

27

The Secret of Longevity

PEOPLE SOMETIMES ASK ME: “What is the secret of your long life?”

That question is not easy to answer, because sometimes long or short life results from one’s family genes. In my case, most of the women in our family live until after the age of eighty (octogenarians). However, we can usually live longer by taking care of ourselves.

What I usually answer to that question is, “Eat sparingly, work hard, don’t smoke, or drink strong wine, but take part in as many sports as you can. In short, live a simple, healthy life-style.” I guess I was fortunate that even in primary school I enjoyed study and reading, but was not much interested in food, except sweet things. Anyhow, I had very little pocket-money to buy sweets.

I remember one year at Christmas time, our family had a huge Christmas dinner, just as Chinese do at Chinese New Year. There were lots of sweetmeats in the living-room, and we were allowed to eat as many as we liked on Christmas day. Dinner in my home-town was what we call lunch in Hong Kong, that is, the mid-day meal.

After that meal we felt stuffed, and I made up my mind never again to eat so much at Christmas. Someone whose name I have forgotten once wrote, “Never get up from a meal feeling

that you could not eat any more.” Very good advice, isn’t it?

Physical exercise is also good for helping a person to live to a ripe old age. An important moment for me was when my Form 1 teacher chose me for the annual medal for physical training. It was a big surprise because I never thought I would become so fond of playing games and doing gymnastics. A teacher’s encouragement can remain in the mind forever. It certainly remained in my mind, and I am sure that has had a great influence on my health even up to now.

Some classmates told me that people who play lots of games never do well in their studies. I thought about it and considered that theory was wrong, provided we do not neglect our studies but plan our time to include both. I made up my mind to prove the theory that taking part in sports actually helps to refresh and develop the mind for study. It is, in fact, “All work and no play” that “makes Johnny a dull boy”!