

# Grandparenting is nature's way of telling you you're old

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## Up Front/Commentary

There is a reason our bodies are programmed to have children early in our adult years.

It's because once you're over the half-century mark, hanging around little kids all day can kill you.

This is not to say that hanging around little kids, whether you're 25, 50 or 75, can't be the most delightful experience of a lifetime. It is indeed, as I have been reminded these past two weeks with my granddaughters, Miss Julia May and Miss Erin Kathryn, visiting at my house.

The minute I come home from my early-morning walk I am greeted by the thundering of little feet and the rush of a bouncy 2-year-old leaping into my arms, smothering me with kisses and cutting off the circulation to my brain with powerful hugs around my neck. People are generally not that excited to see me. It's enough to make you forget, at least for the moment, that the 2-year-old's leap dislocated your lower back, but, hey, what's a chiropractic bill compared to the love of a child?

Right there is the problem. It's not that I can't offer the same love and attention to my granddaughters that I did with my own three children when they were babes. I can still get down on the floor and color in coloring books; I can play the bucking horse to Julia's cowgirl; I can do the Easter bunny thing and hide the eggs or race around the park.

But once I'm down there on the floor it's harder than it used to be to get back up. I can hide the eggs, but if Julia can't find them all, I probably can't remember where I hid them, either. And in a foot race against that child, I'm just glad she's only 2. Another couple of years and she'll be leaving me in the dust.

My heart is still in it, but my body is not as springy as it was a quarter century ago.

Every time I read about some medical advance that enables women to conceive and bear children into their 50s and even 60s I want to say: Are you flippin' nuts? Yeah, sure, with a little practice I could probably walk naked on a circus tightrope, but that doesn't mean I would do it.

Like the song says, for everything there is a season. If you're old enough to have an AARP card, you're too danged old to be having children. And if you don't believe it, just hang around a 2-year-old for a couple of

weeks. I am overjoyed to spend my day making horse sounds and watching Julia dance and singing songs and playing in the dirt and talking about dinosaurs and dragons.

But at the end of the day when I crash like a mighty pine into my bed with barely enough energy left to pull the covers over me I thank the Lord she's got a loving mother who is still young enough to take over. Been there, done that and it was wonderful. But it's also wonderful to be able to pass the torch to the next generation, settle into an easy chair and have a beer.

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