

## Long Live the Geezer!



WRINKLES DON'T HURT.

Illustration: Tim Tripp

**I**'VE DECIDED I SIMPLY WASN'T meant to live this long.

Don't get me wrong, I don't have a death-wish, but my Lord, the years after 60 are tough. Every twinge in a joint, every new spot on your hand reminds you that while life may begin at 40, it genuinely does taper off as you enter the seventh decade (that's 60 and onwards for you mathematically-challenged types).

Irrational fears start to set in. Younger

female friends on Facebook post lovely pictures of themselves and you hesitate to hit 'Like' lest you be judged a dirty old man. Wee kids in shopping malls smile and wave at you and ask Mummy why Santa's here in May, as you stagger around with your unruly beard and saggy pants – and you panic, for fear that little Dominic's mother might report you as a potential pervert.

You creep in your sensible shoes around

the corridors of rest-homes, visiting elderly relatives in God's Waiting Room, and feel an unsettling sense of connection with 93-year-old Doris in room 25, who insists she's there against her will, and asks you to bring boiled sweets the next time you come by.

The posters of sprightly looking septuagenarians inviting you to 60-plus groups in the community, initially fill you with a sense of horror, but then seem strangely reassuring. The old dears who once irked you as they fussed through their change purses for "the right money" at the café, now seem like lovely fellow travellers.

year old chap who'd moved in with Mum as "quite a special lad."

My buddy is happy now that he's got his own place and a new lady (who is well under 60). But I reckon he found the retirement-village spell quite rewarding in its own way.

Although I now wish I had taken better care of myself in earlier decades, I think, upon reflection, I feel a bit the same. My conversations with the delightful elderly in my life are more rewarding somehow. Almost as if the predominance of silver in my hair is kind of like a rite of passage which allows my old mates to open up to me a lot more.

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**A**n old mate of mine, who at the tender age of 59 found himself turfed out on his ear from a messy domestic crisis, moved (reluctantly to start with) to his elderly mum's unit at a retirement home. His initial feelings of desperation, and fevered nightmares that he was in a casting-call for an incontinence product commercial, slowly turned around.

The old bloke whose unit was nearest the crinkly farm gate would watch eagerly for my mate's return home each night, and within 10 seconds he'd be inviting John over for a 'roadie' – a generous slosh of single malt whiskey.

John grew to relish the company of the old fella and the other adoring 80-plussers who obviously regarded a 59

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Nostalgia, they say, has its root somewhere in a Greek word that means 'the wonderful pain and ache of memory'. The ache of watching more and more old buddies and relatives depart this planet is very real, and makes me want to enjoy their company while I can. 

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