

Turning 65

Last year at this time I wrote a column about my favorite Beatles song, “When I’m 64”. In fact my wife threw me a great birthday party where we handed out the lyrics and sang along with John, Paul, George and Ringo in place of the well-worn “Happy Birthday” song. This year, however, is different. It started happening a few months ago when I noticed that I was receiving a voluminous amount of mail from Blue Cross, Aetna, AARP and countless other insurance companies trying to get me to purchase a supplemental insurance policy that would accompany my Medicare policy. Who told them I was turning 65? Someone must have sold them my birth certificate or my demographic data from my credit card records. Regardless, I have not appreciated being reminded daily that I am fast approaching the date in time when people used to retire. But that’s another column.

This spate of mail has made me painfully aware that I am getting older and that I need to pay attention to my health more than ever before. For example, I’m finding that my hearing has degraded somewhat and I need to listen harder and pay better attention. My wife, Karen, scoffs at this notion and tells me that it’s not that I don’t hear, it’s just that I don’t listen! How many men out there are guilty of that charge? Fair enough, she may be right but I have noticed some differences. In a crowded noisy restaurant, I have a great deal of difficulty hearing a conversation at my table. I tend to tune out after trying diligently to get in on the conversation only to discover that I’m picking up on only a few of the words. So, I make accommodations for myself at a seminar by sitting in the front row of a presentation or positioning myself near the speaker system in order to hear better. I actually helped raise money for my church in order to purchase a sound system so that I could hear the softer, gentler voices during the worship services.

At the time that all this was going on, I started receiving mail from audiology offices offering me free hearing tests and free trials for hearing aids. Was this serendipitous or did someone hear me complaining that I couldn’t hear the sermon and send my name to Beltone and all the other hearing aid manufacturers? I finally succumbed and scheduled a visit to have my hearing evaluated by an independent audiologist. The test showed that my hearing had declined but was still in the normal, acceptable ranges. No hearing device would help me, I was told, I just needed to listen more closely and not allow the collateral sounds to take over.

Well, I’m working on it but I’m fighting a losing cause. I’ll pay better attention but I’ll also avoid the noisy restaurants and continue to go to the head of the class.