

Old people are afraid they'll miss something

By J B Leftwich

One reason older people choose additional years rather than, like old soldiers, just fading away is the amazing developments in technology hovering on the horizon.

Though an unwelcome thought, life's end is not feared as much as the fear of missing something such as man's first voyage to Mars, a cloned human (an idea I don't like, but if it happens, I'd like to be around to see it), restored use of limbs for persons confined to wheel chairs, techniques to correct autism, bipolarity and other defects. The list goes on.

I wonder. How can one little flower cell be programmed so that the blossom is red where it is supposed to be red and yellow where it is supposed to be yellow. Genetic engineering has developed hybrid plants with greater range of colors. Could the yellow and red petals be interchanged so that reds become yellows? Maybe I'm ignorant. Maybe this has already happened and I am unaware.

Each morning, I stand before a mirror and mow my beard with a Remington shaver, so intent that I see only the beard and not the aged face, and puzzle over the location of hair. How come man's face is covered with beard and woman's face is smooth and pretty? Was this condition carefully designed for warmth because the males had to face the elements to bring home the meat while the females hovered around the camp fire?

In this regard, why were men assigned the muscle while women were assigned the beauty? Did this have something to do with guaranteeing perpetuation of the human - or near human - race? And with modern technology relying more on brains than on brawn, is male dominance doomed? Are women generally smarter than men? They now are earning better marks in college, and a survey states they are better prepared for today's labor market.

One way or another, men are growing larger muscles, hoping to play tackle for the Titans which a minuscule number of them eventually will do. Meanwhile, the women (female soldiers) are pinning on stars while men fight the wars and dodge sniper bullets and bombs.

Why does hair grow on my face instead of, say my ears? Actually, a stray hair does appear occasionally on one of my ears. As man evolved, did his ears grow bald while his face grew beard? Perhaps science already knows the answer, but I don't.

And why does hair grow on the back of my hands and not on the palms? Did the Creator say of primitive man: "We'll protect the back of his hands with hair, but he can make a fist and protect his palms." Seems logical to my small, finite mind.

I wonder if science could engineer hair in the palms or on the elbows or on the knuckles? Not that any experimentation is likely, but has the idea occurred?

Another question, why is the advent of beard delayed until a male is into puberty? Are there human delayed action computer chips which activate on certain biological signals? And could science alter these chips so that there is more hair on man's chest and no hair on his face?

My friend Gusto doesn't like for me to write stuff like this. Claims I am way out. Thinks my thinking is all screwed up. Believes I am a bit weird. He could be right, you know. I have considered the possibility that there is a link missing in my mental chain.

Gusto is pragmatic. Doesn't spend time wondering if there is life on some distant planet circling a remote sun in a remote galaxy. He doesn't contemplate variegated colors of autumn leaves. He calculates the amount of time he'll spend raking and mulching and bagging. He always knows the day of the month and how many days hath September. He doesn't remember his dreams and never has nightmares.

I envy him. He's never late, thinks to pay his bills, knows the birthday of everybody in his family, and always remembers his wedding anniversary.

In contrast, I dream all night long it seems, and I sometimes have nightmares. Most recently, I dreamed scientists had spliced a palm gene to a face gene, and, sure enough, men no longer were shaving.

The punch line of the dream was: I owned a sizable amount of Remington stock.

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