

Are we holding back the years, or letting loose?

by MARK PAVILONS

Hindsight, they say, is 20/20 ??erfect, invaluable.

The only problem is, life has to be lived forward, not backward.

Stevie Nicks once wondered whether she could handle the seasons her life, noting:

?But time makes you bolder

?And children get older

?And I'm getting older too ...?

And wise Dr. Seuss once asked ?How did get so late so soon??

We all know, even at an early age, that our time is limited and we must spend every hour and day wisely. Some argue that even wasting time is not really wasted.

We will all get to that proverbial finish line, some sooner than others. But we all have the same fate and will one day venture into what Peter Pan called the last, great adventure. Virgil, long before Pan arrived, said ?time is flying never to return.?

There are times when I (maybe many men)?feel like that boy who refused to grow up. He stayed away from grown-up things, to remain free, filled with irreverent joy.

Some say that time doesn't change us, but ?unfolds? us, allows us to expand to new levels. Time is like a dressmaker, according to Faith Baldwin, ?specializing in alterations.?

Being a Boomer, I?have fond memories of my youth, times when life was a bit simpler, easier, more satisfying. We had less stress and pressure and weren't governed by the clock. We enjoyed lazy days of summer doing nothing. We explored.

If you think about it, much of our childhoods can be compared to Neverland, where time stopped, or at least slowed for a while. It didn't beckon us.

How many young people today plop themselves in a grassy field, chewing on a stalk, just looking at the clouds? How many ride their bikes down the dirt road just because?

Some say we're living in a time of anxiety and that we're pressured to use our time creatively.

We must achieve, accomplish, rise and accumulate wealth.

One would think that age and wisdom would be cherished in our society. If you want to learn something about the past, ask someone who was there. The past isn't just a tickle trunk filled with oddities and things like rotary phones and rabbit ears.

It's filled with adventures, experiences, knowledge. We Boomers have a badge, one earned through the school of hard knocks. We learned by doing. We learned from each other.

Our generation also had bookworms, geeks and jocks, but if we flip through the pages of our high school yearbooks, we realize we had respect, a shared brotherhood (or sisterhood) of sorts. Despite the hairstyles and large-rimmed glasses, we were the gatekeepers of a special time.

David and Goliath, Casey and Finnegan may be gone, but they taught us a lot. Their messages were pure and kind.

Most of my peers did well for themselves, but none drive Ferraris. Some still play in bands, go on road trips and love beer and BBQ.

If find it funny that the young think they know everything, when it's us, the older ones, who actually do. Maybe that was always the case, but in our day we did respect age, our elders, and the knowledge they accumulated.

I?agree with Tom Stoppard that age is a high price to pay for maturity.

And ageism is alive and well in our society.

I?remember when I was between jobs in my late 40s and went for an interview at a creative design company in Toronto, housed in a converted warehouse.

Cool place, open concept, lots of windows. The interview process included a round-table of about 12 of us, fielding questions. Of course, I was the oldest, and despite my wisdom, I?received ?those looks? from the 20-somethings in the room. It was obvious I wasn't seen as a good fit, despite my skills and potential to be a leader and mentor.

There were dozens of applications, for entry level writing and proofreading jobs that failed to get a response. When I did interview, the hosts were in their 20s and perhaps my lack of regard for them was evident. I?couldn't help myself!

I?recently went to a hearing clinic and, alas, was told I could benefit from hearing aids. Great!

Why these tiny gizmos are so expensive is beyond me.

We tend to link hearing loss, vision loss and dental issues with age. But in reality, these can occur at any stage of life.

In my youth, cancer was rare, and seldom affected young people. Today, we are all aware of the harsh reality of this disease. During my treatments, every floor of Princess Margaret was packed with people of all ages, from all walks of life. Sad.

I?try to ignore the inevitable, and keep the demons looking over my shoulder at bay.

I?love to laugh, even though I'm in that age bracket where I?fell off the ?humour cliff.? A four-year-old laughs roughly 300 times per day, but a 40-year-old doesn't laugh that many times in a week. From our early 20s onward, we laugh and smile less.

But I?am intent on keeping those laugh creases in my face ???earned them all. I?will trade barbs and jokes with my kids, more often just to get a rise out of them. I?laugh and laugh and laugh. Juvenile humour is my forte, what can I?say?? Just like James Broughton observed, ?I'm happy to report that my inner child is still ageless.?

Simple things keep me young at heart ? my model airplanes and the regular visits to the toy box at my dentist's office.

We should embrace the efforts and legacies of our ?mature??citizens.

Let's not forget that we're sitting in the shade today because someone had the wisdom to plant a tree long ago.