

Eighty Things I've Learned in Eighty Years

I regret that my young self didn't write down my grandparents' reflections on their lives. Still, I've embraced their wisdom throughout my life.

All that I began with, was an accident of birth. All that I am today, is what I did with it.

My lifelong precept has been... "Ease their way."

Every religion attempts to control its believers. Unless it can control the government, it has no power over non-believers.

My *Principia Intelligentia* states: It's a statistical fact that half of any large population possesses below-average intelligence.

Corollary 1: The lower half is usually the louder half.

Corollary 2: The lower half possesses most of the means of, and tendencies toward, violence and/or chaos.

Corollary 3: In all populations there are pockets of intelligence and empathy, and pockets of stupidity and cruelty.

Self-expression can often be felt by others as disrespect. Be careful to always read the room.

I stopped worrying about what people thought of me when I realized how little they thought of me *at all*.

I've only been a member of one 'country club'... this one. Club dues are taxes and public service. Until recently, I always paid my dues gladly.

I was never religious, but I've always been Christian... and Muslim and Jewish and Hindu and Buddhist and Pagan and...

We're all in this together. Matthew 25:35-40 is the only rationale I need, to explain why all of us are here.

The more I've acknowledged my defects, the more benign and sympathetic I've been toward the defects of others.

I abhor those who salute the stupid as patriots, and diminish the worth of intelligence and competence.

Excellence is the process of making fewer and less obvious mistakes.

I strive only to be trustworthy, not trusted. Trust is delicate, and lives in the mind of the other.

I am a dog person. Dogs know this.

If it's urgent, I do it now! If it's important, I do it next. Unless I'm procrastinating.

Hate causes pain. It never heals it.

Nice is not a personality trait. It's a political strategy.

In this country, too many people treat politics as either a sport (mostly football) or a religion. It is neither. It is far, far more important.

I'm an addict. When I do something beneficial for someone, I get an opioid high. (Naturally, from endorphins.)

My generosity enhances my vitality with little effort on my part. When I give, it feels like an essential and natural part of being alive.

Stinginess is exhausting. It promotes a sense of scarcity and makes generosity seem like a sacrifice.

If we had taken seriously any one of three women, we wouldn't be in this mess. Hillary Clinton, Liz Cheney and Kamala Harris all warned us.

I am an introvert. I'm not anti-social. I'm simply pro-quiet.

My best partners held my interests as theirs. They shared in my successes, and delighted in our mutual good fortune.

Joy touches the eternal. It connects us with the cosmos, as well as with the subconscious.

Birds are brilliant mathematicians. To go from 30 MPH to zero in an instant and grab a thin branch, requires some serious real-time calculus.

Certainty is not a virtue. Speaking assertively is not a proxy for thinking deeply.

Refusing to accept opinions as facts is key to my maintaining common sense.

I've learned to be careful when reading between the lines. Most of the time, I was just guessing.

The most important reason for me to treat others with respect is not what I get in return. It's who I've become as a result.

I treat my opinions like worn clothes. Some I'm comfortable with, the rest I need to get rid of.

Sometimes, my walking away from a losing effort was not a failure of conviction. It was a triumph of wisdom.

Thanks to a proctor in my military training, I learned that the best way to prove myself was to *im*-prove myself.

A healthy disagreement isn't about me being right. It's about both of us feeling understood.

I can dislike someone without disrespecting him. It's simply an exercise in mature judgment.

Key to my integrity is adherence to principle. I will oppose anyone who challenges my ethics or threatens my responsibilities.

Take care of your teeth and your feet. They take a beating, and you'll need them your entire life.

An employer, a company, a business... is not a family. Families forgive. Families love.

Hesitation is inconclusive. A decision is clearest when it's either "Hell yes!" or "Hell no!".

I've never been defeated. Either I won, or I learned.

When you're dead, you don't know you're dead. All the pain is felt by others. The same thing happens when you're stupid.

In the land of the blind the one-eyed man is king. Beware the one-eyed man.

Failing is simply part of learning. On the other hand, being a failure is a painful state of ignorance.

I happily accept both my virtues and my admitted flaws. They're my shield. No one can use them against me.

Cannabis showed me that I'm blessed with a cosmic sense of humor. Beneath it all, everything is funny.

As my grandparents used to say: "Too soon old. Too late smart."

I bow to all mothers. If we males were the ones to give birth, we'd be an extinct species. No male would go through pregnancy and childbirth a second time.

Trying to *find* time is a fool's errand. *Making* time is the key to a happy life.

I have found that staying positive is my best chance of having things turn out the way I'd planned.

The current state of our politics: One party is working to make government fail. The other tries, but fails, to make government work.

There's a thin line between insanity and genius. Sometimes the difference is simply intention.

Greed results from abuse in childhood, leaving a craving for acceptance and satisfaction... that can never be fulfilled.

Along the way, I've had several long-term friendships with wise women. Each has been a great blessing to me.

As I've aged, I've come to appreciate what my ancestors had. My younger self could only see what they didn't have.

A lie would make no sense, unless the liar could make a profit... or the truth would expose a crime.

I've found that happiness usually takes the form of "me ... now", where joy is the state of "us ... always".

53 years ago, I took part in an enjoyable conversation between a Democratic candidate for the Presidency, and a Republican former governor of Oregon... in a time when politics was civil.

All those whom I love have at least one thing in common: they can make me laugh. If I insist that my thoughts be consistent, it means I'm as ignorant today as I was a year ago.

When I was a kid growing up in New York, I had no idea where—or even what—Oregon was. And yet... here we all are!

Forgiveness can't change what happened, but it can influence what comes next.

No one can possess a billion dollars honestly or responsibly. Billionaires are, by definition, sociopaths.

You may forget what I say. After all, it's only words. What's important is how I've made you feel.

Only a fool thinks government should be run like a business. Honest government must do things that a profit-driven business cannot.

"All cruelty springs from weakness." -- Seneca

Courage is doing the right thing for the right reasons, when consequences will be painful.

Courage takes preparation. No one is courageous without intention and forethought.

"Courage is resistance to fear, mastery of fear - not absence of fear." — Mark Twain

My beloved country suffers from attention deficit disorder. What else, beside ignorance of history, could explain our re-electing a fascistic convict?

The Romans had two words for love, *amo* and *curo*. *Amo* is loving passionately. *Curo* means I care. In the end, *curo* wins.

An executive once told me the higher he climbed, the more his decisions became just a crapshoot. Often, he was simply guessing... and anxious.

Wealth is a misunderstood concept. Unless you're able to enjoy giving it away, you do not possess it.

Burying one's head in the sand puts the family jewels in a vulnerable position.

I took an oath to be loyal to this country, to its Constitution... not to its government.

My brother Tim showed me how to live with courage and humor, and how to die with dignity. My longevity has been but a lengthy journey on his shoulders.

Believe me, life was just fine before the Internet.

I have witnessed more integrity in prisons than I have in politics.

When my dad died, there was no one left between me and the void. That taught me to welcome all of life's many blessings, and to appreciate its inevitable finality.

And still, life goes on.