

The 65th Horace Mann Reunion Lament:

**What the Hell Are We Callow High School Lads
Doing Here at This Venerable Juncture?**

by Jim Freund

Well, here we are, fellow octogenarians, at our 65th Horace Mann reunion.
So hard to believe

Perspective

Try this on for perspective. In 1952, the year we graduated, the Horace Mann class of 1887 (if indeed one existed) would have been celebrating its 65th reunion. You remember 1887 – President Grover Cleveland, Queen Victoria’s Golden Jubilee, the premiere of La Tosca, Notre Dame’s first football game, and the initial observance of Groundhog Day.

Attitude

Much can be said about our situation that might come off as sounding negative (and I confess in advance to a few downbeat tones in this piece), but I’ll begin with the one indisputable plus for those of us arriving at this particular milestone: WE MADE IT! The painful reality that a growing number of our brethren haven’t made the cut simply reinforces our achievement.

If you don’t consider this a feat to celebrate, I bet you haven’t looked recently at what the Old Testament has to say on the subject. It starts out very matter-of-factly – “The days of our years are three-score years and ten”. That, for you non-math majors, comes to 70. Then the prophets appear to throw the elderly a bone: “or even by reason of strength four-score years” (that gets us to 80) – but then it’s quickly snatched away with this bleak caveat: “yet is their pride but travail and vanity; for it is speedily gone, and we fly away.”

I’ve plucked elements of this essay from similar ones I wrote for my 50th and 60th college reunions and from my reflections on turning 75 and 80.

But not us! Sure, we may have encountered some travail – as Bette Davis remarked, “Old age ain’t for sissies” – but at 83 (or so), we still have our pride The sense of satisfaction (not of vanity) we ought to feel at having survived sometimes gets obscured when we wallow in the downsides of aging, but we shouldn’t let it diminish what we’ve accomplished.

For another view, check in with Shakespeare and his seven ages of man (from the “All the world’s a stage” soliloquy in *As You Like It*). I’d like to think that at 80-plus we’re hanging on to the end of the fifth age (“the justice, in fair round belly with good capon lined. . . full of wise saws and modern instances”). But I’m afraid that, in the Bard’s mind, we’ve eased into the “slipperd pantaloone” of the sixth age, whose youthful hose is much too wide for a “shrunk shank.” (I refuse to acknowledge the seventh age – “second childishness. . . sans everything.”)

In an upbeat piece I wrote upon turning 50, there’s one segment I’d like to retract – my comparison of a man’s age to the calendar months. I had June down for the good stuff that comes in your 30’s, I awarded the prime month of August to the 50’s, and so on. I’m ashamed to say, however, that I coupled the early 70’s to November – a month to which, back then, I ascribed a “penultimate feeling” (when, in the songwriter’s words, “the days dwindle down to a precious few”). I then compounded the insult by comparing 75 with December – “the final chapter,” I called it, although with the throwaway caveat that “there may be plenty of good times to come.” I didn’t even mention 80 or beyond.

Hey, Mr. Freund-at-50, I don’t feel a bit penultimate today. If I could go back, I’d renegotiate the month allocation with my younger self – asking for the 80’s to be October, although probably accepting November by way of compromise.

And as for our Horace Mann Class of 1952, it’s very much alive and well. Under the active management of such luminaries as Alan Sklar and Mickey Littmann, we still communicate among ourselves regularly, and we share a quarterly lunch with classmates – enjoyable moments that help keep us up and

functioning between the major reunions occurring at five year intervals, such as the one we're now experiencing.

But however you slice it, there's one indisputable *minus* to reaching this survival plateau, namely: PSYCHOLOGICALLY, IT SUCKS! How did we get to be this old? Where did the years go?

Mortality

For me, the biggest difference between octogenarian status and prior milestone birthdays was summed up in a quote I saw several years from Gloria Steinem (a contemporary) – something along the lines of, “80 isn't about aging; it's about mortality.”

