

VOLUME 6

ARTICLE 1

2023-04-19

Retirement Stories

Kris Bettin (ed), Gene Allen, Pauline Boss, Lynda Ellis, Mary Knatterud, Toby Oberg, Jo Prouty, Clifton Ware

Neuroscience, betti002@umn.edu
University of Minnesota

Recommended Citation: Bettin, K., Allen, G., Boss, P., Ellis, L., Knatterud, M., Oberg, T., Prouty, J. and Ware, C. (2023). "Retirement Stories." *Journal of Opinions, Ideas & Essays*. Vol. 6, Article 1.

The *Journal of Opinions, Ideas & Essays (JOIE)* is published by the University of Minnesota Retirees Association (UMRA). Authors retain ownership of their articles.

Submissions will be accepted from any member of the University of Minnesota community. Access will be free and open to all by visiting <https://hdl.handle.net/11299/148010>



About this Anthology
Kris Bettin, Editor-in-chief

Many of us enjoy hearing the stories of others. With that thought in mind, we invited UMRA members to share their stories of personal experiences during retirement via a short essay. We received a number of interesting and diverse stories that we have combined into this anthology.

We wish to thank the authors for their thoughtful contributions to this collection:

Gene Allen, My Retirement Story

Pauline Boss, Ambiguous Loss

Lynda Ellis, Have You Tried New Activities During Retirement?

Anonymous, Retirement

Mary Knatterud, When Every Weekday Suddenly Became a Snow Day

Toby Oberg, My Transition to Retirement

Jo Prouty, Metamorphosis

Clifton Ware, My Life in Retirement

The JOIE editorial committee: Kris Bettin, Lynda Ellis, Edward Griffin, Jan Hogan-Schiltgen, Mary Knatterud

My Retirement Story

C. Eugene 'Gene' Allen

I retired 14 years ago, at the age of 70, and have had a fun, busy and fulfilling retirement with my spouse, Connie, family and numerous friends. To assist my transition into retirement, I intentionally distanced myself from most University business and issues. This was very helpful. Connie and I also decided to give priority to domestic rather than international travel that was important in my last role in international programs. In 2020, the COVID outbreak ended my 17 years of higher education workshop lectures for Chinese university groups that came to campus. These were fun and did not require a lot of my time.

The following are the kinds of things I have done during retirement:

- Completing two major projects was quite time consuming. The biggest project was writing my 340-page memoir, "Unexpected Adventures-Farm Kid to Professor." It developed over ~7 years, starting with research on some family genealogy, and the geological and human history of my south central Idaho home area (Burley). I enjoyed the research and reading necessary to write these two historical chapters. These were followed by eight chapters with many pictures and stories about my childhood, youth, education and career, and a final chapter on "Lessons Learned." It was a pleasure to work with our granddaughter as editor; I learned a lot from her as a Missouri documentary journalism major.
- My second big project was a 450-page Time Capsule (TC) about my 1957 Burley (ID) high school class. It is a historical account of the majority of the 164 classmates through life summaries, reunion bulletins, obituaries, many pictures from grades 1-12, the transitions and trivia we experienced since our births in 1938-40, and the settlement and school histories of Burley. It was completed in the Fall of 2022 and made available to 71 living classmates. Open copies were presented to Burley High School and the city library, and a sealed copy with a challenge is in the school vault for the 2032 Class to open. I gave leadership to this time-consuming project and did the majority of the original writing, but my classmate, Newell Dayley, was a critical partner. He is a talented musician and emeritus Brigham Young University dean and vice president. The high school principal believes the insights into this class' diverse careers and interesting life experiences will be useful to students and counselors in career guidance. After looking back on our lives and careers, we concluded that, at graduation, we were largely clueless about what was ahead in our life journeys! So, our advice to seniors is that "the world is going to take you on a whirl you cannot begin to imagine!"

