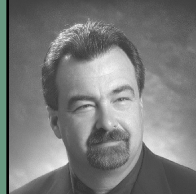


# Surveying 'Da Situation



By John D. Matonich, LS

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## Middle Age Quirks

**M**y kids are starting to give me some grief over my age. Actually, so is my bride, but she isn't too far behind me in age so she uses a little more discretion. It's not one thing in particular that gets them all going, it's the little things. If they catch me holding a piece of mail out a little farther in front of me I get the, "Isn't it time for glasses, Dad?" speech. Both of my kids have glasses, but even at my "advanced age" (according to them) I haven't needed them. I will admit the date box on my watch is a little harder to see, and maybe I do extend my arm out a bit farther these days when I read, but I think I still see pretty well.

Then there's my choice of clothes. Now, I haven't resorted to plaid pants with striped shirts, yet sometimes when I appear in a new shirt or tie my daughter just rolls her eyes. She gets

her sense of fashion critiquing from her mother. Ellen has spent more than 20 years trying to teach me how to dress. She used to gently coach me with questions like, "Your not wearing *that* to work are you?" My response was typically, "No, I have some extra time so I thought I'd throw on a few

different outfits to see if they fit." After a while, I would simply get "the look" and I knew I had to turn around and try again. I used to tell Ellen she

should get some of those "Garanimals" mix-n-match tags for my clothes and my life would be a lot simpler. She didn't think that was very funny, then again I'm not so sure she hasn't considered the suggestion.

The latest activity to trigger their "ageist" comments is my growing

**"...working on that puzzle together—it felt like we were all on the same team."**

interest in working the crossword puzzle in the newspaper. I've tried to keep this quiet, but I came home one evening and sat down in a quiet spot and began to go through the daily puzzle when my daughter saw me and began to question whether I was all right or not. She razzed me pretty good until I gave *her* "the look" and she exited stage left. I had the last laugh, though, when not long after that I got stuck on an answer and asked her help. Pretty soon the whole family was sitting around the kitchen table working on the puzzle and having fun.

Obviously, some of the activities we tend to associate with older folks are fun for younger folks as well. My family certainly enjoyed working on that puzzle together—it felt like we were all on the same team. I don't mind their good-natured teasing about my evolving habits, and I'll probably continue to do what I do, in spite of them. Who knows—there just might be a pair of plaid pants out there with my name on them . . .

And that's the situation as I survey it . . . *A*

