

How did this happen to me?

EDITORIAL

I had the good fortune this past week of becoming another year older. I say good fortune because a lot of people don't make it as long as I have, which is to say 56 years and counting. Still, it shocks me that I'm that old. I don't really see it in the mirror, while wearing my rose-coloured glasses, and I certainly don't feel it, aside from mornings after I have celebrated my 56th birthday. My dad used to say he felt like the world's oldest teenager, which I thought was ridiculous when I was a teen myself, but I kind of get it now. We all grow and evolve as people (well, most of us do), but I think our core remains much the same. Things that used to make me laugh are still funny, for the most part. I still watch Jaws and The Princess Bride and E.T. when they're on. I'm as much of a sports fan as I ever was, and my wife will tell you my jokes are as awful as ever. I have a better understanding of what he meant back then, now that I'm closing in on the age he was when he said it.

The part about 56 that shocks me, though, is that I'm supposed to retire in nine years, which after all this time is a blink of an eye. That simply isn't realistic in these times. I spent much of the first 25 to 30 years of my life allowing the wind to blow me in whichever direction it wanted. I was a major Bohemian with a minor in couch surfing. Sometimes I was flush and living the dream. When the dream turned into a nightmare, I didn't know where my next meal would come from. It was exciting, frustrating, terrifying, and exhilarating ? sometimes in the same day. There were times I truly depended on the kindness of strangers, but before too long I might be eating with friends in the Hyatt Regency in Montreal.

Now here we are. There was no freedom at 55 and I doubt very much there will be any at 65, but truth be told I can't imagine retiring in the first place. I'm not a fan of my own company, daytime TV and boredom. I'm not a social butterfly, so there wouldn't be brunches and lunches with friends. I don't even drink coffee! If I have it my way, I'll work until I die, which is almost assuredly how things will go anyway.

That's how things will shake out for a lot of us, but our health will determine how much we're able to do. A lucky thing for me is that I'm a writer, which is not the most physically demanding of professions. You can tell that by looking at most writers, who don't look like they've demanded much physically from their bodies. The downside of being a writer is that in the event of some kind of apocalypse we'll be the first ones the survivors eat because we bring nothing else to the table.

?I can get the power going again!? (Cheers)

?I can build shelters!? (Cheers)

?I can . . . write stuff?? (Mob moves in)

Kidding aside, there are millions of baby boomers across North America who are or will soon be seniors and we need to plan for that. Kudos for those who were smart, responsible, and disciplined enough to plan for their future when they were young. Many of us didn't, or couldn't, put enough money away to see us through our so-called golden years and are going to have to reply on our children and taxpayers to right our wrongs.

I'm thinking about this at 56 when I should have been doing something about it when I was 26. Unfortunately, my common sense, my friend, was blowin' in the wind.