



HONEST

When I turned 40, I celebrated. Yep, I thought (or at least I told everyone) that it was the best time of my life.

When I turned 50, my thoughts changed, though my verbal rhetoric didn't. I was still convincing the world (and myself) that I was accepting the onslaught of age with grace and dignity. My mind went along with the charade. My body didn't.

Crunch...crunch...crunch. The gravel on the road beneath my feet has an almost soothing sound with each step I take.

It is my first day at my 900th attempt to regain my fitness. Twenty years ago it was jogging, and I had succeeded in taking years off my physical form. But after a while I returned to my sloppy habits, and my body returned to its sloppy state. So every year since, many times a year, I begin again. I bound out the door with the energy I had as a younger man. But the program always seems to end almost as quickly as it starts and I must begin again...again.

Now, even though I tell myself I can still do what I used to do, my body just doesn't agree. A prime example is the garage I am build-

ing and have been building for the last 10 months. I make the excuse that I just don't have much time to spend on it. That may be true, but the real truth is that after hauling lumber around, pounding nails and climbing up and down a ladder for an hour or so, my limbs and joints are protesting and I need a rest.

Crunch.....crunch.....
...crunch. I have been walking now for nine minutes. My steps are slower and heavier. It must be the incline or maybe it's the heat. It has nothing to do with my age.

Miss America isn't getting older either. She was raised on a ranch and thought she could always do as much as anyone else, including any guy. Truth is she always could. She now walks up to two hours every day, then works in her yard hauling around rocks and dirt and mowing and planting and pruning and ordering me around. I don't know where she finds the time or energy even to fix my meals.

Crunch...drag,
crunch...drag, crunch...drag. Why can't I seem to pick my feet off the ground between steps? What's it been - 15 minutes? I'd better head back - don't want to overdo it.

She needed help to build a

rock garden and a strawberry patch and some garden boxes. Never too enthusiastic about her landscaping projects, I always end up joining her. We went up on the hill and gathered some moss rocks, brought them back and moved them around until they were just right. Then we hauled in topsoil and she did the planting while I went inside to...recover. I sat down in the recliner with a glass of ice water. Twenty minutes later I couldn't get out of the chair.

Crunch...drag...pant.

Crunch...drag...pant.

Crunch...drag...pant.

I'm not sure I can take another step. But the house is in sight and I think I can make it.

She is having a little trouble with her back. I keep telling her it's because she's doing too much hard work or she's lifting wrong. I say at our age we should begin to slow down. My back is fine and maybe she should do what I do...like I'm expecting her to embrace a life of sedentary-ism like me? She thinks it's just because she's not in as good shape or as skinny as she'd like to be. She'll probably now start walking three hours a day. But neither of us is getting any older.

Crunch...drag...GASP.

Crunch...drag...GASP.

Crunch...drag...GASP.

I made it! I'm home.

Twenty-nine minutes of high-level aerobic exercise. I see Miss America kneeling over her new rock garden. I square my shoulders, quell my ragged breathing and walk up briskly.

"How'd it go, honey?"
Thank goodness she doesn't look up.

"Great."

"How long did you go?"

"Uh...about 45 minutes."

"Good for you! How do you feel?"

"Never better. This is going to be great."

I wonder if lying to your wife is a sign you're getting older. Probably.

— Jack Hamblin



Jack Hamblin, manager of Southeast Electric Cooperative, based in Ekalaka, wrote this piece for his co-op column.