

Bill Rea ? Aging isn't all bad

It's official ? I'm getting old.

It doesn't come as that big a shock. I always knew I would, just as everyone should, and my late father usually made a point of reminding me of that every birthday (both his and mine).

The reality comes roaring upon me every time I realize some of the things I can no longer do. For example, problems with my knees now makes bending down or squatting down something of an ordeal, and getting back up again can often be worse. If my wife happens to be nearby, I frequently have to stick an arm in her general direction; a sign that I require some assistance.

I dread the thought of dropping anything, not so much from fear of damage or being accused of littering. I just hate the thought of having to squat down to pick it up.

I used to have a bit of an interest in gardening. Nothing too serious; simply part of an effort to spruce up the front of the house. The problem is I had to squat down to do the planting and weed-pulling, and the ordeal eventually became just too much. My attempts to have a green thumb are in the past.

Hopping over fences, either legally or illegally, used to be easy, as was stepping over barriers. Such is no longer the case.

There were such barriers at the Caledon Pan Am Equestrian Park during the recent Pan Am Games. There were some I was allowed to cross, after flashing my media badge that is. One time, I had to crawl through ropes, kind of like entering a boxing ring. The young lady on security quickly noticed I needed a bit of a hand.

?This was a lot easier when I was your age,? I told her with a bit of a grumble in my voice as she helped me through.

She laughed. She'll learn.

Part of the problem comes with doing the household chores, and since we have recently moved and have a lot of stuff to sort through and put away, there are lots of those chores to be taken care of. There's lots of furniture still to move, and the problems with my legs, plus a few issues with my back, tend to make such work difficult, but not impossible.

Beth is able to get a bit of labour out of me.

The recent holiday weekend was particularly fruitful, as she was able to get me to position a couple of chests of drawers, one of which had to have weighed at least 100 pounds, among other things. One of these days, I'll get around to putting clothes, etc. in them, knocking down some of the piles that are around the house.

Peel Region is going through one of those periods when we're allowed to put out more garbage than usual at the curb, and Beth has made sure we're taking full advantage. So early one evening last week, I found myself lugging a variety of debris down the driveway of our new home (a driveway I have casually measured at about 185 feet), including a broken chest of drawers (one of these days I'm going to count how many chests of drawers Beth and I actually own) and an old mattress. I was able to do that with my leg and back troubles too. Even Beth was impressed.

The problem is there is still so much more debris to deal with. I don't know if my old bones are up to it.

Despite my slowly drifting past the troubles of middle age, there are some physical activities that cause me very few problems.

Prolonged standing is seldom an issue. Indeed, I have more troubles when it comes to sitting too long. I'm one of those people who needs to move around a certain amount. Covering lengthy meetings, at which I have to sit down throughout, tend to be something close to torture.

Walking is not too much trouble either. I have to do a lot of that in my job, especially this time of year. There's tons of walking involved in covering fall fairs, and within a couple of months, I'll be running after Santa Claus parades, just like I did when I was a kid in my 30s. I'll be up to it, although I'll also be bloody tired at the end.

Actually, I think I'm lucky to be in a job that requires so much walking. I think it helps keep me in shape. Of course at my age, any form of exercise is probably a benefit.

Shovelling snow, at least in the winter, doesn't cause me too many physical problems; at least they didn't at the old house with a driveway of about 40 feet. Again, it was tiring for my old bones, but something I could handle, even when I had a couple of feet of the white stuff to clear away. I'm not yet sure how I'm going to handle the longer driveway with my bum legs and back, but I'll think of something, as if I have a choice.

There are some activities I have been told to stay away from. When I started having troubles with my legs, my doctor told me not to play basketball. That wasn't too demanding. Even as a kid, I hated playing basketball, and enjoyed watching the game even less. I couldn't tell you how the Raptors did last year, and I'm not planning to keep track of them in the season to come.

I haven't tried skiing since I was in high school, so the admonition to stay off the slopes and trails wasn't very hard to comply with at all.

Some activities proved to be a little harder to turn down.

There is an annual pond hockey tournament at Alton Mill, and I was asked to take part in one of the games in January. I had two problems with that. First, I couldn't remember for sure if I even still owned skates. And the doctor's orders were very much on my mind. I stood down and watched the action from the sidelines. Part of me was upset at the fun I was missing. But my legs were aching just watching these folks.

Swimming is one activity that I've been encouraged to do, and again, that suits me very well. During our recent vacation, I made a point of getting into the lake every day, even the day it rained.

There's a place in the area where Beth and I have gone swimming for years. The problem this year was with the move and other scheduling complications, we weren't able to get there as often as we would have liked. But even with all the work that needed doing around the house, we still managed to get there over the holiday weekend, twice.

That's one physical activity I figure I'll be able to take part in over many years to come, assuming I stay around that long.

And the best part is I now qualify for the seniors' rate to get in.

Getting older isn't all bad, you know

