar Guest (1881-1959), English-born U.S. poet, Poet Laureate of Michigan. Guest authored more than 11,000 poems, syndicated in more than 300 U.S. newspapers and collected in more than 20 books. Collected versus of Edgar Guest (1976).

Political friends

You see these two guys here? If you asked them they would probably tell you they are my friends. In politics, there is no room for friendship. *Jean Chretien (1934-), prime minister of Canada (1993-2003), posing for a photo with two of his aides, Peter Donalo and Jean Carle. Quoted by Anthony Wilson Smith in "Jean Chretien: Is He Up to the Job?" Maclean's, February 5, 1997.*

There are no true friends in politics. We are all sharks circling, and waiting, for traces of blood to appear in the water. *Alan Clark (1928-1999), British Conservative politician, adventurer, and writer in a journal entry. Diaries (1993).*

The Lone Ranger's creed

I believe, truly and always, in the Lone Ranger's Creed... I believe that to have a friend, a man must be one... I believe that all men are created equal and that everyone has within himself the power to make this a better world.

Actor Clayton Moore (1914-1985), who portrayed the Lone Ranger in television and films from 1949 to 1977. When informed that he had beat 85 other contestants for the television role of a cowboy icon already widely popular on radio, Moore responded, "Mr. Trendle, I am the Lone Ranger." Obituary, Los Angeles Times, December 29, 1999.

Deliver me from my friends

My God! Deliver me from my friends; I will take care of my enemies myself.

Voltaire (Francois-Marie Arouet 1694-1778), French writer and philosopher. *At age 65, Voltaire bought a large estate with a 14-bedroom mansion at which he entertained*

a steady stream of prominent visitors, some of whom arrived without waiting for an invitation. Letter, December 24, 1764, to Marquis Charles de Villette. Cited by Will and Ariel Durant in The Story of Civilization, Vol. X, Rousseau and Revolution (1967).

I have no trouble with my enemies —but my goddamn friends, they are the ones that keep me walking the floor at night. *Warren Harding (1865-1923), 29th U.S. president. Quoted in Handbook of 20th Century Quotations (1984).*

Brains and beauty

I don't think men are obsessed with superficial beauty. I think it's what is in your brains. A young woman, you are with her for more than a half hour, and then you are bored; with a woman who is mature, who thinks, that is someone you can stay with for the rest of your life.

Gina Lollobrigida (1927-), Italian actress, photojournalist and sculptress, a sex symbol of the 1950 known as "The world's most beautiful woman." "I studied painting and sculpting at school and became an actress by mistake," she told Parade in 2000, "I've had many lovers... I am very spoiled." New York Times Magazine, June 8, 1997.

Friends of Eye Opener Bob

A man always remembers his enemies, but he sometimes forgets his friends. *Calgary Eye Opener*, annual (1922).

It is well that there is no one without a fault for he would not have a friend in the world. *Calgary Eye Opener*, December 11, 1915.

A friend who knows your secret holds a mortgage on your

peace of mind. *Calgary Eye Opener*, December 25, 1920.

Bob Edwards (Robert Chambers Edwards, 1864-1922), Western Canada's best-loved humourist and satirists, pub-

Two chairs for friendship

I had three chairs in my house; one for solitude; two for friendship; three for society.

Henry David Thoreau (1817-62), U.S. essayist, naturalist and poet. Walden, or, Life in the Woods (1854).

In the two years he spent at the cabin he built at Walden Pond in the woods of New Hampshire, Thoreau celebrated the virtues and pleasure of the simple life, with its escape from the slavery of possessions and the striving for material gain. His iconic book echoes the Stoic philosophy of ancient Greeks and Romans of more than 2,000 years ago, perhaps best illuminated by the Meditations of Marcus Aurelius.

By limiting to friends just two of three rustic chairs he built for his cabin, Thoreau seems to suggest that bonds of friendship are best forged and maintained one at a time. Perhaps friendship, like his Stoic philosophy, is a matter of simplicity.

