

Life is Goo

by Dennis Payton Knight

"Life is Goo." That's the answer to the question, posed by a friend of mine, of what a street philosopher's sign reads when he runs out of paint. It's worth a laugh, but it also illustrates in an ironic way that a good laugh is at the fundament of a good life.

It is hard to imagine a life that you can call "good" ever being without humor, no matter how objectively, productively or virtuously it might be lived. Mark Twain said, "Humor is mankind's greatest blessing." And he proved his point, becoming famous for his observations of people, places and living that make us laugh and think about life as we do.

Mallory Hopkins, a journalist on the environment, has her own sense of humor about living. "Life is short," she says, "Smile while you still have teeth."

Jimmy Carter, an American President of four decades ago, is still with us into his nineties and is himself a testimonial of a good life. Not long after leaving office he observed, "My esteem in this country has gone up substantially. It is very nice now that when people wave at me, they use *all* their fingers."

The great British statesman, Winston Churchill, foretelling the spate of so-called fake news that has addled our journalism and perplexed our own century of politics, warned us, "A lie gets halfway around the world before the truth has a chance to get its pants on."

Steven Wright is a stand-up comedian with a deadpan delivery of irony, philosophy and non sequiturs that make us laugh and ponder. Wright intones sardonically, "I intend to live forever. So far, so good." He is loaded with them. "I am addicted to placebos," he says, "I drive way too fast to worry about cholesterol," "Do Lipton employees take coffee breaks?" and "What's another word for Thesaurus?" He comforts us when we are lonely, "If you think nobody cares about you, try missing a couple of payments."

As a mostly wishful author, I definitely associate with Wright's claim to progress when he brags, "I'm writing a book. I've got the page numbers done."

Albert Einstein, the greatest of all theorists on the physical, relative nature of everything, observed regarding the relativity of mankind's own intellectual potential, "The difference between stupidity and genius is that genius has its limits." He also said, "Two things are infinite: the universe and human stupidity; and I'm not sure about the universe."

Getting back to Mark Twain, it was he who reflected, "The only way to keep your health is to eat what you don't want, drink what you don't like, and do what you'd rather not."

Twain also had keen observations on the end of life, reporting in one instance, "I did not attend his funeral, but I sent a nice letter saying I approved of it," and advising us to "Go to Heaven for the climate, go to Hell for the company."

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