

Can we ever pull our own strings?

by MARK PAVILONS

We're all performers, whether we'd like to admit it or not.

Shakespeare once wrote that "All the world's a stage, And all the men and women merely players; They have their exits and their entrances ...?"

Puppet or puppet master?

Ah, there's the rub, as the Bard put it.

I think we play both roles during the many stages of our lives. But mostly, in our capitalistic society, I believe we're players, puppets of flesh and bone, being pulled this way and that. We're manipulated, not by some unseen force, but by our own devices. We're at the mercy of society.

Our lives, now more than ever, are carved, like a clear path in the woods. Our journey is more on asphalt and painted lanes than through uncharted wilderness. We're guided, or led, by the ties that bind, by convention. We may have wanted desperately to buck tradition, dance to the beat of our drum, and rebel when it suited us. Fact is, we're somewhat hog-tied, constrained by normalcy.

Unlike Hemingway, who escaped to the Florida Keys to write, ponder and drink, most of us have to follow clearly defined path, a route that's somewhat limited and confined.

In other words, most of us can't live the adventurous lives that books are made of.

Sure, we'd like to think we make our own decisions, choices, and reach for the stars, but we're really followers. We follow the rules, follow our hearts, follow what we're told.

If we stray, we almost always find our way back to the straight and narrow.

When I was 19, I chose to study journalism at college. My guidance counsellor at the time said I was suited for that, or becoming an English teacher. I may already be retired with a great pension had I chose the latter.

Was this all of my doing, or was it fate, perhaps even destiny? Maybe all of the above. People aren't like salmon, who instinctively know they have to fight the current and swim upstream, just to spawn. Crazy how strong these drives are in creatures great and small. Bees can communicate the exact location of a food source through their dancing, a dance that is completely instinctive.

Dogs are ready to discover diseases like cancer and polygenic disease and warn humans of pending heart attacks and strokes.

And yet my Labs will eat a bug for no apparent reason. Are they in charge of their own destiny?

For us frail humans, years turn into decades, and there comes a time when our best years are behind us. Does that mean our worst lay ahead?

I hope not.

Fortunately, God gave us senses that deteriorate over time, so we're not reminded of the stupid blunders we made in our 20s, or the bad choices we made in our 30s. No, my brain is perfectly wired to give me happy thoughts, echoes of laughter and mental photo

albums of good times.

Why would I want to remember putting dad's car in the ditch or getting the silent treatment from mom over a hurtful comment? No, my mind sets me free from all that. It has also hidden all those strategically placed bread crumbs along the way. Just where would I find my way back to anyway?

?Back there? no longer exists. I hope I enjoyed it while it lasted.

I am here now, and it took some doing, let me tell you. But if I were to dwell too long on my would-haves or could-haves, I'd sink deep into despair.

But aren't I blessed, playing the part of the leading man in my own story? Yes. My wife and I built our stage together and we created some fine productions. We also gathered quite the troupe of players ? our children. They are their own puppet masters now, and I wish them Godspeed and all the luck of the Irish.

If they ask, I'm ready to dispense some snippets of wisdom ? many ?don'ts? to keep in mind. But they seldom ask. Maybe that will come.

I plan to stock up on a lot of stale bread, so these little ones can indeed find their way home. They're always welcome.

Here's a little twist on things, some alternate food for thought. Quantum mechanics is dependent on the observer so it postulates that for every decision that a person makes in their life, every path that they have chosen, there is the alternate path that exists in a virtual state. However, this virtual state or states could actually be parallel worlds.

So, my friends, this theory is like the ripple effect in a pond. Toss in a rock, and watch the ripples spread far and wide. Could human ?ripples??actually impact time and space? Are there other Marks in other universes, pondering the same things? It's mind-boggling.

Regrets, I?have a few, but what playwright doesn't?

It's weird because we humans take so much for granted, it's hard (even today)?to put things in perspective.

Like our solar system, we bring friends into our ?orbit,? get to know them and enjoy their talents and good qualities. While our orbits change over the years, hopefully we remember their place in our lives.

My ?celestial body??was drawn to my wife and our worlds collided. We zigged and zagged and found our rhythm. We evolved together and formed a family.

Nothing adventurous or ?living on the edge,? but a rather normal progression. The small victories do matter. I don't ever recall running around with a copy of the playbill in my back pocket, all rolled up and crinkled. Maybe some unseen force is constantly scribbling lines, acts and scenes in this comedy.

For most, finishing the play to rave reviews is tops on our bucket list.

If we've done our job, despite the strings, our offspring can dart out, explore, think for themselves, protest if they want. They can learn, seek and enjoy.

Youth is the best time to enjoy a litany of possibilities. I?hope they soak up every second.