

Some things really do last forever

by Mark Pavilons

There are times when I think about how fleeting our lives are.

After seven or eight decades on the planet (if we're lucky) what remains of our existence?

Well, let's take a look at that, shall we?

We don't really think about our deep lineage all that often. Sure, we have ties to our grandparents and great-grandparents if we're fortunate. So, our focus is narrow, concentrating on the past and current generation. But most of us humans long to know our roots, where we came from.

But, my friends, the human lineage has lasted forever, and will continue to do so?

Genealogists say we can reliably and accurately trace a family tree back to the 1600s.

Okay, that's cool. Here in Canada some 250,000 First Nations and Inuit inhabited Canada and in May of 1603 Samuel de Champlain arrived in Quebec.

There are many long-lasting things from the 1600s.

The King James Bible was published in 1611, which is what we know today as the standard among Christians.

The pendulum clock arrived in 1656 and time-keeping devices like this have been part of our lives ever since. In fact, it's hard to replicate, or improve upon some of those early designs. Plus, they're quite beautiful.

Science took a leap forward when Romer and Cassini measured the speed of light. And Galileo, in 1610, discovered four of Jupiter's moons and disproved the former earth-centric theory.

Arriving in Germany in 1682 was the Easter Bunny! He gave coloured eggs to the good kids.

Common, everyday necessities have been with us for literally thousands of years. I can see these lasting another thousand at least.

Scissors date back 4,000 years in spring form, and the current model dates to the 1600s as well. Once perfected, its design likely can't be improved upon.

Forks date back to 2,000 BC and while we've come up with some fancy ones, the four-tined fork remains the standard. I admit that I really miss the two-pronged wooden French fry fork! And those flat wooden spoons for ice cream.

Most of our parents had cast iron pans and if you've ever used one you know just how durable they are. While they arrived in China around 200 AD, casting techniques became widespread in Europe by the 16th century, and since then, this has been a staple in households all over the world.

The ruler, which I'm sure we all used in school at one point, dates back a long way. It became more standard once the metric system arrived in the 18th century. Who remembers the wooden one with the metal edge? And who used it for many other things than its intended purpose?

I know it's hard to believe, faithful readers, but I was struck by a ruler on the back of the hand by my principal in Grade 7. It wasn't me, honest!

The toilet arrived in 1596 and if you think about it, its design hasn't changed much at all. I think humans will continue to use this necessity forever.

There are likely hundreds, if not thousands, of items that have historic origins that we humans continue to use. Many have remained unchanged, like socks, mouse traps, buttons, zippers ...

I'm quite fond of history artifacts, architecture, and ancient towns. I could literally get lost exploring, contemplating our past.

I collect a few baubles, some that date back a couple hundred years BC. I wonder who owned them, touched them, passed them along. How did these things survive the ages? In the big picture, I'm but a caretaker, a temporary guardian of such objects. Hopefully they will find continued long life when they are passed down.

Enough about trinkets.

Our society was built, like bricks in a high-rise. The foundations may still be relevant and even revered today.

Works of literature, like the aforementioned Bible, are permanent. Works by Milton, Shakespeare, Hemingway, are not only part of our literary library, but are still taught in school today.

These are lasting words, ideas and thoughts. These writers are immortal.

While I'm far from a literary genius, I have penned a few pearls of honest wisdom. My columns may exist online and on the internet, but one day they could vanish without a trace. So too, will any trace of my work.

From looking back to looking ahead, just how do average folks leave a lasting impression, a legacy if you will?

I mentioned our children. But they are unique creatures unto themselves and while they carry our DNA, they are not us. They will hold memories of us and perhaps a few keepsakes, but once we fade from the stage of life ...

Nevertheless, they are our tangible witnesses, products of just why we are here on Earth.

I mentioned lineage, and looking back. But the reality is, each one of our family trees go back much, much farther. In order for you and I to be here, watching TV and eating fast food, our lineage would have to be unbroken, since the beginning of time. Our ancestors didn't just pop out of nowhere, they were part of a long, long line of men and women. We are all brothers and sisters, from ancient lands.

My recent tree is riddled with a series of unfortunate events, as are many. My parents survived the Second World War, coming to Canada in search of peace and opportunity.

They didn't really accomplish much, but they had me and my late sister. I am all that remains of that branch of the tree.

My wife and I worked hard to create a positive family atmosphere and give our children all they needed to thrive. We still do.

I don't have a crystal ball, and can't predict the future. I don't know what 2050 holds for them.

Sadly, we are all reduced to a collection of photos, stories and knick-knacks that were once cherished.

We can't all be famous or accomplished.

Maybe we don't have to be. Maybe the people we've loved and touched in our lives will carry a bit of us, a small flame or spark, that will erupt into a beautiful fire.

If we keep that fire going, maybe we can last forever!