**1/31/21**

**MIDWINTER MUSINGS ON “RETIREDMENT”**

I’ve always liked to be busy… rather be busy than bored! I guess I got that from my Dad, the Bear. He stayed active in business until he was almost 80 and was constantly working in his woodshop right up to his end, even when he had to ride a motorized scooter we christened the “Popemobile” to get there.

Like Bear, I never thought I would really retire… seems to me the word should be “retired-ment” and I’m not that tired. That’s probably a big reason why I came back to the House. After I got done with the staffing business and while I was still in Cleveland, I teased that I had 5 jobs… and even though I only got paid money for 3, that was true.

First was Substitute Teaching. I started out working in many schools and I had a simple rule… it wasn’t the kids who determined if I would return to a particular school… it was the staff. Basically, the kids were pretty much the same in every school. You ranged from the seriously studious to the dangerously disruptive with the 90% in between trying their best. (Now that I wrote that, it kind of reminds me of our current political culture… might have to change the percentages, but pretty close to true!)

In most cases the staff was welcoming and supportive. Teachers and principals would check in and ask how things were going; the office staff was so glad to see you they would do anything to help. I do recall one school where the staff gave me a folder and directed me to the room. And when I got there, the teacher was just leaving for meetings. His only interaction… “Stuffs on the desk… good luck!” Last adult I saw… never went back!

I wound up as a direct “contract sub” for Constellation Charter Schools. People are generally unaware that most schools use 3rd party staffing firms to provide subs. This was true with Constellation too, but we developed enough rapport to allow them to hire and pay me directly. This led to me being an extended sub for 7th grade science in 2 different schools. In one case I had to develop my own classes using copies from the textbook because computer access wasn’t ready… in the other another teacher supplied lesson plans and tests. But in both cases I had the chance to develop better relationships with the kids and the staffs were wonderfully supportive.

I continued subbing once I got to Oxford. I tended to specialize in middle school… you either love these “tweeners” or run away screaming from this age group so full of puberty transitions. But I always found high school kids to be too “smart” and self-involved and avoided “ankle biters” because I didn’t want to wipe anyone’s nose or butt! Eventually Covid killed my interest in subbing… it wasn’t fear of the disease (I live with 35 college kids, after all), it was the extension of so many rules and regulations… may go back some day.

Probably my favorite “job” in Cleveland was Playhouse Square where I was a volunteer Redcoat, Head Usher, Tour Guide and almost a House Manager (that’s a story for another time). I’ve always loved theater and did some acting and directing in my day. The opportunity to be one of the 2,000 volunteers who welcome, direct and assist guests was a great joy. I got to see lots of great shows, including Hamilton 5 times (except for the opening… we had things to do!). And I really loved guiding tours through the gloriously restored theaters. Another role killed by Covid that I might go back to someday.

A close second for enjoyment was working for Jackpot Casino where I would deal Blackjack, Texas Hold ‘Em or serve as “Pit Boss” for charity events and corporate parties. John and Janeen are great people and one of my favorite interview stories. I was attending one of their events and after playing Blackjack at her table I asked Janeen “Who’s in charge here?” She pointed to John and I walked up to him and said, “I should work for you!” Janeen was right behind me and said, “He’s right!” Guess I made a good impression because I was quickly on their A list, entrusted with managing events. Again, I continued doing that work around Oxford with other companies… but again, Covid killed the business (are you seeing a theme here?).

Another job was to work at Big Met, one of the Metropark Golf courses where I was one of the few people ever hired to be both a Cashier and a Starter. I was perfectly happy to spend most of my time in the Starter Shack even though I didn’t realize until after I began working that cleaning the bathrooms was on my list! I guess that was good training for my role here at the House! Most of the golfers were great fun… I had one regular Thursday group who expected me to have a new joke for them every week! When I left they bought me a dozen golf balls. In a season and ½ I had exactly one negative interaction with a “guest” who accused me of “ruining” his day when I politely asked him to keep his cart on the path around the green… I think he ruined his own day, and certainly not mine! Once again, if I had stayed in Cleveland, I’m sure my engagement would have been reduced (if not eliminated) by Covid.

One more of my “retired-ment” jobs, the one I loved and hated the most. My older and not as good- looking brother Moose was only in his early 70’s when his health took a turn. Moose (his name was Wallace B. but very few people knew that… Moose was his “identity”) only had one kidney after a congenital issue that both of us had… he often told me I owed him one. He also had other medical issues and when he contracted cancer the outlook was not good.

It became my job to take him to Doctor’s appointments and try to help his family in any way I could. His youngest son “Critter” (other kids were Beast, Mouse and Bug… another story) and his fiancé then wife Darlene had primary duty… I was just the facilitator around trips to Cleveland Clinic and various specialists around town.

Moose and I made those trips as much fun as possible. We always had lively discussions about the latest in sports or politics as we traveled. We delighted in teasing nurses… Moose would start with “You know what a Moose is? A large horny animal!” and then we would proceed into one of our routines about “older and not as good-looking brother” or some such. We usually had them giggling and that seemed somehow appropriate for a guy in a wheelchair.

When Moose passed away in the early Spring of 2019, I delivered one of the eulogies… tough duty and hope it’s the only time I have to do that. It was only about a month later that I saw the posting for House Director at Alpha Delta Phi… with Moose gone, I felt like I was free to go. I’ve told anyone who asked that Moose would laugh himself silly if he knew what I was up to now. On the subject of my other 4 “retired-ment” jobs, he would say, “You like all those things… you can’t call that ‘work’”. But I think he would approve of this turn of events.

In one respect, the move to Oxford was fortuitous. My 4 Cleveland “jobs” would have gone away last Spring with our society-wide “lockdown”. At least here I have things to do just about every day, pickleball for exercise, and new friends and experiences. I miss Cleveland and I’ll probably move back one day… but for right now I’m happy to be busy with this stage of my “retired-ment”.