Ugh! But much as I try to disregard stuff like this, it's a reality that hovers out there, refusing to be ignored – even when I'm feeling full of beans.

I think a college classmate of mine put it best. Several years ago, our class lost three prominent members in the span of about a month. Standing outside the church after the third's service, I asked my classmate, “What's your take on all this – what does it mean for the rest of us?” His answer was prompt and very much to the point: “Well, we may not be in the batter's box, but we're sure as hell on deck.”

It's not just the quantity of the losses, but the quality too. A few years ago I had the sad task of delivering a eulogy at the funeral of a life-long friend. We'd been together in the fourth grade, and he'd become an integral part of our family over the years. Nowadays we often find ourselves bemoaning his loss – especially when something comes up that we know he'd have been fascinated by, or some question arises that he (with his encyclopedic knowledge) could have answered in a flash.

It's also about losing shared memories. Each of us has many vivid recollections from prior years of events that were shared with just one person who was also present – and when he or she goes, so does the sharing – and perhaps,

ultimately, the memories. I became most aware of this when my first wife, Barbro, passed away two years ago. The tensions of our divorce had softened into an amicable relationship; we met for lunch periodically, where we had begun to share some non-controversial pleasant memories that only we two could recall. Now, I have to revisit these past times on my own.

I try to deal constructively with the passing of others. For instance, I come in touch with mortality all too often at the three senior citizen centers where I play piano for weekly or monthly singalongs. From time to time, one of the regulars doesn't show up for a while, and then we get the sad news of his or her demise. For two of the more prominent soloists who passed away recently (as well as two others who were still around on their 100th birthdays), I made DVD's of their notable performances, for airing to the group and their families. These were sentimental undertakings, filled with poignancy, but the warm receptions they received made the effort definitely worthwhile.

Don't worry, though – I'm not going to dwell here on mortality, a topic I find quite difficult to deal with. Pertinent subjects like whether or not to pull the plug, or burial vs. cremation, or what comes after, are just not my cup of tea. I'm roughly in the same camp as my son Tom was at age 12, when I asked him how he was doing in terms of his spiritual education in Sunday School. "Dad," he said, "when they start to talk about those things, I've just got to get up and walk around."

Our classmate Paul Margulies believed in reincarnation and told me several years ago that he was actually "looking forward" to his passing – which did occur soon thereafter. It seemed like an enviable way to approach the subject, and I'm also sure many of you find comfort in the teachings of your religion. For me, though, so far it's still a matter of getting up and walking around – I've obviously got some work to do here.

Meanwhile, buoyed by the fact that my mother, Marcy Freund, lived to a ripe 105, I like to assert, "Hey, I've got 20-plus good ones left in the genes" (ignoring my

father's untimely passing at 67), and thus put off having to deal with any morbid stuff for the time being.

And here's some support from a Times article entitled, "Get to 100 and Life Actually Doesn't Feel So Bad." It begins with the revelation (surprising to me) that according to population projections, half the people born after the year 2000 will live to at least 100. Apparently recent studies indicate that once people approach 100, "they tend to have a very positive attitude toward life" – higher levels of satisfaction than those experienced decades younger. Why so? The research professor speculates that people in their 60's and 70's haven't fully adjusted to their impairments, whereas the very old have reached a state of acceptance. So that's what we have to look forward to. . . .

Age Disclosure

A recurring issue as the years pass – but with extra resonance over 80 – is whether or not to reveal one's age to others. Attitudes on this range across the spectrum – from those who don't give an inch ("It's none of their goddamn business") to those who flaunt their longevity for all to see. Or, a third way, courtesy of Lucille Ball: "The secret of staying young is to live honestly, eat slowly, and lie about your age."

For many years, my mother was fiercely protective about her age, and would grow furious if she thought I had told anyone how old she really was. If someone asked about her age, she would reply with relish, "I'm as old as my little pinky," waggling the fifth finger at her interrogator.