Watching the moon

May we all be around for a long while, so that thousands of miles apart we can still watch the moon together.

Jiang Zemin (1926-), president of China (1993-2003), cites an ode of the Sung dynasty era in greeting a delegation of businesspeople from Taiwan, perhaps seeking to repair tensions between China and Taiwan. Time, September 16, 1996.

A quota of quick quotes

A little axle grease will make the Red River Cart go a long way and so will friendship, if applied wisely. *Alexandre-Antonin Tache (1823-94), first Roman Catholic bishop of St. Boniface, Manitoba. Quoted by Dan Kennedy in Recollections of an Assiniboine Chief (1972).*

Friendship is unnecessary, like philosophy, like art... It has no survival value; rather it is one of those things that give value to survival. *C.S. Lewis (1898-1963), Irish-born British novelist and religious writer. "Friendship." The Four Loves (1960).*

Treat your friends as you do your pictures, and place them in their best light. *Jennie Jerome Churchill (1854-1921), mother of Winston Churchill, and Anglo-American society figure. Small Talk on Big Subjects (1916).*

Instead of loving your enemies, treat your friends a little better. *Edgar Howe (1853-1937), U.S. novelist. Country Town Sayings (1911).*

If you judge people, you have no time to love them. *Mother Teresa (1910-1997), Catholic nun and Indian missionary. Attributed.*

Properly trained, a man can be a dog's best friend. *Corey Ford (1902-69), U.S. magazine writer and author. Quoted by Jim Dratfield and Paul Coughlin in The Quotable Canine (1997).*

I love horses and sometimes I feel that they are my best friends as they seem to understand me. How I wish they could talk. *Sarah Ferguson, Duchess of York (1959-). From a diary while on vacation in Tuscany. London Observer, August 17, 1997.*

If you want to make a dangerous man your friend, let him do you a favor. *Lewis Lawes (1883-1947), U.S. penologist, warden of Sing-Sing prison. Twenty Years In Sing-Sing (1932).*

When a friend dies you lose a friend. When you die, you lose all your friends. *Jack Lemmon (1925-2001), U.S. actor. Obituary, Toronto Star, June 29, 2001.*

There is nothing in the world I wouldn't do for Hope, and there is nothing he wouldn't do for me. We spend our lives doing nothing for each other. *Bing Crosby (Harry Lillis 1904-1977). U.S. singer and actor, referring to Bob Hope. London Observer, May 7, 1950.*

They stay for the season and then they go. They're like good friends. They come, and they go. *Kirby Puckett, Minnesota Twins outfielder talking about blisters on his hands*

during spring training batting practice. Executive Speeches, February/March 1996.

The funny thing about human beings is that we tend to respect the intelligence of, and eventually to like, those who listen attentively to our ideas even if they continue to disagree with us. *S.I. Hayakawa (1906-92), U.S. educator and Republican senator. Bits & Pieces, January 30, 1997.*

It is a consolation to the wretched to have companions in misery. *Publilius Syrus (1st century BC), Roman writer. Moral Sayings.*

A friendship founded on business is better than a business founded on friendship. *John Rockefeller (1839-1937), founder of Standard Oil. Attributed.*

The richer your friends, the more they will cost you. *Elisabeth Marbury (1856-1933), U.S. theatrical producer. Attributed.*

Business, you know, may bring money, but friendship hardly ever does. *Jane Austen (1775-1817), British novelist. Emma (1816).*

If you've got a writer for a friend, you've got a major headache. And if you're married to a writer—God almighty. *Paul Theroux (1941-), U.S. travel writer and novelist. Toronto Globe and Mail, November 12, 1998.*

The holy passion of Friendship is of so sweet and steady and loyal and enduring nature that it will last through a whole lifetime, if not asked to lend money. *Mark Twain (1835-1910). Pudd'nhead Wilson (1894)*

