

I used to not worry a whole lot about retirement. I figured I'd probably be dead before then, anyway.



Since I currently can't get full Social Security Benefits until 72, and it appears the only people contributing to the system are six high school kids pursuing careers in the fast food industry, chances are, they will raise the age limit again.

Maybe if I live to be 96 I might be able to finally see those mythical dimes and nickels the feds have been defrauding, uh, I mean saving, for me, at last.

But that's probably not the way to bet.

Still, with modern advances in medical science, good genes, fairly clean living, and a dose of decent luck, many folks live quite a long time these days. I think it would be great to live that long, provided I have the money to keep myself in Viagra and enough marbles left to remember why am gulping it down like handfuls of M&Ms.

The thing I'm beginning to realize is, no matter how old you are, you have to stay engaged, be involved, find things to do, or you will, in fact, wind up staring blankly into space, idly wondering where your Cheese Whiz is.

I hope I can have it as much together as my mom, for example.

The family gathered at her home in Durham, N.C., for the debut performance of the Croasdaile Piano Quartet. Croasdaile Village is the retirement village to which she relocated a couple of summers ago. She and three other ladies, all of whom are formidable musicians, decided to put together a four-handed piano recital and they played two nights at the Croasdaile Community Life Center Auditorium before a couple hundred people. They were great! Hadn't missed a step as nearly as I can tell, and one thing Mary Tatum did was raise a couple of critical musicians in her brood.

She may very well order a contract hit, or at the very least disinherit me for my next disclosure, but she just turned – well, let's play it safe and just say she had a birthday in October, and she's been kicking around the planet just shy of eight decades. You just wouldn't know it. She has her new set of wheels, and she's constantly on the road, visiting friends and family, pursuing her interests, living her life as fully as she always had. To say she's amazing is to say Stradivarius was pretty good at making fiddles.

Her fellow musicians are essentially in that age range as well, or as one of them put it, "There's probably over 300 years of experience on these keyboards tonight."

Another person at whom I remain pretty wowed is my father-in-law. While a few years younger than my mother, he is enjoying his seventies, and after four kids and a long medical career, is doing pretty much exactly what he wants, when he wants, how he wants. He plays golf every Saturday with his foursome and several other days of the week by himself or with whoever wants to play. He and his horse, while retired from fox hunting, still hit the trail occasionally, just for fun. In fact, for his 73rd birthday, he had a photographer come out and shoot him and Buster, his 27-year-old horse, as he said, "To celebrate 100 years of walking around together."

He teaches a couple of classes at the Medical University in Columbia, as well as a Sunday school class every Sunday. He and my mother-in-law do their share of traveling as well. Sinatra would be proud – Dr. P is doing it “his way.”

If this crazy world doesn't give me an early coronary, or I don't do something like stand under a satellite when it falls from space and hits the earth, or go through the peculiar hell that is quitting smoking only to step into the street and be run over by a tobacco truck otherwise bop off earlier than I would prefer, I hope I can enjoy those years as heartily as they do.

Of course, nothing is guaranteed, but who knows? I'd at least like a couple of my hard-earned samolians back from the government sometime before I turn 120.