Once I took her to the hospital for some tests, but had to take a call while she was being checked in. Upon returning, I looked at the nurse's computer screen and noticed she had inserted a 1917 date of birth for Mom. Assuming it was a bookkeeping mistake, I corrected it and then went over to tell Mom. "They got your birthdate wrong and put 1917 instead of 1907." She replied with vigor, "They don't

have to know how old I am” – at which point I realized this was no mere clerical error.

And then, as she neared the century mark, her age became a badge of honor. One day I was receiving a community award for leading singalongs at Goddard Riverside Senior Center, and I’d invited Mom to the program. In my acceptance remarks, I paid tribute to her as the woman who had started me on the piano and made me practice as a boy, concluding with, “I know she’ll kill me for saying it, but Mom, who’s sitting right over there, will be turning 100 this Christmas.” At that point, the entire room of several hundred people stood up and applauded loudly. When I returned to our table – worried over how Mom would react to my disclosure – she smiled sweetly and said, “Did *you* ever get a standing ovation?” From then on, I would hear her asking people, “Do you know how old I am?” – and then proudly trotting out the big number in response to their invariably lower guesses.

So, if you’re a contemporary, where do you fall on this disclose-or-deny continuum? I’m not embarrassed to say that I’ve been volunteering the information to my friends and acquaintances. (I’m not, however, stopping strangers on the street to report the news.) As for why I’m doing this, I suppose it’s that I’m proud to be belying my age by engaging in various activities associated with younger men.

As for the reactions I receive, everyone purports to be overcome with disbelief. “You, over 80? No way!” After I verify the number, they say something like, “Well, haven’t you heard? – 80 is the new 65.” I’m flattered by these responses but realize they may stem less from genuine surprise than diplomatic nicety – mindful of Washington Irving’s wisdom here: “Whenever a man’s friends begin to compliment him about looking young, he may be sure they think he is getting old.” (If I had any doubt that everyone already knows my age, it was dispelled when, the phone rang recently and a voice greeted me with, “Hello – you’ve been selected to receive a medical alert device. . . .”)

By the way, although signs at airport security assure me that at my age I’m entitled to keep on my shoes when passing through the checkpoint, I often take

them off and deposit the pair in a bin for x-ray inspection. I tell myself that the reason for this is that if I were to be questioned about my footwear, the I.D. containing my proof of age would still be wending its way through the x-ray machine. But I suspect the real reason, deep down, is that I resent the implication of the age exception – namely, that someone of my advanced years is too old to be dangerous.

Health

As outgoing alumni president of my Princeton class, I wrote a piece for our 25th Reunion book containing my personal ten commandments – a variety of lessons of adulthood that I wish someone had offered me at graduation. Twenty-five years later, in writing an essay for the class’s 50th Reunion book, the first topic I turned to was health – after noting that it was a subject I didn’t even allude to once in the 25th book. But even back then in 2006, times had changed. “With age,” I wrote, “you gain a true appreciation of the importance of good health. . . . Everything else – money, status, whatever – takes a back seat.”

This is certainly true in spades at our HM 65th. It’s dangerous to start a conversation with a contemporary by using the standard greeting of, “How ya doin’?” That used to evoke a “Fine – how’re you?” response, at which point the two of you could get down to business. Nowadays however, it can lead to an interminable medical/therapy interlude. As for the initial 15 minutes of a dinner out with senior friends, one wag has dubbed the invariable exchange of bodily info, “the organ recital.”

Well, I don’t mean to mock this seeming obsession. If I ever did feel well enough to do that, any such prideful hubris disappeared a few years ago in the wake of some lower back pain and a popping left knee – problems that don’t even begin to compare with the ailments from which many others suffer. But they made me

realize that once we're in our 80's, good health is the most essential of all positive attributes.