Alongside these two major projects, I pursued my hobbies of golf, reading, photography, and some travel. In addition, Connie and I continue to enjoy a variety of special times with our family and friends. The following are examples:

- Golf is my favorite hobby because it is outdoors, is always a mental and physical challenge, it takes you to some beautiful places, and is typically enjoyed with good friends or family. For decades, Connie and I have played together as well as with our own groups in many states and in a number of other countries. One of our golf traditions, with three other couples, continued into retirement over 42 years in northern MN and WI! Last year, I was delighted to achieve my goal of shooting my age of 83 after being close many times!
- Upon retiring, Connie and I took our four grandchildren on trips to Idaho and then northern MN before they finished high school. During the Idaho trip, we visited our hometowns, farms where we grew up, our summer camps, hunting and fishing areas, and some of Idaho's beautiful mountains, lakes, rivers, and hiking trails. Our two surprises were seeing a wild wolf up close and having a flat tire in a remote mountain area with no jack! A few years later, during our northern MN trip, we visited many of the popular tourist sites north of Duluth, stayed in cabins, hiked and enjoyed lake country. These were memorable times to be together and getting to know each other better, while experiencing nature's beauty. They fondly remember these trips with us!
- A couple of years ago, we joined UMRA and I affiliated with the Photo Club and the Armchair Traveler groups. As an amateur photographer, I have really enjoyed these groups. I should have joined these groups sooner, but I was concerned that there would be more discussion about University issues than I cared about. Thankfully for me, the University is seldom a topic of discussion in these groups.
- Our major domestic travels have included: many wine trips to WA, CA and OR, visits to each of Utah's five National Parks plus AZ's Monument Valley, and weeks each winter filled with activities in either Hawaii or Tucson. During retirement, we have also visited many cities, golf resorts, museums, libraries, and memorials in the US.
- Internationally, we had beautiful cruises to Alaska (via Vancouver), the Greek Isles, and a special tour in Turkey. I went to Tanzania on the "Whole Village Project," was in China to give lectures and receive an Honorary Professorship, and represented the University in Morocco during a celebration of the very successful 25-year UM-USAID Project completed in 1995. Each lasted 1-2 weeks.

Conclusions:

I had an exciting career of 43 years and after an easy transition, am enjoying a fulfilling retirement. I have no regrets about not going to a University office and suspect that such slows or keeps some people from making the transition. Retirements dominated by previous work and little or nothing new to do can be very problematic. More emphasis needs to be given to planning for retirement beyond financial aspects. UMRA groups and programs can be very helpful, but some who could greatly benefit are missing. Largely empty retirements are sad to see when they could be much more fulfilling!

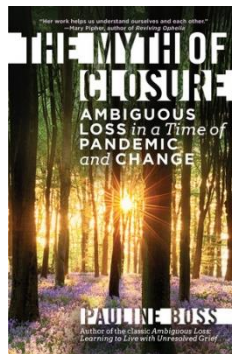
About the Author

C. Eugene 'Gene' Allen is emeritus dean and Morse-Amoco Distinguished Professor of the College of Food, Agricultural and Natural Resource Sciences. Gene had a dream career of 43 years at the U of M. He served as professor, dean, VP, provost, and lastly, as Associate VP for International Programs. His proudest achievements include teaching 3,600 students, his national leadership roles, his two national research awards and the outstanding University hires he made. In 2020, he published his memoir, [*Unexpected Adventures—Farm Kid to Professor*](#), summarizing his life and career.

Ambiguous Loss

Pauline Boss

No time for an essay, but let me say that I am busier than ever training therapists around the world about ambiguous losses. They are everywhere—war, earthquakes, loss of home, disappeared loved one, migrants lost at sea, and pandemic loss, too. Retirement has been busier than ever and I am 88! While my recent book was titled [*The Myth of Closure: Ambiguous Loss in a Time of Pandemic and Change*](#), I am going to close this work down as of June 30, and do a lot of traveling. It is time.



About the Author

Pauline Boss, professor emerita of the Department of Family Social Science, was named by Next Avenue, part of the PBS system, as one of its 2021 “Influencers in Aging: Twelve innovators driving change in how Americans approach getting older.” Boss is renowned as the pioneer researcher, educator, and theorist of ambiguous loss, a concept she named in the 1970s to define the trauma of loss without physical or psychological resolution (see <https://news.cehd.umn.edu/pauline-boss-named-a-2021influencer-in-aging-by-next-avenue/>).

