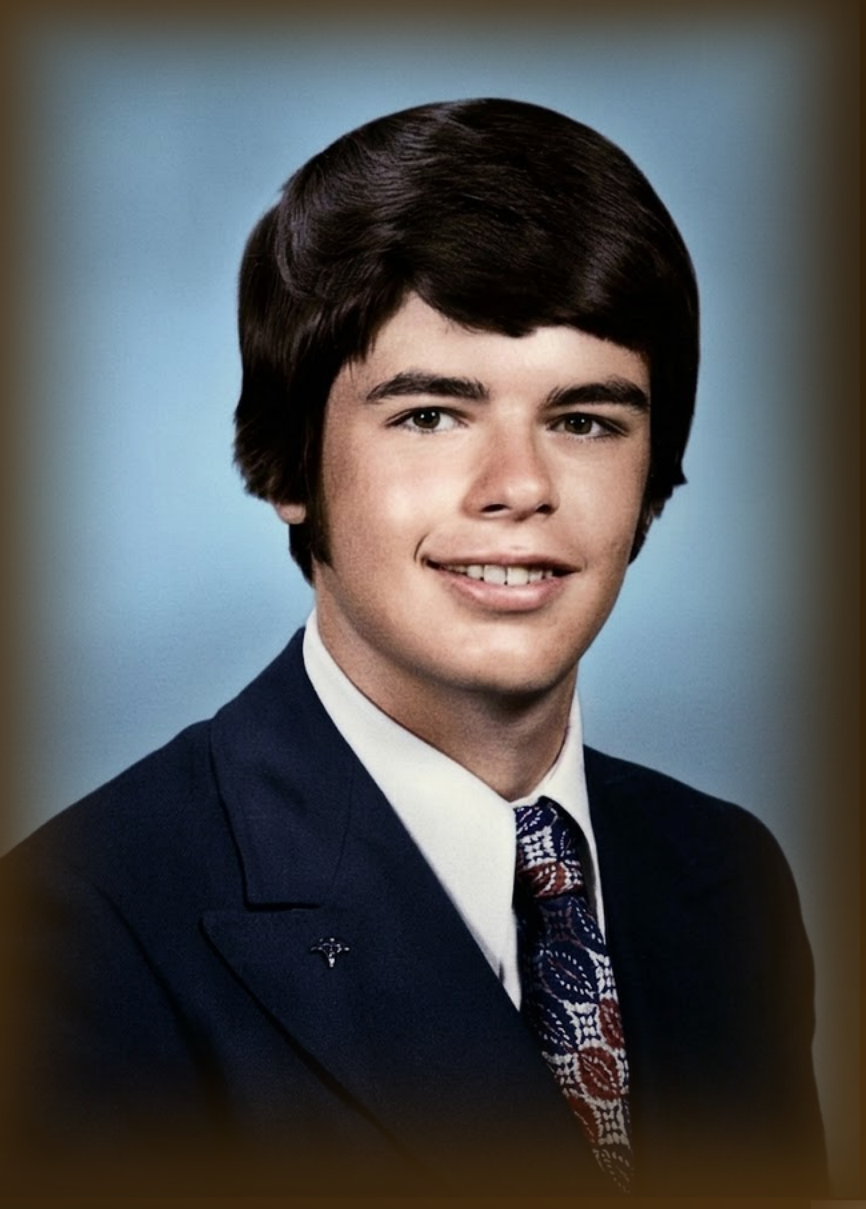


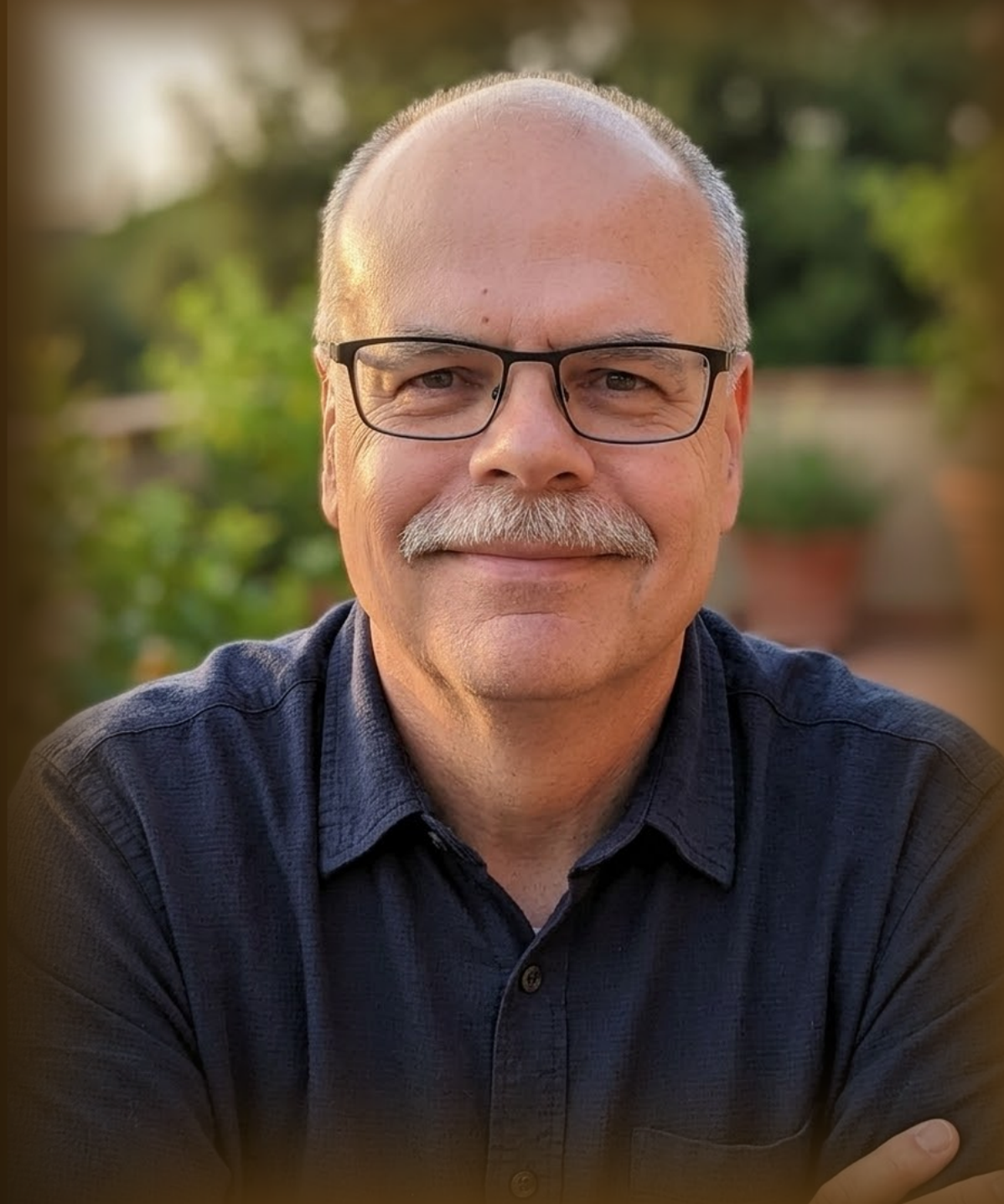
The Things We Don’t Talk About

Candid Essays on Aging, Cancer, and Independence

By

Tony Ventimiglio

TonyVent.com



TONY VENTIMIGLIO

PROFESSIONAL PODCAST BIO

Tony Ventimiglio is an author, writer, and longtime business leader whose work is shaped by more than four decades of professional experience and a lifetime of hard-earned lessons.

A Pittsburgh-area native, Tony spent 33 years in financial services, including senior leadership roles overseeing major mortgage and consumer-finance operations. He later spent nearly 15 years as an executive recruiter specializing in civil engineering and environmental services. In 2007, The Washington Post profiled him during its coverage of the mortgage-industry collapse, drawing on his firsthand experience inside one of the defining financial events of the era.

Tony's life outside business has carried its own share of difficult chapters, including divorce, career upheaval, starting over, and an ongoing battle with Stage 4 prostate cancer. In 2026, while undergoing radiation and treatment, he published two books: It's A Glorious Day: A Memoir in Reflections and Glorious Days on the Dirt Road: Reflections Along the Way.

