**Those things that were. (are bound to repeat)**

**Brian Peacock, 2003**

*THESE things shall be, -- a loftier race*

*Than ere the world hath known shall rise*

*With flame of freedom in their souls,*

*And light of knowledge in their eyes.*

*They shall be gentle, brave, and strong*

*To spill no drop of blood, but dare*

*All that may plant man's lordship firm*

*On earth and fire, and sea, and air.*

*Nation with nation, land with land,*

*Unarmed shall live as comrades free;*

*In every heart and brain shall throb*

*The pulse of one fraternity.*

*Man shall love man, with heart as pure*

*And fervent as the young-eyed throng*

*Who chant their heavenly psalms before*

*God's face with undiscordant song.*

*New arts shall bloom of loftier mould*

*And mightier music fill the skies,*

*And every life shall be a song,*

*When all the earth is paradise.*

# John Addington Symonds

I sang this hymn regularly but never read the words. Clearly these high social and political aspirations were unachievable during our generation’s tenure. We have been responsible for untold numbers of “regional conflicts” in the name of religion; we have failed to deal with famine and disease, poverty, hunger and crime; we are well on our way towards destroying our western bodies with food and drugs, and devastating our earth to feed our appetite for transportation and consumer goods. Now terrorism has raised its ugly head. But there have been a number of successes - our revolution was the information revolution – television, cell phones, computers and the Internet. We also cracked the dna thing. Our problem is keeping up with these monsters and our vulnerability to the exploitation of knowledge.

But when we look back as individuals, we tell a different story – we have all made great contributions through work and family. Perhaps our guidance was personal rather than social:

*If you can keep your head when all about you  
Are losing theirs and blaming it on you,  
If you can trust yourself when all men doubt you  
But make allowance for their doubting too,  
If you can wait and not be tired by waiting,  
Or being lied about, don't deal in lies,  
Or being hated, don't give way to hating,  
And yet don't look too good, nor talk too wise:*

*If you can dream--and not make dreams your master,  
If you can think--and not make thoughts your aim;  
If you can meet with Triumph and Disaster  
And treat those two impostors just the same;  
If you can bear to hear the truth you've spoken  
Twisted by knaves to make a trap for fools,  
Or watch the things you gave your life to, broken,  
And stoop and build 'em up with worn-out tools:*

*If you can make one heap of all your winnings  
And risk it all on one turn of pitch-and-toss,  
And lose, and start again at your beginnings  
And never breath a word about your loss;  
If you can force your heart and nerve and sinew  
To serve your turn long after they are gone,  
And so hold on when there is nothing in you  
Except the Will which says to them: "Hold on!"*

*If you can talk with crowds and keep your virtue,  
Or walk with kings--nor lose the common touch,  
If neither foes nor loving friends can hurt you;  
If all men count with you, but none too much,  
If you can fill the unforgiving minute  
With sixty seconds' worth of distance run,  
Yours is the Earth and everything that's in it,  
And--which is more--you'll be a Man, my son!*

*Rudyard Kipling*

Or perhaps imperialistic forces guided us, remembering that we also presided over the disintegration of the British and Russian Empires.

*Land of Hope and Glory,  
Mother of the Free,  
How shall we extol thee,  
Who are born of thee?  
Wider still and wider  
Shall thy bounds be set;  
God, who made thee mighty,  
 Make thee mightier yet.*

*A. C. Benson 1862-1925*

More likely we followed the advice of Yogi Berra:

*“When you come to a fork in the road, take it!”*

I know that’s what I did.

Now we are at another fork in the road – age 65 and graduation, without pomp and circumstance, into retirement. Like it or not we have to accept our diplomas.

Gaudeamus igitur,  
Iuvenes dum sumus;  
Post iucundam iuventutem,  
Post molestam senectutem  
Nos habebit humus,  
Nos habebit humus.

Perhaps with a little dose of Scotch we may still be singing:

*Bring me my bow of burning gold!  
Bring me my arrows of desire!  
Bring me my spear! O clouds, unfold!  
Bring me my chariot of fire!  
I will not cease from mental fight,  
Nor shall my sword sleep in my hand,  
Till we have built Jerusalem  
In Yorkshire’s green and pleasant land*

My favorite metaphor is the marathon – remember the second half starts at mile 20! The first 10 miles were like our education – just read the books and pass the tests and coast along. The next ten were a reflection of our training and our inherited talents – you get what you deserve; you come to forks in the road; take them; all roads lead to retirement. But the last six miles are all uphill, nobody prepared us for this, it’s a test of character and determination. May the force be with you!

Running marathons teaches you that most runners lose all of the time and all runners lose most of the time, ergo runners are a bunch of losers. But with a little help from the age handicappers, you may win a few if you keep trying. Soccer teaches you that you lose control of the ball every few seconds and the sound of falling timber tells you that you will have to wait until next week to make that elusive century in cricket. Failure may be good for the soul, but we mostly remember the 10 good shots in a round of golf, and forget the 90 bad ones, unless they call you Dave.

So what’s next? How about a trip to Mars?

