

What kids and grown men have in common

By Mark Pavilons

It's no secret that most men are kids at heart.

In fact, I believe we have more in common with youngsters than we care to admit.

Boys will be boys and we have all been boys and recollect the thoughtlessness of our youth.

That was one of the first references to the term from the Vermont newspaper, the Federal Galaxy, in February 1799.

Not much has changed.

The boys in us are alive and well. When we look at something new, we don't ask what it is, we wonder what we can do with it!

Kenny Rogers made the observation that you have to keep boys busy, always. You let them get bored, they'll dismantle your house board by board.

And yet Charles Dickens believed that a boy's story is the best that is ever told.

Prior to the recent Kids Yes Day, Scouts Canada surveyed a focus group of 145 youth (between the ages of 5 and 14) and 368 parent members to determine what activities Canadian kids wish their parents would say yes to.

Their answers were funny and creative. And every man feels the exact same way.

Of the respondents, 55% want to blow stuff up!

Ya! Who doesn't?

That's all I literally wanted to do as a kid. From tossing firecrackers around to blowing up models and making toy cars crash and explode in a ball of flames, we wanted action. I melted so much plastic I likely have brain damage!

Some 44% of kids questioned want to light fireworks. Who doesn't have fond memories of Canada Day, Victoria Day, back in the day when the entire neighbourhood got together to celebrate? Fireworks were cheap and while they did require some caution, the bigger the better.

We all wanted the best bang for our buck. Yes, when I was young, firecrackers were still legal and I even remember those tiny red ones that came in long sleeves. Oh, what fun.

Of course, they were used to dispense of model tanks and planes in the pit behind our house.

I'm not sure where this comes from, but our penchant for making things go boom must be in our DNA. From bb guns to playing with matches, we like it hot, smoky, busted and trashed.

In the survey, another 50% want to do extreme outdoor activities, like winter camping, paddling to remote sites or staying a night in the woods alone.

Yes, camping appeals to many of us.

I will never forget, to this very day, when my parents and I visited friends up north for a weekend. They had a guest cabin for us and I was on the top bunk. From the ceiling hung several model airplanes. I thought this was the greatest place on earth.

We're not all born to be great fishermen, but my dad was pretty decent. He and my mom actually went to weekend tournaments back in the day. His best catch was a 20-pound pickerel and I remember looking at the small trophy for years.

I think a love of the outdoors is natural and everyone should share in what God gave us.

My father-in-law loved to take his girls camping and the more remote the better. Killbear Provincial Park was one of their favourites.

It's funny because today, I actually long for the wilderness, a place where I can literally get away from it all. The farther the better. A log cabin or tiny home by the lake would be just what the doctor ordered.

Another 44% of kids want to fly an airplane, or spaceship! Right in my wheelhouse!

I've always loved the magic of flight, whether it's in the clouds or beyond the stars.

I managed to get an introductory lesson in a Cessna 172 many years ago at Brampton Flying Club and it was an amazing, albeit short adventure. With an interior smaller than a VW Beetle, the Cessna took off at roughly 70 mph and we flew, effortlessly. I remember it was a gorgeous sunny day.

Flying it was a thrill. A helicopter ride from the Bolton-based National Helicopters a few years back was equally fun.

I admire those magnificent men in their flying machines.

I vividly remember the creation of the very first space shuttle, aptly named Enterprise, after a ship from my favourite sci-fi Star Trek.

There's something appealing to leaving the ground behind, despite the danger.

Another 42% of kids want to do wacky science experiments. Who hasn't made a mess of mom's kitchen trying something like this as a kid? And all the dads out there jumped at the chance of helping their kids with a volcano project, even if it didn't go as planned.

In my books, you can't have enough goo.

Another 41% want to ride a dirt bike. When I was a kid, it was the cool kids who got a dirt bike. They may have been beaten up and dented, but we didn't care. Just getting a chance to ride one was a thrill. I had a chance to ride with my friend on his larger bike in my 20s and cruising was fun. We didn't wear helmets or had any licence, we just drove down the gravel roads of Caledon until the sun set.

In the survey, 40% want to get close to a lion or other animal. Again, what kid doesn't love lions, tigers, bears, giraffes, elephants, rhinos and more?

We've never been to the African Lion Safari - the closest we came was the Toronto Zoo.

On a similar note, some kids say they wanted to follow a bear to its lair. And snuggle right next to one, I dare say.

I've watched countless videos on the internet and I'm amazed at just how curious, intelligent and even loving wild animals can be.

Some kids wanted to ?juggle daggers.? As kids, we always had a knife, or borrowed one from dad's shelf or tool box. Anything sharp and pointy did the trick! Sure, there were mishaps, but no one ever lost an eye.

Cesare Pavese once wrote that a man is never completely alone. He has the company of a boy, the one he used to be!

Long live our inner children!