

I'm So Old



by Rob Pue

I guess it's official. I'm officially old. It's not just the multiple mailings I get every month from AARP or the fact that the grocery store checkout clerk routinely asks me if I qualify for the "senior discount." Lately, I've been thinking about the way things used to be and feeling a little like a dinosaur. But I don't necessarily *feel* old, just tired, worn out and beat up. Yeah, I guess I feel old. I just feel like the world around me has transformed into something I never thought I'd see in all my life. And the things I'm talking about were not *eons* ago. Let's just go back 50 years – to 1971 – and see how things have changed.

In 1971, the average cost of a brand new house was \$25,000. The average income was \$10,000 a year. A gallon of gas was 40 cents and a postage stamp was 8 cents. A brand new car was less than \$2,000.

I'm so old I remember when telephones were connected to the wall with a wire. Turns out that was pretty good technology, because when the phones were tied down, humans were free. I remember the days of the "party line," rotary phones, pay phones and phone booths. I remember when, if you weren't home and someone called, they would call you back later. Then came the invention of the answering machine. Then there was a new thing, which you could pay extra for, called "Caller ID." Now you could choose to answer the phone, or not, depending on if you wanted to talk to the person calling or not.

The first cell phones came in heavy, cumbersome bags – or the wealthy could get one installed in their car. But unless you

were REALLY wealthy, you didn't dare use your cell phone unless it was a real emergency – (and then you talked fast) – because a huge bill was soon to follow for each minute you were holding that thing.

Today, almost everyone owns a “smart phone.” A hand-held super computer that allows you to take pictures, send text messages, chat with someone on the other side of the world with live video, access the internet, send email, interact on “social media” platforms, play games, pay your bills, purchase just about anything you can think of with a few taps of your finger, watch movies, get directions and maps to any destination, order food delivery, and more... By the way, do you know what the LEAST used function of a smart phone is today? That would be the *telephone*!

I remember when the news came out that smart phones were tracking all your personal information and data, collecting and selling your information, listening in to your conversations even when your phone was turned off – and that was a big deal to people; a serious breach of our personal privacy. Now, not only do we just accept that as “just the way things are,” many people even install additional listening devices, like “Alexa,” in their homes. Of course, it's for convenience purposes, but no one seems to mind the fact that we're all being “wire tapped” now. The convenience of the devices outweighs the moral and ethical breaches that we know are going on. And we push the thoughts of 24/7 surveillance to the backs of our minds; after all, those listening in would *never really DO anything* with the information... right?

I remember when hand-held calculators first came out. They cost about as much as a new iPhone does today. And the first video tape recorders. They weighed about a thousand pounds and cost about a thousand dollars. And they were Beta! The first video cameras were in black & white only – and had to be connected to a video tape recorder *and* a TV to use them.

I'm so old, I remember riding in cars without seatbelts and on bikes without helmets. Not only did we not wear helmets on our bikes, but we were also pretty inventive and imaginative. Every boy built ramps, got their speed up as fast as possible and then, if they did it right, flew a few feet through the air – usually over a row of metal Tonka trucks lined up between the “take off” ramp and the landing target. Yes... there were skinned knees and more than a few bruises. But somehow, we survived. Now, I suppose helmets would have been a good idea, but if we wore them, I can guarantee they would have looked “cool,” like motorcycle helmets – not like the neon-colored “salad bowls” kids wear today, fastened to their heads with a chin strap.

I'm so old I remember getting our “Weekly Reader” propaganda magazines in public school, where we were warned of a new ice age coming to cover the globe with glaciers by the year 2000. I remember when America tried the “Metric System” and we were told in school that we HAD to learn this, because the whole world was switching over to the Metric System in just a couple of years. Well, we tried that – for about ten minutes – but it was just too hard... we here in America are still quite happy with our gallons, quarts, pints and cups and we're just as happy with our inches, feet and yardsticks.

And I'm still waiting for my flying car. I may be old, but I haven't forgotten that Popular Mechanics magazine PROMISED us those would be commonplace by about 1975. Yep, still waiting. Speaking of cars, I remember when gas stations were in a tizzy because they only had room on their signs for two digits – so they didn't know what to do when gas went higher than a dollar a gallon.

I'm so old I remember all the summers I spent baling hay, mowing lawn, and working hard in the garden. I remember the wonderful feeling of playing outside after supper, in the cool of the evening, as the sun went down, breathing in the smell of summertime. Catching lightning bugs on the 4th of

July... in between lighting off fireworks.

I'm so old I remember 4th of July parades where you STOOD UP for the veterans as they passed by carrying the flags, and you took your hat off in honor of their service, and you applauded our flag and our country. America wasn't perfect, but there was no doubt it was the best country in the world and we were blessed by God to live here. I remember growing up with a feeling of patriotism, that, sadly, I dare say most young people today will never, ever have. Not only have they been taught that everything about our history and heritage is bad and shameful, they've also been taught that to disrespect all things "American" is actually a noble and courageous thing to do.

And in those days, we didn't negotiate with terrorists. Certainly we didn't send them pallets of cash in the dead of night. Politicians were still about as honest as used car salesmen, but at least they pretended to love this country. And people could disagree and speak their minds and tell the truth without being censored by the politically-correct and the thought police.