How often are we to die before we go quite off this stage? In every friend we lose a part of ourselves, and the best part. *Alexander Pope (1688-1744), English poet. Letter to Jonathan Swift, December 5, 1732.*

To find a friend, one must close one eye. Too keep—two. *Norman Douglas (1868-1952), Scottish novelist and essayist. South Wind (1957).*

It is always well to accept your own shortcomings with candor but to regard those of your friends with polite incredulity. *Russell Lynes (1910-91), U.S. editor and critic. Vogue, September 1, 1952.*

Friends are like pillars on your porch. Sometimes they hold you up and sometimes they lean on you. *Anonymous.*

I always felt that the great high privilege, relief and comfort of friendship was that one had to explain nothing. *Katherine Mansfield (1888-1923), New Zealand-born British writer. Quoted by Anthony Alpen in Katherine Mansfield (1954).*

I know a woman who, whenever one of her intimates is attacked in her presence, merely states: "She is my friend"

and refuse to say more. *Andre Maurois (1885-1967), French biographer and novelist. The Art Of Living (1940).*

We read that we ought to forgive our enemies; but we do not read that we ought to forgive our friends. *Cosimo de Medici (1839-1464), Italian politician and banker.*

Money can't buy you friends, but you can get a better class of enemy. *Spike (Terrance Alan Patrick) Milligan (1918-2002), Indian-born British humorist, writer and actor. Toronto Globe and Mail Report on Business Magazine, September 1995.*

A woman will tell a man friend what she will not tell a lover. Few lovers will understand this, fewer still will believe it. *Arnold Haultain (1857-1941), Canadian humourist. Hints for Lovers (1909).*

Doubtless a good general rule for close friendships, where confidences are freely exchanged, is that what one is not informed about one may not inquire about. *Louis Kronenberger (1904-80), U.S. writer and critic. Company Manners (1954)*

There are three faithful friends: an old wife, an old dog, and ready money. *Benjamin Franklin (1707-90), U.S. diplomat, scientist, writer and publisher.. Attributed.*

Friendship needs no words—it is solitude delivered from

the anguish of loneliness. *Dag Hammarskjold (1905-61), Swedish statesman, United Nations secretary-general 1953-61. Markings (1964).*

You shall judge of a man by his foes as well as by his friends. *Joseph Conrad (1857-1924). Polish-born British novelist. Lord Jim (1900).*

He's an oul' butty o'mine—oh, he's a darlin' man, a daarin' man. *Sean O'Casey (1880-1964), Irish playwright. Juno and the Paycock (1925).*

Friendship with oneself is all-important because without it one cannot be friends with anyone else in the world. *Eleanor Roosevelt (1884-1962), U.S. First Lady, diplomat, and humanitarian. Attributed.*

I've had a lot of very good friends. I've always liked them too much to want to marry them. *Lillian Gish (1893-1993), U.S. actor. London Times, November 19, 1980.*

Santa Claus has the right idea: visit people once a year. *Victor Borge (1909-2000), Danish pianist and comedian. Quoted by Merrit Malloy and Marsha Rose in Comedians' Quote Book (1993).*

Tell me what company thou keepest, and I'll tell thee what thou art. *Cervantes (1547-1616), Spanish novelist and playwright. Don Quixote (1605-15).*

The expanding power of friendship

Friendship is a light that brightens the tiny speck of territory we occupy—smaller than the dimple specs on an orange. Friendship makes that space a brighter, better part of the world. Better for us, better for our friends, and better for all who enter our space and our lives. For the glow of friendship that makes us healthier, happier and more empathetic rubs off. A smile rubs off, just as surely as a lipstick kiss.

It may be no more than 100 people—family, friends, colleagues, acquaintances—who occupy our tiny space often enough to feel the warmth we are capable of spreading with friendship. Just one out of every 70,000,000 of the seven billion people on this planet.

