

I realize I'm no longer a 'spring chicken'

Mark Pavilons

I came to a startling realization recently, one undoubtedly exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. I'm not as young as I used to be! And the beautifully straight, flowing locks that adorned my elongated head are thinning. As my wife trimmed my hair out of necessity, the end result was nice and clean, but left little to the imagination. Yes, I'm getting a bit sparse on top. The hint of gray I can live with. But a head without hair is something I never contemplated. As far as I can remember my grandparents sported full heads of hair into their 70s and 80s. My parents had decent locks, too. My greatest fear is not that I would look out of place with a shiny, clean melon. But I doubt it would be smooth as a baby's bottom. My face contains miles and miles of well travelled road so I can only assume that my head would reveal a similarly rough terrain, almost like the moon or other lifeless space body. Don't get me wrong, I know a few who look quite dapper with nary a head hair to be found. Some even choose to shave their heads. I can appreciate the ease of head care and not worrying about a single hair out of place. Alas, it's something I will put on the back burner for now and continue grooming my delicate mane. During our regular grocery shopping recently, I noticed turkeys for sale. A bit odd I thought, since they are typically reserved for holidays like Easter and Christmas. In bold lettering, 'Young Turkey' was spelled across the outer covering. This is not new, but that day it struck a chord. What about the old turkeys, I thought out loud. My wife mentioned that 'Old Turkey' wouldn't be appetizing or appealing, and she had a point. Another reason to remain youthful. Consumers also tend to gravitate to 'new and improved.' I get it. Who wants to buy anything that's 'old and worse'? How many songs are there with 'young' in the lyrics or title? Probably almost every single one. Statistics Canada results from 2019 indicated that the average life expectancy in Canada is 79.9 years for men and 84 years for women. In that case, I have roughly 24 years left on Earth. Doesn't sound like a lot, but maybe the next quarter century will be filled with wonders and medical marvels that will keep us Boomers going a few years more. Both my parents made it just shy of 80 so I'm hopeful. Again, our quality of life is what is important, at any age. My family often says my hearing is failing, but here's a secret: I have selective hearing! Okay, when they mumble or don't speak directly at me I hear all kinds of wonderful words. I often repeat the mistaken words just to get a rise out of them and make them think. It's kinda fun. 'Do you want a tomato, Mark?' becomes 'do you want fun with mayo?' Twisted humour aside, my health has been good and everything's fairly consistent. Sure, I huff and puff when put to the test with a wheelbarrow or skid of sod. But thank goodness I'm solid, aside from some joint inflammation now and then. I must get my hands on those old remedies from the 1800s to soothe these tired bones. One image circulating on social media recently shows a label on a bottle of cough syrup, from 1888. This nifty concoction, called One Night, contains alcohol, cannabis indica, chloroform and morphia sulph, 'skillfully combined with a number of other ingredients.' Hmm, I wonder what those are! Marya Mannes once said that by the age of 50, 'you have made yourself what you are, and if it is good, it is better than your youth.' Victor Hugo believed 50 is the 'youth of old age.' Having reached that milestone a while ago, I can agree with God when he looked at the Earth that he created and said it was 'good.' Some say they would give up youth for knowledge. I appreciate the amount of knowledge and wisdom I've accumulated over the years. But I'd also love to shave off a few years from my midsection. While I'm proud of what I lovingly refer to as my 'daddy belly,' I'd be happy to donate my body fat to medical research. Another drawback for those in their 50s is life insurance. We've been searching for policies for my wife and I for a few months now. She's sitting pretty, at her age and health. However, when you hit your mid-50s like me, insurance companies are charging a premium to hedge their bets that you'll live long and prosper. I find insurance of all kinds to be nasty, money sucking necessary evils. And it gets worse the older you get. While I'm in good health, this past Father's Day and an upcoming birthday in September have me once again facing my own demons of mortality. As I mentioned earlier, I have maybe 20 good years left and I'm not sure if that's enough time. Time is a commodity that we can't earn, purchase or save up. We can't get any more. If I'm lucky, cryogenics will improve over the next two decades and there will be a way to preserve all of this for eternity! Maybe I can get shrink-wrapped in a package that says 'Old But Still Fresh.' It's either that or get shot into space in a sealed capsule, in hopes some alien race stumbles upon my lifeless corpse and brings me back to life in all my glory! If you can't stay young, stay young at heart!

