

Is Brad Little ready for the new 40?

Chuck Malloy/Lewiston Tribune

Sixty is the new 40.

I've been telling myself that for almost five years, and for the most part I feel better than I did at 40 or 45. But I had rude reality check a few years ago when I tried my hand at senior slow-pitch softball. Sixty became the new 80 as I struggled to hit, run, field or throw. In baseball terms, my line score was: No runs, no hits, no skills. Since then, I have followed my wife's advice and stayed with golf, where I see a lot of bad bounces, but no bad hops hitting me in the face.

As I ponder the changes in my life at 64, I think about Lt. Gov. Brad Little, who turned 61 last month. That would be a good age if he were beginning his first term as governor, which probably would have happened if Gov. C.L. (Butch) Otter did not seek a third term. Now, Little has to wait another four years and will almost be eligible for Medicare when he gets his turn - assuming Otter doesn't change his mind and seek a fourth term.

It's logical to think that Little will seek election to governor, whenever that might be. One doesn't spend a decade as lieutenant governor without contemplating serving in the state's highest office. But it's not a sure thing. It depends on how he feels in 2018 and, maybe more importantly, how his wife, Teresa, feels.

"Teresa and I talk about it all the time," Little said. "It's a decision that will have to be made in the not-too-distant future."

I can't read their minds, but I do have some experience living into my 60s. People in their 60s can have dreams and goals, but it's not wise to make too many long-term plans. Nine years ago, my brother looked like the picture of good health at 62 and much younger than his age when he opted for early retirement. He was an old-looking 64 when colon cancer claimed his life two years later.

Living in my 60-something years has given me a different outlook on other things, such as career ambitions. A couple of years ago, I had an opportunity to go for a full-time editorial writing position - a job that I would have taken in a minute during my younger days. Trouble is, I didn't want the 50-60-hour weeks that it would have taken to do the job right. I was laid off from my part-time position with the paper a few months later, but I have no regrets.

At this stage of my life, bucket lists are more important than deadlines. I'd rather play more rounds of golf than write more editorials.

I don't know Little well, and his constitution might be different from mine. But I couldn't imagine throwing away these precious years of my life and throw myself into a pressure cooker, where 60 hours is considered a light week. I'd have no appetite for battling with fickle legislators or getting constantly hammered by editorial writers and opinion-makers in the state.

Being governor is hard work. Sen. Jim Risch, who served briefly as governor, found himself making 100 or more decisions a day. He has said that his life as a U.S. senator is far less stressful, even with his busy schedule. Little may be able to work smarter, not harder, which is something else that tends to come with age. But the demands of the job and the expectations for a first lady, are incredible. Is that what Brad and Teresa Little want?

Little, without question, would be one of the best-prepared people to serve as Idaho's governor. He has been at Otter's side for eight years, sitting in leadership meetings and playing a key role in high-level appointments. Idaho certainly would benefit from that experience.

But I wouldn't blame Little for ditching the political scene and taking his wife on a few long cruises. That's the kind of thing people do when they're in their 60s, and young enough to enjoy life.

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