

My Advanced Youth, the Early Stages

By Dennis Knight

I have studied the calendar, read the advice and held my finger high to check the breezes. I am ready to admit that now, in my seventieth year I am entering the early stages of advanced youth. I am excited to proceed, and see how it comes out. I understand it may be terminal, but it won't kill me.

There are some things I escaped many years ago that I'm happy won't be going along. The stinging of iodine on a scratch and spoons of nasty castor oil for whatever ailment come to mind. I won't be bringing rap music, tattoos and body piercings, either.

And there are many things that have fallen by the wayside I want to take but can't; a human-powered Royal typewriter, for instance, or Warner Brothers cartoons and double features at the movies. I would like to again be able to take trips to Grandma's.

Looking back, there is a whole list of events I am sorry I missed because I was born just a little too late. How special it would be to have seen and carry with me recollections of America's big bands at the Trocadero Ballroom, or Benny Goodman's famous Carnegie Hall concert, or to have been part of the celebrations at the end of World War II.

There is another list I'm glad I did miss, but part of me wishes I had been there, too. The Great Depression and the Dust Bowl are experiences nobody should have had to live through, but I would like to have been part of the resilient way in which our parents emerged to become what became the Greatest Generation, winning the wars in European and Pacific theaters.

I have been on this earth for the speeches and presidency of John Kennedy, the race for space, the Beatles, peace demonstrations, the eloquent struggles of Martin Luther King, Jr., the computer age, sushi, and the speeches and presidency of Barrack Obama. These memories I am happy to take into my seventies, but I must also carry along the sad thoughts of slaughters of children in their school houses, and of young people killed in mass on their campuses and at the movies.

Youth is for learning new things and creating new memories. It is for new friendships, doing new things, and going new places, and I will have it until I lose interest. It stops when I do.

As a new septuagenarian, I will still be a proud father and grandfather and part of a large, wonderful family, mostly Irish but with other rich strains running through. I will still admire anything done with passion, whether it is an occupation, art, sport or performance. I will continue to write and work, immerse myself in computers and gadgetry, travel, enjoy all the jazz music I can fit on my iPod, smile at the pretty girls, and fall in love at least once a week.