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## Editor's Notebook: Twenty More Good Years

Michael Kryzanek

*Bridgewater State College*, [mkryzanek@bridgew.edu](mailto:mkryzanek@bridgew.edu)

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## Editor's Notebook

### Twenty More Good Years

I am also glad that I live in the United States and not in sub-Saharan Africa where the HIV- AIDs menace has driven live expectancy down to 40 years of age in some countries and has brought horrible deaths to millions of people. We take for granted our long life and good health prospects, but over three billion people in the world don't have that luxury.

The key to all this talk of life expectancy is whether the 20 or more years that I and others have left on average will allow me the ability to get around without a cane or walker; that I will be able to maintain mental function (and let's not forget urinary function); and that when I the open medicine cabinet, I won't be staring at twenty drug containers.

Now that I am 60, I find that there are those occasional milliseconds when my mind wanders and I begin to think about my mortality. I fully expect to live to a ripe old age, but there is no denying that recent medical data from the Massachusetts Department of Public Health give me on average about 20 more years on this planet

According to the study, life expectancy from birth in our state is 79.8 years. The study also shows that if I and my fellow citizens in the Commonwealth are going to be among the departed, it will likely be because of heart disease or cancer, which remain the top two causes of death. So twenty good years along with daily prayers that medical science finds a cure for two of our most deadly health threats and I just might beat the odds.

But since 79.8 is an average number, I choose to define myself and my prospects for a long life as above average. I therefore have no plans to go out and buy a cemetery plot or get my financial affairs in order. In fact, just the opposite, I plan in these twenty years to enjoy good friends, relish in good times and go on really good vacations.

Thankfully, we in Massachusetts are blessed with some of the best hospitals, medical professionals and researchers in the world. Everyday new cures are being introduced and with all those wonder drugs that keep flashing across my television screen, hope runs eternal. I firmly believe that in twenty years, not only will I be around and kicking, but that the life expectancy line will continue to go upward into the 90 range.

When I alerted my friends about this new data on life expectancy in Massachusetts, most laughed if off and proudly stated that they would beat the numbers. But it is interesting at this age the party discussions that go on among baby boomers. There are now regular animated discussions of retirement plans, pensions and 401Ks, nursing home insurance and that old stand-by, arthritis. Twenty years may be a long way off, but aging and the aging mentality has set in place.

There really is no need to dwell on these twenty years, since there is not much that can be done to stop the march of time. Sure we can eat properly, exercise often, see the doctor regularly and keep a positive attitude. But time is another dimension that is not influenced by all that we may do to add years to our life. As John Maynard Keynes, the famous British economist once said about predicting the future, "In the long run, we're all dead." That may be a bit harsh, but it does make clear the fact that no matter how much we try, we don't control our own destiny.

So if you are like me and in your 60s, enjoy the next 20 or 30 or more years and make them "good" years. As we say in Polish—*Sto Lat*—may you live 100 years.

—Michael KryzaneK, Editor