Have you tried new activities during retirement?

Lynda Ellis

I retired from my job at the University of Minnesota in 2016, first transitioning to partial retirement. As I was decreasing my work, I wondered what to take up in the remaining time and expand into my full retirement. I became a master gardener (MG)!

First, I found out that applications were available in September, and due October 1. I applied, then went to an interview. While they wanted to find out about me, I wanted to find out about them. In the state of Minnesota, MGs are mostly organized in county.

I live in Anoka County. When I was accepted into the Anoka MGs, I met with the other new applicants. Each applicant mentioned the city they lived in, and I found another person in my city. We ended up carpooling to MG classes and are friends to this day. The classes teach a wide range of horticultural topics. Presently, they are offered at the Landscape Arboretum or online, starting in January and ending in March.

The first year, a new MG is called an Intern. An intern must do activities with a more experienced certified MG (CMG). Activities include things like talking about gardening topics to groups, attending monthly meetings, small group work, maintaining MG public gardens and writing gardening articles. During my first year, I tried to do all the activities that were presented to me, even some that I thought I would not like. I found some that were really interesting to me. I liked talking to groups and writing articles. I liked attending monthly meetings, and I really liked the MGs I became friends with. I worked for approximately 200 hours during that year. At the end of my first year, I was selected as "Rookie of the Year."

The next year, I was a CMG, no longer had to have another CMG work with me, and I could support Interns. Some signups for activities would have slots for CMGs and Interns. I did not work as much as I did when I was an Intern, since I was not interested in some of the activities. Here is a description of one activity. I volunteered to serve as a CMG for the Columbia Heights Centennial. There was one Intern slot. I contacted the Intern and we discussed how we would handle the event. Since we did not live close together, we agreed to drive to the location separately. I told her to look for an organizer, and ask where the MG booth was. As happens sometimes, it did not go as planned. First, the organizers had not given MGs a booth! (Centennials do not happen very often.) There were a lot of people there. So, I wheeled my booth materials cart to a shady spot, sat there, and thought about what to do. I had things to hand out (which would normally be put on the booth table). I grabbed a handful and wandered around the crowd with my MG T-shirt on. I gave away as many as I could, and looked for my Intern. When I gave away all of them, I got some more and repeated. They had food trucks, and I bought lunch. A side booth had free birthday cake pieces and I got one of those too. I sat down at a picnic bench and talked to a young man

who was sitting by me. He was interested in becoming an MG. He lived in Hennepin County and could not become an Anoka MG. Also, he worked during the day and could only volunteer evenings and weekends. I gave him information and told him he could be a fine MG and he would have to contact the Hennepin MGs. If he had come by a booth, I would have been able to give him a brochure about becoming an MG. No, I never learned if he became an MG. I never met my Intern at that event, but she had also found a shady spot, and sat with her T-shirt on, and answered questions.

My second and subsequent years ended with the closing MG dinner. Each year, I met and worked with old friends and made some new ones. I participated in the activities I had previously enjoyed and sometimes tried out a new one.

Should you become a Master Gardener? Maybe, but there are many other things to do. Perhaps become a Master Naturalist. Or learn to train your dog as a Therapy Dog and, after both of you pass a Therapy Dog test, volunteer at health care facilities, schools, or libraries. Let your own interests lead you.

About the Author

Lynda Ellis, professor emerita, Department of Laboratory Medicine and Pathology, in partnership with biochemist Larry Wackett, was co-director of the University of Minnesota Biocatalysis/Biodegradation Database, an innovative, internet-based microbial biotechnology database. Her work centered on developing bioinformatics tools that support the work of life sciences colleagues. Her research focused on bioinformatics and computational biology. She has been an active member of the Anoka County Master Gardener Volunteer Program since 2014.

