

Birthdays remind me of aged Limburger!



MARK PAVILONS

Clint Eastwood said aging can be fun if you simply lay back and enjoy it. Many others believe aging is much better than the alternative ??dying! Of course, reaching a certain age has its benefits, not the least of which is a certain smidgen of wisdom. Like a fine wine, I've reached a decent vintage, even though no one is interested in this particular blend of middle age man stuff. Wednesday marked my 57th birthday and while 1963 may have been a very good year, 2020 is not. Well, '63 was the best year for the Corvette, and the worst year for JFK. I'm not a big fan of my own birthday and having others making a fuss. Apparently I'm not alone in my distaste for birthdays. Norman Rockwell once said 'to hell with birthdays!?' I'll drink to that! Years ago, in my carefree youth, I would rent a costume and dress up like a famous figure on my birthday and go out to the local watering hole. I remember getting quite a few looks dressed as Captain Hook and King Henry VIII. Those were the days. I still may be able to pull it off, but my frugality would prevent me from dishing out the money for the costume. Today, we simply can't ignore or forget birthdays. Our social media sites let the whole world know it's our 'special day.' Yay! Everyone feels obliged to offer well wishes, but I'm not sure for what exactly. Perhaps it's that I've made it through another 365 days. Saying someone looks good for their age isn't really much of a compliment. That ham and cheese sandwich I ate for lunch looked good, but I later discovered the cheese was moldy. I also cringe when it comes time to accepting gifts. While my wife knows me very well, at this point in my life, what do I really need? I have a couple of small collections, hobbies if you will. But my tastes are so unique, no one would find the proper gift. I do give my wife credit for finding creative gifts for our recent anniversary ? coins from every country we visited, made into rings! We celebrated the last weekend of August, even though my mother always warned to never mark your birthday early. An old wife's tale, for sure. We all hope that Father Time makes an exception in our case. ?Let all the other people age, wrinkle and wither. We shall remain youthful, spry and glowing! I suppose it's all in the genes. Unfortunately for my side of the family, I have little knowledge of my family tree, or lineage. Both of my parents came here after the war. My mom's parents both died prematurely ? one from appendicitis and the other from a heart attack brought on by a severe assault. My dad never shared stories of his relatives or how long they roamed the earth. I hope I am blessed with longevity, if only so I can sit in a reclining chair and spout off irrational obscenities! Old age affords one the right to wave a cane at those 'meddling kids and thier stupid dog!?' It is to laugh. Both of my parents almost hit the 80 mark so I'm hoping to at least reach that milestone. But you never know these days. A former colleague of mine read the obituaries in the daily papers every day. I'm not sure if he had a morbid curiosity, or just wanted to see if anyone famous passed away on a given day. I'm a compassionate soul, and I actually feel sorry for complete strangers who meet their untimely end. Every day on the news, someone dies from accident, misfortune or crime. Any life that ends abruptly, and prematurely, is sad. It's a life not fully lived. I also find it very tragic when people are killed in automobile collisions. Again, a terrible waste. ?That's why I remind my kids every day to keep both eyes peeled, in every direction. We bop around in these plastic and tin cans, hoping to just make it to our destination. Sure, all automobiles have to pass safety standards, but I've seen what even small collisions can do to a car. I hope that one day driving around town will come with a safety guarantee. We live our lives on a bit of a wing and a prayer, since there are no hard and fast rules. I don't know about you but I wasn't given a handbook when I took my first steps. I wasn't prepared for what awaited me. When you're young, you don't really think much about the distant future. In high school, you may ponder post-secondary studies and then a career. You work and save up to buy a car. You hope to find your soul

mate. But no one thinks about children, picking from the myriad of diapers, saving for their college, buying a house and paying a mortgage for the rest of your life. Heck, in my early 20s, I thought about my next pay cheque, going out with the boys and just chilling. Sure, I imagined settling down one day and raising a family. But I never envisioned celebrating 50-something birthdays, or even nearing retirement. I never dreamed of fixing up the basement so the kids can stay a bit longer. We live each day as it comes. We have no control over the orbit of our planet or the fire released from our sun. We hope all is well in the universe as we go about our business, buying birthday cakes and blowing out candles. But now we worry about sugar, carbs and packing on the pounds. Gone are the skinny jeans, replaced by the jumbo stretchy track pants and enormous t-shirts. During a recent closet-cleaning exercise, I discovered t-shirts I haven't seen in years, let alone worn. I found clothes I will never fit into ever again. During this tossing frenzy, I did mention to my wife that I'd prefer shorts, sandals, a shell necklace and one of my Hawaiian shirts as my "coffin attire" when the time comes. She simply reminded me to get life insurance! How perspective changes with age. For those celebrating birthdays this year, you have my sympathy!