

Raging Against Old Age: Tripping Into the Vicinity of Getting Old



By Frosty Wooldridge

April 10, 2025

"I'm tripping into the vicinity of being an old man."

Instead of raging against all the bad news in April of 2025, how about each of us contemplating our own struggles while living in America, especially us baby boomers. We've lived through some pretty amazing moments since WWII. I don't have to name them because you all know them from living through them.

Today, I skied at 12,000 feet over Parsenn's Bowl at Winter Park, Colorado. Across from the Panoramic Ski Lift when I jumped off at the top, a bluebird sky revealed the grandeur of the Continental Divide with 13,292 foot Parry's Peak piercing the frigid air right in front of me. I sucked fresh, clean, energizing mountain breezes into my lungs before I cut left for a glide down that pristine mountain that I've skied for 50 years.

For my fellow 1965 high school classmates, this is not about 'me, me, me' or 'ego' or any of that stuff. I'm T00 old to worry about conceit or self-absorption. This is just about recounting moments of my life, because I know the adventure is soon coming to an end. If you find this account amusing, you might write one of your own. I'd like to hear every story of

every high school graduate. What did you do with your life? Obviously, we boomers lived some amazing moments on this planet before what Charles Lindbergh called, "Death, the last great adventure." I wish you well in 2025. This is Frosty ruminating about old age. Oh, I've got another 10 years in me!

This winter, I stepped into my 78th birthday, same day as Paul Newman's. My wife Sandi and I took a hike at 9,000 feet in a dazzling snowstorm on Genesee Mountain near our house. Snow covered everything with a magical white blanket. We ate a quiet dinner by our fireplace that ended with a cupcake with a candle poked into the top of it...to make it easier to blow out and make a simple wish. "Please God, grant us good health in the coming years and health to all our friends and family."

As it is, I pray each day for world peace, health for everyone, tranquility for America, and I wish every human being the very best in his or her own journey. After these 78 years of world travel, I know most human beings try to live as decently as possible. For the ugly humans in the world, I wish them commensurate Karma.

Because of a life lived with extensive adventures, I never suffered a mid-life crisis. Every time I hit 20, 30, 40, 50, 60, and 70th year birthdays, I traveled in some far-off lands such as Antarctica or cycling across the Outback, or exploring India, or standing on the Wall of China. Each decade brought astounding moments whether scuba diving off the Galapagos Islands or the Great Barrier Reef or riding my bicycle across some continent or around it.

During those years, I became an U.S. Army officer, teacher, United Van Lines truck driver, magazine-writer-photographer, dance teacher, bartender, cardiac catheterization medical tech, safety director, personal trainer, ski instructor, heavy equipment trainer, house painter and roofer. I raced in 81 triathlons. Ski bummed for two years. Backpacked into big wilderness regions of Alaska, South America and the Himalayas.

How about 15 bicycle adventures coast to coast across America? That bicycle trip from Nord Kapp, Norway to Athens, Greece stands tall in my memory. All those jobs and adventures created 17 published books, and more to come.

Yes, I know delicate work and mostly, I know hard work. In the end, it was that brutally hard labor of moving furniture for United Van Lines at 90 to 100 hours per week that launched me toward my world travels. And you know what, I am thankful for that opportunity.

With those last five decades, it's been a blast, but now, I'm tripping into the vicinity of being an old man. It's an age where nothing works, and everything hurts. Darnedest feeling to cut loose from the powers of youth where I enjoyed boundless energy, a spirited body and the next high adventure somewhere on this planet!

In my front room, I enjoy a large cabinet with a "Memory Shelf" of 55 years of adventures across six continents. Pictures and little things collected along the way. Water collected from the snows of Antarctica. Indian vases. Chinese dolls. Japanese cup. Argentine bolo balls. Bicycling in the Amazon Rainforest. Pacific-Atlantic water bottles from bike trips across the USA coast to coast. Statue from Greece. Sandi and Frosty sailing. Backpacking the Grand Canyon. Boomerang from Australia. Shell from Galapagos Islands. Needles in a packet from 2,500 year old redwood. Bamboo walking stick from Nepal Trekking. Leaning Tower of Pizza. Bicycling by the Coliseum in Rome. Standing on the Parthenon, Greece.

