Columns

Let's 'face' it; aging has not been kind to me

So there I was

By Pete Buckley

With my 50th high school reunion approaching, I have begun to see some photographs of my former classmates posted on FaceBook. I found myself exclaiming, "Who are all these old people?" I thought to myself, "I can't possibly look as old as these geezers."

I guess I have reached the age where looking in the mirror is like checking the news… I know there'll be some new developments that I won't like. So today, I look into the mirror while I'm shaving and, for the first time in a long while, I closely examine that face I am about to shave, in order to see if I have aged like those old guys I saw from my class on FaceBook. As I put a razor to my skin, I observe the following:

A bald, white guy with a forehead so wide that I could make money by renting it out as a moving billboard. My cousin claims that my large, round head reminds her of Charlie Brown, only without the curl of hair in the front.

My ears seem to have grown longer than I remember and they are close to elf or hobbit length. The whole Hobbit look is intensified by the stray hairs that continually grow on the inside and outside of my ears. Although I try to trim that ear fuzz routinely, the ear hair returns like it is a chia pet. The only other hair on my head are my eyebrows and it looks as if someone sprinkled them with white paint.

I still have the small scar below my lower lip from when I was 11 years old and fell face forward forcing my buck teeth through the skin. I got even with those front teeth by knocking them out a year later during an indoor squirt gun fight when I slipped on the wet floor and landed on the linoleum kitchen floor. I shattered those teeth because I was protecting the squirt guns and threw my arms out to the side as I fell to the floor.

I've always had a freckle or two on my cheeks, but now I notice that I have acquired some brown colored spots on my face that are commonly referred to as liver spots or age spots.

And when did I start getting those lines which travel from my nose to my mouth and beyond that resemble World War One trenches? Wrinkles around my eyes have made themselves known lately and for some unknown reason, it looks as if I have the beginnings of two black eyes.

My reflection in the mirror clearly shows that I have loose skin that resembles a turkey's wattle (those wrinkled folds of skin that hang under a turkey's beak). According to the internet, aging, weight fluctuations and sun exposure result in turkey neck in humans and these three things are hard to avoid. The only youthful part of my face are the pimples that I unexplainably get on my nose. As a 68-year-old man, I think it is ridiculous to retain one of the worst parts of being a teenager… zits.

So, after contemplating my face and deciding to continue shaving rather than imbedding my razor into my jugular, I made the objective realization that I am not a good-looking guy. Thank goodness my wife (who still retains her beauty) and I are Catholic, because she can't quit the team.

I have come to the conclusion that I may not be Brad Pitt, but more of an Abraham Lincoln (in the looks department, not the intellect department). Many people described Lincoln during his lifetime as Lillian Foster did, "His face is certainly ugly, but not repulsive." Others said that Lincoln was "not so bad looking as they say."

Lincoln's law partner, William Herndon, described his friend by saying, "He was not a pretty man by any means, nor was he an ugly one; he was a homely man, careless of his looks, plain-looking and plain-acting."

I figure that if Lincoln can put up with his face, than I can put up with mine… and so can those other old classmates at my 50th Reunion.

When did we stop taking care of our own health?

Real Life Wellness

By Dr. Bill Hemmer

When you look back into the American history of healthcare, it's a very interesting story. From the early 1700's, women provided most of the healthcare around the birthing process and infections. The first US medical society was formed in 1735 in Boston and the first general hospital was established in 1750 in Philadelphia.

During the Civil War, more soldiers died of disease than fighting. Founded in 1849, the AMA didn't start to gain momentum until the end of the century. Most healthcare to that point was "fee-for-service". You paid the physician directly at the time of service. Even if it was livestock, crops, bartering or other durable goods. There was a fair trade of goods for services. This was also the era the local doctor gained respect as a civic leader, much like a priest or the sheriff because of this fair exchange.

