

*this Indian "vision-quest" a boy at puberty sought "medicine power" through retreating alone to some remote place, fasting and praying for four days and nights until a hoped-for vision appeared, giving "medicine power" and direction for the rest of his life. (The anthropologist would attribute the "vision" either to a dream or to sensory deprivation). Usually the visionary makes up a "medicine bundle" of magical materials found during the quest into which the visionary power enters permanently. A tribe will have an all-night peyote cult meeting which is thus a sort of assembled vision-quest through the aid of an hallucinogen.*

*Two hundred and fifty thousand present-day American Indians used this hallucinogen, believing that the ensuing visions are visits from the supernatural. Many states have passed anti-peyote legislation because an hallucinogenic substance was used and legislators did not understand its cultural context. Although the cult is as old as the Aztec, the peyote cult has recently been prohibited by the Supreme Court, one justice curiously proclaiming that the law is prepotent over the freedom of religion clause in the Bill of Rights which he had sworn to uphold, protect and defend.*

*But Peyotism is an authentic ancient religion, indeed older than Christianity. Peyote itself is non-addictive and is used only in cult meetings, never for individual secular or recreational use. The danger of peyote is therefore about as real as the use of wine in communion, where wine, although dangerous, is in fact used.*

*A notorious historical fact is that most colonial immigration and much that came later was to flee religious persecution in Europe. Besides flouting precedent, the Supreme Court decision demonstrates a deplorable ignorance of American history and cultural context. It is much to be hoped that this clear violation of the religious freedom clause in the Bill of Rights of the Constitution will be reversed in a later court decision.*

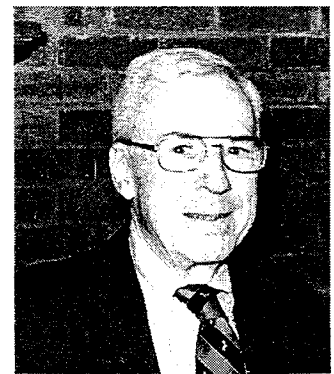
For those interested in pursuing this interesting tribal custom, a copy of *The Peyote Cult* can be found in many public and university libraries. Its use has been widespread. An anthropologist once asked a native Indian an obscure question about peyotism, whereupon the Indian went to his car and got out a copy of *The Peyote Cult* for the answer. LaBarre in his wildest imagination had never dreamt of being a "Prophet of the book."

## GROWING OLD? WHAT ELSE IS NEW?

**George A. Perera, M. D.**

*Editor: The class has its share of medics, and George Perera is one who has had a long and busy career and has become a bit of a philosopher on the way. He refers to our stage in life as simply "old age", having no taste for such terms as "senior citizen" or "golden years". His favorite term is "the elective years", by which he means you can opt for: - no homework; no papers or exams; no penalty for cutting classes; work or loaf as the spirit moves. He then gives us a list of what he calls his aphorisms and epigrams of old age (see below) which he says are mostly original as long as you are willing to admit that most originality stems from having forgotten the original.*

My medical education began at the Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons, in New York, during which I married Anna P. Rhoads, and this year we will have our 60th Anniversary. Our two children (golly! the oldest is a grandmother), have given us eight grandchildren and two great-grands.



*Our Smiling Epigrammer - Dr. George*

After getting an M.D., I went to work at the Columbia Presbyterian Medical Center, where I have spent most of my life, getting a Med.Sc.D. degree, teaching, engaging in research resulting in over 100 publications. Most of my work has dealt with the adrenal cortex and hypertension. I have also practiced as an attending physician, became a professor of internal medicine, and finally associate dean responsible for admissions, curriculum and student affairs.

There has been interesting work on the side, serving on the editorial boards of *Circulation Research*, *Annals of Internal Medicine*, and *Journal of Medical Education*, on the examining board of the American Board of Internal Medicine, as an alumni trustee of Columbia University, a trustee of The Mary Imogene Bassett Hospital in Cooperstown, New York, president of the board of the Riverdale Country School, director of the Columbia University Press and others.

I became involved also in lecturing in many countries and in medical missions for the American Friends Service Committee. In the Middle East, travelling in Jordan, Lebanon and Israel, we tried unsuccessfully to set up a joint hospital for Arabs and Israelis. In the Soviet Union an attempt was made to establish a scientific exchange program between the two countries. In Cuba we delivered medical supplies and relief following the hurricane of 1963. Finally, in 1972, two of us took a shipment of medical equipment and supplies for civilian use to a hospital in Hanoi. Although we went with the approval of the North Vietnamese and of the Nixon administration, it was a novel experience to be bombed by American planes during the twelve days we were there.

Now I am "refired" since Anne and I moved in 1982 to a continuing care retirement community called Kendal at Longwood, south of Philadelphia at Kennett Square, PA. Favorite pastimes include: some medical and personal counseling, reading, music, bird watching and meteorology. Vacation time usually finds us in Vermont or in the Pacific northwest with our son who lives in Seattle.

Along the way I have coined a few sayings, which I like to think are more or less original:

*When asked your age, don't answer "I'll be — on my next birthday". Why sound older than you really are?*

*Illnesses you survive are "growing experiences".*

*The older I get the more I appreciate and accept the "unanswerables". They may have more meaning than the answerables.*

*Life is so daily.*

*Give me more awareness that death is not separate but is part of life.*

*If your toothbrush is wet, you've brushed your teeth.*

*Even horizons can be extended. Try climbing a hill.*

*Don't try to stay an expert as you age. Be a dilettante. Diversity of knowledge makes each day more interesting and it's never too late to start.*

*"Human nature is so prevalent" — Don't let it get you down.*

*You're less apt to stay ignorant if you ask questions.*

*Accept some aches and limitations.*

*Stay curious; employ your smile.*

*Accelerate slowly and apply the brakes gently.*

*" - - - things hoped for," as Paul wrote, may lead to stronger faith than searches for definite answers.*

*Learn how to get along with being alone, without being lonesome.*

*I'm getting much more comfortable with doubt.*

*Keep planning for tomorrow; never cross more than one bridge at a time.*

*A candle loses nothing by lighting another candle.*

*Caring, which gives much significance to our lives, needs only to be a light touch, a word or a smile to have deep meaning.*

*Don't be down on something you're not up on!*

*Shared interests are much more rewarding than tackling them alone.*

*Stop trying to be important. It's when you're silent that you become known for your wisdom and wit.*

Having violated this last bit of advice by agreeing to write this piece, it's high time for me to return to listening. In thinking of you, dear classmates, many scenes and schemes of our four years together are vivid memories. And aren't memories wonderful - - - you forget the low points and remember the highs. Hi! to all of you '33 oldsters!