His writing and podcast conversations focus on resilience, faith, family, leadership, adversity, and the lessons that come from living through difficult seasons. His style is candid, reflective, emotional, and often humorous. He does not present himself as a guru with a formula. He speaks from lived experience and shares what he has learned along the way.

Tony lives on California's Central Coast with his wife, Andrea, and continues to write, work, and speak about finding purpose, gratitude, humor, and hope even when the road gets rough.

Author • Writer • Business Leader

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HELPING OTHERS ★ ALWAYS LEARNING ★ ONE STEP AT A TIME

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Let's Take the Next Step Together

By Tony Ventimiglio

A few months ago, I turned 68 years old. The year before that, I was only 24.

If you're my age, you understand exactly what I'm talking about. If you're younger, well, someday you will.

It's amazing how quickly the years pass. One day you're a young man with your entire life ahead of you, and seemingly overnight you're wondering how you got to be the oldest guy in the room. Age has a way of sneaking up on us. So do the limitations that come with it.

Things that once seemed effortless require a little more planning. Our bodies don't always cooperate. Our energy isn't what it used to be. And sometimes our ambitions seem to be moving a whole lot faster than we are.

In my case, I've got another challenge. I'm fighting Stage 4 prostate cancer.

Cancer brings its own limitations. The treatments can be exhausting. I've been through radiation several times, along with other therapies that have taken a considerable toll on my strength and stamina. There are days when I simply can't do what I want to do. That's frustrating for someone who has spent a lifetime working, building businesses, and staying active.

But I've made a decision. **I'm not going to allow age or cancer to paint me into a corner.** I've got too much living left to do.

In fact, I've decided that I'm fighting for the world championship of survival against cancer. And I intend to win.

Now, that doesn't mean I can control everything that happens. I can't. I've learned that lesson the hard way. But I can control how I approach each day, what I do with the abilities I still have, and whether I continue moving forward.

And that's exactly what I've been doing.

During the past year, I started a new career. It's only part-time, but I can't begin to tell you how thankful I am for the opportunity. I get out of the house, interact with people, learn new things, and have a reason to look forward to each workday.

I've also started building several businesses. One involves writing and publishing. Another focuses on helping businesses grow their sales. I'm also developing a business offering promotional products.

At 68 years old!

And I've been doing all of this while fighting cancer, undergoing radiation, and dealing with the effects of treatments that sometimes make simply getting through the day a challenge.

Has it been easy? Not even close. Have I become frustrated? You bet. Have I occasionally wondered whether I've taken on more than I should? Absolutely.

But I keep moving forward.

Not every day is productive. Some days I need to rest. Other days I accomplish far less than I planned. I've had to accept that my body sometimes has a different agenda than my mind. I'm learning that slowing down doesn't mean giving up. Sometimes it simply means finding another way forward.

And I've discovered something else. Having something to look forward to is one of the greatest gifts we can give ourselves.

A new challenge. A new friendship. Something to learn. Something to build. Someone to help. A reason to get up tomorrow morning and see what the day brings.

I don't know how successful these new ventures will become. Of course, I hope they'll do well. But I'm already receiving something valuable from them: purpose. The opportunity to continue learning, growing, and contributing, and the satisfaction of knowing that neither my age nor my illness has taken away my desire to make something of the days ahead.

So now I've told you my story. But the rest of the story is yours.

Maybe you're approaching retirement and wondering what comes next. Perhaps you're dealing with a serious illness, a financial setback, or the loss of something that once gave your life meaning. Maybe you're simply feeling that your best days are behind you.

I understand those feelings. But I don't believe we should measure our future by the number of birthdays we've celebrated or the difficulties we've encountered.

We still have choices. We can learn something new, develop new friendships, find ways to help others, and pursue opportunities that once seemed beyond our reach. And we can do those things at our own pace, within our own abilities.

We don't have to accomplish something extraordinary every day. Some days, simply taking the next step is an accomplishment worth celebrating.

I've been blessed with 68 years of experiences. Some wonderful, some painful, and many that taught me lessons I couldn't have learned any other way. And I'm not finished learning. I'm certainly not finished living.

