



My sunrise golf and heart-healthy exercise priorities often clash with my honey-do list.



## Reflections of a River Rat:

This vintage model continues to roll along

I spent the last year crossing the hurdle of age 64.

“Will you still need me? Will you still feed me? When I’m 64.”

My sainted wife, Mary, agreed with the Beatles lyrics, figuring I was a high-mileage model, but still good for mowing the lawn, snow-blowing the driveway, and folding laundry. I have different priorities such as watching 162 Cleveland Guardians games, keeping my golf ball in the fairway, and going out for lunch, but we have learned to compromise. That’s been our formula for 38 years.

But turning 65 ranks as a major milestone. You have to go on Medicare and decide when to take Social Security. It’s what ... I hate to say it ... it’s what old people do.

In the cockiness of my youth, I swore I would never act my age. Saint Mary Holleran agreed with that assessment. What I meant was I would never adopt “old people” stereotypes.

So when I enter my 65th lap around the sun, as the Earth spins about 1,000 miles per hour while speeding through space at 67,000 mph, I will remain grounded. Let Ponce de Leon chase his fountain of youth. I have resolved to flip off Father Time for another year by trying to act like a 45-year-old:



**The Dawn Patrol** – Just for the record, I’m 19 years younger than the movie. I rise at 5 a.m. four days per week, two for my 6 a.m. basketball game with the 30- and 40-year-olds, and two to tee off at 5:30 ahead of the deliberate players and high handicappers. I walk and carry my clubs, finishing 18 holes in 2 hours, 40 minutes. You don’t get a medal or a spot on the PGA Senior Tour for that, just 6½ miles of heart-healthy exercise. Young people do the 5 a.m. thing too, only with hangovers.



### **The GEICO stereotype**

– The insurance company is making a killing by spoofing the habits of older parents. I won't perseverate about the weather, leave games early to beat the traffic, eat dinner at 4:30, or drive 30 minutes to save two cents a gallon on gasoline.

With age comes crankiness. I have that covered. I will dwell on the behaviors that irritate me. The drivers who arrive late at stop signs but roll through to be first. The shoppers who leave grocery carts in parking spaces when the corral is a few steps away. The loudmouth who offers simplistic solutions to complex problems: "The trouble with schools is they abandoned cursive writing!" Yeah, let's bring back Morse Code too.



**Paging Marie Kondo** – I will hire her for an intervention. She can start at my workbench where I have stowed every tool and scrap of wood from the last 35 years. She'll have to step around the beermaking kit, the stash of old newspaper special sections and the 78 rpm records for my Victrola. I swore I would

play each one of them in retirement. Still hasn't happened. Hey, you never know when you will need several sizes of wooden dowels or a third set of screwdrivers.

Then we can move to my clothes closet. I haven't had complete trust in Mary since she jettisoned all my polyester pants the week after we were married. Marie Kondo will play a neutral role. Call her Switzerland. She can help me sort through

all the articles I haven't given up — the heavy cotton polos, the paint-splattered sweatpants and the T-shirts that ride above my Guinness Stout tumor.

**Dyeing my hair** – A fellow basketball referee suggested I would be assigned more games if I dyed my hair. “No way,” I responded. “I earned every one of these gray hairs.” The truth is my hair is white. The pigmentation cells in each hair follicle already have died and hastened the transition from brown to gray to silver to white. I knew Guinness could kill brain cells, but I now wonder if there is a side effect on your hair. At least I haven't adopted the Samuel L. Jackson look.

**Watch my mouth** – I'm not going to try to act hip by saying “bro” and “dude.” I consider “awesome” and “amazing” as obscenities. I am going to stick with the language of my youth. “Are you going to bogart that last slice of pizza?”

I am going to remain fit and avoid wearing my pants around my ribcage. I'll refrain from calling my arms a “gun show.” Most would call them squirt guns. No tattoos, tats or ink. I will embrace technology, but refuse to watch reruns of “Keeping Up With the Kardashians.”

**Unfair and unbalanced** – The moment I begin quoting distorted, politicized media accounts and start relying on only one silo of news will be the day the St. Lawrence Psychiatric Center gives me a rubber room.

I never want to be the old guy who repeats verbatim what he heard on right-wing cable stations or attributes information to “you know, they're saying.” I never want to be the old guy who fears that his white-dominant culture is changing. We saw that baloney aimed first at former slaves and Native Americans, then the Irish (No Irish Need Apply), Germans, Italians, Asians and Latinos. We need to embrace the diversity that makes our country great, not deny it.

Another model was rolled out in 1957 called the Edsel. I'm thankful I lasted longer.

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