

It is official: I am old

by Rev. Joe Dirt - Friday, April 16, 2021

<https://www.curmudgeon-alley.com/it-is-official-i-am-old/>



By whatever methodology of measure you elect to utilize, I am not a young man. I have not been so for a while now. The other day I celebrated my 69th birthday by mowing and fertilizing the lawn. Brothers being brothers, one of mine reminded me that as of my birthday this year I was beginning my 70th circuit around the sun. Thanks Mike, now pass me the foam encounter bat, you fellow old curmudgeon. My wife, for my birthday this year, bought me a coffee mug with my name on it. I deduced that she was afraid that with my advancing decrepitude I might not remember who I was... let it alone my name.

However, the real kicker happened today. I have begun working with a new young Mexican tutor who lives in Oaxaca, Mexico. This is via [italki](#) and Skype for conversational practice in Spanish. He just graduated from a university in Mexico City with a degree in Petroleum Engineering. I seem to remember this being the National Autonomous University of Mexico, perhaps the top university in Mexico. However, the pandemic is slowing up his employment search, so for the time being, he is working as an online Spanish tutor.

It is a little amazing to me, but generally it is fairly easy to fill up an hour of time conversing with someone in another country. Frequently the differences in cultures and perceptions will trigger numerous other discussion pathways. Of course at times the conversation can lag a little bit. I think that is what provoked this series of questions. First he asked me my age. He then told me his age, 25. He then asked what 3 pieces of advice that I, as a 69 year person, might have to give to him, as a 25 year old man. It was at that exact moment that I realized I was officially old.

My first thought was that I am not particular wise even if I am “experienced”. I sometimes learn from my mistakes, but frequently I just keep hitting my thumb with the hammer. A couple times I have fantasized about the *now me* going back and having a conversation with a *younger me*. I quickly decided it would be useless. The younger me would most likely say, “f*** off, old man!” There is an Isaac Newton quote: “*If I have seen further, it is by standing on the shoulders of giants.*” That may have worked for the man of science, but it has been my observation that most young people need to make their own mistakes and find their own route through life. They are not so prone to stand on anyone’s shoulders to see the best path.

However... I decided to treat his question seriously even if it were only a conversational gambit. Here is what I came up with on the spur of moment while trying to express these thoughts in Spanish.

My first *consejo* was to be careful and choosy about whom you marry. This relationship affects all aspects of your life. A good life partner can be a wonderful blessing. A mismatched partner can be a nightmare for both parties. I cannot think of any other thing that will affect your life so drastically as your mate in life. I'm not sure about the Latino culture, but so many Americans, especially when young, make this important decision from a hormonal bias or possibly a sense of being "in love".

My second piece of advice was to remember that life is short. I may be 69 today, but in many ways it feels like I was 25 just yesterday. Many of us spend a life time putting off until tomorrow so many things, and suddenly realize that the tomorrows are running out.

My third was somewhat related to the second. I have occasionally have seen some famous person being interviewed and in response to a question they avow that if they had it all to do over again they would live their life just as they have lived it. It is just about at this point that I want to throw a shoe through the TV, until I remember what a new television would cost. I could spend pages listing the things that I would have done differently, the things I wished I had not done, and the things I wished that I had. My advice was to follow your dreams, to do the things you want to do and not put them off. It is not entertaining to lay awake at night regretting what you could have done and did not do.

There are a multitude of other pieces of advice that if I had reflected longer I could have given him, and perhaps should have. There are two more that stand out for me right now. First, that in the final analysis, relationships and people are much more important than possessions, jobs, money or most things that people think are of paramount importance. Secondly, I would collect all the experiences I could. I would value experiences over the money I was afraid to spend or the time I was afraid to give up. When I am lying in the nursing home bed reminiscing, it will not be about money or possessions, it will be about those experiences I have put in my memory.

In any event do not take any wooden nickels.

Keep well.

[Subscribe to Curmudgeon Alley](http://www.curmudgeon-alley.com)