Neither are you.

Whatever your age, whatever challenges you're facing, don't allow them to determine the rest of your story. You may not be able to choose every circumstance in your life, but you can choose what you do next.

Make the most of the opportunities in front of you. Appreciate the people around you. Find something that gives you purpose. And never stop looking forward.

If I can do this, so can you. Let's take the next step together.

The rest of the story is yours to write. Make it a glorious one.

— Tony V

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I hope you'll find something that inspires you to keep moving forward, one step at a time.

Take the Next Step With Me

I'm Afraid That I Need Help

By Tony Ventimiglio

There are some things that are just plain embarrassing to talk about.

I've written quite a bit about my battle with metastatic prostate cancer. I've shared the fear, frustration, exhaustion, and even some of the victories along the way. When I began writing, I made a commitment to myself. I was going to be candid. I wasn't going to pretend that life was always wonderful or that I handled every challenge with courage and a smile.

Sometimes life is difficult. Sometimes it's downright humiliating. And sometimes the things that bother us most are the things we're least willing to discuss.

So here goes.

Cancer has taken quite a bit from me. Actually, much of the damage has come from the treatments intended to keep me alive. My strength isn't what it used to be. Fatigue has become an unwelcome companion. My muscles have gotten noticeably smaller, and my body certainly doesn't look the way it once did.

At 68, I suppose some of that was inevitable. But there's one particular problem that bothers me more than all the others.

I'm having trouble putting on my underpants.

There. I said it.

Something I've done every morning for more than six decades has become a challenge. Standing on one leg while putting the other through a leg opening isn't nearly as easy as it used to be. My balance isn't what it once was, and neither is my leg strength.

Then comes the other leg.

Now, I know what you're thinking. Why not sit down?

Well, I'll be damned if I'm going to put my bare ass on a chair just because I can't balance long enough to put on my underpants!

And there it is.

It's not really about the underwear. It's about independence. It's about recognizing that something I've taken for granted my entire life is becoming difficult. It's about wondering what might be next.

And perhaps most of all, it's about being afraid that someday I might need help doing things I've always done for myself.

That's a difficult admission for someone who has spent his life being independent, solving problems, and taking care of himself and others. In fact, it took me a while to even bring this up with my medical team. Not because I didn't understand the importance of addressing it, but because I was embarrassed.

There I was, a 68-year-old man who has faced cancer, radiation, and more medical appointments than I care to count, struggling to tell his doctors that he was having trouble putting on his underwear. Think about that for a moment. I've faced some pretty frightening things in my life, yet admitting that I was struggling with something so ordinary was difficult.

But I finally had that conversation, and I'm glad I did.

I suspect I'm not alone. Maybe you have trouble climbing stairs. Perhaps getting out of a chair takes more effort than it once did. Maybe you struggle to open a jar, carry groceries, or remember something that used to come to mind instantly.

Some limitations come with age. Others come from illness, injury, or circumstances beyond our control. And sometimes they're embarrassing. We don't want people to know we're struggling, and we certainly don't want anyone feeling sorry for us.

But here's something I've been thinking about.

There's nothing embarrassing about having limitations. The important question is what we're going to do about them.

For me, that means working to rebuild my leg strength and improve my balance. I may not be able to restore everything cancer and its treatments have taken from me, but I'm determined to do what I can with the abilities I still have.

And I have to recognize something else. There's a difference between giving up and accepting help.

If sitting down to get dressed keeps me from falling and hurting myself, perhaps that's a sensible decision rather than a defeat. I can accept that. What I won't accept is simply deciding that there's nothing I can do to improve.

So I'm going to work on my strength. I'm going to keep moving. I'm going to follow through on the things I need to do to improve, and I'm going to appreciate every bit of progress, however small.

Because the goal isn't really to stand on one leg while putting on my underpants. The goal is to remain as strong, healthy, active, and independent as possible for as long as possible.

And that's worth fighting for.

Now, I've shared something that I would have preferred to keep to myself. Maybe it made you smile. I hope so. I can certainly appreciate the humor in the situation. But I also hope it made you think.

What's something you're struggling with that you're embarrassed to admit?

