



EHS, Karen Hunter photos

The red brick home of Walter Gray, at 6 Church St., was purchased by the town and demolished to make way for a parking lot. Gray was Georgetown's 1978 Citizen of the Year, and a long-serving councillor of the town during the 1950s.

OPINION

I THINK THE EYES ARE THE FIRST TO GO ...

EMERGING TECHNOLOGY COULD HELP, WRITES TED BROWN



TED BROWN
Column

ing about aging, and Dad's saying.

And I've come to realize the eyes are the first to go!

I find myself taking an interest in new technologies that could possibly make our senior lives a bit better.

If I can find technology to make my life safer or more "fun," then I'm in.

I recently watched a story presented by CFTO news health reporter Pauline Chan regarding seniors and autonomous cars. A Toronto-based research project, sponsored by AGE-WELL - a national organization that focuses on new technologies to help our aging population - has been studying seniors' driving.

It's a given that as se-

niors age, night driving becomes intimidating. Be it rain, fog, or other adverse conditions - it's simply less fun.

The AGE-WELL-sponsored research utilizes a sophisticated driving simulator that duplicates various adverse driving scenarios, allowing researchers to see how senior drivers react to driving challenges.

I think it's a fabulous idea. If it makes life safer for all drivers and pedestrians out on the street - then it's a good thing.

There comes a point when every senior has to admit that it's time to hang up the car keys. It can be a daunting decision.

Not only is it giving up the joy of driving, it's also

giving up convenience and freedom.

Hopefully this research will help introduce seniors to technology like operating autonomous vehicles.

We already have vehicles that will automatically brake if approaching a stopped vehicle in traffic. And the people portrayed in the ads are usually young 30-something people - so there's no age stigma there.

The technology is obviously already in place to avoid a rear-ender, so developing a tool to help seniors safely get home after dark can't be that far away.

I love driving, but as I make my way to 70, I realize we all come to a point when technology could make our lives safer.

Of course, driving isn't the only challenge we se-

niors endure - but it is still about eyesight, and society.

Something as simple as reading the menu in a restaurant can be difficult for a senior.

I often joke that menus must have been designed by someone under 30, they're the only ones who could read it.

Many menus are designed with tiny, low contrast typeface - some in yellow earthy colours - and my senior eyes have difficulty reading it.

And I'm not unique. I'm reading that menu with 68-year-old eyes, and those eyes can't distinguish certain colours, like those of a 30-year-old.

So, if an entrepreneur is designing a menu for senior clientele, make sure it's black and white, not grey or light blue. Translation: Readable for old eyes.

Marketing firms make a science out of pairing de-

mographics with the product and seniors are no exception.

But some entrepreneurs might be missing the boat. Seniors are viable customers who are quite happy to spend money on dinner, they'll just do it more willingly if they can read the menu.

Getting back to the AGE-WELL seniors' driving study - I'm watching where this study might ultimately take us. I even considered signing up as a research volunteer, to see how I scored behind the wheel in a rain storm, fog, or icy conditions - the whole nine yards.

One problem there; I gotta drive to Toronto to take part.

And that might involve driving home in the dark ...

Ted Brown is a freelance journalist for the IFP. He can be contacted at tedbit@hotmail.com.

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