

Retirement! Now What?

A career in school music teaching for many of us is a “calling,” which is a nice way of describing our dedication to the intense 24/7 schedules of classes, rehearsals, after-school activities, meetings, preps, arrangements, and performances. After embracing 35 years of directing/managing orchestras, choirs, string and band camps, musicals, and plays, and creating music, lessons, programs, enrichment media, curriculum, workshops, letters of recommendations, and the like, I finally “hung up my boots” in June, now welcoming with open arms the chance to experience the totally new lifestyle of *retirement!*

The reality is that retirement is one of the biggest transitions of your life, albeit one (hopefully) we are all likely to face. As a self-proclaimed “super-busy person,” I expect the “retirement passage” will be filled with ups and downs. However, so far (in my seventh week of “freedom”), being retired has been blissfully serene, with seemingly limited responsibility, no stress, and little day-to-day routine. I can get up when I want, go wherever I choose, and do whatever I feel like. For the first time since 1978 (when I entered the work force), my time is freed up for new personal, social, creative, intellectual, and family activities, with few restrictions (and lots of space) remaining in the planning of my weekly calendar.

Sydney Lagier (*US News and World Report* July 20, 2010) proposes seven secrets to a happy retirement:

1. Good health
2. A significant other (spouse)
3. A social network (friends)
4. Avoidance of heavy TV viewing
5. Intellectual curiosity (brain-stimulating hobbies)
6. Not being addicted to achievement (“The more you are defined by your job, the harder it will be to adjust to life without.”)
7. Enough money

In *Retire Happy – What You Can Do Now to Guarantee a Great Retirement (USA TODAY/Nolo Series)*, attorneys Ralph Warner and Richard Stim suggest that prior to retiring, you make a concerted effort to prepare for “life after work,” including:

- Cultivating interests outside work
- Leading a healthier lifestyle
- Revitalizing family relationships
- Spending more time with spouses
- Embracing spirituality or meditation
- Nurturing friendships and making new friends

To meet the emotional challenge of retirement, Dr. Robert P. Delmontagne forewarns several potential difficulties in his book *The Retiring Mind – How to Make the Psychological Transition to Retirement* (Fairview Imprints 2010):

“If one or more of the following characteristics describe you, you may be at risk for suffering unpleasant mood swings and depression after retirement:

- You work long hours and are successful in your career.
- You are highly focused and motivated.
- You enjoy competition and winning.
- You have an aggressive or assertive personality.
- You enjoy achieving challenging goals.
- You have few outside interests not connected with your work.”

Paul K. Fox
1564 Hastings Mill Road, Pittsburgh, PA 15241
(412) 854-3459 or (412) 596-7937
paulkfox.usc@gmail.com



Retirement! Now What?

Yikes! Sounds like the typical full-time music director, right?

I have to admit to a few moments wondering where I was going to find new intellectual stimulation, professional or personal development, and even feelings of “being needed.” Then, I came upon two great resources to help me “set my path” and look towards the future.

The Bucket Lists

If you have never viewed them, go to <http://www.bucketlist.net> or <http://bucketlist.org/how-it-works> and read about methods to define the things you want to do before you *kick the bucket* (ha, ha!):

1. Make a list of your life goals.
2. Bring joy to others by helping.
3. Live your dream and find joy in your life.
4. Give credit to those who have helped you.

My own “bucket list” includes the things I have not had time to pursue, such as photography, reading about World War II submarines and other naval engagements, rescuing a dog, and volunteering at a local hospital.

The Best Book on Retirement

By far, the greatest wisdom I found was in Ernie J. Zelinski’s humorous book *How to Retire Happy, Wild, and Free* (Ten Speed Press 2009). He offers solid advice (quoted segment from the back cover):

- Put money in proper perspective so that you don’t need a million dollars to retire.
- Generate purpose in your retirement life with meaningful creative pursuits.
- Follow your dreams instead of someone else’s.
- Take charge of your mental, physical, and spiritual health.
- Create and maintain great friends – a key ingredient for a great retirement.
- Above all, make your retirement years the best time of your life.

Retirement Allows You to Actively Pursue Your First Love – Music!

What inspired you to choose a career in music? Examine your “expressive roots.” Refocus on singing or playing your major instrument. When did you last participate as a member of a band, choir, or orchestra? Join a local community group. Play chamber music. Volunteer to coach a music ensemble. Offer to guest conduct a concert or festival. Learn a new instrument. Or, consider returning to musical composition. Have you finished writing or arranging your own “Mr. Holland’s Opus,” solo song or concerto, marching band arrangement, or drum line feature? If you enjoy music technology, have you studied how to use the new software or apps available to your computers or other devices?

Service to Others

Ben Holste, PMEA Retired Members Coordinator, has written numerous ways you can contribute to PMEA and to the profession. I bow to Ben’s experience, and wholeheartedly agree and plan to explore many of his ideas. Survey the numerous opportunities to participate in future state and local conferences and workshops (retirees receive waived or discounted-rate registration fees), serve as the presiding chair for a session or two and/or member of the planning committees, help in teacher mentoring programs, judge adjudication festivals or parades, piano accompany community groups or music festivals, or volunteer your music teaching skills.

The skies are the limit! Now, go out and *realize your dreams!*