Retirement
Anonymous

I suppose I could tell you that we finally decided to hire a house cleaner once per month, two years after my spouse retired and when we actually have more time for house cleaning—but even less interest in doing it. But that might not make a very revealing or interesting story.



About the Author

Anonymous wishes to remain, well.....anonymous.

When Every Weekday Suddenly Became a Snow Day

Mary E. Knatterud

A dear friend who retired before I did, once merrily declared that every day for her is now a Saturday. I admire her mindset. But since Saturday can be synonymous with endless chores, I prefer this mantra: every weekday for me is now a snow day. Growing up in wintry, windy northwest Minnesota, I will never forget the surge of unexpected elation and unlooked-for freedom in the delicious wake of the radio announcement of yet another snow day, even though I really loved school.

That childhood sense of elation and freedom took a lot longer to feel when I transitioned from a workplace I adored to...hmm, wait, what now exactly?

My first not-quite-full-year of no longer working full-time was bookended by my last salaried paycheck (mid-May 2019) and the start of the surreal COVID lockdown (mid-March 2020): those Big Ten months, post-retirement but pre-pandemic, teemed with my painstaking efforts to build a brand-new weekday life for myself. My husband's own retirement was at least several years in the future; my three grown kids had flown from the nest years before, busy making their own adult lives soar. So, I was truly, quietly, eerily on my own, every single Monday through Friday. I vowed to retain as much autonomy, intellectual creativity, and social interaction as I could: the trinity of what I had cherished throughout my long, long-savored academic career.

Autonomy was easy, basically all I had!

That left intellectual creativity and social interaction, both of which I knew to be essential for my very survival. I continued to do sporadic research, writing, and editing projects for a select few of my longtime surgery colleagues, as well as for my local and national medical writers association—whether pro bono or for occasional honoraria (and once, for a box of gourmet pears!). I continued to ad lib the history-rich welcome speech, one afternoon a week, to riders eager to mount the exquisite 1914 State Fair carousel at its current home in nearby Como Park. I continued to meet my least tied-down non-work friends and my favorite former colleagues for coffee, meals, and walks. On weekends, and during my husband's allotted vacation time, I continued to travel, widely and wondrously, with him and often my kids as well.

But throughout those first 40+ weeks of retirement, the overwhelming majority of weekdays were mine, and mine alone, to somehow fill with fresh purpose.

My calendar, however, was bare. I missed attending Grand Rounds presentations; I missed attending faculty/staff meetings. I missed the scholarly manuscripts and other professional challenges that had pleasantly clogged 40+ hours a week for 40+ years.

My home office was also bare. It kept triggering wistful sadness, so I quickly learned to shut that door. I didn't want to continually see where my departmental computer, my once-churning printer, and my well-thumbed reference books—all issued to me by the University of Minnesota, all now turned back in by me—used to be. (I had always worked most of my hours from home, decades before the coronavirus made such win-win arrangements common.)

Novels initially came to my rescue: stacks and beckoning stacks of them, from centuries-old classics to modern bestsellers. Having read for a living, I had never enjoyed sufficient time, or sufficiently rested eyes, to devour every book and magazine I wanted to. Now I did.

Still, even with the most mesmerizing pages in my hands, I couldn't sit still *all day, every day*. Two additional volunteer gigs became my passion. First and foremost, my niece gave birth to a son who became my joyously frequent babysitting charge, at their Minneapolis condo and in my St. Paul home and yard. She and I marveled at the serendipitous, meant-to-be timing of the end of my career and the end of her pregnancy.

Second, I reached out to my own sons' old elementary school and signed up to be a reading buddy to a precocious third-grader; I relished the walks to and from her classroom almost as much as I relished getting to know her.

And then the pandemic hit.

The reading buddy program, indeed the entire school, abruptly shut down. The carousel horses cantered to a dead stop. My tiny great-nephew sheltered in place with his now-working-from-home parents.

Nearing the end of that first year of retirement, I watched aghast as normal routines crashed to an end for the entire planet. I reeled in horror at the tragic loss of life, at the isolation of almost everyone.