An especially troublesome and sad condition here is coping with Alzheimer's or some other form of dementia. Can any classmate deny having wondered whether this might be in store for him – especially right after he's forgotten something he should have remembered, or repeated himself, or lost his way, or misplaced possessions?

When my wife Barbara comes into contact with someone who's deep in the throes of Alzheimer's (the real thing, not just imagined), she'll often say, "If I ever get that way, just take me out in the backyard and shoot me." To which I reply with something inane like, "There's no backyard in our apartment," and we move on.

For me, the ultimate issue is less clear-cut. I enjoy living so much that it's hard for me to envision situations dire enough as to make me want to bow out voluntarily. But, then again, I realize that if I went way downhill, I wouldn't be in the best position to decide whether I'd had a change of heart on the subject.

This was brought home to me recently when a good friend, who has been experiencing a protracted run of serious health issues, said to me, "I'm now in an assisted living facility. I'd rather be in an assisted dying facility."

So I've devised my own test, which I have conveyed to my wife on more than one occasion. "If I'm really losing it, Barbara, seat me at the piano and place my hands on the keys. If within 30 seconds you hear something resembling those two B-flats that kick off *Blue Moon*, then keep me around." (And by the way, I'm charging the rest of you with the sober responsibility, assuming I pass the *Blue Moon* test, of not letting her take me out into the backyard, assuming we had one, at least for a while longer.)

Family

As I'm sure most of you would agree, a prime pillar of happiness as we age comes in the form of family. I like what I said on the subject a dozen years ago and don't apologize for repeating it here:

"Kids are great, but they grow up and move away. Grandchildren are a joy, but for most of us, a treat savored on a part-time basis. A wife, on the other hand, is both a companion for all seasons and a full-time commitment. My congrats to those classmates who have stayed the course on a single admirable choice. As for those of us who have gone back to the well, I hope your experience has worked out as wonderfully as my own."

Barbara Fox and I celebrated our 32nd wedding anniversary in January – and all I can say is that it gets better each year. The woman is a real dynamo – managing her real estate brokerage firm and handling major residential transactions, rescuing abandoned dogs and cats while tending her own menagerie, nourishing her family, playing tennis with me, and so on. But, oh boy, with all that, does she ever take loving and supportive care of her guy. The Fox is so consistent – none of those highs and lows that can bedevil other unions – I always know where she stands. And such fun to be with – we're laughing together and reminiscing and planning all the time. And in such good shape. . . and I find her so attractive. . . . Negatives? Well, I'm not happy about her predilection for throwing out my old magazines. . . . Anyway, you can bet that Barbara is going to do her best to keep me youthful – she simply won't allow me to wither.

Being Retired

At this point, most of us have been retired for a while and are passing the time in a variety of ways. I hope yours brings you enjoyment and a sense of satisfaction – we all deserve that.

Retirement is a subject I've written about often, so I won't dwell on it here, except for three points (none of which involve financial matters that, of course, can't be ignored).

Perhaps the toughest psychological aspect of retirement is giving up the thing you're best at and most known for. The sense of no longer being needed, the absence of accomplishment, the lack of recognition, approval, even adulation – all this and more – definitely tests your self-esteem. But, you can't let your self-esteem be dependent on the praise or positive reaction of others. If adulation has been your sole source of validation, you'll be in trouble. As octogenarians, we should be able to judge for ourselves how well we're doing. Or, as Shakespeare put it, "Go to your bosom/knock there/and ask your heart what it doth know."

Next, in addition to whatever communal activities you embark upon, my advice is to find something you can do by yourself, without the need of a supporting cast. Preferably, it'll involve a skill requiring some effort on your part to achieve proficiency and also creating opportunities for further improvement. And there's a real bonus if it yields something you can view with pride, perhaps even show off to others. For me, photography has filled the bill splendidly.

