

“When I’m 64” Finally Arrives

Several years ago, my friend Scott and I were observing an elderly man who had made an aggressive wardrobe choice of baggy plaid shorts, mismatched shirt, suspenders, black socks up to his knees and white tennis shoes.

“When I start dressing like that,” Scott commented, “Please shoot me.” I responded, “When you start dressing like that, Scott, you’re really not going to care too much about what anybody thinks.”

I’m going to celebrate my 64th birthday on Thursday, if I live that long. There seem to be no guarantees. I’m optimistic about my chances, but for some reason, this year’s is causing some extra introspection; maybe it’s because Paul McCartney once wrote a popular song about that age seeming really old. I’m about half-retired now, so I have extra time to waste on such maudlin musings.

It didn’t help that last week LuAnn and I attended Marilou’s 90th birthday party – the mother of a friend of ours. Her birthday wasn’t actually until several days later, and I literally bit the tip of my tongue to prevent me from joking with her about her prospects of lasting until then. Fortunately she’s in excellent health, and besides, I think everyone has heard the green banana joke.

Many of the party attendees sported white hair and utilized walkers, bless their hearts. The conversation among us less-generationally-challenged revolved around our own aging and whether or not there is such a thing as getting so old that life becomes less precious. By the way, I define “elderly” as 20 years older than whatever age I am at the time.

I used to think that there are circumstances under which life may not be worth living, but not anymore. Humor me, and for one minute let’s pretend we’re all just nebulous spirits floating above the earth, aware of the human life below us but unable to experience it ourselves. Fortunately, we’re able to purchase “ride-alongs” with specific humans - for an insane amount of spiritual money per minute – so we can feel, breathe, touch, taste, smell and experience the same things they do.

Wouldn't even a short ride with almost anyone be worth it? It's certainly better than the nothingness we're experiencing now. With luck, your selection would be hiking, flying, eating, reading or doing anything else that really engages the senses and emotions.

Anyway, after much deliberation I have concluded that perspective is a bitch. Ten years ago I wished I was ten years younger, and ten years from now I'll wish I was the age I am now. I suppose I could wish to be twenty or thirty years younger, but that would probably be unrealistic.

I play in a band where two dozen of the musicians are a generation younger than me. Occasionally someone will make a joke about getting older and needing adult diapers, and I'll say, "You know, those jokes get less funny as you get older."

I recently ran across a photo I took of myself in a mirror in 1973 when I was about 20 years old. Shirtless and wearing tight jeans, I'm pretty sure I never looked any better at any other point in my life. It then occurred to me that every photo of me for the rest of my life will likely be more flattering than the next.

I recreated that selfie (as they are now known) last week on my iPhone7 and posted the two on my Facebook page for comparison 44 years apart in case anyone but me is interested. I'm not the stud I used to be, but I like to think I'm hanging in there.

<https://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.1047794032863&type=3>

That's enough narcissistic self-indulgent nonsense for this year. I'll need to save some for next year when even the U.S. Government will officially consider me to be "old."

Writers Group Member Dave Parsons is rapidly aging, part-time, in his office at the business he co-owns on the Coralville Strip