

Today is September, 15, 2008 and I just finished reading How it feels to be 80, by **Richard D. Leonard**, 9.15.08 (UU World - Fall 2008)

View the article on the web at:

<http://www.uuworld.org/spirit/articles/117933.shtml?n>><http://www.uuworld.org/spirit/articles/117933.shtml?n>

SPIRIT: The only really upsetting thing about being old is realizing that I'm not going to see how everything comes out.

I hasten to add I have been thinking along those lines. I agree with several of Richards's observations.

It is disappointing to realize that I'm not going to see how everything comes out. Like Richard, I would like to know if we're ever going to discover other intelligent beings in outer space, and if so, how we'll react to the news. My son, Greg, probably will hear such news. I am a naturalist humanist. I do not envision keeping an eye on things below from above. There is longevity on my father's side of the family. His sister, Nancy and first cousin Cora Bell lived well over a hundred and he in his eighties. It is great to have lived this long. I have experienced my two children, Carol and Greg, as mature, responsible, successful adults. I got to review my childhood with my grand children, Junelle, Ian, Alex, and Colin. It has been the best of times.

Born the fifth child during the depression years, almost every year has been better than the one before. I have been lucky. For successes, luck is when preparation meets opportunity. I also know the meaning of "pure luck". It is when good things just happen. I have had some of that. Proof, meeting and marrying Betty Grant my partner in life for over fifty years. A few years ago I began to experience episodes of fast irregular palpitations, atria fibrillation. After experiencing a heart rate of over one hundred and sixty per minute for 24 hours, I became poetic.

*I know I must go Mr. Tango,
for no one gets to stay.
I know I must go Mr. Tango,
others showed the way.*

*I know I must go Mr. Tango,
kin , friends left yesterday.
I know I must go Mr. Tango,
for no one gets to stay.*

*I know I must go Mr. Tango,
weeks are days, years are months,
my father would say. Yesterday?*

*I know I must go Mr. Tango,
for no one gets to stay.
When? I'm not ready to say.*

*I know I must go Mr. Tango,
for no one gets to stay.
Say! I need more time to play!*

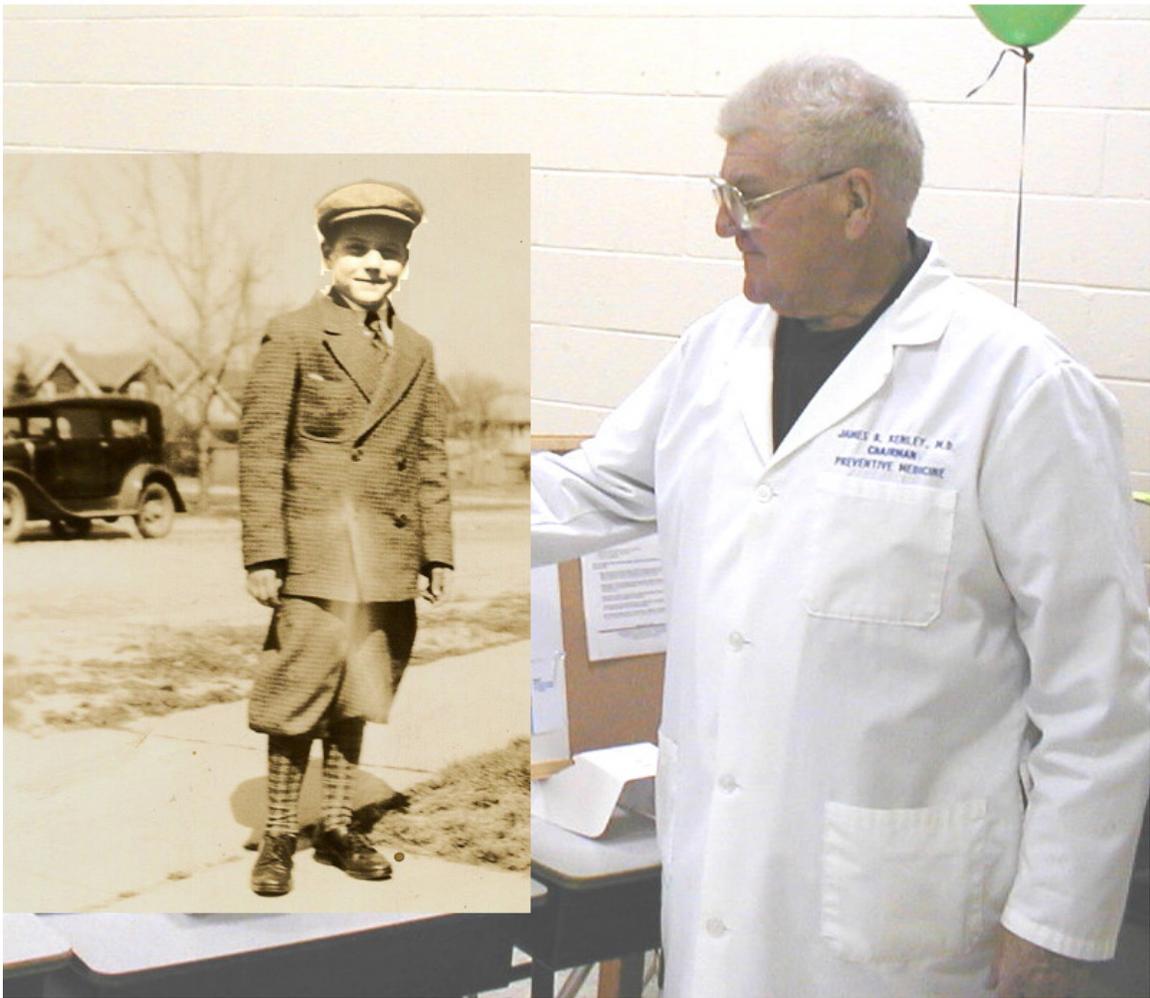
*I know I must go Mr. Tango,
for no one gets to stay.
So little time.
No delay?
Is it slipping away?
No one gets to stay.
One more day.
No one gets to stay.
One day.
Say. Stay.
Stay*

To paraphrase Richard, I look at my body, which is gradually getting older and older, but I know I am also that kid who once tossed my large, black nipple baby bottle from my carriage, (hearing my mother say that is the last one son) and the two things don't quite seem to belong together. But they do! Life is an adventure that begins a birth. How it turns out depends largely on the choices one makes along the way. At age 80 years, things seem to come together. One tends to look way back and a somewhat short glance ahead. The past is assured, the future (as it always was) less confident.

I value intelligence, knowledge, and competence. I usually remain in the background until I see a real need to lead. I am a naturalist humanist with Quaker roots, somewhat independent. A long-range thinker, I practice tolerances and try to effectively communicate my insights to others. I do not like conflict, and tend to avoid it. I have an interest in others. I love people. Dignity, respect, worth and social justice for all is my collective goal. Thus far, I have enjoyed a rich and rewarding life.

I still sing "Life is good". The word "deserve" has little validity here. It is better to enjoy life than to fuss about death. Perhaps my life's work in Public Health and Preventive Medicine and teaching may be the final score! The Individual succumbs but he does not die if he has left something to mankind.

History begins after origins disappear. JBK 08



Comments by Jim Kenley (9/23/2008)