

# The Second Fifty Years

By Jim Meskimen

Call this essay, The Second Fifty. Better yet, call it what it actually is for me; the NEXT Fifty.

September 10, 1959. Do the numbers of the date of your birth look special and kind of magic to you? Mine always do to me.

Fifty years ago, my mother gave birth to a premature little yellowish baby boy, jaundiced, feeble and squalling, at St. John's hospital in Santa Monica, California.

From that time on I have been trying to use my voice to get people's attention.

When you reach fifty, you tend to want to look back at your life.

But that's inaccurate.

One doesn't actually look back at one's life. There is no "Back". Everything important is right there in front of your face. The good, the not so good, even the completely random and trivial.

I have it all to hand.

Looking at the previous fifty, I can tell you that I've been very fortunate, mainly because of all the wonderful people I've met and known.

That same mom that grew, warehoused and gave birth to my little pink body turned out to be about the best mom an artist like me could have had; a truly giving and tenderly appreciative person.

I didn't know how rare that was until I was a lot older.

Whew! Dodged that bullet!

That she actually became an international icon of modern mom-hood (1950's style anyway) was a strange and disorienting coincidence...

I'm fortunate for that reason.

And fortunate that I lived through things that I did early in this lifetime that were patently and unalterably stupid.

Stuff I will not be writing about in this or any other Blog, thank you very much.

Trust me, I'm FORTUNATE.

So, what of the future?

For the next fifty, I want to get into high gear as a creator. There are things I like to do, and I want to do more of them. Make art, perform, create marvelous things. Help my groups, my wife, my daughter, my friends.

I know myself pretty well after the last 50, and if I enjoy doing it, it's probably something worth doing. Luckily, I also know that many things I enjoy creating are also enjoyed by others.

I do like to please.

I'm a rather polite guy. My beloved, late father F.H. Meskimen went through periods when he liked to drink a little too much, and was consequently a bit unpredictable in his moods, so I gave myself a childhood education on how not to upset volatile people, and how to make uncomfortable situations more bearable. That's one of my jobs. It may be one of my flaws, too.

The Next Fifty might be the time to fight a little more.

Notice how I use the phrase "A little more"? That is to make an uncomfortable concept more bearable. What I really mean is more definite.

Being definite is not always comfortable. I think it makes some people nervous, because then they might be expected to say something definite too, and that can be looked on as an unreasonable demand.

But, what's this about a fight?

You know, in fifty years I have never once actually had the real necessity to punch someone in the face, or clank them over the head with a heavy object.

Any time I thought I did, it turned out it would have made things a lot worse.

Obviously, these needs do arise. Somehow so far I have escaped. Maybe this is never going to be my kind of fight. Anyway, I think it is too late for me to concentrate on developing the skills of applying deadly force; that seems like just asking for a serious ass-kicking.

Force begets force, so why concentrate on it, for God's sake? (That simple observation apparently is not one that many people in government, for example, are falling all over themselves to make.)

The coming fight, as I see it, will be for fundamental human rights. Because there is a lot of insanity and criminality around, and every reason for it to grow and get out of hand, like the Morning Glories that took over our backyard a few years ago.

It's nicer to think about crime, violence and societal decay in the image of beautiful flowers, don't you think? Even when those same flowers work like mad to overwhelm and choke the life out of every shrub, bush and tree in their path.

Must there ONLY be Morning Glories? That would be my question to the God of Morning Glories.

Must there only be super-controlled slaves? That would be my question to the would-be Gods of man, if there were any sense in asking them about it.

So, human rights are key. I'd like to make it legal to be a human. There's so much legislation against it these days.

I love mankind.

That last sentence has a loaded, sort of stupid aspect, as if I had just written, Coke adds life. But the truth is, I don't have to try to love mankind, I just find myself loving it. I love the species. I love the shapes, the activities, the expressions, the problems.

Some people love rats, snails, terriers, ants... Sure, I guess I love them, too. But I don't marvel at them like I do people.

You guys are GREAT. Well done on doing the impossible: being people.

The Next Fifty may have some unpleasantness and some responsibility to fight back against enemies of mankind. I think that is a given. So, with my many earned gray hairs, my "altitude" as a mature-ish fellow, and my junk mail from AARP, my possessions may now have to include some occasional bad manners.

I may start to say and do some definite things.

Possibly.

(Okay, you saw that one coming.)

Tell you one thing: I will be striving for more truth. More effectiveness. More expression of who I actually am.

That may piss some people off. (I kind of hope so, nice as I am.)

The striving for truth will no doubt get kind of hairy for me, from time to time. We all know how that goes.

I see it as my job to communicate from my unique viewpoint. It's my job even more than that other job I mentioned, the one about not upsetting anybody so that they get all dark and brooding and ruin the evening. (I think I'll retire from that job. I may do it on weekends.)

I appreciate you, fellow human being. I think you are good and really extraordinary. You are capable of so much; probably if we weren't in the middle of a "Death Culture" you would be appreciated a lot more for what you actually bring to the party, and would find greater satisfaction in living.

I daresay in a more orderly world, you would be valued a lot more for yourself, rather than how much you can put on your Amex card.

Well, if it is true that the cycle of society is gradually moving along the line of decay into a period of bondage, as some philosophers and social critics claim, then the hour when we will all be obliged to truly deliver whatever we can for our fellow man is not too far ahead of us.

And if, on the other hand, all things start to grow and get a little brighter, and our future starts looking less like a nightmare, (and we can make it look any way we want it to, appearances and past history notwithstanding) then I think it will be delightful to be a part of it with you.

The End