I remember when someone was going to have a baby and it was a very positive, HAPPY time. Babies were blessings, not "punishments," and harming a baby in any way was the most reprehensible thing one could ever conceive of. People didn't kill their babies for convenience and so-called "doctors" didn't kill babies for profit.

And I'm so old that when a baby was born, it was either a boy or a girl, and it was not difficult to tell the difference. Thinking back now, the words of Archie Bunker in the opening song of that show were almost prophetic: *"And you knew who you were then. Girls were girls and men were men."* Today, that distinction is "blurred," to say the least.

I didn't know anyone whose parents were divorced. Divorce –

like abortion – were not simple solutions to perceived problems. Marriage really was “‘til death do we part,” in the vast majority of families. Grandparents and elders were honored and their wisdom valued.

I’m so old that I can remember when so-called “race relations” were actually good. White people did not hate black people and black people did not hate white people. There was no rioting, looting and burning to protest the arrest of criminals. We all had the same opportunities and it was up to each individual as to what he’d make of his life. Everyone worked hard. There was no such thing as “white privilege” or “toxic masculinity” or “micro-aggressions.” Those who needed a hand up were able to get it. But it was a hand UP – not a hand OUT; it wasn’t a recipe for delinquent parenting, easy divorce, abortion-on-demand or multi-generational welfare communities.

I’m so old I remember when being a Christian was actually a good thing. Young women would hope to meet a good Christian man; young men would hope to meet a good Christian woman. Marriage and family was the goal. Children were raised by both parents and almost every family went to church. There were tough times, and looking back, I guess you could say our family was “poor,” but us kids never knew it. We trusted God, we had strong faith, family was a team, and we all worked hard. The “little” things in life were the most precious, and memories I will always carry with me.

In those days, drugs were bad. Getting drunk was bad. We didn’t have an enormous pharmaceutical industry pushing prescription drugs of every sort – most with side effects worse than the disease – and raking in more money every year than Big Oil does today. We certainly didn’t have a nation-wide push for the legalization of illicit drugs for recreational use. And we were not forced to take medications. My grandparents could never have conceived of such a thing.

If you got sick, you stayed home from school or work for a few days until you got better. You weren't forced to quarantine in your home – you stayed home all on your own, because you were sick. We certainly were never forced to quarantine in our homes when we were healthy. (Who needs a COVID concentration camp when you can just force people to comply with house arrest?) We were never denied entrance to any store or business, or shunned from society because we refused to wear a mask on our face or get a shot. We had freedom. Freedom to think for ourselves, freedom to study and learn for ourselves, freedom to speak our minds on any particular subject, freedom to go work, shop, travel, and eat what we chose.

Churches didn't close in the midst of a crisis – they OPENED up bigger. They would never have been considered “non essential,” and the idea that the government would or COULD arrest a pastor for preaching, padlock the doors of a church, arrest church-goers for going to church, or hand out fines for simply sitting in your car in your church parking lot was unthinkable. Not in America. It could NEVER happen here.

And I'm so old I remember how the pastor used to pound his fist on the pulpit – to drive home a point in a powerful sermon, or to wake up a tired farmer on the verge of dozing off. But those were the days when sermons were sermons. (Not “talks.”) Pastors preached on the relevant topics of the day and their goal wasn't to keep people happy and complacent. Their goal was to tell them the TRUTH of what the Word of God had to say about the most important issues in our culture, politics, morality (or lack thereof) and especially about the precious blood of Jesus, shed for us, so that by repentance and faith, we could be saved.

We sang songs like *“Onward Christian Soliders,”* and *“Nothing But the Blood.”* But those timeless hymns of the faith are off limits in most churches today. Too violent. Too radical. Too masculine. Too offensive. There was also the song, *“I Love To Tell The Story.”* When was the last time you heard that in your

church? The sad fact is, most church-goers today don't KNOW the story well enough to tell it, and if they did, they'd be too ashamed of Jesus to even speak His name to a friend or loved one, for fear of being rejected. I know that's a hard thing for you to hear...but you know I'm right. How many souls have been lost because generations of church-goers have been dumbed down, feminized, and trained to be cowards rather than Christian soldiers with a purpose? The sad fact of the matter is that too many churches have indeed become "non essential." In fact, it would be better for the cause of Christ if many of them would remain closed permanently. And it hurts me to say that.

We would do well to remember the days of old. Allow me to close with God's Word from Deuteronomy 32: *"He is the Rock, His work is perfect: for all His ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is He. They have corrupted themselves, their spot is not the spot of His children: they are a perverse and crooked generation."*

"Do ye thus requite the Lord, O foolish people and unwise? Is not He thy Father that hath bought thee? Hath He not made thee, and established thee? Remember the days of old, consider the years of many generations: ask thy father, and he will shew thee; thy elders, and they will tell thee."

There is great wisdom available to all who seek it. So generation of 2021, don't despise the wisdom of your father and forefathers and elders. They remember the old days. They can show you and tell you the ways in which you should walk, the things most important, and help you discern right from wrong, evil from good in a world now filled with deception and lies. Most importantly, remember your Creator, our Heavenly Father. Seek Him and serve Him. *"Only one life, 'twill soon be past, Only what's done for Christ will last."*

E-Mail Rob Pue: Rob@WisconsinChristianNews.com

Audio CDs and transcripts of this message are available when you call me at Wisconsin Christian News, (715) 486-8066 or email: Rob@WisconsinChristianNews.com. Ask for message number 323.