*Wider still and wider  
Shall thy bounds be set;  
God, who made thee mighty,  
Make thee mightier yet.*

Thanks to our serendipitous choices of forks in the road we have a complete, well-trained team from the 1956 MLHS graduating class:

Dave - Propulsion - Give me a steady half g please

Andrew - Navigation - I said Mars you fool Neddy, not Neptune

Maureen - Food - How about steak and eggs, fresh from the farm?

Mary - Health management - If the micro gravity don’t get you the radiation will.

Barry - Physical conditioning - If it’s physical, it’s therapy

Mac - Diplomacy - the little green people didn’t invite us

Tina - Social services – we’re going to need a lot of those

Shiela - Communications - what would we do without the newspaper and all the adverts?

John - Marketing - baubles and beads worked before

Lorna - Habitat development – a handyman’s dream

Dorothy - Mars tour guide – how did those little green men build flying buttresses?

Pete - Book keeper - *If you can make one heap of all your winnings  
And risk it all on one turn of pitch-and-toss, Pete will be happy*

Bryan - Crop production – irrigation of the red dust without water

Maureen - Laboratory services – HDL’s LDL’s and PSA’s

Sue - We will not need your log peeling skills, perhaps you can teach the greenfolk how to smile.

Dave F - Fuel – Nuclear is cleaner than coal, if it doesn’t leak

Jean - Translator from greenspeak – if you shout loud enough they’ll understand

Geoff - Detention of the little green people because they complained about taxation without representation

Geoff L - Environmental services – see if we can mess up another planet

Margaret - Psychological counseling – plenty of business here

Sandra - Kennels – we will always be in need of a doghouse

John G - Greenskeeper – those red greens could do with a little work

Colin - Scout - maybe the green people have the talent to put Hull City back on the map

Jenny - Facilities management – what facilities? We’ve got to build them first

Janet - Water management - with help from hubby; what water?

Brenda - Croquet – to bring out the meanness in us all

Valerie - Hockey, needlework and the Mars faction of the silver strollers

Keith - Architecture – a clean slate, go for inflatables or subterraneans

Pam - Choir – Non nobis domine – it may have sounded bad, but it felt great; singing is good for the soul

Peter A - Greyhound racing - nostalgia

Dave B - Economics – let’s invent the “muro”

Ken N - Skiffle master – washboard

Allan - Politics – we will be outnumbered by the greens, so what about colonialism

Pat B - Mars peace – Remember the 60s

Pat E - Primary school ma’am – little green and white children

Ken B - Percussion – music may be good for the soul, but banging a drum is a great way of converting energy, perhaps Ken will show us how

Brian - Emperor – so?! - Napoleon was a little man

The journey was somewhat long but uneventful and most of us were basket cases – osteoporosis, muscle wasting, radiation sickness and psychotic. A perfect landing, thank you Dave for hitting the brakes at the right time and Andrew for pointing us in the right direction. OK everybody out of the space ship for an hour of PT to get those muscles working, don’t worry about the lack of oxygen, try breathing something else for a change. This one-third g will let you break all the trampoline records for rocks and rolls and twists and shouts.

Mary and Maureen, tell us the news of the crews. Cholesterol and PSA are just fine, perhaps all that in flight exercise helped. Just a few broken bones, kidney stones, neurovestibular dysfunctions and some fried bodies. Didn’t those NASA life scientists warn you about the radiation?

Now Mac if you can handle Grenada, you can handle all these little green people. John will help you with a few free samples of food supplements from his Shacklee days, Alan will teach them how to form a political party and Pat will advise you on amnesty for those misguided greenfolk who threw Mars rocks at uninvited visitors while Geoff will incarcerate the ringleaders.

OK Lorna, you will work with Keith to build this City. Just check out the local preference for burrowing holes in the ground. Sorry Kieth no fancy concrete, steel and glass rising up to the heavens – we need function before form.

All you gardeners, follow Brian; Janet will get hubby to find the water or perhaps Dave will find a by product of combustion, if he can get that CO2 to work. We need to get the raw materials to Maureen for processing – we need to balance color not content of food.

Sheila, I’m sorry but we have no copiers, you will have to write all your material by hand, just like the monks did, you may need a little help from your friends to meet the midnight deadline for the Mars Daily Mail (Should we call it the Green Mail?)

Now for an explanation of why we collectively messed up our time on Earth. We created engineers who made machines that kill people and deplete the earth’s resources. We trained doctors to keep old people alive and place a burden on the health services. We created politicians with pride, prejudice and no brains. We created religious leaders who made war in the name of peace. We created teachers who forced little children to sit still. We created lawyers and jailors to incarcerate the true entrepreneurs.

The only useful profession is entertainment – even the US constitution talks about the pursuit of happiness. So why don’t we make Mars into the biggest combination of Butlin’s and Carnival Cruise Lines ever. So there is work for most of our crowd. Every afternoon will be games day – cricket with Len, hockey with Val, trampoline with Barry, soccer with Colin, golf with Dave, orienteering with Andrew. And every evening music, music, music if you put another muro in. Flowers in our hair, provided by all our gardeners. And beer to make us fat, flatulent and happy. And food glorious food to rot our teeth.

Perhaps we may need a little help from our psychological counselors and social workers and prison officers, but not to worry the best treatment will be a one decade sentence to listen to recordings of the Goon Show and Journey into Space and Dick Barton and The Archers.