By the early 1900's the industrial revolution highlighted how dangerous working conditions were and workplace injuries were becoming much more severe because the machinery was becoming heavier and hours being longer. It was also at this time unions were growing stronger. This led unions to begin different forms of sickness prevention and pooling money for serious injuries that were a direct result of work.

After World War 1, hospitals and physicians began to charge more than the average person could afford for a fee-for-service system to work. In 1923, Baylor hospital in Dallas began to provide local teachers healthcare at a prepaid monthly fee. This program grew quickly to become Blue Cross/Blue Shield, but for most US citizens, fees just kept going up.

Then in 1942, to fight inflation after World War 2, the government passed an act to limited how much businesses could raise wages. So, businesses got creative and began to attract workers with employer sponsored health insurance. Employees didn't have to pay taxes on this new form of compensation and got healthcare for themselves and their families.

This newfound form of compensation was very effective in the beginning, but there was a side-effect no one considered. The patient lost control of the types and quality of the healthcare they were being provided. In the beginning, their employer did their best to provide quality healthcare, but prices on every level continued to grow. The employer had to monitor costs, while also keep employees.

Employees had to settle for "free" or almost free health services but would put off or ignore things they had to pay for "out-of-pocket". Patients just took providers recommendations without question because healthcare providers were still always considered "above reproach". They were highly educated and knew best. Who were we to question them.

But, by the time the 1940's and 50's was over, physicians were being compensated much differently than the "pay-for-service" model. They were employees of the company or hired by the Health Insurance, Hospital or Drug company to provide care. The provider lost touch with the patient's financial responsibility and just kept prescribing testing, drugs, procedures and referrals to other providers, the way they had been trained to do.

In 1960, the government started tracking National Health Expenditures (NHE) and calculated that healthcare expenses were 5% of our Gross Domestic Product (GDP). By 2000, the NHE was 13.3% of the GDP. In 2022, the NHE has grown to almost 20% of the GDP.

Why is that important? Find out next week.

Fine line between a 'futurist' and a 'fatalist'

Ramblin' Man

By David Porter

The word "futurist" is a buzzword I've been hearing a lot lately. I'm not surprised. A lot of us are eager to see the present fade into the past and be replaced with an era where the lawns are greener, the skies are bluer and the only hiccups in the market are from drinking too much champagne.

I don't know what it takes to be a futurist. Predicting the future isn't enough. There are plenty of people wearing bandanas on their heads and toting crystal balls, but we don't call them "futurists." Whackjobs, maybe, but not futurists.

"Futurist" has a much better connotation than "psychic." But isn't it the same thing?

A psychic may profess to reading your mind, reading your palm or getting feelings from otherworldly beings, but most of them draw inferences from what you tell them and from your body language. Even the color and style of the car you pull up in.

A futurist will look at trends. The intuitiveness that a futurist brings to the table is the ability to assess forces outside of the control of an industry and to speculate how well the industry is equipped to deal with those external challenges. The futurist will look at trends within the industry, too, but anyone can read a bar chart. The real value is in being able to predict changes to a trajectory, not to read the trajectory by itself.

But there is another element to earning the title of "futurist." A futurist doesn't merely tell you where you're headed; he makes you want to go there. He's giving you the directions to a big ol' pot of gold.

I used to think I was a futurist. I could kind of tell what was going to happen six months or a year down the road. But if you're not painting a rainbow, you're not a futurist; you're a fatalist.

It's funny how closely the two are related. There are a few things within my industry that I predicted two, three, four, five years ago. I didn't really come up with anything new, but I could see where things were headed. However, I had no money or influence to lead the way. People are naturally resistant to change unless they can taste the rainbow. (I knew I could work in a Skittles commercial eventually.) Looking to me for directions to the gold is like taking mechanical advice from a guy who has never owned a car.

So, I'm not a futurist. I can't say I'm a fatalist, though; I've always had great faith in the human ability to solve problems. I don't know where that leaves me. "Curmudgeon," I guess. Curmudgeons are to futurists as rodeo clowns are to cowboys. They don't get to ride on top, but they still have to deal with all the bull.

