

Writing our own stories while we still have time

by Mark Pavilons

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

For the rest of us, 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 exponential 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 disease you're prone to, and which may, in fact, kill you.

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

We tend to think of ourselves as biggies, the top of the food chain, the master of our own domain and the like. In reality, we are mere footnotes in the big picture. I think we should be lucky, and blessed, to be a paragraph, page or heck, even a chapter, in someone's diary.

I want to be one of those pages with the bent corner, to remind you to revisit it. You can put the book away, even for years at a time, but when you take it off the shelf, you will find that exact page and remember me.

In our family, my wife and I are the two main characters, the heroes of the story. Can there be two beloved leading characters?

Shakespeare always had protagonists and antagonists and he believed that life is one big stage, and we are merely actors.

Are we acting out our own tragedies and comedies, for all to see?

It's funny when we look back on our lives or perhaps not so funny at all. I often don't see the humour in my past indiscretions or bad decisions. Some still haunt me today.

When we were young, we truly thought we were brilliant playwrights, creating our own stories and taking charge of our lives, chapter and verse.

Still today, many think they are strong, independent thinkers who can set the world on fire with their brilliance, compassion and talent.

I do encourage my offspring to take the bull by the horns, but that same bull has been tamed, partially neutered by the system and realities of the world today.

My son constantly comes up with some great business ideas, only to be deflated by the reality of modern economics. To get a start-up business loan, you have to be in business already and proven some success. You have to get inspections, licences, approvals

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He plans on making oodles of money, only to realize a good portion goes to income tax.

He wants to be the captain of his own ship, but the wheel is being controlled by various levels of government, red tape, rules, regulations.

He often asks whether this is the country our forefathers envisioned when they set about creating the Charter and all things Canadian?

Not likely.

I doubt many of our ancestors, who witnessed the birth of democracy, ever envisioned the power of the big banks; the cost of housing; skyrocketing food costs and unaffordable dwellings.

Democracy, as it turns out, is great if you can afford it.

I also doubt that Henry Ford thought automobiles would be planet-destroying contrivances for the very rich.

All of these are sending our fellow citizens to food banks in record numbers.

Things are not cheery, even though we are in the merry season.

Many people I have spoken with have scaled things back a bit this year. Expensive gifts, lavish offerings, huge parties, may all be a thing of a past.

I have been on a bit of a self-absorbed minor spending bender. But they are only small items ? collectibles under \$20 or so ? that I find on eBay.

I have rekindled my joy of model airplanes and I love getting a new one, re-painting it, making it right. They are made to fit together nicely, unlike the rest of our lives. They give me sanity and offer distraction from the nagging demons in my mind.

They offer solace in a world gone mad.

My family members are less than impressed with my efforts. My wife threatens to eat one of my tiny planes, mimicking King Kong.

Our kids are adults now, all at various stages of development in their lives.

Try as we may, we often don't have all the answers. Sure, we can offer advice, based on our years of successes and failures. But we try not to dampen their spirits.

Admittedly, it's getting harder and more than often than not I am the devil's advocate.

I'm a realist who looks for practical solutions or approaches. There are no shortcuts, cheats or hacks any more in the world today.

But even working, being dedicated and loyal won't necessarily garner you any rewards.

As we've witnessed in many fields and industries, companies don't care about cutting their workforce and sending out pink slips. It's downright shameful for any company to let people go this time of year.

And average people cringe when they see government deficits in the billions, with little relief in sight.

We shake our heads that our children may never afford a \$1-million-plus home.

I really don't mind keeping them around a bit longer, but at one point we will have to downsize.

Where does that leave us?

Even we Boomers don't have a lot to leave behind.

We enter the world all excited, wiggly and noisy. We live through the twilight years in roughly the same way.

In between, we're constricted by a system that has us hog-tied. We're consuming peasants, trudging along at the whim of the elite and ivory tower decision-makers.

No, my son, this isn't the Canada my parents envisioned. It's not the perfect one I hoped for, either.

I say let's dispense with the over-the-top gifts this year, and wrap up some good, old fashioned dreams for Christmas. Let's serve up some hope along with the cookies and pie. Let's join together in love and feeling blessed.

Maybe we can rewrite our characters, and the plot to our own unfolding stories.

I say flip that giant, Wicked Witch-sized hourglass over and start the new year fresh. Best of luck everyone!