

# JANUARY 1995 — MERTON AT EIGHTY

by **Francis J. Welsh**

---

Born of British heritage in France  
he would in January celebrate an eightieth birthday  
as an American.

Among the Americans who reached their 80th year  
were 14 signatories of the Declaration of Independence.

These men determined their society would know  
freedom.

Their efforts enabled generations to be free —  
free to do what ought to be done.

Hopeful are the benefactors that  
freedom will remain.

With this freedom Merton would be able to  
communicate while cloistered,  
converse while silent,  
compose while free time was sparse.

Occasionally we find respite in the shimmering  
sunlight on a placid mill pond —  
seldom do we realize that our attention  
is only on top of the water.

Our efforts to remember him give us pause at the  
volume of his work —  
seldom do we realize that our attention  
focuses on part of his life.