*Wok & Roll by Peter Kwong, (Frederic) Inter-County Leader*

**Poem offers perspective on one’s treasure in life**

I just received an article from an old friend from Hong Kong. I can’t believe how much time has passed since we were in school together when we were 12 years old.

We were very close buddies then, and after almost 60 years, we are still very close buddies; amazing indeed. It is nice to be able to talk to someone without worrying about what we think of each other’s social status or other concerns. Who cares? Friendship is not built on one’s possessions, but the allotment of the hearts.

I’ve visited many nursing homes the past few years. My wife and I used to go to different nursing homes in the Milwaukee area and serenade those wonderful folks who would appreciate us every time we showed up. And we’ve just put our dad in a nursing home not too long ago.

Seeing all these lovely folks having a good time and enjoying their final years just melts my heart. They have worked so hard all their lives, contributing all they’ve got to their families, their careers, and the communities. Now is time for them to take a step back and say, “Sonny boy, I’ve given all I got, now you take over and let me enjoy what’s left of my journey.”

My Indianhead Chorus went around different nursing homes in the area and serenaded the folks who appreciate us to no end. They didn’t care if we sang off-key, as most of them did not have their hearing aids on. However, our director with his sensitive ears would raise his eyebrows toward the off-key direction. But it all ended up with a smile as we were all doing one thing — making someone happy.

This article my buddy sent is written by a professor from a Chinese university. He retired from his profession years ago, and now resides in a nursing home. He wrote this poem, “One’s Treasure in Life,” which I found very heartwarming; and I’ll do my best to translate his message:

“It is ridiculous to waste your life seeking fame and fortune

Worrying every day of how to stay alive and to get ahead

Just to realize that at the very end, life is just like a bed

I’m living in a nursing home, in a very nice and clean apartment

Equipped with all kinds of convenient gadgets

The meals are adequate, the service cordial

The environment is quite pleasant, but I paid a hefty price

I am not rich

And my pension can barely afford the costs

What I thought was the inheritance for my children

Now is the pavement for my last journey

Leaving all the priceless possessions

Just to survive in this tiny apartment

What to do with closets and boxes full of memories

Priceless to me, those unforgettable moments

Now I can’t even give them away in a garage sale

My stamp collections which took years to accumulate

All my books with multiple languages

How about my wine collections?

What are they worth now, and appreciated by whom?

All my herbs and spices, my knives and utensils

What to do? What to do?

I have a bed, a closet and a sofa, a TV and a small refrigerator

That’s all my possessions

Everything I needed, or ever will need

Everything I own, in this tiny place

All the richness in this world, rest in this little room

All of a sudden, I realize

All the fame and fortune in this world

Are not important, as I have no need for them

They don’t belong to me, but to the world

I was lucky to have a chance to look at it

To feel it, to touch it, and possess it for a moment

But it really belongs to the world

We are all travelers

Passing through this wonderful journey of life together

Why not live in peace and harmony

Cherish and love one another

Give what you’ve got to help others

As what you have you don’t really own

You didn’t bring it when you came

And you can’t take it with you when you depart someday

After all, the bed is the only thing you’ll ever need

The only treasure in life that will bring you peace

Happiness is not to own the world

Happiness is to share the world

By giving whatever you can to help others.”

After visiting all these nursing homes, I totally agree with the writer. Owning everything in the world means nothing, as at the end, all we need is a bed; all the priceless possessions mean nothing.

I totally agree, but maybe I can add my wife and a warm blanket in my bed?