Finally, how good it feels at this point to "give something back" – to do things that benefit others without consideration of self-interest. I was delinquent in this regard prior to retirement, but for two decades now, I've been playing the piano for singalongs at Senior Centers. (I made a documentary DVD on the subject called *Young At Heart*, which I'll be pleased to share with anyone interested.) Also in common with other college classmates, I've been running a program of selecting and funding graduating candidates for public interest fellowships.

The Revolution in Personal Technology

If I had celebrated a 65th reunion a generation ago and were writing about it back then, this section wouldn't have been included. But the recent technological

developments in personal gadgetry simply cannot be ignored, even for an octogenarian.

I was slow getting myself going into the computer age. While still practicing law in the '90s, I may have been the only attorney to ignore the module the firm placed in all offices. As for phones, while I didn't go as far as my mother (who, until the end a few years ago, kept a rotary dial phone in her foyer closet), I never considered myself a prime mover in the cellphone direction (although Barbara likes to remind me about when I used to lug around a huge battery to keep some relic device functioning).

But all that changed after I retired in '96. I became (somewhat) computer literate, especially for photography; began to rely on a (now compact) cellphone; discovered email (while still wary of texting); and ultimately found my way into IPODs, tablets, Kindles and such.

You may hear me complain about the difficulties of gaining traction in the often counter-intuitive digital arena, and bemoan the enormous dexterity gap between late learners and your average second-grader, but I am now a convert – this stuff is terrific, even for us geezers.

For instance, the combination of digital cameras and the computer “darkroom” has been a real boon to taking and editing photos. The ability to see what you just shot (in case the subject's eyes were closed); the little card that replaces film and holds a thousand shots; the ability to shoot color and black & white with the same camera and card, to adjust the “film” speed to accommodate indoor and outdoor lighting – what progress!

Years ago, I put in a darkroom at our Connecticut weekend retreat, where I processed black & white shots. It was tedious, but I got a kick out of watching the print slowly emerge – almost magically – from the chemical solution. As the digital age gained traction, Barbara wanted to convert the darkroom into another bathroom, but I held my ground. I had long envisioned taking my pre-teen

grandchildren into “my place” and introducing them to the miracle of developing photographic images.

But the last time I printed pictures in the darkroom, instead of marveling at the image coming slowly to life in the pan, I found myself tapping my foot and mumbling, “This . . . is . . . taking . . . a . . . long . . . time.” And as for my granddaughters, they’ve never set foot inside the room – and if they did, instead of gazing with awe at the print taking form in the chemicals, they’d probably be saying, “Hey, why are you going through all that? We can do this in less than a minute – and with better results – on our computers.”

And they’d be right. I was never that good in the darkroom anyway; and the computer’s ability to remove shadows on faces and other foreground objects, to brighten the image, to eliminate red eye and other dross, to straighten the horizon and (with such ease) crop out what’s not vital to the picture – that’s what’s magical.

(But just in case, I’m still not giving in to Barbara’s unreasonable demand to convert it into an extra toilet . . .).

I have a personal website (*jimfreund.com*) that contains my essays, stories, pictures and piano albums (recorded incidentally, on a laptop computer in my living room). Cell phones with email and all the apps are fantastic, and also take very presentable photos which can be edited in the phone and emailed to friends. The IPAD contains so many possibilities – including the games I like to play such as backgammon, sudoku, kakuro, ken-ken and solitaire.

It’s almost enough to make one not hark back to the good old days. . . .

Sheer Happenstance

One thing I’ve become acutely aware of in later life (and have written about) is what I call “sheer happenstance.” I find it amazing how many coincidences and other events outside of my control have had to happen in order for fateful

encounters (like meeting each of my wives) or new beginnings (like attending Princeton or signing up early with the about-to-boom Skadden, Arps law firm) to occur. So much of my life (and I bet this is probably true with many of you) partakes of this chance character.

I don't mean to wax philosophical or religious, but let me just put it this way – if a superior being is pulling the strings, he or she works in some mighty mysterious and complex ways.

