

The charging T-Rex of truth...

Written by Jim Tatum



You think you're on top of your game. Then out of the blue comes that stray freight train, that looming bomb, that guided missile that annihilates all those illusions.

Okay, okay, so maybe I'm being dramatic, but hey, a rude awakening can be a right traumatic experience.

As a guy in lower middle age, I am currently running that racetrack to hang onto what youth might be left. Thanks to our dogs, I probably walk at least two miles every day. I run or bike every day as well and recently, my Beloved and I joined the Y so I have added several sessions on the elliptical as well as the weight room every week.

I think it pays off – I've always maintained that a pair of running shoes beats a prescription every time.

But most of all, it feeds my sense of vanity. I look in a mirror and think, "Hey, I don't look as old as I am," and in truly megalomaniacal moments and with apologies to Kris Kristofferson, I might lean against the mirror and murmur, "You good lookin' so and so, don't you never die."

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So anyway, I'm at the office a few weeks ago and we are working on a father's day special section for the newspaper. Someone asks me if I have any pictures of my kids and I reply that I do, but my kids are all four-legged and home schooled. Then someone asks me why I don't go ahead and have a couple. To this my answers are pretty standard. Currently, it costs about \$225,000 to raise a kid to adulthood these days. If I became a father tomorrow, I would be in my 70s before that kid got out of school and I don't want to work that long or that hard. Besides that, I look at kids the same way I look at cats – I like other people's just fine but don't care to invest in a litter box myself.

However, the following comment emerged during the conversation – and insincere or not -- it stroked the old ego in a big way.

“Man, I thought you were my age – you sure don't look like you're 46.”

I sort of shrug and mention that I sure do feel that old sometimes, but inside, of course I'm smirking – I look like I'm still in my 30s, for cryin' out loud.

A little while later, while washing my hands in the bathroom, the T-Rex takes its first chomp out of the big juicy rack of raw brontosaurus ribs that is my ego. I look into the mirror and notice this thing at the corner of my left ear. At first I think I'm just seeing things, or maybe it's some stain on the mirror but no; there it is.

A hair. A single, dark wiry strand poking out from the corner of the ear canal area like a dandelion through a concrete driveway. It's not just a little thing, either; it needs to be wrapped around a climbing trellis.

Ear hair? Really? Dear Lord, are you freakin' kidding me? What am I, 90?

To add insult to injury, when I go to grab it, it moves. It's like a cobra in a basket, bobbing and weaving before the snake charmer's pipes. It coils and sways, avoiding my fumbling fingers, slip sliding away, as it were, every time I almost have it within my grasp.

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Finally, I snag it between thumb and forefinger and now thoroughly animated, I give it a mighty yank.

My eyes water, my head jerks violently sideways, my ear bends double, as though someone punched it in the stomach, if an ear could possibly have a stomach. And while I know, deep in my manly heart that I did not utter a sound, I think everyone within two blocks hid under desks and tables with their hands over their eyes because they thought they heard a civil defense siren announcing an imminent nuclear attack.

Of course, old guys can just wander out, stare blankly at swirling pandemonium and sort of go, "What?" as they shuffle off to feed pigeons in the nearest public park.

That happy thought occurred to me even as I was digging out the last piece of popcorn in the bag to throw to the flock of cooing, burring, strutting winged freeloaders that surrounded me in the little town square across the street.

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