But for those of us lucky enough to stay healthy, medically and economically, workarounds popped into place. For me, they took the form of informal outdoor get-togethers with my reading buddy, regular playdates in a city park with my great-nephew and niece, and a host of electronic fixes (WhatsApp and FaceTime chats; marathon phone calls and Netflix binges; Zoom delivery of my Tai Chi and French classes, of my book clubs and poetry group, of one-on-one conversations and larger church circles, *ad infinitum*).

Perhaps most transformatively, my husband and I at last stopped merely salivating over L.L. Bean catalog photos of kayaks and actually bought one for each of us: a pandemic-tailored gift to ourselves that we have safely paddled, and serenely fished from, ever since.

In the midst of the late February 2023 storm that gave much of Minnesota several snow days, I showed a draft of this essay to my also-now-retired husband—who, unlike me, did *not* major in English. He smilingly noted that *his* version of *his* “retirement story” would be much shorter than mine, in fact just eight words long: “Went fishing with my wife. Never looked back.”

About the Author

Now an independent writer-editor, Mary E. Knatterud spent most of her full-time career as an editor and associate professor in the University of Minnesota Department of Surgery. She is a recipient of the Golden Apple Award from the American Medical Writers Association and author of the book, *First Do No Harm: Empathy and the Writing of Medical Journal Articles* (2002, Routledge, New York and London).

My Transition to Retirement

Toby Oberg

My transition to retirement was nothing like I expected. My husband I had planned to retire to southern Spain in 2020. Instead, came the pandemic that changed everything.

I was in the group of University of Minnesota employees that took advantage of the retirement incentive offered during the pandemic to save the University money. At the time, I had a very stressful job and had been looking for another opportunity when the retirement incentive came along. The stress from my position at the time was wreaking havoc on my body. I have physical issues and I need a chair that doesn't hurt my back and a keyboard tray to prevent a return of my shoulder issues. Stress also brings on migraines.

I was so excited about the incentive and worked on the numbers to see if it would work for me. I showed my worksheet to my financial advisor and my sister, and both said it would be a workable solution.

I was on the younger side of the qualifications for the incentive, and I was too young to receive Social Security. My plan was to work a part time job until I could retire fully when I was 62. My hope was to find a relatively simple position with low stress that would not exacerbate my physical issues. I did find a part time job rather easily and I was able to work remotely in my home office, which was already set up ergonomically. I began this part time job in September 2020.

I didn't anticipate that my part time job would also be taxing. While I was able to move on from my stressful University job, the stress from my part time job exacerbated my shoulder issues and my migraines returned.

About a year later I learned that the person who had taken my previous position at the University was moving on. My wheels began to spin, thinking that this could be my way out of the current stressful job. It was bad timing for my old department for budget purposes and since I had done that budget four times, I knew I would be a shoo-in to return and create the budget one more time. I contacted my old boss and said, "Have I got a deal for you!" She agreed to hire me on a temporary basis, and I returned to my old department in early 2022. I borrowed a laptop, and I was able to work remotely my last several months stress-free.

And then the rest of 2022 happened.

The year 2022 was exciting and excruciating all at the same time. Exciting because I could finally fully retire. Exciting because we took a trip to Washington, D.C. to celebrate both my

birthday and my retirement. Exciting because I could finally stop working and causing my body pain.

Excruciating because of the various financial events that occurred that year. For one, both my husband and I managed to max out our dental coverage. Him, because he needed a dental implant, so we took money out of our retirement funds. Me, because I replaced a crown and a week later, I needed an emergency root canal. Excruciating pain!!

2022 was the year that the gift from the University ran out. It was also the year of a lot of market downturns. These were so bad that when I approached our financial advisor to obtain another distribution from our retirement funds to cover my health insurance, I was told that our retirement plan was not sustainable. Since I was still too young for Medicare, we needed a new plan.

We cut many expenses, trimmed down our typical Christmas spending and, as of early 2023, we've managed to not tap into our retirement funds. And I began looking for another part time job.