The devilish twist of sheer happenstance is that while you're in the midst of one of these chain-of-events or decisional cycles, you don't even know it's happening. It's only when you get to a distant vantage point and can look back with some perspective that you can see what has occurred.

In more general terms, in a piece for our 25th college reunion yearbook on what I'd learned since graduation, the first of my ten commandments was, "Don't assume the accuracy of your current perspective." "Let's face it," I said, "we're all like blind men fondling an elephant. It's not easy to stand back and assess where things stand." And the examples I chose from my own life were of experiences that, at the time they occurred, seemed negative (like those three frigid years on a Navy icebreaker), but that later evolved into something positive (my interest in becoming a lawyer having stemmed directly from the court martial work I did at sea).

Does the axiom still apply today at 83? And if it still holds, might the examples go the other way – blissful present experiences harboring glimmers of the pits?

While I'm sure many of us are still in denial about something or other, I think that most octogenarians are prepared for the twists and surprises of life – for boom and for adversity. In general, our eyes are open – we know ourselves pretty well and can competently assess where things stand. In other words, this rope-like object I'm hanging onto is simply the tail, and there's a truly mammoth beast standing just a few feet in front of it. . . .

Some Octogenarian Negatives

Even though we have a lot to be happy about, there are also some negatives – and these are actually more fun to write about! I’m sure each of us has his own list, but let me offer up some of mine that I have a hunch others of you may share.

One of my biggest bugaboos is a seeming inability to locate specific possessions of mine at the time I want them to appear. Nothing has been the cause of more self-flagellation in recent years. The objects in question are rarely lost, usually turning up hours or days later, when they’re no longer in such immediate demand. But if someone out there has a surefire panacea for this, please let me in on it before I go over the edge.

Have you noticed – or is it just my problem – how everything seems to take a lot longer to do nowadays? I’m not talking about major projects – just mundane stuff, like getting ready to go play tennis in the country on Saturday morning. So many little things to accomplish before stepping out the door. . . .

I’ll tell you one thing that really bothers me. For years now, I’ve wanted to shed about 15 pounds, but can’t seem to do it. I start on a diet, succeed briefly, and then fall off the wagon. I go on exercise machines, but don’t really push myself to weight-reduction speeds for lengthy durations. My wife chides me about the poundage, but I can’t seem to muster the self-discipline to get it done. As I write this, I’m now on another such kick – bye, bye bagels, so long pizza – but based on past precedents, my confidence level is less than so-so.

In this regard, I do take some comfort from Gypsy Rose Lee’s world-weary observation: “I have everything now that I had 20 years ago, except now it’s all lower.”

Excess noise levels – ah, there’s one that I’m more cranky about with each passing year. At weddings and other celebrations, the amped-up dance music drives me out of the room. At trendy New York restaurants, the cacophony of voices not only impedes conversation but undercuts enjoyment of the food (albeit not enough

to diminish my diet-breaking intake!). I'm grateful that my hearing remains unimpaired at 83, but I can't abide the frequent assaults on its well-being.

I seem to be more impatient now (or was I always impatient?). I find it tougher to roll with the punches. Some people (e.g., my wife Barbara) get impatient with the pace at which other people (e.g., me) are operating. My primary impatience, though, is directed at machines and other artifacts of life that refuse to operate as they should, thereby evoking from yours truly a lusty string of Anglo-Saxon epithets aimed in their general direction.

How about memory? Well, my sense is we overdo the significance of those memory lapses that are such a common source of complaints in our senior years. Most of us can remember what's really significant (like the name of our spouse), even if our minds take a hike on other names, phone numbers, and the location of car keys.

I wrote an article on this subject last year called *Senior Moments* – all about those pesky brain freezes that many of us experience with age. The good news is that we're not alone – and the article contains many humorous examples of others who have failed to cope – but I also tried to distill some of the sobering (albeit conflicting) views on whether we should be worrying about any of this stuff. Let me know if you'd like a copy.

