

## "My 2015" by Jean-Pierre (J.P.) Harpignies ('68)

First I want to express my deep love for the city of Paris, one of the crowning glories our species has produced. I only lived there briefly as a student in 1968 during a fairly crazy historical period and I couldn't adjust to life away from New York, but I return to visit it every few years, and it is without doubt the most enchanted and beautiful city on Earth. My heart goes out to all its inhabitants after the horrors visited upon them recently. Their refined and vibrant culture, the envy of the world, has withstood far worse insults, from Vikings to Nazis, and it will thrive long after these latest fanatics have been swept into the dustbin of history.



On to my own far more mundane little life. Another year gone by. This October marked the 26th year of the Bioneers Conference, a big annual eco and social justice-themed event that takes place north of San Francisco that I have helped produce and program since its inception. If any alumni are interested, they can see some of this past year's keynote talks on Youtube at: [2015 Keynotes YouTube playlist](#).



I personally especially recommend a 20-minute presentation by Kim Stanley Robinson, a famous science fiction author, (with an introduction by yours truly):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=489I0gZlepM&list=PLcrF8IYZY1450NIWnvvGqQcn0IR4rw-mF&index=24>

As well as the very short (5 minutes) but powerful talk by anti coal activist Junior Walk:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=schDbVMEapU&list=PLcrF8IYZY1450NIWnvvGqQcn0IR4rw-mF&index=8>

You can also listen to audio recordings of many of the conference's panels and workshops at:

<https://soundcloud.com/bioneers/sets/2015-conference-workshop-audio>

2015 also marked the sixth year of my involvement as a member of the Review Committee for the Buckminster Fuller Challenge, which has been called "Socially-Responsible Design's Highest Award." The winner of the \$100,000 top prize this year was a very cool ocean farming project called Greenwave (<https://bfi.org/ideaindex/projects/2015/greenwave>), and the other finalists were also very inspiring projects from all over the world, including a very impressive housing project based in France and Sahelian Africa, La Voûte Nubienne. Info about all the finalists can be found here: <https://bfi.org/challenge/finalists>



Other than that, climate change has been hitting closer to home in recent years. "Super Storm" Sandy wiped out several of my friends' houses and/or automobiles a few years back here in Brooklyn and in lower Manhattan, and this September a massive wildfire, exacerbated by a climate change-linked historic drought, burned to the ground a place I had visited every year for 38 years, Harbin Hot Springs, about three hours north of San Francisco. It was an amazingly beautiful "intentional community" and resort with thousands of acres of mountainous, wooded lands, extraordinarily rejuvenating water and air, a place I found more relaxing and revivifying than anywhere else on the planet. They plan to rebuild, but it will take quite a few years, and even longer for the vegetation to grow back. The people I knew there lost everything and had to run for their lives.

On a more positive note, in closing I will share a poem by Longfellow designed to give hope to those of us, including by definition those from our class of '68 still standing, who are no longer all that young but still hope to accomplish a bit more before the sand in the hourglass runs out:

It is too late! Ah, nothing is too late  
Till the tired heart shall cease to palpitate.  
Cato learned Greek at eighty; Sophocles  
Wrote his grand Oedipus, and Simonides  
Bore off the prize of verse from his compeers,  
When each had numbered more than 4-score years  
Chaucer, at Woodstock with the nightingales,  
At sixty wrote the Canterbury tales;  
Goethe at Weimar, toiling to the last,  
Completed Faust when eighty years were past.  
These are indeed exceptions; but they show  
How far the gulf-stream of our youth may flow  
Into the arctic regions of our lives  
Where little else than life itself survives. . . .  
For age is opportunity no less  
Than youth itself, though in another dress,  
And as the evening twilight fades away  
The sky is filled with stars, invisible by day.

- Henry Wadsworth Longfellow