

**FRIENDS LIKE DOC ZEY HELP IN JUDGING ONE'S
CHARACTER
01/11/00**

My life has been blessed with many things and I really have little to complain about. One item is the number of people of good character I consider true friends. I am openly proud of this fact because I personally believe it is an excellent criterion of judging one's own character.

These friendships begin in many ways, most of them in the usual manner we are all familiar with. One of my most lasting and fulfilling began in a most unusual way. It started in the early 60s during my stint as a Forest Ranger.

A lady from Louisville, KY, made a call to "the Adirondack Park" to try to get a message to her husband who was on a hunting trip there. The operator luckily picked me from the many rangers in the park to field the call. Further, I just happened to have issued a camping permit to the gentleman he was hunting with.

To make a long story short, our mission was completed and I received a Christmas card that year from Louisville by the way of thanking me for the effort. The correspondence continued from that time on and has blossomed into a real friendship. I like to think it is principally because of a mutual interest in the outdoors and respect for each other's values.

My friend is a retired dentist who grew up in Illion. His working years as a dentist were spent and his home to the present is in Louisville. He faithfully maintains ties with several friends and acquaintances in Upstate New York.

Until the inevitable vicissitudes of health overtook him, he punctuated his steady correspondence with annual visits.

His name is Frederick Zey and aside from being a dentist, he is many other things. His philosophy for many years has been to enjoy life to the fullest and not waste a minute of it.

He is a prodigious communicator and shares all of the things of mutual interest to others by way of written word, photos, newspaper clippings, literature, etc. His regular packets of information are often prefaced with the personal comment, "It's easy to hand a person something to read. No one can give you the time to do the reading."

Doc, as his friends know him, explains his philosophy this way. Every minute of his time is spent doing things he enjoys. An avid outdoorsman he includes, but is not limited to the following: hunting, fishing, plinking away with a .22, picking berries, and hunting frogs. Drinking is a pastime he forgoes entirely because it would detract from the full enjoyment of all else.

He may have unknowingly provided the impetus for my writing endeavors. The title of a voluminous missive he wrote in 1988 echoes many of the same reasons I continue to write. It is “Stories for the Grandsons and A Few Old Men: 54 Seasons of Deer Hunting.”

It was dedicated to “Donald Polley and his sons, Ronald and Donald, Jr. and also to all those men with whom I traveled the trails of the backwoods, whether physically or in a spiritual sort of way.”

He sent me a copy with the following postscript: “To Mart Allen, another one of the ‘Old Men’ who walked over, fished, hunted and trapped and spent more time in the wilderness than most of us. May you find some enjoyment in reading these stories, and recall some of the fun you had with the old gang. Even though we never hunted together, we have the feeling that you were with us on many of our hunts. With respect and admiration from the men in our gang. Fred & Gang.”

Both Doc Zey and Don Polley are known by some of the old timers in the area. They traveled the North Country a good many years in the Old Forge, Raquette Lake and West Canada Creek regions. Don Polley and his two sons have a camp in the Raquette Lake area and are frequent visitors.

Doc has a subscription to the *Express* and I am sure this will come as a complete surprise to him. It is one way I can catch up on our correspondence and level the playing field. I tender it by the way of a well-deserved salute and to let others know the high esteem in which I hold his friendship.