

## Am I past my 'best before' date?

by Mark Pavilons

I just might be past my prime.

While prime cuts of beef are quite desirable, the same can't be said for humans. I've gone from 'beef cake' to 'jello pudding'.

Several trips to the mall recently made something perfectly clear. I'm in the minority in the age category. The majority of the masses at the mall are teens or 20-somethings. There was a time I was in that group, but alas, nothing has been invented to slow the passage of time.

I still haven't gotten used to sales associates addressing me as 'sir.' I don't think I'm one of those, a term typically associated with middle aged men. Wait, I am a middle aged man!

Just when did that happen?

As we trudge along through life we try to do all the right things ??at a well balanced diet, exercise, enjoy the fresh air and do yard work.

We seldom notice the passage the time. I don't spend a lot time looking in the mirror so I don't have a really good grasp at just how I appear to others. It's weird because we tend to spend a lot of time and effort looking good, but we seldom see the results. It's for other people. We don't walk around life attached to a mirror, although some, especially those same 20-somethings, cling to selfie sticks.

When I do see a photo of myself, or stand in front of the mirror, I am not amused, as the British say. What can I do to improve this visage of mine? Nothing. My face is the result of genetics, diet, the luck of the draw, and the effects of time. It's a gnarly road map that my life's journey has taken. The deep crevices that emerge with my large smile are my trademark. I love to laugh and do so often.

I have always envied those who were born of attractive stock and have perfectly smooth, almost flawless skin. Oh, how life would have been different for me had I had that chiseled jaw or movie star looks.

Looks aside, when I see all the youngins at the mall, I envy them, too. They have so much to look forward to, as the world unfolds in the next 20 years. The future will present many marvels and opportunities for them.

At some point, many of us live vicariously through our own children. I have mentally travelled the world, through my daughter Lexie, who just returned from a five-week stint doing volunteer work in Rwanda. I've been to the wide open plains of Kenya and the shores of a remote fishing village in Trinidad. I have sampled Guatemalan delicacies and spoken with Haitians.

Through my son, I have enjoyed rap music, revisited teen angst, and rekindled the joy of driving stick. Through my youngest, I am sparked by never-ending curiosity, sprinkled with humour and sarcasm. Delightful!

Am I no longer considered part of the target audience or consumers? I struggle to find the proper clothing sizes and styles, in a world geared toward Millennials. I love bold, colourful shirts in the summer, but my favourites are no longer vogue, and considered 'vintage.' Moi, vintage? I am not amused.

When I see a colourful pair of sneakers in a store window, my wife promptly points out that I am no longer a teenager. When I see a really nice hairstyle or look on a poster, again my wife let's me know I can never look like that.

Would blond streaks, a five-o'clock shadow and that California surfer look make me young again?

In reality, my moustache and facial stubble are grey and those hair dyes would make me look silly, not distinguished.

I still have fine tastes in watches and jewellery but given today's prices, I just can justify spending that kind of money on myself. It's in short supply these days, and every dime is directed to my offspring.

Am I doomed to the remainder of my life being addressed as 'sir' and being asked if I'd like the seniors' discount? Am I'm doomed to driving Buicks the rest of my days?

Are there benefits to being mature and wise??Sure.

I?watched the original Star Trek show on a black and white TV with rabbit ear antennae. I?remember when the first LED?watch appeared. I?had a flip-phone and played the console video games. I?was quite a good pinball player.

I actually remember when the Raptors started in Toronto. My wife and I?witnessed the back-to-back World?Series titles won by the Blue Jays. Unforgettable.

I?remember Grade 13 and my first few cars, one of which was a nice 1970 Camaro RS. Today, that would be a valuable muscle car survivor.

There was a time, dear 20-somethings, when life was rather simple. There was no pressure to 'grow up' and our failures were never posted for the whole world to see. We had fun just chilling, and suffered in silence.

We ate family dinners all together. I?even watched the Carol Burnett show with my parents. Hey Millennials, Google it and watch some clips of Harvey Korman and Tim Conway. You'll die laughing.

The Happiness Index, a survey by Leger, discovered Canadians are happier after age 55. The online survey, conducted in June, found about half of respondents ranked their happiness as at least 8 out of 10. The happier souls hail from the east coast and Quebec, with BC?residents coming in third. Ontario participants were at the bottom of the list, with only 47 per cent reporting a high level of happiness.

Happy or not, jello-like or not, I still have a lot to offer! Who doesn't like cold pizza the next morning?