

Dr. Kellen Silverthorn is Just For Canadian Dentists' automotive writer. He tries to keep one convertible and/or one track-day car in the family fleet.



The Big One(s)

Planning milestone birthdays is getting more frequent...and elaborate

Miy social circle now features super-sizing any birthday celebration ending in zero or five. A neighbour had 70 costumed guests at his 70th birthday party. Our financial advisors had 65 friends at their 65th b-day-bash in Tuscany.

Growing up, I remember my 16th, 18th and 21st birthdays being special. Stepping stones to adulthood. Now, on the other side of adulthood, have Boomers made big X0 and Y5 birthdays indulgent—or have they always been, but I'd never peered behind the 49-and-older veil?

Still, osmosis multiplied by duration of exposure is a persuasive combination. I'm starting to warm to the idea of having extra special birthdays every five years. Our savvy travel agent now robo-sends custom planning offers for big-occasion birthdays. Both my wife and I have an X0 birthday upcoming in 2019. Official festivities planning is underway.

"Regular" birthdays have been birth-weeks in our household for eons. It seems extra special birthdays could now last a month, or even a whole season. Jeez, my wife's and my specialness mandates could even overlap—and then who would take out the garbage or make the bed?

I take some satisfaction in that I thought about her X0 birthday before I thought about mine...but then hers comes earlier in the year. My wife's favourite trip to date has been an African Safari. I'm guessing for her X0 birthday a trip to the Galapagos will win out over a Mekong River cruise, but what if she thinks this birthday's specialness augers for both trips in 2019?

Logically, I then thought about what specialness I'd want for my own X0 birthday. Confession: My immediate go-to thoughts were, "Would the planets align to see the Isle of Man motorcycle races and the Monaco Grand Prix on back-to-back May weekends?" Mr. Google tells me the planets are indeed aligning in 2019. Those are two

indulgent halo events I'd likely never attend without a "Big X0" mission egging me on.

As I mulled over my (okay, indulgent) first reaction, some ambivalence set in. For me both the Isle of Man and Monaco GP are spectator events; I'd be watching others doing what I would love to do. Being worldclass events in Europe they'd be crowded and expensive. Jet-lag of epic proportions would be another penance. Maybe my first reaction was misguided?

Should I instead opt for a ParticipAction-style Plan B? Surely I have bucket-list items I'd also likely never do without the halo of a X0 b-day specialness



mandate? Perhaps Mexico's Carrera Panamericana seven-day road race? Or is that event a bit too ambitious for me at the age of X0? What's the worst that could happen? Maybe I shouldn't answer that, but instead move onto a Plan C.

I'm also observing that my social circles now include gentlemen road racers who've managed to intrigue their adult children into the sport. Whether the racing bug ultimately bites them or not, how cool

would it be for my Big X0 birthday to have our two adult children share a second Targa New Zealand entry? That event is an annual addiction for me and 100+ Kiwi motorhead friends. I've even come to manage Kiwi jet-lag in both directions.

Of course I can visualize my accountant's reaction to any of this...that look where said accountant sits up taller, chin moves up and forward, forehead wrinkles and eyeballs bulge ever so slightly. Maybe you too know the accountant-scolding look? So I'll need to develop a more cost-conscious Plan D...more of a beer-and-brats approach.

NASCAR's Daytona 500 isn't really my thing, but it is an iconic Americana spectator event writ large that I've yet to attend, and February in Central Florida beats...well it beats anywhere in Canada in February. Still, it's (again) watching other people do what I'd rather be doing, and I have actually raced on the Daytona "roval" in CrapCans.

A ParticipAction Plan D on a beer budget could be more CrapCan racing too. I've wanted to check-off more East-of-the-Mississippi must-do tracks on my bucket list. In no particular order: Watkins Glen, Virginia International, Road Atlanta. I could just eek out that track list relying on Big X0 and Y5 birthdays alone, but I'd have to be the equivalent driver of septuagenarian Paul Newman by the time I finished.

Procrastination will be the enemy here. Spoiled by choice, damned by inaction.

Fortunately, I can rely on everyone else's X0 and Y5 birthdays between now and late 2019 to motivate me forward. That, and I'll forever regret (is forever that long once you hit X0?) if I let sloth carry the day.

So yes, I'm going to embrace this evolving cultural norm of my generation's super-sized X0 and Y5 birthdays. I'll let you know how mine works out. Now, tell me, what's your first-reaction answer for your next Big X0 or Y5 indulgent birthday mandate? ●