On a lighter note, my favorite joke in this area is one I used to tell to break the ice when I stepped up to the lectern – to plead my imperfect memory and justify why I was using notes for my speech.

My wife and I are dining at another couple's house. After dinner, the wives repair to the kitchen, with the guys still at the table – and I'm complaining to my buddy about my failing memory.

"Oh," says he, "I had the same problem, but my wife got me a great book that explains how to deal with it – by making image associations and such."

“Great,” I say, “I’d like to read the book – what’s the title?”

My friend’s brow furrows, he thinks for a moment and then says, “What’s the name of the flower you give to someone for a special occasion?”

I don’t answer right away, so he continues, “You know, the one that’s red and has thorns on the stem.”

“Do you mean a rose?” I offer.

“That’s it!” he says. Then, turning toward the kitchen, he yells, “Hey, Rose, what’s the name of that memory book you gave me?”

Here’s something I notice frequently nowadays – how often I’m the oldest guy in the room. Sure, this was always the case when I attended my wife’s high school reunions, but lately I’m noticing this more and more – at parties, sporting events, lectures and so on. Now that I think of it, this really isn’t so much a negative – sometimes, especially when the activity is physical, I even take a quiet pride in the realization – but I bet it’s something my peers are encountering on a regular basis.

And, by the way, I haven’t failed to notice how easy it is to claim my senior discount at the movies and sporting events. You may consider that a positive, but I’m apt to wonder why the ticket-taker doesn’t mumble, “Hey, this young-looking stud is definitely faking it” – and then demand to see a birth certificate. But sadly, no one has. . . . Won’t somebody card me, please?

Facing Up to Aging

In facing up to aging, I recommend these words of General Douglas MacArthur, which my mother introduced me to some years ago, as representative of her philosophy on life:

“People grow old only by deserting their ideas. Years may wrinkle the skin, but to give up interest wrinkles the soul. . . . You are as young as your faith, as old as

your doubts; as young as your self-confidence, as old as your fear; as young as your hope, as old as your despair. In the central place of every heart there is a recording chamber; so long as it receives messages of beauty, hope, cheer and courage, so long are you young. When. . . your heart is covered with the snows of pessimism and the ice of cynicism, then and only then are you grown old – and then indeed, as the ballad says, you just fade away.”

As for yours truly, my favorite song on the subject – surpassing even *Young at Heart* and *You Make Me Feel So Young* – is Bob Dylan’s *Forever Young*, which closes with these stirring lines that summarize my approach toward life:

“May your hands always be busy/may your feet always be swift/may you have a strong foundation/when the winds of changes shift/May your heart always be joyful/may your song always be sung/and may you stay/forever young”

Horace Mann

The years at Horace Mann were important ones in my life and, I’d venture, in the lives of most of my classmates. We enjoyed a certain educational prestige, we were ably taught and well-prepared for college, and there was real camaraderie with friends in our own and adjacent classes.

There has been an unfortunate spate of negative publicity in recent years about some unworthy goings-on at the school in the decades after we graduated. I’m not aware of anyone in our class having been subjected to such stuff. At any rate, this has evidently now been overcome, and in the most recent Niche.com ratings, Horace Mann was ranked as the #1 private high school in the NYC area.

I’m pleased to have retained a number of good friends whom I’ve known since our high school days, and I’m sure many of you share the same sentiment. We should use the occasion of this 65th reunion to strengthen those existing ties and to reconstitute those that may have inadvertently lapsed over the years.

Let's rejoice that we've all come together once again on this memorable weekend. Try to attend the periodic lunches we have during the intervening years, and let's look forward five years to that big 70th reunion in 2022.

I've been wearing a cap lately that has the letters "ndy" on the front. When someone questions me about what the letters stand for, I point to the answer embossed on the back - "not done yet". That's the way I feel, and I hope you do too.

September 2017

Jim Freund