Or it might be very many more. For people of great influence, great friendship can sometimes affect millions.

In Canada, the power of friendship affected the course of political history in 2011. In the United States, a scholarly journal says the close, personal, 50-year friendship of two founding fathers did much to implant the ideas

that shaped the nation in its formative stage—and thus impacted the world.

Jack Layton

Eulogies at the September state funeral of Jack Layton confirmed a profound depth and breadth of personal friendships, a bedrock of the political power that helped him lift the New Democrats from Canada's third to second national political party in elections barely more than four months before his death.

On the hustings and on television, Smiling Jack, courageously fighting cancer, brandishing his cane like the happy warrior, projected an appealing image of sincere friendship that no other political leader could match.

Elections, of course, are not personality contests. Yet there are many who cast their vote on their evaluation of the candidate, with little regard for party, policies and programs. And even where these are, as they should, what really matters, the perception of a candidate's character, personality and charisma, will either strengthen or weaken the force of his arguments.

The politician whose honest friendship shines, has an edge.

Jefferson and Madison

“Political leaders often cannot function without the intellectual and emotional closeness simple friendship can provide,” journalism professor Lee Wilkins writes in *Political Psychology* (vol. 12, no. 4, 1991).

In the case of Thomas Jefferson and James Madison, a

friendship that endured for 50 years had a significant bearing on the development of the United States in its formative years, according to Wilkins:

“Madison and Jefferson’s ability to make and to sustain a friendship provides... some hint of their ability and commitment first to make and then sustain the ideas and people that built a nation.”

They first met in the Spring of 1776, when Madison was elected to the Virginia legislature. Madison was 25; Jefferson, eight years his senior, had already served five years in the legislature, a member of the Revolutionary Party.

Physically they were Mutt and Jeff. At a time when the average height of males was a few inches shorter than now, Jefferson towered at six feet, two inches; Madison at five feet, four inches, barely tipped the scales at 100 pounds. In every other respect, they shared similar attributes and interests, the key to close and enduring friendship. Both were revolutionaries; both had deeply-thought ideas about the forms of democracy they envisioned; both were intellectually brilliant; both were well-read scholars: Madison, in addition to English, was fluent in French, Spanish, Latin and ancient Greek. “Both needed a political confidant,” Wilkins writes.

It was early in the birth pangs of the United States. The Revolutionary War (as the British still call it), or the War of Independence (as Americans call it) had been raging for more than a year. Fighting would continue for more than another five years. Within four months of their meeting, the Second Continental Congress adopted Jefferson’s

Declaration of Independence, on July 4, 1776. During the next three decades, Jefferson had a hand in almost every stage of U.S. evolution, before retiring after serving two terms as the new nation's third president.

Madison was just as involved; the principal author of the U.S. Constitution; the author of the Bill of Rights; and the fourth president, succeeding Jefferson.

One disagreement strained the friendship—a disagreement about the value of a Bill of Rights in the Constitution, and how much power should be centralized in a federal government. But trust, respect, and understanding overcame the strain, and the friendship emerged stronger than ever, closed only by death.

Trust, writes Wilkins, was at the centre of that friendship, and at the centre of a form of government they envisioned in which power is shared by elected leaders and the electors:

“Two people who were willing and able to accommodate each others could also be expected to favour a style of leadership, both in terms of structure as well as daily activity, which would sustain trust between political leaders and their followers.” And for that sharing to work, “it must be based in trust.”

Healthy blessings of friendship

Rare, indeed, will be those who will ever have an opportunity to see the influence of their friendships expand on a scale approaching that of outstanding political leaders. But there are lessons to be learned from their examples. And if the sphere of friendship influence of each of us is small, might it not collectively be greater than that of the greatest leaders?

It's a consensus. The authorities agree: friends are good for your health.

