



**Retired – Reactivated** is the theme of this article as a common human error is made on retirement that can be fatal. Many people look at retirement as a time when they will be able to do nothing but relax and enjoy life. They may even tell you the story of the rabbit that hops all its life and is lucky to live a maximum of about 15 years while the tortoise who never runs and does little can live over 200 years. Thus, it's the tortoise life for them. Sadly, that does not work for us humans.

A study was carried out on people who had retired. Those who had said they were going to do nothing but golf and lay around, lived an average of only two years past retirement while those who found another purpose in life (**Reactivated**) by volunteering to do something that they enjoyed doing, lived much longer. **Reactivation** is simply having another purpose in life after the purpose in life job you had comes to an end.

I am writing this on behalf of a fellow worker I worked with long ago. His name was Roy and Roy was a chatty hard working guy that would be difficult not to like. If there was a crappy job, say repairing a leaking sewer tank outflow valve on an aircraft parked in the boonies on a cold rainy midnight shift, Roy would be the man to do it without complaining. He loved his job and willingly took the bad with the good. After forty plus years of working on aircraft from Lancasters to DC3s to 747s Roy reached the age of 65 and mandatory retirement. We all chipped in and bought him a brown leather jacket like what he had worn in World War Two with the company logo embroidered on the back if it. I believe he had been a bomber gunner and mechanic in the war although he didn't like to talk about it much. Roy was very proud of that jacket and would come to the hangar coffee shop wearing it every day to have coffee with the guys. It wasn't too long before the company asked him not to do that as it often resulted in some of his ex-fellow workers being late to get back to their jobs. Shortly after that we heard that Roy had committed suicide by hanging himself in his closet. When someone missed him and they finally located him he was found wearing his jacket. Roy had been working in the hangar in his last few years and I was still a "ramp rat" so we heard about it through the rumour mill. It seems that his wife had died several years earlier and his kids were all back East where he had worked long ago. The funeral was very low key and I don't know if anyone from the company attended or even knew to attend. Roy had not **reactivated** and didn't even make the two year average. That is a tragic human error that I hope none of you make should you have the "privilege" of living to retirement.

As retirement approaches, take time to consider just what you are going to fill the 40 hour (plus the required commuting time ) hole in your future retirement weeks. This all important

**reactivation** plan must consider both physical and mental health. Another word for **reactivation** could be to re-energize. I say that it is to give yourself another purpose in life or a reason to get up in the morning. That is much more important than many of us realize. As principal of an aviation maintenance training school, I arranged with a local aviation museum to take on a project to rebuild an aircraft that we had donated to it. I contacted a number of retirees and soon they had formed a group and were hard at work rebuilding an aircraft that would likely be Safe to fly by the time they were finished. To say that they were re-energized is an understatement. They happily volunteered their time and the museum had a hard time finding enough money for materials to keep them going.

There was also a one-quarter century in aviation club that held monthly dinner meetings that would see about 100, mostly retirees, attend. They in turn formed committees that organized projects and tours of Boeing, the Flying Tankers, etc. If you go back to Article # 57, Dec/Jan 2020/2021, you can read about a fellow aviation maintenance person who was likely close to thinking that the answer to his future was like Roy's. Fortunately he found usefulness by volunteering at a local railway museum. It is worth going back to read, as you never want to be in that position in life. Retiring is a time to **reactivate** your usefulness into something you enjoy doing. I am positive that Roy would have made an outstanding guide at the aviation museum as he loved to interact with people, knew a lot about every aircraft that ever flew and would have had a purpose in life.

They say that over 70% of employees hate their jobs. Staffsquared.com says that the number of haters increases to over 85% among the millennials. I suspect that the word hate is too strong a word and dissatisfied is a more correct one. I have a friend who was counting the days and hours to retirement, not because she hated nursing, which she loved, but because it involved 12 hour shifts which saw her working the hated 12 hour midnight shifts about every other week. I left the airlines for that very same reason. I loved the job, but just couldn't hack the constant rotation to midnight shift. Remember my father's saying, #38 Nov. 2018, "if you want perfection you have to die and go to heaven, but that doesn't mean that you shouldn't strive for it". When I told them that after six years I was leaving and why, they said with my background you could easily be an inspector. But, I said, they still work midnights! But, they said, the chief inspector doesn't. I thought, oh great, how many more years would I have to wait until he retires or dies?

With **reactivation** there will be no more midnights if you don't want to. It is your chance to give back to the industry or community or the like that has helped support you and/or your family. There is always a need for volunteers so take the time to volunteer to do something that you will enjoy doing. There can be a lot of satisfaction to be had helping others and that qualifies as **reactivation**, even if you only do it once or twice a week. A friend of mine volunteered to be a "green coat" at the airport to assist people arriving there. The green coat was an airport initiative that organized a very dedicated group of retired volunteers to assist lost or confused new arrivals to the airport. All they got was a nice fitting green sports jacket with a name badge, free parking space and a once per year thank you dinner for him and his wife. Whenever I flew into that airport I looked for him, would try to sneak up behind him and in a disguised voice ask, "Which

way to the nearest pub?” He loved the job and was very good at it. He was the perfect ambassador for the airport and I’m sure it helped him live a lot longer.

A green coat program at Vancouver airport in 2007 would likely have saved the life of a 40 year old Polish man who was confronted by 4 police officers after wandering around in the airport secure baggage area for nine hours waiting for his mother who was waiting outside the secure area. Due to a lack of communication, he spoke only Polish, he was tasered five times leading to a heart attack and his death. A green coat would have helped him when he was waiting and wondering around the baggage claim as his mother had instructed him to do. With it being an international flight it was in a secured area that she couldn’t enter. The green coat or equivalent program is an excellent one that every airport should have and the life it saves could be yours.

To enjoy a long retirement you also must keep moving. The Gold standard for exercise is considered 10,000 steps or the equivalent per day. Being retired, 5,000 will help keep you off of the couch and with a dog to walk, is easily attainable. With today’s Fitbits or equivalent, it is easy to determine if you are getting the movement that you need to stay fit. You don’t need to join a gym, but they help motivate you to keep moving in many different ways.

Retirement should be the golden years of life and taking the above into consideration, I believe you can actually enjoy your final phase of life. I do.