

Advice to seniors: check blood pressure, don't think about Jays (24, 08, 13)

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When you get older, as in my case, circumstances, more than ever, can suddenly affect your best laid plans. Miriam and I were set to visit France and remain there for an entire month. We booked our flight and secured accommodations in Cannes on the French Riviera. Cannes ... visions of a young, coquettish Brigitte Bardot flooded my brain which is easily swamped with even a slight downpour, and soon, nubile Brigitte was accompanied by scores of topless bathing beauties, and where exactly did I leave my camera?



Shortly before leaving, I visited a walk-in clinic because (as detailed in an earlier column) my doctor for the past 45 years had reduced his workload to three days per week prior to his imminent retirement. So, the walk-in doctor takes my blood pressure, and perhaps I had been thinking too much about Cannes and Nice and St. Tropez and, of course, Brigitte Bardot, because my reading was off the charts. The kind doctor suggested that I return the next day, and I did, and the results were not encouraging.

Nor was my insurance company very encouraging either because, if I ventured to France and had a medical problem over there involving my heart, I was not covered. In fact, I had to wait three months to be covered even out of province, let alone out of country. Alas, the much anticipated trip to France was quickly cancelled.

Sadly, we were to travel with friends, the same two that we had travelled with a year earlier when we stayed in Portugal for a month. It was with heavy hearts that we explained what had happened, but they understood our predicament. They subsequently went and had a good time, but the weather was cool and rainy, so the bathing beauty component of my dream was not to be, even for them.

Insurance companies actually control the entire world. Soon after seeing a specialist and taking a stress test (which I passed), I was prescribed some meds but had a reaction to one drug, and guess what? Yup, the three month period applied to the new meds. Suffice to say, I am now on meds which have brought my blood pressure down to normal numbers, often even the perfect 120 over 80! Miriam and I have a machine inside our abode that we keep handy on our kitchen table, and this wonderful appliance provides accurate blood pressure readings seemingly at will.

I often say to Miriam, "Let's have some real fun tonight; let's take our blood pressure readings right after watching the Blue Jays." And whenever we have guests over, we ask them if they would like a free reading from this magnificent apparatus. I also keep a notebook on the table, and in this notebook I record my daily readings much like a navigator might plot the course of his vessel. One might peruse my blood pressure notebook and easily predict on which days I watched the Blue Jays.

In three months, one beneficial result (other than being alive) has evolved from this dreary situation. I can now wear most of my trousers that had languished in the closet, patiently waiting for me to drop a few pounds. In fact, I have dropped twenty. Have you ever lifted a twenty pound weight? Not so light, is it? Well, that was the extra baggage that I was about to transport to France!



We have now embraced a strict salt-free diet, try to eat fish three times per week, and avoid carbs associated with a decadent diet. I am also trying to exercise regularly. Both of my parents died of cardiovascular diseases at about my current age. This unfortunate genetic inheritance I am not so fond of, particularly when I realize that I am thus a likely

candidate for similar problems. Yes, parents are amazing; mine haunt me even when they are long gone.

The bottom line and my advice to fellow seniors – get to your neighborhood drugstore and use their free blood pressure machine to take a reading. Try to relax. Do not think about Brigitte Bardot or the Leafs or Jays.