

## Vivid surroundings inspire deep thoughts about life

by Mark Pavilons

Driving down a country road the other day I filled my lungs with the still-mild fall air. It was a beautiful day.

I thought, then thought some more.

Not unlike an old, famous farm hand, I could ?wile away the hours, conferrin' with the flowers, consultin' with the rain.?

This brainless boob also vowed to ?unravel any riddle ... For any individ'le ... In trouble or in pain.?

Well, Scarecrow, what say you about human existence? What about my pain?

While enjoying the sun shine upon the landscape, I realized our breaths are limited, as are our days in this wonderful place.

We take roughly 900 breaths per hour, literally millions over our lifetime. Some of those, of course, are reserved for shock, exclamation, joy, blowing out birthday candles and even blowing raspberries.

Right until our last, raspy breath, we long for more time, more time.

We don't think about our mortality until we reach a certain plateau, one of old age, sickness or facing certain death. Then it becomes as clear as the first frost on still clinging leaves.

This planet, and this existence of ours is a bit of a Catch-22.

Yes, this is one beautiful rock in space, with so many wonders it would take several lifetimes to explore and enjoy.

My daughter and her boyfriend recently returned from a short trek to Arizona, where they encountered never-before-seen wonders. Of course, there's the Grand Canyon, which is on many people's bucket list.

They were in awe of the natural formations in Antelope Canyon. And they simply enjoyed hiking in these vast, previously unexplored spaces. Perched on the edge of a rock, like a scene from The Lion King, this intrepid duo gazed out upon the land.

Taking the lead from my mom, who urged me to see as much of the world as I could, my wife and I?have seen many wonders. We've experienced sun-soaked beaches, marvellous sunrises and amazing natural features.

I?would encourage everyone, regardless of age, work commitments and, of course, funds, to get out and explore. You don't have to visit the Great Pyramids of Egypt ? there's plenty to do and see right here in Ontario.

Lexie says she created a new ?list,? one that involves visiting as many provincial parks and conservation areas as possible in the coming year.

I've visited almost every conservation area in Caledon and King and have checked off a few provincial parks. Simply trekking through meandering trails and quiet forests can fill those lungs, and your heart, with untold riches.

Nature is the key, and unfortunately, many have lost touch with Mother Earth.

In this day and age, many believe we are built for competition, success and achievement. We're meant to accumulate as much as

possible in the time we have.

Many have tried.

But how do you place a value on sitting quietly, perched on an outcropping, gazing upon one of God's best creations? If we could tune in, would we talk to the trees and confer with the flowers? I know I would.

There's so much going on around us from the sound of a gentle breeze and waving branches, to the eerie silence of a still forest. We're surrounded by song, rhyme, colour and feeling.

How would you describe the warm air as it passes over your skin, or the heat from the sun as it comes out from behind a cloud? How about the curious looks from a neighbourhood squirrel, or the mayhem caused by an out-of-control tail wag by your dog?

We get used to the everyday, sights and sounds that envelop us. Some don't even pay attention, or shrug them off as boring, or unimportant.

They are anything but.

Unfortunately, we here in western culture have embraced objects, gizmos and the internet of all things.

My son and I fell down a rabbit hole the other night, talking about God and being good Christians.

Without getting into a religious discussion here, suffice it to say that every day on this planet, and looking up into the night sky, we are reminded of the infinite power, beauty and mind-blowing glory of creation.

None of us neither the most learned of religious scholars or top-notch scientists know why or how we got here. Heck, we've been here for eons yet haven't figured out how to hinder weeds growing through the cracks in our patio stones. They have figured out how to survive, despite the odds and obstacles.

Every day, new photos are snapped of distant galaxies, nebulae and never-before-witnessed births of stars. Many of our fellow brothers and sisters don't give it much thought but boy, is there a lot going on out there.

And here, too.

Our very existence is a miracle. Every person, plant, animal and insect has been created for a purpose and has value.

If we could only unravel any riddle by consulting with the rocks, trees and babbling brooks.

Listen carefully, brothers and sisters, they, too have stories to tell ancient tales that date back to when the world was new. Glorious.

The Scarecrow also mentioned he found rapture, when his brain fired up. But Professor Marvel was quick to point out that a brain is a very mediocre commodity. Every pusillanimous creature that crawls on the Earth or slinks through slimy seas has a brain.

Perhaps we don't need excess gray matter to ponder life's mysteries. All we require is curiosity and our senses.

We don't need to understand air currents to enjoy the wind through our hair. Aerodynamics alone, can't fully explain how a dragonfly twists and turns.

As we take in our daily breaths, I hope there's a certain amount of awe and joy contained in those oxygen particles.