

# There's a fleetingness to it all

by MARK PAVILONS

We try to grasp the 'big picture' of it all and yet we are faced with the cold, hard truth that life is fleeing.

Our lifespans are mere minutes on the celestial clock, the timelessness of the universe.

Unlike the stars and planets that whiz through space, we are not eternal, everlasting. Some of us may indeed see everlasting life if sufficiently blessed. But it won't be in our current form. Our planet's current milestone of eight billion souls pales in comparison to the roughly 117 billion people who have ever lived and died in human history.

In some countries human life has little value and that's very sad. Every morsel of humanity is important and should be cherished. Pointless deaths that we're hearing about nightly on the news is a crying shame.

Human beings have created many 'things' for us to be comfortable, live well and struggle less.

We are gadget-makers with keen eyes and abilities.

There was a time, not so long ago, when our forefathers and mothers took pride in their work.

They were craftsmen and women and made living an art form.

They created vital tools, implements and gadgets that would last forever and outlive their human users.

That time has passed, my friends. When we were young, we joked that many things, including our toys, were made in Hong Kong. Today, international trade and commerce has taken that notion to an entirely new level.

China is one of the biggest producing giants on the planet and many things on store shelves can trace their roots back to the Orient.

Even good, old-fashioned North American brands are now made off-shore, or south of the border. From car parts to computers, we in the west are no longer kings or queens. We are servants.

And the goods we consume may no longer be top-notch or high quality. They simply don't stand the test of time.

But it's our fault, you know.

What do we do when our cell phone, laptop, TV or refrigerator no longer works properly? You got it, we toss them and get a new one. They are either not worth fixing, or become cost prohibitive.

We are willing parts of a throw-away society.

What we may not fully appreciate it, with that mentality comes a loss, a loss of craftspeople and specialists.

Gone are master clockmakers, watch repair people, blacksmiths, sword makers, old-school clothiers, along with many mom-and-pop businesses. Yes, the retail landscape has changed forever and we have to live with it.

Recently, I had to find someone to sharpen a sword. Sure, there are still individuals who operate out of their garages or vehicles, to sharpen implements, expensive steak knives, scissors and such, but swords? Well, I did find a few, one in Newmarket who fits the

bill nicely. It's not rocket science but this, too, is one of those services that's on its way out.

What ever happened to the idea of 'see a need, fill a need'? And how often have you heard from someone, 'We don't do that anymore'?

I remember my youth, growing up in rural Caledon. My dad, old-school, of course, did everything he could on his own. When the lawn mower blades needed sharpening, he did it with a file. When screwdrivers broke their handles, he didn't toss them, he made new ones, or covered them in tape! When cutting down trees, he used leftover bits to make a bench or a stool. He used linseed oil on everything!

I remember when my parents moved for the last time, and cleared out the strange collection of odds and ends in the garage. Bits of metal that could come in handy. Parts of a motor that could be cannibalized. Pieces of wood that may become something useful. Screws and nails, removed from their original purpose, were saved in jars. And an old yard stick.

My dad's efforts were never given quaint, self-serving terms like 'upcycling.' It was a case of 'waste not, want not.'

These age-old methods extended the lives of many man-made objects. Some of the best tools were old ones, fashioned with heavy metal and real wood. I think I still have one of his screwdrivers with a home-made handle, in our meager toolbox.

Our garage is due for another major cleanout, something my wife insists on. It always becomes a huge task, because 'things' keep appearing, getting set aside, tossed in there because we don't know what to do with them or when we will need them.

It's likely most families could fill an entire garbage bin annually with dunsels, boxes, and 're-gifted' items.

But wait, faithful readers, we too are temporary and can't be fixed with a bit of duct tape.

Time is a luxury that many of our fellow human beings just don't have.

We've abused it, squandered it, and mocked it.

But you can't cheat it, just as you can't cheat death.

As technology improves at an amazing rate, I imagine we will one day have wearable, watch-like health monitors. These gizmos will keep constant track of our total health, the parts that are wearing down, and an estimated 'time and day of death.'

While this may sound like material for a good science fiction story, it may become reality in the not-too-distant future.

And what if it does? What if science comes up with a monitor that basically predicts our future?

There are already certain DNA tests that indicate what diseases you're prone to, and which may, in fact, kill you.

So, what to do with the time we have left? What would do differently, if we knew exactly when and where God calls us home?

Maybe we could concentrate on some 'lasting' bits and pieces 'things we create and tidbits of wisdom we pass on to our families.

I don't come from a long line of sword-makers or master sculptors. I am but a modern storyteller.

But some stories have lasted for thousands of years, haven't they?

Good luck everyone.