

Town Crier VI: A new career on entering my ninth decade

By Pete Haug | Posted: Wednesday, January 27, 2016 12:00 am

Indulge me. Last Friday, I entered my ninth decade, but I'm not done yet. Actually, I feel privileged and blessed to have made it this far. On the other hand, I'm not even the oldest Town Crier.

Some of my friends at Pullman Senior Center have me beat by another decade or so. When I mentioned my birthday to a spry barbershop tenor who sings at the PSC, he grinned and confided he'll be 88 next month.

Okay, that's not quite a decade, but at the Halloween party last October I sat across from a young woman with black whiskers painted on her face and a pair of black kitty ears on her head. She was competing for a costume prize, and she earned it - at age 96.

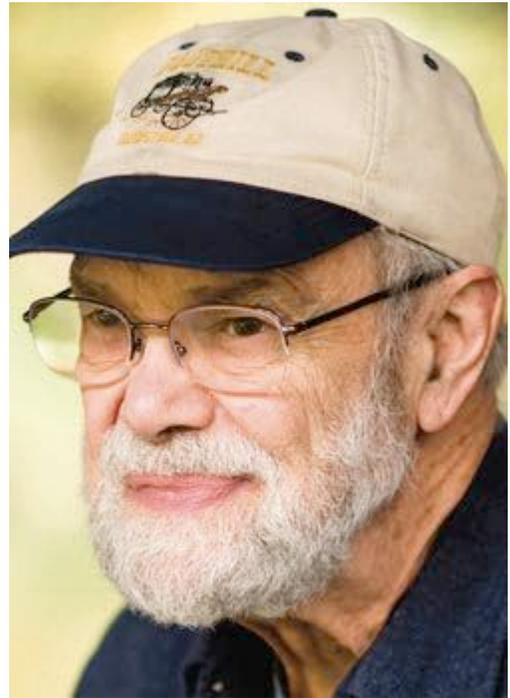
Then my cousin wrote that her father-in-law drove himself to his 100th birthday celebration. I feel somehow diminished, but not defeated - two more decades to go.

So I'm learning life is good, and realizing that it probably begins at 80 - not 40 as once thought. One can't stop aging, so now, retired, I wonder what I'll do when I grow up.

For decades I've told my children and students, "This is the best time in history to be alive, and you'll be able to say that tomorrow, and the next day, and for the rest of your life." It's not always easy to see this, but in the sweep of history it's truer than not.

Despite evidence to the contrary, we humans have the capacity to rise above our animalistic traits. Altruism is not commonly found among other animals. Even among humans the tendency is to put one's self first, but when common danger threatens, people help each other out.

During World War II, for example, much of the world cooperated to defeat a common enemy. Today's common enemy transcends boundaries. It's forcing most of humanity to reconsider values, alter lifestyles and massively change direction to rise above impacts of our changing global climate.



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So in my new career, acting as an individual, I try to alert friends and neighbors to challenges and ramifications of rapid climate change. But that's just the beginning. How we collectively face those challenges will determine the destinies and choices of future generations.

Last month's Paris agreement among 196 nations reflects broad recognition of threats to all nations. It also reflects more hope than has been seen for decades. The last time the world worked together on an environmental problem was 1987, when the Montreal Protocol invoked a ban on gases causing ozone depletion.

The "first international environmental treaty to achieve complete ratification," according to the Australian Department of the Environment, it was a "remarkable effort." Last May, the 27th anniversary of that Protocol, "Business Insider" reported "the hole is slowly healing."

It's taken 27 years to see results in a relatively small portion of earth's atmosphere. What can we expect for the global climate?

The Paris agreement calls for preventing earth's temperature from rising 2 degrees Centigrade above pre-industrial times. It's already risen 0.7 degrees Celsius and continues. To reverse this trend and achieve that one goal, many things must happen. [The degree rise above pre-industrial times has been corrected downward from initial publication. The error was made by the *Daily News*.]

Foremost is that stakeholders have to look beyond their stakes to acknowledge the consequences of their activities and demands. How much are they willing to help other stakeholders? How much good-faith cooperation will rally us, as we learn to recognize and implement our global citizenship by sharing the sandbox we call Earth?

Can it be done? It must be done.

Yet, there still is no better time to be alive than today, except for tomorrow.

Pete Haug's eclectic interests and several careers drew him across the U.S. and into China with his wife before retiring south of Colfax. drpeterlaoshi@aol.com