Don't tell me. You don't owe anyone an explanation. But think about it.

Is there something you could do to improve the situation? Something you could practice? Someone you could ask for guidance? A small change that might make tomorrow a little easier than today?

Maybe your challenge isn't physical at all. Maybe it's loneliness, fear, financial trouble, or the uncertainty of what comes next. Whatever it is, don't allow embarrassment to keep you from addressing it.

We can't control everything that happens to us, but we can make decisions about what happens next.

I don't know whether I'll ever regain all the strength I've lost, but I'm going to keep trying. And if I need a little help along the way, perhaps I'll learn to accept that too.

If I can do this, so can you. Let's take the next step together.

— Tony V

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Real feedback from readers on my books

GOODREADS | Five Stars • July 8, 2026

“This book is a must read! It was quite emotional and I think I went through just as many emotions reading it as Tony must have went through writing it. ... He is an inspiration to all who know him!”

AMAZON | Five Stars • Steve • July 15, 2026

“This is an excellent read full of inspirational anecdotes from the author’s personal life experiences. Tony describes his battle with cancer and how faith in Christ, family, and sheer determination helps him not only endure but to thrive.”



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Tony C

“Tony grew up in a gritty suburb of Pittsburgh, PA ... this is a highly motivating read to get you through those tough spots in life!”

George Greever

“Tony shares real life obstacles from his life ... a reflection of his grit. I would recommend it for anyone who needs a push in difficult times.”

Paul

“Finding hope within life’s toughest battles ... Throughout it all, Tony doesn’t dwell on the negatives but focuses on the positives of his faith and family.”

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Speak to Somebody You Trust

By Tony Ventimiglio

Sometimes the hardest thing we can do is admit that something is wrong. Even when we know something is wrong, we're often too embarrassed to talk about it.

I recently wrote a story called *I'm Afraid That I Need Help*. It was probably one of the most personal things I've ever shared. But there's another story behind that story, and I think it's just as important.

I've been fighting metastatic prostate cancer for several years. The disease and the treatments have taken a toll. I've lost strength, and some everyday things have gotten harder. Some of those challenges are pretty embarrassing.

In that earlier story, I admitted I'm having trouble keeping my balance while putting on my underpants. There, I've said it again. For someone who's always been independent, that was difficult to admit, and it bothered me for a long time before I did anything about it.

Then I talked to somebody I trusted.

One of my closest friends and I got together for a drink. We've known each other long enough that I didn't worry about being judged or misunderstood. I told him what was happening, explained the weakness, and how much it bothered me to struggle with something so simple.

And you know what he did? He listened.

He didn't try to fix it, didn't offer advice, or convince me it would all be fine. He just sat quietly and let me talk. And that was exactly what I needed.

By the time our conversation ended, something had changed. My strength hadn't come back, my cancer hadn't disappeared, and nothing physical was different. But I was beginning to look at the problem differently. I'd finally said something out loud that I'd been reluctant to admit even to myself.

Sometimes getting it off your chest builds the courage you need.

Earlier that day, I'd read about a simple strength test for older adults: sitting in a straight-backed chair without arms, crossing your hands over your chest, then standing up and sitting down as many times as you can in thirty seconds.

For some people, that’s a straightforward measurement. For me, it felt like a challenge I wasn’t sure I could face. What if I couldn’t do it? What if it showed I’d lost more than I realized?

But after talking with my friend, I decided to try.

I pulled a chair over, sat down, crossed my arms over my chest, and stood up. One. I sat back down and stood again. Two. Then three, four, and five. I kept counting, concentrating on each repetition, until I reached ten.

Ten times.

I hadn’t timed myself, so there was nothing to compare, and I wasn’t even sure how strong the count was supposed to be. I stopped at ten, not because I absolutely couldn’t go on, but because I decided ten was enough for that moment.

It wasn’t a fitness score. It was me facing something I’d been avoiding.

That was the victory. Not the number, not the chair, not even that I might have done more. The victory was finding the courage to face it at all.

And I don’t think that would have happened if I hadn’t first talked with my friend.

Isn’t that interesting? He didn’t suggest the exercise or tell me to work harder. He just listened, and that was enough to help me start helping myself.