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Official Notice is hereby given that the Annual Meeting of the Douglas County Farm Bureau will be held on Thursday, March 16, 2023 beginning at 5:30 p.m. at Yoder's Kitchen, Arthur, Illinois for the purpose of hearing reports from officers and employees and electing District Directors from District 1, 2 and 3, and conducting any other business which may properly come before the meeting.

Jeffrey Young, Secretary
Douglas County Farm Bureau

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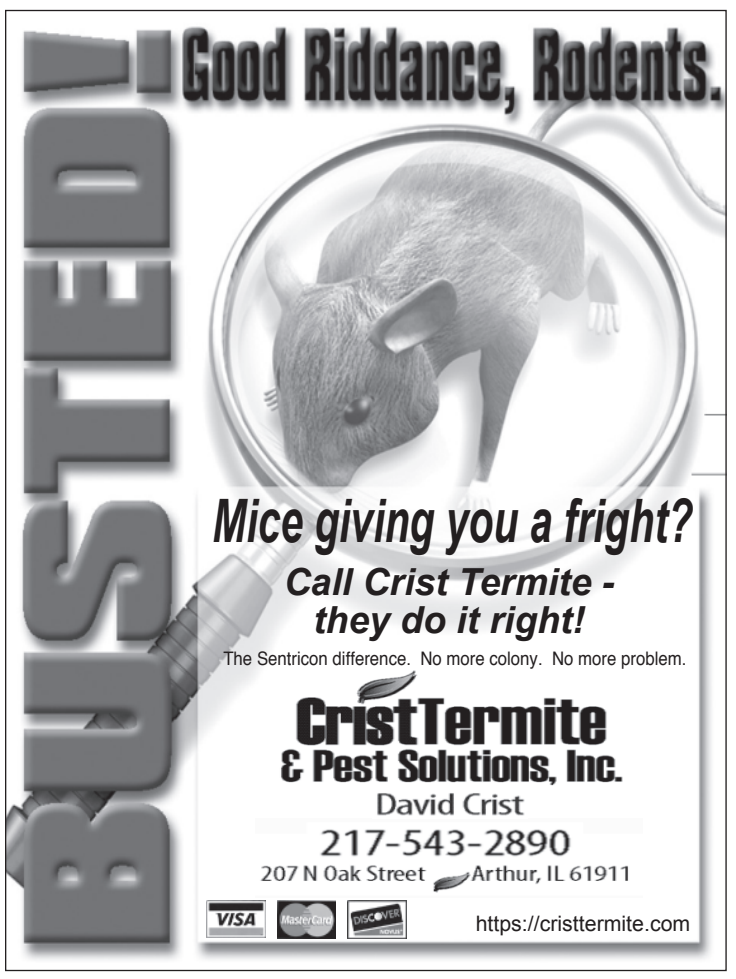

APRIL 4, 2023 CONSOLIDATED ELECTION

GRACE PERIOD REGISTRATION & VOTING

If you are not registered to vote by the voter registration deadline of March 7, 2023 but you are a qualified resident of Douglas County, you may register to vote in person in the County Clerk's Office located on the 2nd floor of the Courthouse, Tuscola, Illinois and once registered must vote in person at that same time in the County Clerk's office.

FIRST DAY: MARCH 8, 2023
LAST DAY: APRIL 4, 2023

EARLY VOTING

This allows a voter to make application for a ballot and vote without having to be absent from the County on Election Day.

Registered voters may vote early in the County Clerk's Office from 8:30 A.M. to 4:30 P.M., Monday through Friday.

EARLY VOTING BEGINS: FEBRUARY 23, 2023

VOTE BY MAIL

Registered voters may vote by Mail. Voters may request a ballot be mailed by contacting the County Clerk's office at 217-253-2442 or elections@douglascountyil.gov for additional information in mailing a ballot.

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