

SAYING “BYE BYE” TO RETIREMENT

by Marie Langworthy

I'm on a mission to retire the term “*retirement*.” I'll admit it – there are certain sociological and egotistic reasons why, when I left my life-long career three years ago, I found it increasingly difficult to admit that I had joined the ranks of “the redundant,” as members of the UK so tellingly describe that stage of *Limbo* in which an increasing number of retiring Boomers seem to be finding themselves these days!

Actually, “*redundant*” was how I felt! Suddenly I was (or *felt* that I was) so unimportant, so unnecessary, so useless, so potentially *poor*! Why was I finding myself frequently apologizing, and yes, not a little ashamed to admit that I was ... *retired*!

And although I can't attest that all Boomers who have decided to accept “the golden handshake” for one reason or another -- and at an increasingly younger age -- share my sentiments, I'm willing to bet that many more will admit having experienced ambiguities similar to my own.

First, there was the panic – the buyer's remorse, as it were -- the reality that I was no longer important or essential to an organization. What had I done? Did I make a mistake? I still had so much talent, expertise, energy to contribute. What had I irrevocably given up? Then there was the secret resentment that my replacement (who, of course, could *never* fill my shoes) now had assumed *my* title, *my* power, *my* glory, *my* salary!

And now how was I going to fill my days? No one seemed to need me professionally any more. All the e-mails stopped. The phone calls ceased. My calendar was noticeably empty of back-to-back meeting dates. I no longer found myself going to work in the dark and coming home in the dark!

And what about all those gorgeous, professional outfits hanging in my closet – many still bearing clearance price tags? When would I ever get to wear them again or share a snicker at someone's fashion faux pas with a colleague? Horror, horror! What had I done?!

For years, I had fantasized about how I would spend my precious “retirement” time – gardening; organizing my books, DVDs, CDs; cleaning out the attic, the basement, the garage; walking six miles a day... everyday... rain or shine; learning French. Now all those personal projects that I had eagerly anticipated having the freedom to accomplish in retirement – suddenly they lost their importance, their appeal, their priority.

Now fast forward three years. At social events, when lunching with friends, spending time with family members, or chatting with colleagues, I no longer categorize myself as “retired.” Depending on my audience, I describe my new career as that of an author, a web site business owner and editor, a curriculum designer, an enrichment instructor, a supervisor of student teachers, a university instructor, a world traveler.

Admittedly, I'm more than a little fragmented at this point in my life. That's because I find myself in a new stage of career exploration, "trying on" several new projects to determine what I *really* want to do for the rest of my life. What's my new career? How am I *re-inventing* myself? It's a great feeling having the luxury of *choice*. What do I really want to do, and when and where do I want to do it? What's my passion? What creates the "fire in the belly?" What excites me?

One thing's for sure - I've left "retirement" in the dust! I've *retired retirement!* It is no more! In its stead, this Boomer has replaced "redundancy" with lots of promising career adventures yet to be explored and embraced... *or* abandoned. The way stations on my newly discovered "yellow brick road" promise to be replete with future surprises.