In June 2022, the woman that worked for me for 4.5 years in my old department found another opportunity. My old boss contacted me to see if I would help them until the replacement was found. It was easy money. Plus, how could I refuse after she rescued me from my previous stressful part time job? I borrowed the same laptop and worked about 5-10 hours a month until the new employee started in October. I trained her on the duties she was picking up and left again at the end of October. I casually mentioned to my boss that if the market didn't pick up soon, I'd be looking for another part time job and he said "Well don't look too far! I could use your help with the budget."

And so, I went back for the third time, in early 2023, to help him with the budget. It looks like this was the part time job I was meant to have at this time. At this writing, I'm still there and plan to be done again at the end of March 2023.

In the "interesting how things work out" department, we got a surprise inheritance in February 2023 which enables me to not work until I qualify for Medicare. Whew! A huge burden lifted at just the right time. While we are sad that our loved one is no longer here, it's amazing how things work out.

I will finish up my third temporary assignment with my old department and this time I will be done. No more worrying about where the money will come from. And when I do qualify for Medicare, we'll be in even better financial shape. Southern Spain is likely not going to happen, but we would still like to move somewhere warmer.

While my retirement didn't go exactly as planned, I'm so grateful for the unexpected financial gift. My transition to retirement is perhaps unlike many other retirees but it is working out well, despite my financial worries.

About the Author

Toby Oberg is a retired finance manager of the University of Minnesota's Molecular and Cellular Therapeutics facility. She is currently a free lance writer and maintains a blog, "Travels with Toby" (<https://travelswithtoby.net/>).

Metamorphosis

Jo Prouty

I remember the first day of retirement when I tossed the alarm clock into the trash. I announced at the breakfast table, "I'm not getting up until I finish my coffee." The sense of freedom I felt I had not experienced in many years; no scheduled time to be anywhere and nowhere to be. And no lists of things to do.

But habits are hard to kick, and before long I began making lists. My husband, Bob, laughed as items on today's list moved to tomorrow's list and then the next day's list. Sometimes items disappeared altogether. I vacillated between needing to get things done and thinking I had forever to do them; after all, I was retired now. Bob loved having a day of seemingly infinite possibilities, and we negotiated the day between my list and his possibilities. It was fun. It reminded me of our first days together, before children and all the responsibilities of being sensible adults.

As I said, habits are hard to break. Days of the week became identified with routines: laundry, groceries, library visits. I'll be forever grateful to our black Lab, Tasha, that paid no heed to routines or chores and demanded walks and playtimes. Her insistence for exercise took us to state and local parks walking, seeing wildflowers and birds. We tracked the flowers in bloom and the birds we observed, and birthed a new hobby, which I turned into another form of list making.

We rode our bikes on local trails and on a trail around a lake I remember thinking, "It can't possibly get better than this. It's 10:00 in the morning and I'm not at a desk. I'm outside smelling aromas of new growth in the woods, feeling the warmth of the sun on my skin and the wind on my face." The physical exertion felt so good.

We canoed on a lake and enjoyed seeing the world from a different perspective. We watched waterfowl up close, drifting quietly along the shore so as not to scare the birds singing in the cattails. After a couple of hours of this bliss, we paddled back to the dock. I struggled to stand and step out of the canoe. Bob grappled with the rocking canoe as I waved my arms trying to gain my balance. Every muscle screamed as I stretched out the kinks and moved my legs. Wow, this was new!

We paid attention to messages our bodies sent. We couldn't just grab a backpack and take off anymore. Trips required more planning, and now we needed *contingencies*. Our tent-camping days ended; I couldn't sleep on the ground even if I wanted to. I began to think we had it backward: we should "retire" when we had energy and good health, and could physically do all the things we dreamed of. Well, we would adjust, as we always did, to the changes in our lives.

Not all the changes were physical. Our beloved canine companion died a year into retirement and accepting her loss was harder than accepting any physical limitations. Sadly, we came to grips with the reality of aging, and that those death notices would now come more frequently. Finding balance took time: treasuring the arrival of spring and new birth; the never-ending cycle of life. Our son met the love of his life and we celebrated with them, being reminded of those days of beginning a life together.

