

Slouching toward oblivion

By Tim Hollenbach

Everyone knows that dinosaurs like Tyrannosaurus rex, the stegosaurus and the triceratops disappeared millions of years ago. Most likely, scientists believe from the available evidence, an asteroid stuck the earth and the dust from the resulting explosion blocked out the sun's light, killing most plant life and eventually leaving the dinosaurs nothing to eat.

Toward the end of their reign, scientists say, the dinosaurs became disoriented and could not adapt to the changing environment.

I know exactly how they felt.

As it turns out, not all dinosaurs are extinct. One type still walks the earth, and most everyone has seen them. They are men like me: the Middle-Aged Guyosaur.

Middle-Aged Guyosurs still can be spotted in their natural habitats, but you better hurry. We congregate in hardware stores, golf courses, barber shops (not to be confused with hair salons), bowling alleys and neighborhood taverns.

To the untrained eye, yes, we appear to be thriving. But the truth is, we guyosurs are disoriented and not adapting well to the changing environment, just like our ancient reptilian predecessors.

Tending to our personal hygiene has become a mystery. We don't exfoliate before we shave. We've never heard of a "loofah." We use soap, not "body wash." Hair grows out of our nose, back, ears and toes and falls off of our heads.

We seem to be able to communicate only with each other. Our cell phones still ring with the tone set at the factory. We don't know what words like "thang" and "cuz" and "skeet" and "shiznit" and "fitna" mean.

We don't text message or send pictures over the phone, and couldn't tell you what those little smiley faces mean when they show up in e-mails. Instant messaging abbreviations like "lol," "jk," "brb," "nzm," and "bbl" — base on balls? — are gibberish to us, and what exactly is instant messaging anyway?

We are having a hard time feeding ourselves. Whatever minimal kitchen skills we might have possessed at one time have long since atrophied. Our mates won't even consider cooking for us, and grilling steaks on a charcoal barbecue pit has become politically, medically and environmentally incorrect.

Speaking of which, you can't buy a cup of coffee and a cruller anymore; you buy a Starbucks and a scone, a word that comes from "stone." Scones are rough on old teeth.

Nor is the Middle-Aged Guyosaur capable of acquiring our basic needs in the public square. Shopping malls might as well be another planet to us, with sights, sounds and chain-store names that are bizarre, and if they're not bizarre, they're incomprehensible.

So you'll likely find us at Target searching for the underwear aisle. And shaking our heads at the checkout queues, waiting to pay cash while the teenager in front of us with the body art and pierced eyebrow uses his parents' charge card to buy damaged — *distressed* — jeans for \$75.

Middle-Aged Guyosurs still are plentiful; you might say our numbers actually are booming. We still go to work in the morning, and most times that person you have to see when you get in trouble is a guyosaur. And yet we seem outnumbered and outflanked, invisible to the real world unless a family member needs some cash or someone has to be bailed out of jail. Then our cell phone rings.

Middle-Aged Guyosurs are the creatures everyone loves to hate and point fingers at. Pre-historic dinosaurs had the cool names. We're usually called names like "jerk," "old man," "pops" or, my personal favorite, "old school."

In politics, at the movies, in restaurants and in polite society our opinions really don't count. We're tolerated, barely. For now.

Yes, like the fearsome reptiles, we once ruled the earth, but our time has come and gone. Our asteroid has hit. We're just hanging on until we're ground up into the dust of modern life.

Move over T-Rex. We're coming to join you.

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Did T-Rex
have a
mid-life
crisis,
too?

