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Thoughts from a Nursing Home and an Unfortunate Quote

Wednesday, June 03, 2015

Thank you for the kind messages about my MIL. She is settled into her new location and seems content with the situation. I visit several nursing homes as part of our church ministry and from what I've seen here so far, this one is excellent.

I've been walking the halls, talking with residents and even singing with them in the activity room. Of course, many are not active or able to participate in anything at all. It is a nursing home after all.

This brings me to the quote in my title today.
When checking Facebook, I saw that a friend had posted this.

"Life's journey is not to arrive at the grave safely in a well preserved body, but rather to skid in sideways, totally worn out, shouting "holy sh... what a ride!"

There were 12 'likes' and one comment which corrected the quote.

"Life should not be a journey to the grave with the intention of arriving safely in a pretty and well preserved body, but rather to skid in broadside in a cloud of smoke, thoroughly used up, totally worn out and loudly proclaiming "Wow, what a ride!"
-Hunter S. Thompson

Now I don't know anything about Mr. Thompson, but in the last 3 days I've seen a LOT of people "thoroughly used up, and totally worn out" but they weren't proclaiming anything except "help me, help me" and some just crying and moaning.

Yes, it's an excellent facility and I've observed caring staff. There isn't much else to be done except to keep them clean and comfortable. Has Mr. Thompson considered that the destination of that "skid in a cloud of smoke" might just be into a bed, not a grave?

Lifestyle alone does not account for a person's situation in life. There are enough examples right here on Spark of people facing challenges that have occurred in their lives through no fault of their own. Still, the 2 versions of Mr. Thompson's quote are distressing to me in that they seem to advocate an "anti-healthy" lifestyle as a good thing.

Obsession about appearance, nutrition or fitness is not a good thing either, but often we hear "life is too short not to..." (fill in whatever activity the person has decided to do).

I totally understand this. I've made enough excuses myself for my bad choices. However, I want to continue to think of them as bad choices and not something I should happily embrace. Logging in to Spark each morning gives me the motivation to understand the difference.

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Edit:

I just remembered another quote.

"If I knew I was going to live so long, I would have taken better care of myself"

-Mickey Mantle

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SYLPHINPROGRESS



Your observation on not knowing whether we're sliding toward a hospital bed or the grave is food for thought. It's sad that it takes events such as moving a family member into a nursing home for us to consider such things. Then, too, we must consider that, no matter how healthfully we live, it may be irrelevant toward the end. Sorry to say.

Your connecting to the Thompson quotation is understandable, but I doubt that there is a statement on how to live that perfectly suits the subject. Anything will necessarily be taken out of context. I considered the statement attributed to James Dean ("Live fast, die young, leave a beautiful corpse" or similar), but his callowness undercuts its suitability.

I'd known a little about "gonzo," but had never read any Thompson. Last year I saw a documentary and found it quite interesting, as it filled in some blanks about the man and other matters of the time. Here's a trailer, followed by his 1988 guest segment on Letterman. If you're curious, that is.

www.youtube.com/watch?v=rLP8SH-Y7uA

Laurie

2191 days ago



BOILHAM



I've read that quote many, many times. Each time it leaves a bad taste in my mouth. It seems to me to say that one should live hard, die young. Push that young body until it's worn out. Eat, drink and party to excess, then slide in, worn out early. BS. Why not live life to the fullest and still get old? I see athletes in their 70s and 80s who appear to be extremely vibrant and look very healthy. I just think with some hard work and an intelligent diet we can do this and have the best of health and still age heartily. There are no guarantees of longevity this way, of course, but still you'll be enjoying life fully all the way until the end.

2195 days ago



LINDAKAY228



Great job on the blog and the quotes. In some ways I see Mr. Thompson's quote if we wear our body to sliding to death doing things positively and that we enjoy in a healthy way, not an unhealthy one. Some people don't do anything at all and would enter the realm of death perfectly preserved because they were afraid to live, even if it were doing healthier things. But I don't believe in living unhealthy as an excuse. I worked for a major insurance company for 5 years, until I had a stroke, doing service coordination for older and disabled adults who had this particular insurance through their Medicaid in NM, who contracted the Medicaid out to insurance companies. I visited a lot of older or disabled adults in their homes, but also had 2 nursing homes in our rural area to cover. Neither one of the would I want to be in. But I'm sure there are better ones out there than we had available to us close by and I'm sure you found a good one. I'm glad she seems content there. I hope if I ever have to go in one I can go in a good one. But of course I hope to never have to be in one. I want to live as much as I can and be on my own as long as I can! Glad you were able to find a good one.

2196 days ago



PHEBESS



DH's dear friend, an ER dr, used to describe that slow fade out of life as "the dwindles." And sadly, too many people end up that way, just slowly fading to black.

So yes, staying busy and active and in shape, physically and mentally, is something we all need to strive for. No matter what our age!

2199 days ago



STRIVERONE



Maybe trying to stay active, fit, and always looking to improve ourselves as we age is equivalent to skidding to our final destination in a cloud of smoke.

2199 days ago



WALLAHALLA



I like Mickey's quote better.

2199 days ago



DOVESEYES



2199 days ago



PHOENIX1949

Great blog -- love the ones that make me think.

2199 days ago



JANETRW50

I want to feel great right up to the day I don't and then promptly expire

2199 days ago



CD4114015

Excellent, excellent blog. I have been pretty much awol for days from not feeling well from some medical things but so glad I got back in time for this and didn't miss it. I also am glad your MIL is in a quality place....my mother was also and thankfully not for a long time....some places are straight out of the movies. I do agree with all you say in this blog about health...I only wish I hadn't waited to "figure it out" at an earlier age....praying it was n't too late to avoid badness at the end!



