

Don't let age keep you down

By Bill Shaw

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she becomes cynical or negative and sees no joy in living. Men are slow learners and late bloomers. We don't get the mortality "thing," or toss aside the male macho or invulnerability façade until our 40s. Then, we face a fork

I don't think I am old, despite my sagging belly, my lined and sagging face and the aches and pains that plague my body. I find great joy in life by writing, reading, running, swimming, cycling and participating in runs and triathlons despite my falling to the back of the pack. To finish a race is to celebrate life and age.

"I have measured out my life with coffee spoons" (51), says Prufrock. "I have seen the moment of my greatness flicker" (84). He has no one to blame but himself.

Don't be a Prufrock. Live the best life you can live as you grow old. In the words of Robert Browning's Rabbi Ben Ezra, "Grow old along with me! / The best is yet to be, / ... Youth shows but half; trust God: see all nor be afraid." (1-2, 6).

Always be ready for a new voyage no matter what your chronological age like Alfred, Lord Tennyson's Ulysses, one who was "Made weak by time and fate, but strong in will / To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield" (69-70).

As our American Memorial Day Holiday begins the season of celebration and vacation, get out there and frolic in the sun but be sure to use sunscreen.

Carpe diem!

Bill Shaw's running column appears in *The Facts* every other Monday.

I grow old ... I grow old ...
I shall wear the bottoms of my trousers rolled.
Shall I part my hair behind? Do I dare to eat a peach?
I shall wear white flannel trousers, and walk upon the beach.

I have heard the mermaids singing, each to each

I do not think that they will sing to me.

— T. S. Eliot

"The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" (120-125)

The speaker in Eliot's *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock* experiences a serious senior moment. The poem is a conversation between Prufrock and himself. "Love Song" is ironic: The pathetic Prufrock loves little about himself. He is old, his body shrunk so that he must roll his trousers, his hair so thin that he must cover a bald spot with what hair he has, his teeth or dentures too weak to take a bite out of a peach.

Prufrock has such low self-esteem he thinks the mermaids, those sea sirens who delighted in tempting mariners to a rocky death, consider he is too worthless and old to tempt. Prufrock whines about his wasted life and old age.

Old is a subjective perception determined by one's attitude. One gets old when he or

in the road of the journey of our lives. One road leads to a sedentary life and becoming old; the other to a life of physical activity and drinking life to the sweet or bitter dregs of the cup. I became a born-again runner in my early 40s, finished my first marathon at 48 and my first triathlon at 61.

Unfortunately, some fall victims to debilitating maladies and can't enjoy physical activity; they still can think young and celebrate the life they do have when the alternative is "shuffling off this mortal coil," however uncomfortable that coil might be. We all have friends who are old but young in heart, and mind and spirit.

In three days, I shall be 69, on the threshold of 70, three score and 10, what was once perceived as the full length of the life cycle.