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To: Hab Barton
Subject: My Graying Blind Spot



It's election year. We'll get more into it and other serious topics as it nears. For this month at least, let's discuss something else. It will start with a light hearted story, *but this month's topic might actually be more important than elections*. We know an election is coming and can thus prepare. What follows is about what we don't see coming... Or what we refuse to see coming.

How I fooled myself for months

A mundane event caused an odd phenomenon in my life recently. My wife bought new bathroom towels a few months ago. This caused a small but baffling mystery whenever I would shave. It has now been solved. The actual answer to the riddle was quite unfortunate, but it happens to everyone.

I shave about every five days. If you are older than me, you probably think that is not enough. If you are younger than me, [it doesn't matter what you think](#).

As stubble would grow in, fuzz from the new bathroom towels would get stuck on my "beard." I'd pluck it out. However, even weeks after the new bathroom towels had been in use, long after the new fuzziness had worn off, little specks still kept showing up in my stubble. I'd only see this stubborn fuzz in certain lighting. Try as I might, I could not remove these little light gray spots from my beard. After a minute or two of trying, I'd just leave it there. No one else seemed to notice.

This went on for weeks, months actually. It was a mystery I kept to myself. How could microscopic towel lint stay on my face that long and cause my beard hair to look light gray....

Then all of a sudden, on April 23, 2024, I realized what was actually happening. The truth mercilessly slapped me across the face. Maybe you already guessed it. Micro fuzzes from new towels were not mysteriously staying in my beard. The explanation was much more simple. *I was starting to get gray whiskers*. For months I'd been

looking at gray hairs. Instead of realizing what they were, I concocted a story in my head about new towels, strange lighting, immovable fuzz, and so on.

I held on to my realization silently for two days. I finally asked my wife to look closely and see if I actually did have gray whiskers. She leaned in real close, looked carefully, and said it all with a sympathetic smile.

I'm okay with it now, but it took a few days. This comes for us all. All of my friends of similar age had already started the graying process, well before me. I just figured if it happened to them in their late 30s, I'd start around 50.

The heart of all this is the following question I've gone back and asked myself:

- Hab, you are one of the smartest people you know. Did you really think, over all those weeks, that microscopic gray towel particles were stuck in your beard,
- OR did you really know deep down what was happening and you just avoided the truth?

My answer as I look back: *I truthfully do not know.*

Perhaps this is a perfect illustration of a blind spot. You don't know what you don't know. **You honestly cannot tell if you are fooling yourself or not.**

How often we fool ourselves, how large our blind spots loom is anyone's guess. It's probably much easier for you to see someone else's blind spot than your own.

How can we best deal with these things? My example was innocuous thankfully, but what about the times when a blind spot can really get us into trouble?

- Do you think you are spending at a certain level but really it's around 20% more?
- Do you really know where your Wills and Powers of Attorney are in the event of an emergency? Do these documents even exist for you?
- Are you truly prepared if the market were to drop 40%?
- Have you done routine bloodwork lately?
- If something happens to you, are family members prepared for what they might or might not inherit?
- Do you focus too much on minimizing tax in a single year instead of over a lifetime?

Those are just some examples of blind spots that quickly came to mind. In reality, no one could ever compile a list of all the potential blindness.

What is the best way to uncover and work through these? My obviously biased opinion would be to talk with an advisor focused on planning, not products. Really though, talking things through with anyone that is curious and asks questions is usually beneficial. Simply saying a thought or concern out loud in a conversation can add a new perspective.

It's true for all of us: we don't know what we don't know. We can turn on the news and find 15 things to worry about in less than 5 minutes. However, it's what we don't see coming that usually hurts us the most. A surprise is, by definition, something we could not have predicted.

It sounds corny and soft, but some of the best tactical planning comes out of a calm hour set aside to have a free flowing conversation. You don't know what clarity you might gain, what blind spots you might uncover. It's always better to discover an issue in that quiet, calm hour instead of waiting until that hidden problem loads up and punches you in the face.

Disappearing Investment Funds



Here is another potential blind spot / surprise for investors: mutual funds and ETFs shut down all the time.

Last year alone saw 224 ETFs shut down, the 2nd most in history just behind 2020. And 2023 was a great year for the market! It is a good reminder that even ETFs are not immune to failure.

Wes Crill, a writer even snarkier than me, recaps some recent notable closures: [Goodbye to these Investments](#)

Video of the Month: Silver Haired Daddy

Gene Autrey and Jimmy Long wrote the classic "That Silver Haired Daddy of Mine." Marty Robbins performs my favorite version.

I first heard of Robbins in the series finale of Breaking Bad and have been a fan since. My girls are not quite ready for Breaking Bad, but perhaps soon.

[Marty Robbins That Silver Haired Daddy Of Mine](#)



Summer's Arrival; Airport Greeting

Our girls have loads of energy. Perhaps I am to blame. Either way, we hope to wear them out often this summer by swimming as much as possible. We are off to a good start.

Also, I out of town for two nights recently. The greeting the girls gave me at the airport upon returning is a lifetime highlight.



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