

Voices In My Head: On Turning 50

By P.J. O'Leary

I'll be turning fifty years old in April, and I'm not quite sure how I feel about it. I'm not the only one to get my AARP membership offer in the mail this month. A friend of ours, whose identity I will not reveal except to say that she is a school district employee who has a county commissioner for a husband, will also reach that milestone. Her birthday is before mine so I always like to remind her that she's considerably older than I am.

Here's what I think about aging. Chirping about how fifty is the new forty makes as much sense as pretending that my '98 Subaru is a late model Lexus. Both the Subaru and I know that our exteriors are faded, our frames rattle and it takes a lot longer now to get warmed up. That fifty/forty stuff is just the spin they use to sell magazines and health club memberships. I'm also pretty sure age doesn't bring wisdom as is so often said. If you were a bonehead at twenty-five, there's a good chance that you're still a bonehead. What age can provide is perspective and maybe a certain kind of tired resignation. An old dog with a few bite scars understands that he can't run around like a puppy sniffing every butt in the yard. He's learned that some sniffs are just a bad risk.

I'm not saying that there aren't still flashes of vibrancy, but it gets more and more difficult for me to remember life before Metamucil.

I'm talking to age fifty and over people here. Isn't it crazy trying to hold together what you've got left? I still try to play a little volleyball and basketball, but it's getting harder all the time. When the action requires speed and agility, I find that my head still reacts while my feet remain firmly cemented to the floor. In order to avoid hurting myself I typically need to spend at least as much time pre-stretching as I spend in the actual activity itself.

I've got lots of grey hairs, but I've also noticed stray hairs growing in the most unusual places. On any given morning you'll look in the mirror and find one sprouted on your ear, or your nose, or some equally alarming location.

How about geezer romance? I think the great American philosopher Rodney Dangerfield put it best when he said, "Now it takes me all night to do what I used to do all night."

There are, however, some very liberating aspects to aging. You get to make cranky, narrow-minded observations about modern trends. There's kind of a cultural understanding among younger people that since old farts like me are about three steps from a sod nap anyway, it's less taxing just to humor them.

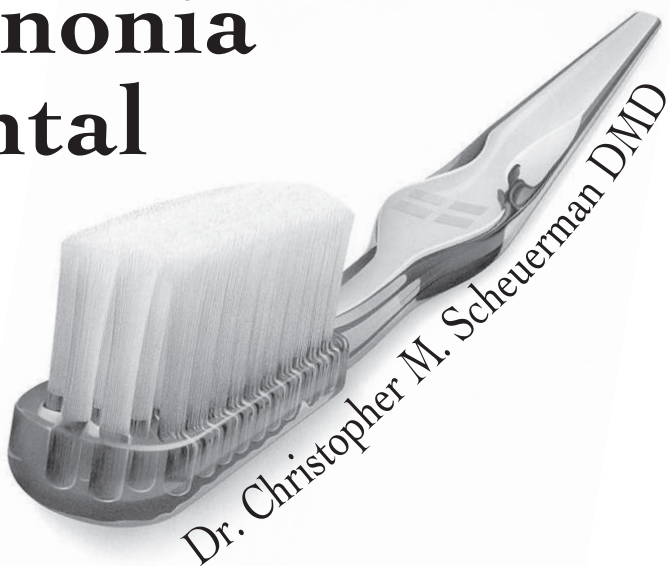
That being said let me say this. When I was young you didn't wear a baseball cap backwards unless you were the catcher. You didn't wear a stocking cap when it was 78 degrees. And what about the underwear thing? Apparently today the more underwear you have exposed, the more status you have with similarly clad underwear exhibitors. In my era this kind of exposure was a clear sign that you were looking for a wedgy.

I'm not too comfortable with the body piercings either. It confounds me why someone would want to emulate the fashion tastes of cultures so primitive that they bow with awe in the presence of a Bic lighter.

Now that I have adequately offended my younger readers, allow me to guess what your collective response might be. "Enjoy your first colonoscopy, Mr. O'Leary."

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Safety Matters

By Chief Mathew Workman

The Vernonia Police Department continues to take reports of fraud and counterfeit check scams. The most recent fraud report that was filed was different from other scams as the checks were received as payment for items. A Vernonia citizen was selling items on the popular website "Craigslist" when he was contacted by someone interested in purchasing the items. After several emails the alleged "buyer" agreed to send checks for the merchandise.

When the check arrived the citizen immediately was suspicious as it was a business check from the University of Colorado. The citizen took the check to his bank and asked the teller to check the validity of the check. It turned out the check was from a valid account but was a counterfeit check. The bank did not cash the check but did end up freezing the citizen's account for suspicious activity. The "buyer", being very persistent, sent another check which was again counterfeit from a different business. This time the citizen brought the check and all of the emails to the police department where I initiated an investigation.

Another part of this transaction that raised the suspicions of the citizen was the process the "buyer" wanted him to follow. The citizen was supposed to cash the check, deduct the amount of the purchase, send a portion to a shipping company, then send the remainder of the check funds to the Republic of Benin. If there are obvious red flags in any type of transaction, please call the police department for advice. Hopefully the investigation will provide some clues as to who the suspect(s) are.

The Oregon Attorney General's office recently released the list of the Top 10 Consumer Complaints in Oregon filed last year. They are as follows: (10) Auto Repair, (9) Internet Auctions, (8) Construction Contractors, (7) Health Related, (6) Internet Retailers, (5) Motor Vehicle Sales, (4) Collection Agencies, (3) International Money Transfer Schemes, (2) Financial Institutions and (1) Telecommunications. The Attorney General's consumer hotline is 877-877-9392 or online at www.doj.state.or.us.

On the Shelves: What's Happening at the Library

By Nancy Birch

During the month of April the Vernonia Library will be having a Mini Book Sale each Saturday from 10:00 AM to 4:00 PM. Because of the recent flood the library did not hold its usual Spring Sale, but since then it has been the recipient of boxes and boxes of donations from outside book drives. The Library will make some of these donations available for sale in April and still expects to have plenty of books for the annual Used Book Sale during Jamboree this summer.

National Library week runs from April 14th through 19th. The Vernonia Library will celebrate with free books and book bags for youngsters as well as holding drawings for prizes. Adults can win a gardening basket, and children can win a Spiderwick Chronicles book and tickets to the movie. B.J. The Clown will be at the Library on Tuesday, April 15, at 7:00PM for a performance sponsored by the Friends of the Library.

National Library Week is a national observance sponsored by the American Library Association (ALA) and libraries across the country each April. It celebrates the contributions of our nation's libraries and librarians and promotes library use and support.

Saturday Movies continue in April with a kids' movie at 3:00 PM and a family film at 7:00 PM.

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