



On Growing Old

On May 31, 2011, I reached the age of 85. In other words I've lived through 85 summers, 85 winters, 85 springs. It may seem like a lot, but it's not. 85 is not much of anything. What can you buy for 85 cents? What can you buy for 85 dollars? What is 85 compared to a national debt in the trillions? As the well-known saying goes, "Life is short." Short, indeed. We should be living for hundreds of years, because it takes more than 85 years to become truly wise. But the good Lord decided that this short life is long enough, even though the Bible speaks of persons living hundreds of years.



What happened to shorten our lives? Maybe it was God's observation that it doesn't take long for a human being to make a mess of things. Look at the mess in Washington, all made mostly by people under 60 years of age. Some are just in their 30s and 40s. Maybe God decided that the longer people live, the more stupid and evil they get, and the more damage they can do. People are supposed to mellow with age — but that doesn't seem to apply to politicians or dictators.

But regardless of how cheated we may feel by the shortness of life, it is useless to complain about it. We spend the first 20 years just growing up. It takes time to make sense of all of this, of our parents, our society, the world. Then for the next 40 years we struggle to raise families, bringing into the world more human beings with not much time in which to grow up and struggle. We try to make meaning of our lives. We are convinced that we are here for a purpose, and finding that purpose is what makes each of us an individual like no other. Seeking purpose is why we are willing to hang around as long as possible. And when we finally find purpose, we are ready to go into the great unknown — hopefully something called Heaven.

But seeking purpose is what makes life intensely interesting. A nihilist believes that there is no purpose to life, that we are all walking digestive tracts with sexual urges. That's why so many Americans are addicted to drugs, which are an escape from having to think of one's life as purposeful. And that's why so many children emerge from our nihilist public schools believing that they are here simply to enjoy animal pleasures. After all, cats and dogs don't have to worry about having a purpose, and since we are all animals neither do we.

I knew that there was a purpose to life when I found out as a child that I was a Jew. That made life immediately interesting. My parents had come to America from Poland in the 1920s when it was still possible to leave that doomed country. But at that time nobody knew how doomed it was. Had my parents remained in Poland we would have all perished in the death camps Hitler had created to get rid of "the Jewish problem."

It never occurred to me that I was a problem to anybody, except perhaps my parents. But hatred and persecution can keep you on your toes.

Only one member of my parents' families survived the holocaust, a niece. After the war she emigrated



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to Canada with the man she had married in a refugee camp. My mother and I visited her in Montreal. She had a tattooed number on her arm. She had survived Auschwitz. I asked her what she and the other Jews in Warsaw thought when the Germans conquered the city. She said, "We knew that things would be bad, but we didn't think they would be that bad." After all, the Germans were a civilized people.

And that's the catch. Civilized people can become barbarians overnight. It's not easy for ordinary folk to understand that simple fact. It's not easy for ordinary folk to understand the nature of evil. But when it is imposed on you by the nation of Bach, Beethoven, and Brahms, you have to wonder what it is in human nature that can turn decent people overnight into devils.

But, as I said, being Jewish makes life intensely interesting. Never a dull moment when there are of millions of Muslims who want to kill you.

My cousin had told us that they knew that things would be bad, but they didn't think they could be that bad. They couldn't even imagine how bad it could be. In a way, the same can be said about America. We conservatives knew that Obama would be bad, but we didn't think it could be this bad. We knew that federal debts were bad, but we didn't know they could become this bad. It's hard to believe that some 545 lawmakers in Washington could work overtime to destroy the hopes of over 300,000,000 Americans.

In other words, it only takes a few evil people to destroy a nation. Fidel Castro did it to Cuba, once the third most prosperous nation in the Western Hemisphere. He forced over a million Cubans to flee the island for their lives. And yet, he still lives, and the Cuban people are forced to live under a dictatorship motivated by an ideology cooked up by evil 19th century utopians.

And what is the purpose of life for the Cubans? To endure. That's all they can do in a system that stifles freedom. And what is the purpose of life for many Americans today? To survive, to wait for the folks in Washington to regain their sanity. And what is the purpose of life for the Israelis? To enjoy life to its fullest, to invent and thrive, and to thumb their noses at all of those who want to kill them.

As an 85-year-old American, I've never been hungry a single day in my life. I have always enjoyed the freedom to speak my mind regardless of whom I might offend. I've never been the victim of a single anti-Semitic act. The purpose of my life has been, plain and simple, to use my writing talents to enlighten other Americans about this glorious country we live in, and expose those evil forces who would destroy it. My books on education have inspired thousands of Americans to become homeschoolers.

America is the mightiest engine of material progress ever to have entered the stage of history. It is also the mightiest advocate of the philosophy of freedom, both political and individual. It has striven to obey the God of the Bible, who gave the Founding Fathers the courage to fight for independence from Britain. In short, it is Biblical religion that is the foundation of this revolutionary nation.

If life is short, consider how short is our history: from 1776 to 2011, a mere 235 years. But it's long enough for too many of our political leaders to make a royal mess of things. Let our present decline be a lesson for all of us. When we send corrupt, evil men to make our laws in Washington, they can make 300 million of us suffer. It's taken 235 years to learn this lesson.

Despite our dysfunctional government in Washington, life in America is still sublime. This afternoon I had a senior coffee and a McChicken sandwich at McDonald's for \$1.89. That's awesome. I drive through the Massachusetts countryside with its fertile fields, magnificent trees, and glorious sunshine. With my desktop computer, I can visit any place in the world. With YouTube I can listen to some of the



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greatest musical classics and watch conductors and singers anywhere on the planet.

Despite the cost of fuel, the modern automobile is more than just a means of transportation. It provides mobile freedom unmatched in pre-automobile history. One can drive from Boston to Los Angeles in the comfort of a vehicle with a magnificent sound system, travel through the Western desert in air-conditioned splendor, and come and go following one's own timetable. And you can still make lots of money if that's your purpose in life.

Many people think that they ought to retire when they reach 65. One should never think of retirement as a goal. Retire from what? From a boring job or career? Actually, life begins at 65. I ought to know. I've been there. I began writing my book on Marlowe-Shakespeare in my seventies. It took seven years to write, but it was the greatest literary experience of my life. An active mind will increase your life's expectancy. Aim to live to 100. That's my aim. I may not get there, but why aim for anything less? Except for the usual aches and pains, old age can be a wonderful time of life. Everyone is younger than you are, and therefore you are generally treated with respect and courtesy. Not bad for the last stage in life, before the curtain comes down.



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