Those first delicious days of freedom didn't feel the same as time progressed. We loved retirement, but we had adjusted to "being retired." We wanted different stimuli to keep us thinking, challenging us with ideas and experiences. We attended classes on topics neither of us knew much about. I wrote an article for an historical journal, and Bob encouraged me by giving me a course on nonfiction writing. We travelled to the North Shore, one of our favorite locations in all of Minnesota. So what if we didn't tent-camp; we found staying in a cabin just as much fun, as long as we lived in the woods and heard the warble of loons at night.

One day Bob found that walking the golf course required more energy than he had. We rented a golf cart. Okay, one more adjustment to make. But why was it difficult to walk the golf course? His aortic valve had calcified and he wasn't getting ample oxygenated blood. Open-heart surgery was the gold standard for replacing the valve, but he qualified for a new procedure using a catheter through the femoral artery.

On one of the coldest days in January, our son, his girlfriend, Bob and I entered St. Mary's Hospital in Rochester. "See you in a little while," Bob waved from the gurney as they wheeled him away to surgery.

We left the hospital bereft, carrying only a plastic bag of his clothes, seven hours after entering that hospital with a vibrant human being. My life ended; not as his ended, but the life I'd known and the retirement we shared for six years was over.

I had to conceive of a different life, an impossible task for many months - or maybe it was years. Retirement alone is nothing like our shared retirement.

The Chinese have a proverb: Great loss, great gain; small loss, small gain. What have I gained from my great loss: new perspectives, new friends, visits to new places, classes to learn new things, opportunities, and experiences I never imagined.

I don't think we should call it "retirement." I think we should call it "metamorphosis." It's a time to transform ourselves, to become our best selves, to contribute, to be an example, even an inspiration, a time to look forward to what's next.

About the Author

Jo Prouty is a retired administrative coordinator for the Minnesota Council on Economic Education in the Department of Applied Economics. She is a member of the UMRA Family History Interest Group and the Hiking Club.

My Life in Retirement

Clifton Ware

When turning 65 in 2002, I took advantage of an administrative policy offering eligible faculty a five-year retirement phaseout option. The approved quarter-time appointment became the highlight of my teaching career, as I enthusiastically taught a sequence of courses that formed a voice-pedagogy certificate program completed by 25 graduate students. Having minimal administrative and committee duties was also appreciated.

The freed-up time allowed me to finish a new book—*The Singer's Life: Goals and Roles* (Birch Grove Publishing, 2005)—also to continue working on a 4th edition of *Adventures in Singing*, a McGraw-Hill voice text and song anthology.

Meanwhile, in 2006 we (Bettye and I) sold our home in New Brighton and moved into a new condo complex in St. Anthony Village, a community featuring multi-family housing and a commercial district. During the retirement-phaseout period we also took several trips, including some connected with teaching and presentations at colleges and universities.

After a rewarding University tenure of 37 years, I officially retired in 2007. Soon afterwards, I began writing *The Aging Challenge: Making the Most of Life After 50* (Birch Grove Publishing, 2008), a project largely inspired by our renewed mind-body health commitments, which included daily exercise regimens and vegetarian diets. The book project also inspired us to compose and perform three songs about aging, once for an UMRA presentation.

Another musical project involved *The Silvertones*, a six-member band that featured songs from the '50s. Most performances took place in our local Salo Park Amphitheater, assisted at times by our three guitar-playing sons. Other musical performances were given primarily for family, friends, and neighbors. Our only teaching (Bettye, pianist; myself, vocalist) has been Voice Exploration classes offered through our city's continuing education program. Unfortunately, Covid effectively curtailed this very fulfilling co-teaching-and-learning experience.

Hobby wise, I managed to revisit my off-on visual art work for a few months, this time using acrylic paints to create nature scenes. Another interest resulted in fashioning a variety of model airplanes made of recycled materials, including paper, cardboard, and Styrofoam. Most paper planes were designed to fly, while others were imagined recreations of WWII aircraft. A few are hanging in various formations from the ceiling of our home office.