2199 days ago



SATCHMO99

"Nobody ever promised fair" me to my sons as they grew up and occasionally whined about some situation/decision they didn't care for.

Even if life is unfair, it's great that so many Spark friends are making good life choices. Bad things may happen, despite our good life choices, but that's no reason to make a bad choice.

Glad your MIL's home is a good, caring one. I know how hard it is for everyone involved to make the transition from independent living to care/nursing home/assisted living. I saw a lady in her late 90s singing along to the radio on Sunday - someone who I haven't seen awake in all the weeks I've been visiting my mum. It was lovely to see.

2199 days ago



KRISZTA11

I'm glad you found such a good facility for your MIL.



My "old" boss used to tell us "Don't grow old!" often when his back or joints bothered him. He was only 55, at a healthy weight but heavy smoker, totally inactive, lived a sedentary and stressful life. It made me think the only way to avoid troubles of old age is to die young, and found it funny in a morbid way ;)

I believe healthy lifestyle may give us many enjoyable and healthy extra years, but the last years may be just as unpleasant and painful.

2199 days ago



TERI-RIFIC

Hunter Thompson committed suicide at the age of 67. So, I guess he didn't follow his own advice unless he thought blowing his brains out in his bedroom while his grandson and family were visiting was a "wild ride". I think he was a sad little man who led a sad life although many found him exciting and made him a cult figure. Since I don't believe the grave is the end of life, I do not think God created us to selfishly live life for excitement and pleasure. When I was in HS, I was a candy striper in the county hospital for the chronically ill (basically an old age home) I used to pray at night for God to let me die young. Well, now that I am old, I'm glad God doesn't answer yes to all prayers! I agree with what you say. As a former nurse I know the torture that being sick and obese is- obesity just makes it so much worse.

2199 days ago



DR1939

Many years ago I was driving two famous health psychologists to the airport after a conference. They, both men, were discussing the differences in lifespan for men and women. One of them commented that although women lived eight years longer, on average, than men, the quality of life for women in those eight years often was poor..

2199 days ago



MARYJEANSL

It is sadly true that some people who try to take good care of themselves still end up with horrible diseases, and some who make bad choices, proclaiming loudly that they don't care, live longer and relatively healthy lives. Another quote I have heard often - "Eat right, exercise - die anyway!"



However, given that life isn't fair - something I have a *lot* of experience of - the odds are still in favor of the one who tries to make the good choices. After having made too many bad ones in the past, I am now trying to do better. That's all anyone can do.

I'm glad your mother-in-law is settled in. I hope she does well.
2199 days ago



LIVEDAILY

I'm so glad you got your MIL settled in!
2199 days ago



KELLIEBEAN

I'm glad your MIL is settled.

I have seen that quote many times (the first one, not the corrected one) and I had always thought of it as live life to the fullest instead of embracing a risky and unhealthy lifestyle but I can see that perspective.

I have spent time in nursing homes with different relatives and it's a sobering reminder to appreciate our health while we have it.

That is so wonderful how you engage with others there!
2199 days ago



GINIEMIE

Life too short is not one of my Mantras either. How am I living/going to change to live a long and healthy life to the best of my ability is. I know that placing someone in a nursing home is hard,

I'm glad you found a good one.



2199 days ago



MIRAGE727

As I just turned 65, I do everything with longevity in mind. I do my Triathlons safe but push myself to achieve personal goals. It insures that I reasonably fuel clean, train, and spend quality time with my family. I don't know when I will cross my final finish line but until then, I'm, enjoying what I'm doing...and that's really what matters to me. So I work not to rust or burn out but to enjoy my healthy lifestyle! My unexpected returns of inspiring those around me, especially in my family, motivates me to go on!



2199 days ago



WILSONWR

Great blog. Life doesn't always turn out like we want it to, but we have to learn to live with what we're given. We can, however, do our best to live a healthy lifestyle to avoid certain problems.
2199 days ago



SLIMMERJESSE

I read the quotes as saying to live life to the fullest. Glad you have gotten a good place for your MIL.
2199 days ago



NELLJONES

Hunter Thompson was a journalist who created what was called "Gonzo Journalism". He was the inspiration of Garry Trudeau's character in Doonesbury, Uncle Duke. He intended to be outrageous in his writing.

Until our age of modern medicine, most of those people in nursing homes would have been dead. Extending life for the sake of extending life isn't necessarily the best way, but you can't know in advance. It's the quandary of modern medicine.
2199 days ago



WATERMELLEN

Terrific blog.

We certainly don't all get our "just deserts": life is not fair.

The option of assisted suicide when the quality of life has completely vanished is one that I consider desirable -- as per our recent Supreme Court decision in Carter, and as possible in a number of jurisdictions including several US states.

Tough decision but I'd wish to be able to make it.
2199 days ago





ONEKIDSMOM

Yes, I can see where that quotation could be taken that way... so as with many quotations, I twist it to my own purpose. I have to do this with many so-called motivational quotes!



Glad your MIL is in a quality place!
2199 days ago



MISCHAKEO

I am glad your MIL has a good home. Yes, there are people who suffer from things beyond their control. All we can do is try to stay as healthy as possible while we have good health. I am not in favor of the life is too short not to..life style either. I have heard it too many times to excuse poor choices. I am in favor of celebrating your appearance, nutrition, and fitness as long as you are not obsessive.

Spark definitely reminds us to make healthy choices.
2200 days ago

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