

Paying respect to the 'good, old days'

Mark Pavilons



Every generation has its unique insights and plight in our society.

And every generation makes jest of the previous one.

How often have you rolled your eyes at your parents or grandparents when they begin a sentence 'When I was your age ...'?

Yes, snow was a lot higher back then. Not everyone had cars or bicycles and people walked a lot more. Earning a buck was important, but so was family, friends and neighbours. People respected politicians, police officers and their teachers.

These things should not strike us as odd or out of place. They should be the norm, in 1954 or 2014.

I can understand that technology changes and it's reflected in the modern marketplace and global economy. But have people changed all that much in the past 100 years?

Something we should remember is we are all products of our past, not just our immediate past, but millennia of lineage that has blessed us with being alive in the here and now. Our unbroken family trees, which stretch back to time immemorial, has brought us here. It's a combination of a tremendous amount of fortitude by our ancestors and a heck of a lot of luck.

For those very reasons, we should pay homage to our past, or at least give it the respect it's due.

I consider myself still rather young, at the half-century mark. And yet, more often lately, I've muttered something to the effect 'things just aren't made the way they used to be.' How's that for a blast from the past? Am I sounding like my father? Heaven forbid!

But if you really think about it, it's true.

I've met a few really interesting people lately, in their retirement years. They shared some remarkable stories about their past, their interests and the 'way things were.'

And here are some things I learned.

Life was simpler 40 years ago. You had to work hard, but if you did, people would notice. They were apt to give you a chance and if you earned it, respect, friendship and opportunities would come your way. People tended to care more about one another. Sure, they all had jobs, families and nests to feather, but life seemed more about fulfilment, sacrifice and helping one another, even acting as mentors to others. Rules, laws and restrictions were much, much more lenient 'back in the day.'

In conversations with my late parents and late uncle, who were all teens during the Second World War, some things were quite clear. The circumstances of the world 'their lives' were beyond their control. They made the best of it. They tried to survive. They sought a better life, got jobs, got married, had kids.

It was that simple.

For them, the war wounds were still fresh, even in the '50s when Canada became their new home.

But they witnessed the space race, cold war, the emergence of rock and roll. They were fans of Frank Sinatra, Bing Crosby and Dean Martin. They listened to Buddy Holly, Chuck Berry and Elvis. To them, Elizabeth Taylor, Richard Burton, Brigitte Bardot, Sophia Loren, Marcello Mastroianni and Cary Grant were stars.

The 1960s brought more conflict in Vietnam and a strong anti-war movement. The peace sign became the symbol of the day. Civil

rights, computers, Motown, The Beatles, Mary Poppins, Hendrix, Woodstock and landing on the moon filled this action-packed decade. For entertainment, they enjoyed The Andy Griffith Show, Gilligan's Island, I Dream of Jeannie, Ed Sullivan, Bonanza, Red Skelton, and my favourite, Star Trek. They saw the birth of the mini-skirt, bell bottoms, beehives and sideburns.

Exciting times, indeed. In my years on the planet, I witnessed the introduction of the fax machine, cell phone, HD, video games, ABS brakes, airbags, microwaves, CDs and DVDs. I enjoyed Seinfeld, Friends, Letterman and Schwarzenegger. I wore a jean jacket in high school until the sleeves literally wore right off.

In hindsight, who had the more interesting time?

For me, the 70s, 80s and 90s seem rather unimportant in the big picture. They're not really fodder for tall tales for my grandchildren one day. Unless of course they want to hear about disco, the Piano Man, science fiction or VW Beetles.

Things were much more interesting back then. And yes, cars in our parents' era were built stronger and lasted longer. Food was relatively cheap, and so was gas. Houses were affordable and one thought about RRSPs, life insurance, braces or bungee jumping. Teens didn't carry knives or guns. Jobs were easy to come by.

So, my friends, it seems we have all it all wrong.

Back in the day? or when they were our age? are not bad things. Quite the contrary, those were the days.

Let's celebrate them, remember them and appreciate where we all came from.