Other than musical interests, Bettye and I have always been ecologically minded, so we appreciated having more time to learn more about modernity's critical existential issues, including the overall negative impact our species is having on the biosphere and all ecosystems. Subsequently, we've developed acquaintances with leading sustainability-oriented advocates, particularly generalists with big-picture, deep-time perspectives supported by evidence-based findings in all relevant areas of life, particularly the relationship of humans to all flora and fauna species.

This quest prompted us to study the interrelations of several so-called Big E's: Environment, Economy, Energy, and Equality-Equity. I've also sought to learn more about Existence (evolution), Enlightenment (science, reason, belief and behavior), and Excellence (quality, beauty). This investigation has helped confirm the three historical transcendental domains that anchor my world view: Truth (reality), Goodness (morality), and Beauty (quality). I'm grateful for having had quality time to ponder existence in greater breadth and depth, and to realize we are part of all that has ever existed, beginning with the Big Bang and continuing throughout the expansion of space-time.

Our next musical collaboration resulted in our creating the music and text to 13 *Eco Songs* (2010), which we performed with several singers, including my voice students when teaching fall semester (2012) at the University of Tennessee-Knoxville. Several additional performances were given, and three songs were placed on YouTube.

In response to a growing concern about the ongoing disastrous effects of cascading crises, in 2013 we founded Citizens for Sustainability, a group of dedicated citizens that collaborates with city leaders and community groups on a variety of projects and programs to enhance community resilience and sustainability. Although the pandemic created some challenges, the group has remained active.

From 2014-2019 we offered some sustainability educational forums featuring pertinent topics, and co-published a weekly *Sustainability News + Views* e-newsletter that included a commentary related to newsletter topics. I've also given sustainability presentations for organizations, including UMRA, and served on the advisory boards of Citizen Powered Media and Art to Change the World.

Due mostly to the pandemic and aging, we've gradually reduced participation in organizations. At age 86, I increasingly feel it's time to let go of some activities and simply focus more on being and becoming. Part of this contemplative process has resulted in my writing *Clifton Ware: Life Chronicle-Memoir*, a huge document comprising five life stages, from childhood to final-life stage. I completed it in 2019 (digital format), and continue adding annual updates. The ongoing project remains a very worthwhile undertaking, allowing me to retrospectively and contextually review my life via both objective and subjective lenses.

Our retirement years have also provided more time for educational travel, and we've taken advantage of many opportunities, including several road trips to the southwest and western states, mostly to visit national parks and hike trails. Our introduction to commercial touring took us to Europe, the Middle East, and South America, plus a European river cruise and two ocean cruises. Other travels took us to all Canadian provinces, Mexico, and New Zealand. Our last tour was to Portugal, Spain, and Morocco in February 2020, and, thankfully, we made it back before Covid struck the U.S. We've also continued visiting and hiking in many Minnesota and Wisconsin state parks.

In conclusion, I've found retirement to be a period in which I've gained a deeper understanding of myself and the world. I'm extremely grateful for all of the challenges presented and undertaken, and also the many opportunities for personal growth and continuing service on behalf of myself, loved ones, colleagues, and the common good. I'm

also very grateful for having enjoyed a rewarding 37-year University tenure, and appreciative of the services UMRA provides retirees, including the many offerings that foster ongoing valuable learning and congenial social relationships.

About the Author

Clifton Ware is professor emeritus of voice and pedagogy in the School of Music. A tenor, he has performed widely in recital, opera, and oratorio in the US and abroad. When he arrived in the University's music school, he was the only full-time voice teacher and there were no qualifying tests for students becoming music majors. He helped his department develop voice studio classes, singing diction classes, and weekly recital labs for students, as well as a highly regarded certificate program in voice pedagogy. He and his wife, Bettye, treated UMRA members to a musical program amidst the visual arts of the Weisman Art Museum at the annual meeting in 2008 (see

<https://umra.umn.edu/sites/umra.umn.edu/files/0805.pdf>).