

I always thought I'd got my mum's hair. She has black curls, and so do I, and her hair has stayed jet black into her 70s. My dad's hair used to be bright ginger, but now it's white. I'm only 40, but it turns out I might have my dad's hair after all: grey hairs are starting to appear, as if I'm turning into a badger from the top down.

When I say, "Only 40," some of you will be thinking, "What do you mean, only?" When you are 5 or 10 or 15, even when you are 25, 40 seems old. But when you're 40, 40 is just now, the same way 25, 15, 10 or 5 were now before. Looking out from you, the world looks the same. Even though you know different things about it, your place in it is different and maybe the lenses on your glasses are a bit thicker, it's the same you looking out.

But it's not the looking out that's the issue. It's what people see when they're looking in. And what people are going to see soon when they look at me is a man with whitening hair.

To me, that says old, and I don't feel old.

A few days ago, on holiday in Vancouver, I got chatting to some people on a beach. Someone was throwing a skimmer ball around that bounced over the tops of the waves, like when you skim a flat stone over the water. Several of us joined in. There was one chap who was a lot older than me, and two who were younger. In my head, if you split us into two groups, there were three of us younger people and one old guy. But I realised the split they saw was down the middle, and I was an old guy too. It felt the same and the opposite of when you're 11 and you somehow get lumped with "the little kids" instead of the teenagers.

I'd already hired a Mustang convertible 5.0 GT to drive down the coast road a few days later, so the four of us arranged to meet up. When I was younger, I'd have said it's the sort of car an old guy would buy to make him feel younger, but I was just excited at the thought of driving a big American sports car along the Pacific.

As it turned out, the two young guys made their excuses and didn't show up. Maybe they decided they didn't want to spend the day with two old guys. So it was just me and the old guy. We picked up the car, and even though it was a cold morning, we put the hood down, though we did leave the windows up to begin with. We headed out of the city, along the curving coast road called the Sea to Sky Highway.

It's amazing how the view seems bigger from an open-topped car than it does if you're just standing in the open air. Mountains, islands, the sea, blue sky. A perfect day for a road trip. We kept stopping, to get out and admire the view, and to have an excuse to put the hood down and up again at the touch of a button. Then each time we pulled out onto a stretch of clear road, I was able to put my foot down and be thrown back by the acceleration. The noise of the engine was terrific.

One of the places we stopped at was Brandywine Falls. There's an optical illusion: you stare at the falls for a minute, and then when you look away, the other side of the canyon seems to be moving upwards. It's a bit like how the world spins the opposite way to a roundabout when you get off.

I let the old guy, John, drive for a while. He'd last driven a Mustang convertible when he was 16, just after he'd passed his test. He was very happy. All day, we were like two big kids.

But I'm still wondering whether or not to black my hair.