

UNCLE JACK'S LATTER-DAY SOCIAL ROLE AS A LONGEVITY COACH

WHEN I REACHED age eighty-six I crossed the upper borderline which entitles one to be a "longevity coach" for younger individuals -- because professional gerontologists classify senior citizens according to three categories: people between the ages of 65-75 are called the young old, persons from 76-85 become upgraded to membership among the old old, and those eighty-six and over are the eldest of the elderly. Upon entering that stage of my life, I began to wear a sports whistle on a cord around my neck, having decided to spend my remaining Golden Years as a volunteer "longevity coach" and an especially wary whistle-blower against The American Suicide Diet.

MY CONSTANT MOBILITY during many years giving tours and excursions brought lots of opportunities to reduce my food consumption along the byways. And thus I gradually formulated **My Geriatric Diet** that I continue to refine by personal experimentation -- convincing me further of the rule Less Is Best!

ALTHOUGH MANY SENIORS have kissed physical fitness goodbye, I still repeat an easy exercise routine of simple calisthenics done daily since I was a teen-ager. It takes me only thirty minutes, and it's "better than nothing" for keeping good circulation and flexibility and balance and proportions. I do these movements in "slow motion" and it's not hard to modify them according to limitations that come with aging. I believe this morning ritual, together with my enjoyment of walking just about everywhere at a pleasant pace, have been the two key factors leading toward my own longevity.



ATTAINING AN ADVANCED OLD AGE is often envisioned as a listless sitting around hoping to live past a hundred years. But I'm advocating a productive longevity and not merely "life extension" which is often just a prolonged waiting-to-die situation. I don't tout any popular HEALTH and FITNESS methods because there are too many persons giving that kind of advice -- who are killing themselves in other ways, such as enslavement to electronic devices and not attending to the careful conserving/directing of their energies. So my primary pitch as a "longevity coach" cites a basic law in the biological evolution of humankind: Good enough is as good as anything needs to be. Everything about us, it seems to me, remains able to thrive and proceed upon that fundamental foundation.

PHOTO: Uncle Jack at age eighty, atop the ten-meter-high Olympic platform (33 feet tall), University Of Hawai'i At Mānoa, Honolulu.

LONGEVITY OF THE HEBREW PATRIARCHS
As Recorded In The Old Testament

THE LORD said, My spirit shall not abide in man forever, for he is flesh; his days shall be a hundred and twenty years.

GENESIS 6:3

LINEAGE	AGE
Adam	930
Seth (son of Adam)	912
Enosh (son of Seth)	905
Kenan (son of Enosh)	910
Mahalalel (son of Kenan)	895
Jared (son of Mahalalel)	962
Enoch (son of Jared)	365
Methuselah (son of Enoch)	969
Lamech (son of Methuselah)	777
Noah (son of Lamech)	950
Abraham (first called Abram, son of Terah)	175
Sarah (wife of Abraham)	127
Isaac (son of Abraham and Sarah)	180
Jacob (son of Isaac, twin of Esau)	147
Joseph (son of Jacob)	110
Aaron (brother of Moses)	123
Moses ("his eye was not dim nor his force abated")	120
Joshua	110
Jehoiada	130
Job	140

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MAHATMA GANDHI (Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, 1869-1948) was known to have upheld some steadfast health practices based upon personal experimentation, and he believed that these self-cultivated habits would carry him to age 120. But his expectation was cut short by a political assassin -- very near the 120th day of Gandhi's 79th year. The religion of The Gandhi Family was India's ancient and venerated Hindu folklore. However, when Mohandas was a young law student living in London, he encountered The Bible and might have come across his specific longevity goal of 120 years in The Old Testament, Genesis 6:3. He devoted his adulthood to social activism, and his conduct at all times was seen to be decidedly Christian. As a beloved Elder Statesman, his millions of followers affectionately spoke of him as Gandhiji. Long before being shot to death, he had revised his life expectancy, extending it beyond age 120 to 125, even saying that perhaps he'd be able to reach 133 years.

