

Loose in the Foothills

by Bob Ring

The Problems of Getting Older

If you are a young person, you can skip this column – unless you want to read about what your parents or grandparents are going through.

Health problems of older age are the “pits.” First it’s the illnesses – heart conditions, cancer, pneumonia, arthritis, osteoporosis ... The list goes on and on. And as we age we are more prone to injuries like broken bones from falls or running into something. Then there are those uncomfortable medical procedures like colonoscopies, that invade your inner body; MRI’s that enclose your entire body; and treadmill stress tests, with parts of your body wired for surround sound. And hospitals! Many of us have spent more time in hospitals in the last three years than we did the previous 60 years!

How many doctors do you see regularly? How about your internist, or as we used to say, your “GP?” And your cardiologist, your orthopedist or chiropractor, your cancer surgeon/oncologist/radiologist, your gastroenterologist, your dermatologist, your psychiatrist/psychologist, your neurologist, your astrologist? We’re just getting started aren’t we? No wonder medical care costs so much!

How are your teeth doing? Are they still your natural teeth? Remember fluoride? Did fluoride prevent your cavities, bridges, or crowns? Have you found yourself trying to brighten your smile with special tape or bleach-filled teeth molds? Do your gums bleed?

Can you still see OK? At night? Do your eye-glasses have separate lenses for long distance, driving, reading, and finding your shoes? Do you see spots before your eyes? Seeing ghosts or pink elephants? Do you still drive? Should you?

How about your hearing? Do you miss parts of most conversations? Do you have conversations? Do you have a hearing aid? Should you?

Is your mind still sharp? Do you still do your own taxes? Pay your own bills? Do you understand your medical and drug insurance policy? Does anyone understand your medical and drug insurance policy? Do you still work that daily crossword puzzle? The “hard” sudokus? Are you always worrying about your cholesterol, blood pressure, heart rhythm, or hair color? Are you depressed? Do you depress others? Do you experience “senior moments?” Would you remember them if you did? Tell the truth now.

Do you have to be careful with your diet? Having more indigestion and elimination problems? Is your stomach always growling? Producing more gas than Exxon Mobile? Had an embarrassing accident or two or more?

Do you still sleep through the night? Do you occasionally sleep through the day? Do you know the difference?

Do you remember what sex was? Is it a distant memory? Does your nightstand contain Viagra and lubricating lotions? A copy of "Idiots Guide to Sex over 50?"

Do you feel like you're becoming a "drugee?" Do you use a giant-size weekly pill dispenser (like mine)? Do you take more pills per week than your age?

How's your cardio stamina? Your strength and balance? Are you losing energy? Is getting the mail your exercise for the day?

Regina Brett, a columnist for Cleveland, Ohio's *Plain Dealer* newspaper, sums all this up:

Growing old beats the alternative – dying young.