

## *I Am Something*

"Preserve your memories  
They're all that's left you."

- Simon & Garfunkel

"Whatcha doin'?"

"Watching some YouTube before I go to bed."

"Oh no, are you watching that Kirk Gibson thing again? Didn't you just watch that last week?"

"Yeah"

"How many times have you watched it?"

"I dunno. Maybe 5 or 6."

"You mean 9 or 10, don't you?"

"Maybe."

"Do you ever get the feeling that you're wallowing?"

"You mean like a pig?"

"Well, sort of."

"No. I'm taking a walk down Memory Lane."

"Well, I think maybe you got lost."

"I'm reconnecting with my past."

"Are you sure you ever got disconnected?"

"Well, yeah, or else I wouldn't feel the need to reconnect."

"Whatever happened to Be Here Now?"

"It changed to Be There Then."

"Spare me."

And so on.....

What's your version?

Scenes like this are probably playing out in homes across the country as we Boomers head into the Autumn of our Collective lives. It has the trappings of a ritual.

What's happening?

Witness:

I find myself rewatching Kirk Gibson's historic 9<sup>th</sup> inning home run in the 1984 World Series (okay – nine times).

I am watching old clips of the Beatles, Johnny Carson, Steve Martin, the first time Paul McCartney played *Yesterday* on the Ed Sullivan show.

I am reading *Franny and Zoe* and Joan Didion's essays from 50 years ago. I read a memoir from the Beat Era, for God's sake.

Is this plumbing your past? Or 'wallowing' in our reminiscences.

I ponder. I hypothesize.

I've never been 67 before, so I have no idea if this is a normal occurrence for a senior citizen in the late innings.

But, somehow, I suspect it is.

The causes are numerous. There are many, perfectly legitimate reasons for this phenomenon. It is natural. It is healthy. And just maybe – enlightening.

### **Cause One: CHANGE**

I am discovering, as I grow older, that I am becoming increasingly resistant and indignant to change. Change is always difficult, but it seems to become even more difficult the older we get. Part of it is that we just don't have the energy or patience for it. We don't have the appetite for it. I find myself being resistant to anything unfamiliar. I like living in the little cocoon of a life I've woven for myself over 67 years – the home, the hobbies, the friends, the restaurants, the hikes. Now – please, don't change it!! It's taken me 67 years to build this. The last thing I want is to see it dismantled, altered, "improved". Leave me alone and take your change somewhere else, for God sakes.

### **Cause Two: COMFORT.**

I am discovering that comfort is one of our only tools to help soften the harsh edges of aging. Comfort in its many forms – clothes, food, movies, beds. There's the reassurance that we know what to expect. Things are predictable.

I know that Trader Joe's will have my wife's favorite Blue Moon Moscato. I know where to find the exact type and size of wood screw I need at the ACE Hardware store. Heck – I even know the old guys who'll be working there. They know that I had to fix the plumbing in my bathroom sink last week. There is true comfort in this knowledge. It cannot be overestimated.

### **Cause Three: SEARCHING**

As we approach the end of the road, I believe there is a natural curiosity to understand from whence we came. There is a need to understand how we came to the place we are today. How we have become what we've become. How did all this happen, we ask?

I never planned on starting an arts school from scratch. I never planned on living in California. I never planned on turning into a writer. But, all those things happened.

How? I ask myself. How did I wind up here? Most of the time we are so busy frantically living our lives, just trying to keep up with all the demands, trying to keep our head above water, that we never take time to contemplate, to take stock, to breathe.

What was so magical about Paul's singing *Yesterday*?

What was so moving about Kirk Gibson's dramatic home run in the World Series?

The word "touchstone" comes to mind – the things we touch to reaffirm our reality, that we are truly here, we have truly been. These are seminal events in our lives that marked important moments. They touch us to our core. They help define who we are. We were there. We saw that. We were part of that moment. It really did happen. They didn't just define us, they defined our generation. They shaped our world.

I was a professional dancer most of my life. I recently went through a period in which I immersed myself in the biographies and videos of some of the great dancers and choreographers of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century – George Balanchine, Rudolf Nureyev, Baryshnikov, Edward Villella, Jerome Robbins. These are all people who I knew about and had a rudimentary understanding of their work and significance to the Dance world.

But, when I went back at age 67 and read and watched these great artists, I discovered I had a new, deeper appreciation of who they were and what they did. Somehow having the perspective of looking back on their lives and work after my career was over, enabled me to have a more profound respect and understanding of their accomplishments. My artistic ego didn't prejudice my vision. I was able to examine them with a certain detachment.

There is something to be gained from revisiting familiar people and events. We see them in a different light. We look at them with different eyes. After toiling our whole lives to accomplish what we did, it is easier for us to see how wonderful and amazing what other people have accomplished in their lives.

We are rediscovering ourselves. We are reconnecting with our roots. What could be more natural? After all, plants do it every day. As they sprout their leaves to collect the golden sunlight, they are constantly being replenished by their roots. Without them, they are nothing.

These people. These events. These moments are our existential roots. They sunk into the soil of our psyche and nourished us as we grew, matured, evolved. They helped create the flowers of our accomplishments.

Looking back I am reminded that I have been part of something larger.

I was there.

I am something.

I am the seed that is falling from the plant of my life to nourish the next generation.

I hope.

As a plant hopes.