

On Honing Our Instrument  
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Almost twenty years ago, I published a book profiling white racial activist William Pierce (1933-2002) called *The Fame of a Dead Man's Deeds*. Remarkable to me, I still get contacted through this website by people wanting to talk with me about him (or more exactly, have a written exchange via email with me; I am hearing impaired and can't use a phone). Pierce died right after the book was published, though to the people who write me about him, it's as if he were still alive and at the age he was back then. Most all of them want to muse about—that's a good way to characterize it—Pierce the man, rather than explore his ideas.

Many of those getting in touch with me were barely born when Pierce died. One young man, who I pick up is in his early- to mid-twenties, has contacted me several times, the latest time this week. He asked about Pierce's daily habits and I mentioned that Pierce munched on small chewy candies from a big bowl throughout his very long workday, I assume for the sugar high, though I never talked to him about it. The young man immediately got back to me asking, I believe seriously, whether I thought the candy-munching was a good practice.

I answered with the brief paragraph below. As I looked over the few sentences I had jotted down to send this young man, it struck me they summarize what I think each of us needs to get in place to up our chances of living well, so I decided to share what I wrote with you here:

I strongly recommend that you *not* munch on candy. Dr. Pierce was dying of cancer when I was around him, but as far as I know, he didn't know it—he never went to doctors, I think regularly popping small candies into his mouth was his way of keeping himself going, and it wasn't a healthy or effective way of doing it. The best thing I can suggest

to you is to focus on honing your instrument--your body and mind and personal habits—that gets you through life so that you can be as effective and peaceful and happy as possible. Good nutrition. No junk food, alcohol, dope, or pills. Good weight management. Some kind of daily toning and stretching—the key, keep your spine flexible. A meditation/relaxation technique to calm and center yourself. Kept-up and aesthetically pleasing and comforting surroundings—home, workplace. Quality books, films, music. A creative, self-expressive outlet—painting, woodworking, gardening, etc. A daily leisurely stroll. Relationships with people who celebrate you and build you up, who don't disconfirm you and bring you down and deplete you. A life that balances work, love, and leisure. As remarkable as he was in so many ways, Dr. Pierce didn't attend to any of this personal business and it cost him greatly, including, I believe, dying before his time.