



Feet grow weary with age, begging the question:

Is stunning shoes worth the wrath of two perfectly good feet?

For me and my friend, Harriet, Father Time seems to be marching at a quicker pace these days.

Harriet, who is about my age, checks in with me at least once a month and the talk invariably turns to the challenges we face daily as the years catch up with us. It used to be office gossip, but lately the conversation seems to always end up with us commiserating about aching feet.

Now retired, Harriet has happily hung up her fancy wardrobe and traded it in for



Generations

Peg DeMarco

some jeans, T-shirts and sneakers.

Even better, the important hair touch ups aren't quite as imperative as they once were and makeup seems to be lasting longer because these days it's not a

crime to go out without it.

I have to agree with her. I gave up coloring my hair

about a year ago and have a distinct feeling that Cover Girl's stock dipped slightly when I decided life was better without makeup.

And as one who would never leave the house without mascara, I can say with relief that the world does not stop when I forget to put it on.

It's terrific working from home these days, but it hasn't always been that way.

Taking my 60 years on earth and deducting 17, which was the age when I began working, the 43 years left over was

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strictly devoted to office work and a tailored wardrobe.

And it was only during the last few years did "dress down Friday's" come into play for me. It was super Friday in itself was a bonus, but the coveted day of the week became even more special when a pair of Dockers and soft leather loafers could be substituted for a dress, control top pantihose and pointy-toed, tight fitting two-inch heels.

In 1965, when I first began working after graduating from high school in New York,

women were not allowed to wear slacks in the office and dressing up five days a week was a drag.

In those days, women had no choice but to wear, of all things, a tight, merciless gir-dle and uncomfortable gartered stockings that you only see these days in lingerie stores for those who want to put a little spice in their relationships.

Convenient pantihose were not around like today in every size, color and style (think about how far we've come —

have you all seen Spanx?)

I didn't know this, but our own North Carolina has the distinction of inventing pantihose. In 1959, Glen Raven Mills introduced what they called "pant hose," which they advertised as "hose with an attached opaque nylon top, eliminating the need for multiple foundation garments." Way to go, Glen Raven.

There was skepticism, of course, but in 1965, about the time when I was first shimmy-

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DEMARCO: Unbeknownst to us, in the dark recesses

of our minds, our feet were talking to us

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ing into a girdle, Glen Raven Mills perfected its creation by developing a seamless pantyhose version that coincided with the introduction of the miniskirt.

The girdle found its way into the trash, but my feet have always been slaves to fashion — platforms, pointy-toed two-inch heels, a switch to a square or round toe, stacked heels that made one feel like a bun-less librarian, no heels a la Audrey Hepburn, the wedge, back to platforms, back to Audrey's look, and

then finally today zeroing in once again to two-inch, pointy-toed heels.

As the years passed, Harriet and I roamed free and carefree in our stilettos, arm and arm with life and all it had to offer.

However, unbeknownst to us, and in the dark recesses of our minds, our feet were talking to us. Did we subconsciously refuse to listen?

Imagine what the nagging was all about in the corner of our brain that signifies pain. It probably began with a whisper, something like, "Hey. Here's a corn for the tight shoes you stuck on us today."

In time, the nagging probably turned to demands, "Don't do this to us. Forget about fashion, cheap stores, flea markets and hand me downs! Give us a break!" And, finally, I imagine the nagging probably ended with a falsetto plea of, "You're killing us!"

But we were young, vain and confident that our feet would always be there to bail us out and carry us gloriously to retirement and an existence of fun filled days of doing absolutely nothing but drinking martinis, shopping and volunteering for every good cause in our neighbor-

hood.

Unfortunately, we were not aware during those formative years that it would ultimately become our feet that would rule our lives. Yes, the 10 digits we call toes and the ball, arch and heel of each foot all got together and decided the day of uncomfortable shoes was indeed a thing of the past and there was no way they were going to take it anymore.

As a result, these days, the exhilaration of a pair of new shoes has turned into an unpleasant, mediocre chore. What used to be the thrill of opening a shoebox and slip-

ping on a gorgeous pair of pumps has turned into the painful task of deciding on either Naturalizers or Hush Puppies. Those invitations I used to accept with gusto have turned into a call to the host with an inquiry about whether I can come with sneakers or not.

I tell all of you young gals this story because the new *Sex and the City* movie is coming out soon, and I know you will be enthralled with the heroines' Jimmy Choo's or Blahnik's five-inch heels. Sure, they'll look spectacular on the gals or in the box in front of

you neatly wrapped in thick tissue paper. But before you open your wallet and lay your plastic or cash on the counter, shake Carrie Bradshaw from your mind and think about me and Harriet if only for a second.

Is stunning shoes worth the wrath of two perfectly good feet? And, incidentally, I have it from a very good source that Sarah Jessica Parker has several pairs of slippers hidden on every movie set.

PEG DEMARCO is a local columnist for The News Herald. E-mail news@morganton.com.