

## The way I see it...

We all have views on certain things; someone is obviously going through a mid-life crisis here...

### You know you're getting old when.....

..... policemen start to look young. I turned 40 last year and have noticed some even more obvious and disturbing tell-tale signs of my increasing age.

- For the first time in my career I am old enough to be the father of some of the fire fighters on the watch, and even more worrying is the fact that they regard me as a father figure. The first time a recruit said that I was like a dad to him I was both pleased with the compliment but also a little concerned as he was 28 and actually looked older than me!
- The scantily clad females who are normally to be found around the city centre on weekend nights moving between clubs and the taxi rank are now more annoying than attractive. Do their parents know they're out this late, dressed like that and without a coat?
- The thought of a night out clubbing fills me with dread. The lure of a quiet pub and a nice meal is much more appealing.
- I'd rather be comfortable and warm than trendy and "cool".
- The last car I bought because of its safety features and not its performance.
- They don't write songs like they used to! Radio 1 play awful music but I found a great alternative recently called Radio 2. Apparently it's where all the old DJ's go for a few years before they get put out to grass.
- Policemen DO look young. I asked the last copper I saw at an RTA if his mum knew he was knocking off school. He thought I was joking!

The only question that remains is what to do about it. A mid-life crisis is always a favourite but I don't think I could carry off leather trousers and a peroxide hair do, it's just not me. Plastic surgery is out! I'm too mean to pay for it, too chicken to take the pain and just not vain enough to put myself through it.

That only leaves one option that I can think of.....accept the new status that my years now give me. Woolly cardigans and comfy shoes here I come!

Do you have an opinion you'd like to share or a view to express? Please send it to the editor. Articles will be printed anonymously if you wish.



## Then and Now...

### The Fire Brigade Axe

by Roger "Rip" Smith

The 'Then and Now' article in the October edition (Issue 3) of the Avon Fire & Rescue Magazine led me to reflect on the 'Then' year of 1964, and in particular the wearing of personal axes. "Then" axes were a prominent part of a Fireman's personal kit. They were worn around the waist in a pouch on a leather belt. As a new recruit posted to A3 Avonmouth, I noticed that some men's axes had very thin wooden handles when compared to my own brand new one. After several months I twigged that the thinnest axes belonged to the longest serving men. But this alone wasn't the reason for their thin axe handles.



The answer lay in a routine which took place on a Monday morning at 08.30 hours for the day watch, and 17.30 hours for the night watch. Then we had to parade in full fire fighting kit for an inspection by our Station Officer. One of

the requisites was the cleanliness and whiteness of the wooden axe handles. To ensure such a state, men could be seen scrubbing their axe handles with Vim scouring powder, and then bleaching them white with Chlorox. Thus, over a period of years wooden handles became thinner and thinner, almost to the point when you thought they might have snapped in half the next time they were used in anger!

This practice of cleaning the wooden handle and the metal head with emery cloth and oil eventually vanished as new equipment and methods of maintaining it evolved.

Among the more user friendly methods introduced was the use of varnish both on the axe handle and its head, as a method of preserving its readiness for action on the fire-ground. Therefore the axe handle 'thinning' process ceased, and with them the archaic ability to judge a man's service by the width (or lack) of his axe handle!

Roger Smith joined the Bristol Fire Brigade on the 3 January 1964, and retired on 4 October 1999 a day before his 55<sup>th</sup> birthday. Older members of the Brigade and most pensioners would remember him as 'Rip' Smith, but that's another story!

