

From Henry's Desk.....

Are We Dying Gladiators?

When I reached my senior year of college and had completed all of the necessary courses for application to medical school I decided to take some electives in which I was interested. One of those elective courses was English Romantic Poets. One of the poets studied was George Gordon Lord Byron who lived a relatively short life from 1788 to 1824. One of his more famous poems was a very long poem, entitled "Childe Harold's Pilgrimage." The poem described the travels and reflections of a tired young man who, disillusioned with a life of pleasure and joy, looked for something different in his travels in foreign countries. The poem is an expression of the melancholy and disillusionment experienced by a generation weary of the wars of the post-Revolutionary and Napoleonic periods. The title came from the term *childe*, a medieval title for a young man who was a candidate for knighthood.

In the Fourth Cantos near the end of the poem Harold is in Rome and these famous lines are written describing the Dying Gladiator.

I see before me the Gladiator lie:
He leans upon his hand -- his manly brow
Consents to death, but conquers agony,
And his droop'd head sinks gradually low --
And through his side the last drops, ebbing slow
From the red gash, fall heavy, one by one,
Like the first of a thunder-shower; and now
The arena swims around him -- he is gone,
Ere ceased the inhuman shout which hail'd the wretch who won.

He heard it, but he heeded not -- his eyes
Were with his heart, and that was far away:
He reck'd not of the life he lost nor prize,
But where his rude hut by the Danube lay,
There were his young barbarians all at play,
There was their Dacian mother -- he, their sire,
Butcher'd to make a Roman holiday --
All this rush'd with his blood -- Shall he expire
And unavenged? -- Arise! Ye Goths, and glut your ire!

Do you feel at times like the dying gladiator? So many of us fought the polio gladiator early in our lives and often came away victorious or at least came away stronger despite residual wounds of the battle. Those wounds might have been shorter or curved limbs that limped, limbs wrapped in steel and other atrophies and curves marking our fight with the polio gladiator. For many two score of years passed or even more time elapsed and another polio gladiator engaged us in another, but different battle. This time we were no

longer young. We tried many of the battle tactics of the past, but usually these tactics only added to our misery and suffering. We did learn new tactics and became wiser. We conserved our energy and put it to better use. We formed alliances with other survivors of the polio gladiator and together we found that we were stronger in a cognitive, emotional and spiritual sense. We found that often what we had experienced as individuals was almost universal with the experiences of other survivors of the polio gladiator. For many of us our eyes are with our hearts and minds in our experiences of battles fought long ago and battles fought only yesterday. Are we still dying after a long struggle with the polio gladiator and do we expire unavenged? No, we keep arising every time we tell our stories to each other and to the world