SOME INTERESTING FACETS OF LONGEVITY

JAPAN counted more than 58,000 people over a hundred years old in February, 2015 -- the most elderly population in the world at that time. The oldest Japanese person was a woman 117, and women were 87% of the nation's people over a hundred.

TWO PREVALENT SYMBOLS of longevity in Japan are the tsuru (white crane, pronounced "soo-roo") and the kame (green sea turtle, pronounced "kah-may"). A popular Japanese proverb says, Tsuru wa sennen, kame wa mannen, which translates: "a white crane lives a thousand years, and a green sea turtle lives ten thousand years." Various depictions of them are included at birthday celebrations, weddings and any other auspicious occasions because these figures are believed to inspire good health and stability. Actually, white cranes can live for a hundred years and green sea turtles three hundred years. The oldest sea turtles are sometimes seen with strands of seaweed and algae trailing from their shell like a ceremonial robe.

FUKUROJIN, God Of Longevity, is one of Japan's Seven Gods Of Good Fortune. He is always depicted with a long beard and a bald head that's highly extended, oddly out of proportion -- today suggesting an alien from outer space.

JUROJIN is another of the Seven Gods Of Good Fortune, also associated with longevity because images of him portray an elderly man carrying a walking staff. He is accompanied by a dwarf stag with antlers, the significance of which is not known. Jurojin is the god of scholarship and wisdom.

KEIGO RYOAN (1425-1514) became the abbot of Tofuku-ji Zen Buddhist Temple in Kyoto. At age eighty-five he was sent as an envoy to China for three years (1511-13) and then traveled back to Japan where he died at eighty-nine.

KATSUSHIKA HOKUSAI (1760-1849) ranks as the grand old man of Japanese artists. His popular set of woodblock prints entitled One Hundred Views Of Fuji was published in 1834 when he was seventy-five. In a written postlude to that collection, he stated: "From the age of six I had a mania for drawing the forms of things. By age fifty I'd printed innumerable designs, but whatever I produced before seventy years of age is not worthy of particular mention. Now in my seventies I know a little about the structure of plants and animals -- trees, birds, fishes and insects -- so by the time I am eighty I shall have made further progress, and at ninety I'll have mastered the secrets of depicting things, and at one hundred I certainly will have reached a marvelous stage. Then when I come to a hundred and ten, everything I draw, whether dot or line, will be enlivened." He signed this statement with his self-appointed last name, Hokusai, which translates as "art-crazy old man." He lived to age eighty-nine.

JAMES A. MICHENER (1907-1997) was a famous American writer who lived 90 years, 8 months and 13 days. His appreciation of Japanese woodblock prints led him to cultivate what he called "an artistic interpretation of life" expressed in the many best-selling books of his long literary career.

FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT (1867-1959) revolutionized architecture in America. His lifetime spanned 91 years and 10 months. He sailed to Japan for intermittent stays between 1915-22 to supervise construction of his beautifully designed and earthquake-proof Imperial Hotel in Tokyo. He later said, "My experiences in Japanese civilization were for me a confirmation of my own prior development -- culturally and artistically and spiritually." He also confessed, "I always become painfully aware of my own crudity when I'm in the more cultured Japanese environment."

JOSEPH CAMPBELL (1904-1987), the renowned scholar of world mythology and comparative religion, lived in New York City most of his 83 years, 7 months and 4 days. He went to Japan in the mid-1950s and thereafter he told others, "If you're thinking of psychoanalysis, save the money and go to Japan instead. It clears away an awful lot of rubbish. I totally fell in love with the place."

GEORGIA O'KEEFE (1887-1968) painted in a "modernist" style during her 98 years, 3 months and 20 days. On her elderly plateau she admitted, "I've been absolutely terrified every moment of my life, but I never let that keep me from doing a single thing I wanted to do."

FLORENCE FOSTER JENKINS (1868-1944) was an American singer who lived 76 years, 4 months and 8 days. Although she had a reputation for singing badly, she rented Carnegie Hall in New York City to perform a grand vocal extravaganza on October 24, 1944 and all tickets sold out weeks in advance. Upon reading the reviews in newspapers following her triumph, she concluded, "People may say I can't sing, but nobody can say I didn't sing." She died one month later.

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