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About Vintage Voice

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VINTAGE VOICE



Retirement Reinvented

By Margaret Sanford

Most of us of a certain age have a vision of what our retirement will be like. We look forward to spending more time doing what we love, be it golf, or needlepoint, or horseback riding; more time to spend with family and friends; time to travel; and so on. But while we may have a clear idea of how we would spend our days, the reality is sometimes far removed from those expectations. The financial plans we so carefully made are easily derailed by that leaky roof or unanticipated medical expense; and before we know it we are looking for ways to supplement a modest retirement income.

I know. I'm there. But here's the real news. What I thought to be a setback may just turn out to have been a blessing in disguise. Maybe. I'm not yet far enough into it to be certain. The jury is still out, but I've drawn a few preliminary conclusions:

You do have some marketable skills, and they could be the very things you love to do best. I've enjoyed sewing for many years, both for myself and others, and it still surprises me that not everybody can hem trousers, fit a dress, restyle a suit, or mend a backpack; and furthermore, many are willing to *pay* you to do it for them. So I have hung out my sewing shingle. Word of mouth has been my best form of advertising so far, and I'm beginning to collect a modestly sized group of local customers in need of clothing alterations. Some are even grateful to have found me. Not nearly as grateful as I am!

Acknowledge your weaknesses, and learn to use them to advantage. I'm a pretty extreme introvert (in case that isn't already evident), and the idea of promoting my skills and my work is almost anathema to me. I hear whispers of "it's not nice to brag." I'm working really hard to get over this one. I am skilled and proud of my work. Need is forcing me to say so. Blessing in disguise.

You are never too old to learn something new. This is huge! I've been guilty of looking at life as all downhill from here. But over the past few weeks I, who had never even used a computer until I was past 50, have managed to publish a website to sell my handcrafted

knitting bags. I've been perfecting my sewing skills and creating lovely handbags for a long time, but if I am ever going to market them beyond the front door, I need to be online.

I feel like the Grandma Moses of the cyber world. I began knowing nothing. Now I can say I have created *alt text and meta tag headers* and *key words*, and I actually know what those things are. It's an enormous boost to discover that you're not yet completely past it. My mother always said we were a family of late bloomers. She ought to know. She just celebrated her 97th birthday and she's still blooming!

Ask for help when you need it. And you *will* need it. I'm not sure where I first came across the statement, "Don't be embarrassed to ask your children for help with modern technology. After all, you taught them to use the toilet." My younger advisors have been invaluable. They grew up with all this technology. I, on the other hand, was already old when I had to be shown how to use a mouse. They have my unending thanks for their patience. I still haven't graduated to texting. Perhaps I'll master the smartphone next. Oh, wait. I don't yet have one of those.

Accept that you don't have the energy you had 30 years ago. Work around it. If you need a noon-time nap, take it. Face the fact that you can't do everything. This one is hard for me. It was with a great deal of reluctance that I finally made the difficult decision to give up my place in a very fine auditioned choir. It was a wrenching decision, but I have had to realize that I cannot bring my best efforts to everything at once. My creative desires and my actual physical stamina are badly out of step. My tiredness infuriates me. There is so much I want to do that I'm simply too tired for; but I am slowly learning that being angry about it depletes my energy even further. The key seems to be moderation. Sleep enough, eat sensibly, take your vitamins, drink plenty of water, and get some exercise. (Did I just say 'exercise'? If you know me, your jaw just dropped.) Do you mean *knitting* is not exercise? I have a lot of work to do here. But it becomes increasingly clear that to function at my best, I have to take care of myself. A well-regulated schedule is my best ally.

So ... Is this the retirement I envisioned? Not quite. But I have to conclude that the necessity of generating additional income has brought out some strengths that I didn't know I had. I am learning something new every day as I create a business out of a long-loved avocation. I enjoy the new people I meet. As a classic introvert, one-to-one interactions have always been my best thing. And just this week I sold my first knitting bag through the new website! But best of all, I wake up each morning anticipating the day's activities (which include that lunch-time nap and a lot of time to 'play' with fabric and yarn). I don't think it gets much better than that.



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