Jack London said it best, "I would rather be ashes than dust! I would rather that my spark should burn out in a brilliant blaze than it should be stifled by dry-rot. I would rather be a superb meteor, every atom of me in magnificent glow, than a sleepy and permanent planet. The function of man/woman is to live, not to exist. I shall not waste my days trying to prolong them. I shall use my time."

That quote is pegged to my cork-board and I read it every day to infuse my being with its energy. Several others inspire me, too. I read them often to keep my mind right. Poet Jack Gilbert said, we all face "the ruthless furnace of this world." You can either navigate the generated heat or you can allow yourself to be cooked. I chose to work hard, play hard, honor all life and maintain optimal integrity in the "ruthless furnace of this world." So far, so good.

On the sobering side of old age, from my high school graduating class in 1965, over 20 have died for various reasons: Vietnam War in the 60's, heart attacks, cancer, diabetes, suicides, drug prescription reactions, car accidents and other reasons. Our class president Billy Canon and his wife Jill died in their 60's. I miss them. The Student Council president Judy died of ovarian cancer in her 40's. Our top basketball athlete Scott McLennan died of lung cancer from smoking. How is it that they died so young and the rest of us keep living? Where's the fairness? Answer: in this life, there is no fairness. Mostly, it's the luck of the draw. You can be here today and gone tomorrow...in a blink!

As I look back on my life, I am thankful I didn't get killed, maimed, poisoned by Agent Orange or incinerated by napalmed in the Vietnam War. The most thankful day of my life remains my honorable discharge date out of the U.S. Army on June 13, 1971. I had seen so much death and mutilated bodies...it was constant depression for me. When I visit the Vietnam Memorial Wall in Washington DC, I rub my hands over the names of four of my old friends and weep uncontrollably. They never got to enjoy school, romance, wife, kids, family or fishing on the lake. Their lives were cut short by politicians, the Military Industrial Complex, liars and bankers. May LBJ, Nixon and Westmoreland rot in Hades.

Of course, I married right out of college to a fabulous lady who possessed a totally different lifestyle than me. So, after three quick years of mutual frustration for both of us, we

shook hands and pursued our chosen lives. She loved elegant hotels and clothes. I loved tents, sleeping bags and campfires. Thankfully, we avoided children, so we went our own ways without burdens. I am happy to say that she lived a highly creative life as a successful artist and art teacher at a college. She finally married the perfect guy for her lifestyle. I am thankful because everyone deserves to live a happy life.

Late in life, I met and married Sandi, who loves to camp, dance, ski and laugh. A-men! Everyone deserves to find their best mate. I hope we humans get serious about our home planet, it's sacredness and beauty. I'm looking forward to bicycling the Lewis & Clark Trail from St. Charles, Missouri to Astoria, Oregon some 4,100 miles. Sandi will ride with me along with a few friends. As long as I can pedal, I can enjoy great adventures on my bicycle.

And what about you at whatever your age? Are you enjoying a good time? Are you happy with your work? Are you interested in your life? Are you happy with your fitness and your body? What is important to you? Are you enjoying a life worth remembering? Because if you're not, you can change it by choice.

I hope you're having a blast. This life offers incredible opportunities for those of us living in free societies. I am hoping you have discovered your dream, are chasing your dream, have caught your dream, and are living your dream.

Captain Jean Luc Picard of the Starship Enterprise said, "Someone once told me that "time" stalks us all our lives. I'd rather believe that "time" is a companion that goes with us on a journey. It reminds us to cherish each moment, because it will never come again. What we leave behind is not as important as how we have lived."

And, my own thoughts—Spirit of Adventure

“If the roar of a wave crashes beyond your campsite, you might call that adventure. When coyotes howl outside your tent—that may be adventure. While you’re sweating like a horse in a climb over a 12,000-foot pass, that’s adventure. When a howling headwind presses your lips against your teeth, you’re facing a mighty adventure. If you’re pushing through a howling rainstorm, you’re soaked in adventure. But that’s not what makes an adventure. It’s your willingness to struggle through it, to present yourself at the doorstep of Nature. That creates the experience. No greater joy can come from life than to live inside the ‘moment’ of an adventure. It may be a momentary ‘high’, a stranger that changes your life, an animal that delights you or frightens you, a struggle where you triumphed, or even failed, yet you braved the challenge. Those moments present you uncommon experiences that give your life eternal expectation. That’s adventure!” Frosty Wooldridge

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