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Never before in human existence have the aged been so numerous — and for the most part — healthy. In this important new book, two professionals, an anthropologist and a physician, wrestle with the complex subject of aging. Is it inevitable? Is it a burden or gift? What is successful aging? Why are some people better at aging than others? Where is aging located? How does it vary among individuals, within and between groups, cultures, societies, and indeed, over the centuries? Reflecting on these and other questions, the authors comment on the impact age has in their lives and work. Two unique viewpoints are presented. While medicine approaches aging with special attention given to the body, its organs, and its functions over time, anthropology focuses on how the aged live within their cultural settings. As this volume makes clear, the two disciplines have a great deal to teach each other, and in a spirited exchange, the authors show how professional barriers can be surmounted. In a novel approach, each author explores a different aspect of aging in alternating chapters. These chapters are in turn followed by a commentary by the other. Further, the authors interrupt each other within the chapters - to raise questions, contradict, ask for clarification, and explore related ideas - with these interjections emphasizing the dynamic nature of their ideas about age. Finally, a third "voice" - that of a random old man - periodically inserts itself into the text to remind the authors of their necessarily limited understanding of the subject.