Among the mooted benefits of friendship:

Longer life and sharply reduce death risk; reduced risk of mental impairment, including Alzheimer's disease; reduce decline in motor skills such as strength, speed and dexterity in advancing years; greater happiness and self-esteem; greater emotional strength; improved ability to cope with life's traumas.

Friends and family are the core elements in the nurturing social relationships that provide these and other benefits. But friends provide health benefits apart from family.

Friendship plays a particular role within broad “social relationships [that] remain an important health resource into very old age,” Professor Carlos F, Mendes de Leon at the Rush Medical College, Chicago, writes in “Why do friendships matter for survival?” *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health* (July 2005).

A supportive social network is said to promote healthier lifestyles, including “better access to healthy food, better dietary habits, more physical activity,” and less harmful stress.

But Dr. de Leon sees additional health benefits from friendship that is

“...valued for its own sake, offering intrinsic rewards that fulfill basic psychological needs of competence, autonomy and relatedness. In other words, friendship, feeling connected to other human beings who are valued, trusted and loved, may provide meaning and purpose that is essential to our human condition, and perhaps to longevity as well.”

de Leon speculates that friendship may produce a physiological benefit that tends to “slow down chronic disease processes that typically lead to disability and death as we age.”

A study of 2,835 women with breast cancer found that women who were socially isolated had a 66 percent greater risk of death from all causes compared with women who were socially integrated, and a two-fold increased risk of death from breast cancer, during a 12-year period. The higher mortality rates of isolated women are said likely due to a lack of “beneficial care giving from friends, rela-

tives and adult children.” (*Journal of Clinical Oncology*, March 1, 2006).

Social networks may reduce the risk of mental impairment, including Alzheimer’s disease, according to studies funded by the U.S. National Institutes of Health, published in *The Lancet Neurology*, April 2006. The study involved tests of memory and other mental functions of more than 1,100 elderly patients, and examination of the brains of 89 of the patients who died during the test period, to measure the extent of AD damage. “They found that the larger the size of a person’s social network, the less a given amount of AD damage in the brain affected mental tests,” the NIH reported. Cause and effect, however, were not clear. “It may be that the better you can use the reserves in your brain, the better you are at maintaining social networks. But social networks may help you use what you’ve got more efficiently.”

Friendships not only improve your health but also enrich your life, the Mayo Clinic claims (www.mayoclinic.com/health/friendships/MH00125).

Mayo says friends can “Increase your sense of belonging and purpose. Boost your happiness. Reduce stress. Improve self-worth. Help you cope with traumas, such as divorce, serious illness, job loss, or the death of a loved one. Encourage you to change or avoid unhealthy habits, such as excessive drinking or lack of exercise.”

Some people benefit from a large and diverse network of friends, others prefer a smaller circle, “But overall the quality of your relationships is more important than the specific number of friends you have.”

Dire effects of isolation

A widely reported 2010 meta analysis of 148 different studies involving more than 300,000 people, conducted by researchers at Brigham Young University, found that the health benefits of good social relationships—and the dire consequences of isolation—are greater than previously appreciated, according to Dr. Julianne Holt-Lunstad, co-author of the study.

Social isolation was reported to be as bad for your health as smoking 15 cigarettes a day, as dangerous as being an alcoholic, as harmful as never exercising, and twice as dangerous as obesity. Those with adequate or high social relationships—friends, family, neighbours or colleagues—were found to have a 50 percent greater likelihood of survival than lonely people, during the time period of the studies. (The 148 studies varied from three months to 53 years, and averaged 7.1 years).

That social relationships improve health has long been understood. “But no one in the health community seemed to recognize the extent to which social relationships affect mortality,” Holt-Lunstad commented.

Both the number and quality of contacts in your social network count. “People who have more, or more complex, social resources versus people who have less, have higher rates of survival,” according to Holt-Lunstad.

Risk of isolation rises after retirement: school, college and work provide large opportunities for expansive social networks. For many, the risk of isolation increases year by year in the “golden years.”