

We 50-somethings are the real deal!

by Mark Pavilons

Being older and wiser can have its advantages.

While I still feel young at heart, I am closing in on the final few chapters of my life.

It's funny that when we Boomers think back about our youth we feel old.

I remember our first microwave and colour TV. I remember dial phones in that weird beige colour. I remember heading to the dump on weekends with my dad. I recall our first office fax machine and dial up internet. I remember when email became a thing.

To the millennials of today, a lot of this is foreign. Fortunately, many young ones are starting to appreciate our music, the rock of the 1970s and 80s. It's no longer old people music.

And who doesn't love a classic muscle car?

When we talk about our early days as kids, our children tend to tune out, or turn to something more interesting on their smart phones. Okay, our youthful days weren't especially exciting or action-packed, but they were fun, stress-free and easy going.

I think most of us can look back with a certain fondness. And, truth be told, we were a strong, independent lot, capable of things way beyond our years.

We were the masters of our domain, the free spirits who joined with other free spirits to explore, push boundaries, engage, discover and well, enjoy our youth to the fullest. You could say we were made differently from other generations. We were built tough.

Many of us were referred to as latchkey kids and I recall having a house key around my neck at an early age. Walking to and from school on my own was my daily routine. Ok, I got lost in a snow storm once, but made it home, frozen and covered in icicles.

We were pretty self-sufficient by around 9 or 10, making meals for ourselves, doing our homework and staying active. We always cleaned up after ourselves.

Yes, there were days we left the house bright and early, returning when the streetlights came on. Once in a while we heard a distant cry from our moms, calling our name. We all looked at each other, hoping it wasn't our mom!

We survived all day long on bits of candy and a maybe a swig from someone's garden hose. If we were lucky, we'd head into the local mom and pop store and grab a bag of Sweet Tarts or a bottle of Coke, those small curvy glass ones that were just the right size!

We learned, quite early on, how to fib and convince our parents we were just hanging out.

We were no angels, but we knew our limits.

We respected adults and it was okay for a stranger to grab us by the arm and give us a good talking to. We wanted to avoid someone telling our parents, at all costs.

At the end of most fun-filled summer's days, we had to learn to clean ourselves up and look presentable. We found new and innovative ways to remove mud, hide rips and clean blood from our clothes.

We had extremely good coordination and could handle food, a squirt gun, baseball bat and another person, all while riding our bikes. When we crashed and we always did we all laughed. If we drew blood, we closely investigated one another's wounds, offering words of comfort.

During our high school years, we formed bonds, many that have lasted until this very day. I think this longevity is due to the fact we had few expectations and demands on our friends. We just shared. We had each other's backs.

Oh, there were fights, arguments and verbal exchanges and insults to be sure. But the next day we were back at it, often as if nothing ever happened. We weren't emotionally scarred. When our parents caught us in mid-headlock, it required some quick thinking for a plausible explanation. That was a skill, let me tell you.

When we matured we took turns driving, when our parents let us borrow the car. We didn't care what we rode in, as long as it had four wheels and a radio.

We were lucky because for \$5 we could get gas that lasted us the weekend. Another \$5 and we had money for fast food. And \$4 more would get us into the movies, less if it was a Sunday. We always lied about our age to get into the AA flicks.

We had friends who opened beer bottles with their teeth, and we could spin beer caps with the snap of our fingers and hit a squirrel at 20 yards!

We were the unsung Evil Knievels of our day we didn't wear seatbelts, helmets, eye protection or anything safety related. No one lost an eye though!

If we couldn't buy it, we made it! Okay, often it looked like something from The Beverly Hillbillies, but hey.

And here we are today. I wear my belly flab like a badge of honour. It's not easy getting this rotund on a budget, another skill we Boomers picked up. Waste not want not.

Sure, I have trouble finding 3 XL shirts in a world of tiny bodies. Is there a Sasquatch size? Also, I have to find that perfect shade of Hawaiian sunset that accentuates my skin tone. Do I look fat in this? I ask myself in the mirror. No, because my age group never asks such rhetorical questions. Go big or go home is the battle cry of 50-somethings.

We mature adults love our food, reminiscent of mom's home-cooked meals and kitchen parties. We drink beer and whiskey, not those fruity coolers and low-carb seltzers. Okay, I admit to trying some of the new low-calorie drinks to maintain my figure!

We complain about the cost of food, gas, cars, houses, clothes, haircuts, shoes, suits, car batteries, and Big Macs. That because when we were young, \$10 went a long way.

Those who had tattoos or piercings were the rule-breakers. They were tough as nails. So, to my young friends out there, we are the bomb! We were the trendsetters, the trailblazers and tellers of tales.

Bend our ears and we're happy to share some of our well-earned wisdom!