

## **LIFE'S A VERY FUNNY PROPOSITION, AFTER ALL**

Do you have a favourite song that has lyrics that seem to capture your ideas about life, including why we're here and what it's all about? Here's ours:

I believe the bottom line challenge for REAL wellness seekers is finding, fine-tuning and sustaining sufficient meaning and purpose in life. Once achieved, other lifestyle advantages are more likely to appeal and fall into place. Books, poems, movies and yes, songs about meaning and purpose interest us greatly. No song has been of more fascination than "Life's A Very Funny Proposition After All" It was written and recorded over a century ago by George M. Cohan, the famous composer best remembered for patriotic songs, such as "Yankee Doodle Dandy," "Over There" and "You're A Grand Old Flag."

"Life's A Very Funny Proposition After All" was composed for and featured in a Broadway play in 1911 entitled, "Little Johnny Jones." You can enjoy video renditions posted at YouTube.

The song has enjoyed attention in recent years, as it was featured in Episode Ten, Season 1 of the hit HBO series, "Boardwalk Empire."

The beginning of "Life's A Very Funny Proposition After All" invites the listener to think about ultimate questions, such as:

"Did you ever sit and ponder, sit and wonder, sit and think, Why we're here and what this life is all about?

"It's a problem that has driven many brainy men to drink, It's the weirdest thing they've tried to figure out."

That stanza gets everyone's attention, as it must have in 1911 when sung in "Little Johnny Jones." The next stanza is equally arresting:

“About a thousand different theories the scientists can show, But never yet have proved a reason why. With all we’ve thought and all we’re taught. Why, all we seem to know is we’re born, live a while, then we die.

How do we spend our days? George M. Cohan does not paint a pretty picture:

“Imagination, jealousy, hypocrisy, love, three meals a day, a whole lot to say. When you haven’t got the coin, you’re always in the way. Everybody’s fighting, we wend our way along, Every fellow claims the other fellow’s in the wrong. Hurried and worried, until we’re buried, there’s no curtain call.

Life’s a very funny proposition after all.”

Cohan notes there are good times and bad, that we are all different, but eventually time runs out for everyone, so live well while you can:

“When things are coming easy and when luck is with a man, Then life to him is sunshine everywhere. Then the fates blow rather breezy, they quite upset a plan. Then he’ll cry – this life’s a burden hard to bear.

“Though today may be a day of smiles, tomorrow’s still in doubt, What brings me joy may bring you care and woe.”

“We’re born to die but don’t know why or what it’s all about. The more we try to learn, the less we know.”

“Life’s a very funny proposition, you can bet. And no one’s ever solved the problem properly, as yet. Young for a day, then old and grey, Like the rose that buds and blooms and fades and falls away.”

“Losing health in search of wealth as through this dream we tour, Everything’s a guess and nothing’s absolutely sure.”

Nearly all of Cohan’s songs are upbeat and celebratory, cheerful and rousing. Not this one. Ponder the final stanza:

“Battles exciting, fate’s we’re fighting. Until the curtains fall.

Life’s a very funny proposition after all.”

No doubt about it, “Life’s A Very Funny Proposition After All.”

We all know life is short. Make the most of every day, love as much as possible, look after yourself, be grateful and, to paraphrase another of George M. Cohan’s hit tunes, “give your regards to Broadway.”

by *Donald B Ardell*