How many of us are carrying something we’re embarrassed to discuss? Maybe it’s physical. Maybe it’s money. Maybe it’s loneliness or fear or something that feels too heavy to explain.

We don’t want sympathy or judgment. So we keep it in, lose sleep over it, and allow it to grow into something even more troubling. Keeping it to ourselves doesn’t necessarily make us stronger. Sometimes it simply means we struggle alone.

There’s strength in having a difficult conversation.

Think about something you’ve been avoiding. You don’t have to tell me, but ask yourself: Is there someone you trust enough to talk with? Someone who will listen without judging?

If there is, consider having that conversation. It might be uncomfortable, and you might struggle to find the words, but don’t underestimate what it can accomplish.

Saying something out loud can be the first step toward doing something about it.

I’m not finished with my own challenge. I’m going to keep working on strength and balance, keep showing up, and see where it takes me. Because the next time I sit in that chair, I’ll know where I started and have an opportunity to see how far I’ve come.

Don’t let embarrassment keep you from confronting something that affects your life. Find someone you trust, get it off your chest, and then see what one step you can take to make things better.

If I can do this, so can you. Let’s take the next step together.

— Tony V

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Take the Next Step With Me

When the Road Gets Hard to See

By Tony Ventimiglio

There's something frightening about growing older that we don't talk about enough. It's the gradual loss of abilities we've taken for granted our entire lives. Sometimes it happens so slowly that we hardly notice. We make little adjustments, change our habits, and convince ourselves that everything is fine. Until one day, we realize it isn't. For me, one of those challenges has been my eyesight.

Over the past six years, my vision has gradually deteriorated because of cataracts. When I last had my eyes examined several years ago, I was told the cataracts weren't advanced enough for Medicare to cover surgery. So I went about my life, but things continued to change. Watching television became more difficult. Reading license plates and street signs became a challenge. Things that had once been perfectly clear were becoming increasingly difficult to distinguish. And then there was driving at night. That's where things became frightening.

Road markings that aren't freshly painted and bright can be extremely difficult to see. Street signs are harder to read, and approaching a dark intersection can be downright terrifying. Think about that for a moment. I've been driving for more than fifty years. I've driven across the country, traveled countless miles for business, and never given much thought to my ability to get behind the wheel and go wherever I wanted. Now, something as ordinary as driving home after dark has become a source of fear.

For a while, I managed. During daylight saving time, when the evenings were longer, I simply made sure I was home before dark. Problem solved. Or so I thought. But the days grew shorter. Darkness started arriving earlier. And when we returned to standard time, I suddenly found myself facing a problem I could no longer work around quite so easily. The world hadn't changed. My ability to see it had. And I didn't like that one bit.

There's another part of this story that has been weighing on my mind. I turn 69 next August, and my driver's license is due for renewal. I've been worried about the vision examination. What if I couldn't pass? What if something I've done almost every day of my adult life was suddenly no longer an option? For some people, losing the ability to drive might be an inconvenience. For me, it would represent something much bigger.

Another piece of my independence slipping away.

I've already experienced some of that through aging and my battle with cancer. The weakness, fatigue, and physical limitations have forced me to confront changes I never imagined I'd face. And now my eyesight. I'm fortunate that cataracts can often be treated successfully. I've recently been examined again, and this time surgery is appropriate. My first procedure is scheduled for February 2, with the second on February 9. I'm looking forward to it, not simply because I want to see better, although that certainly matters. I want to regain the confidence that comes from being able to do ordinary things without wondering whether I still can.

And I've learned something from this experience. Sometimes we adapt to a problem for so long that we begin accepting limitations we should be addressing. We tell ourselves it's just part of getting older. Maybe it is. But getting older doesn't mean we should simply surrender the things that make our lives enjoyable and independent. We need to recognize what's changing, acknowledge our fears, and explore what we can do about them.

I don't know exactly how much my vision will improve after surgery. I certainly hope it's substantial. But I'm glad I've taken this step. Because there's something I want you to remember. Growing older may change what we're capable of doing, but it doesn't have to change our determination to live as fully as possible. And sometimes, the first step toward a better future is admitting that something isn't quite right today.

— Tony V

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