

Wisdom

I don't know about you, but I kind of like the word 'senior'. It implies a level of wisdom earned from hard earned experience. For example, our navy is called the 'senior service' as an acknowledgement that the British Empire benefited from a blue water fleet manned by professional sailors long before it had a standing army or flying machines. I recall the prestige of belonging to the 'senior boy's basketball team' in High School (which maintained their prestige by excluding me from their roster). At one point in my career, I was even a member of 'senior management' in a large public sector organization. For me, the adjective 'senior' conjures up images of silver haired, older people with crow's-feet around their kindly, twinkling eyes leaning back in their rocking chairs by the family hearth dispensing hard earned advice to spellbound listeners who treasure every golden word.

I am not alone. A lot of companies agree with my impression. My new status as a senior gives me the privilege of \$1 dollar coffee at the McDonald's restaurant in Yorkton, Saskatchewan and reduced ticket prices at all Cineplex Odeon movie theatres across Canada. Some eating establishments even have special sections in their menus devoted exclusively to seniors providing smaller food portions at lower prices in recognition that dispensing wisdom over the dinner table can cut into your eating time.

Now there are many forms of wisdom. Some wisdom is proactive and creative and helps people and governments to come up with innovative solutions to tricky situations. A good example is former President Jimmy Carter who travels the world helping third world countries organize democratic elections and getting American hostages out of North Korea. Other wisdom is of the 'Don't do this' variety as in 'Don't embark on major home plumbing projects on Christmas day when the hardware stores are closed and the on call plumbers charge triple overtime'.

My wisdom is mostly in the latter category best summarized by the American cowboy philosopher Will Rogers who said: 'Good judgment comes with experience which mostly comes from bad judgment'.

The problem that I am having is that despite my vast life experience and restaurant discounts, nobody is lining up for my advice.

Whenever I try to give my wife advice, she holds up her arm, waves it in my direction (kind of like a traffic cop halting traffic when the traffic lights are out) and says most unpleasantly – ‘ When I want your advice I will ask for it’. After more than 41 years of marriage, I am still waiting. However, she will also soon become a senior and, no doubt, has her own stockpile of wisdom.

My children aren’t much more receptive to my hard earned senior’s wisdom. Whenever I dish out unsolicited advice or pithy sayings (e.g. a fool and his money are soon parted), they merely roll their eyes and change the subject. They apparently believe that my inability to master my home computer, use a hand held device or turn on the television surround sound are the early indicators of a deteriorating mind.

My big hope is that my grandchildren will draw upon my accumulated senior’s wisdom as they grow older so as to enrich their lives and make the world a safer and better place. These days I am spending a lot of time with my grandson Henry who is 3 years old. I want to be like ‘Gramps’ in the long ago T.V. series ‘Lassie’. I want to be the one guiding Henry through life and dispensing helpful advice although I hope that I will not be called upon to pull him out of old abandoned mine shafts or wells. So far, so good. No mineshafts and already Henry is asking me questions such as ‘Can we buy chocolate raisins?’, ‘Can we go to the playground?’, or ‘Can you turn on the DVD?’ Using my senior’s wisdom I have been able to respond well all his questions to date as long as he is willing to forego the surround sound system.

Senior citizen - it is nice to have arrived.