

Looking Back at My Life, When I'm 75

Years ago, I would spend most fall Saturday afternoons watching college football. I still enjoy viewing the games today, even when I do not have any interest in who wins.

However, over the past few years I have noticed that I watch fewer games, instead focusing my interest on perhaps just one game a week. Although I try to keep up with the results of the day, lately, I find myself sometimes watching no games at all.

September and October can be beautiful in Pennsylvania. By the time November arrives, the days are short, and it is dark early. With the inviting autumn weather, and winter approaching, I prefer not to spend too much of my time watching sporting events.

I don't make any money writing articles. Oh, I have plenty of confidence in my ability, but I think I'll keep my day job just in case a Pulitzer never comes knocking.

Yet, I write.

But why? Why go through all the grief, frustration, and struggle of articulating my ideas with neither millions of readers nor millions of dollars?

A few years ago, I wondered how I would assess my life when I reach 75. I concluded that I did not want to reminisce, and regret that I relinquished the dream of becoming a published writer.

I know middle-age artists who still paint, mindful that their dreams of being the next Monet or Rembrandt are hanging by a thread. I know people who are well beyond their college years taking college courses – determined to achieve their lifelong dream of earning a college degree. Business men and women witness their businesses start and fail, yet they persevere, yearning to hit on that one successful service or product.

I have attended weddings where middle-age musicians play at the reception. Decades ago, they probably fancied themselves the next hot musical group, with hit songs, world tours, a legion of groupies, and cheering crowds. Today, they play before small crowds a handful of weekends a year, for a fraction of the money they once envisioned. Oh, they still secretly dream of the groupies, but I imagine their wives might have a say in that. Still, they play.

At some point in all of our lives, we recognize the limited amount of time we have. We witness relatives pass away, a neighborhood friend dropping dead after just turning fifty, or an acquaintance develop cancer and meet a tragic fate.

And we know that life is just too short to spend beautiful weekend afternoons watching television.

When I was younger, a number of senior citizens advised me to travel when I'm young. They became too old to take their dream vacation, perhaps to a lush South Pacific island, a week in Europe, or a cruise to Alaska. When I was in my twenties, I always imagined that there would be enough time to travel in the future. Now that I am in my fifties, I realize that the time to do anything is when you can do it.

Some might regret never marrying. Others might lament not having a child. In life, there is always the potential for something to regret.

And so artists will continue to paint, writers will continue to write, and musicians will continue to perform, knowing their dream of success is fleeting.

Someday, I may finally surrender and retire from writing. I may never have a million readers, make any money, or win any awards. But, looking back at my life when I'm 75, I want to acknowledge that I gave it my best effort. Hopefully, that will suffice.

In the meantime, a few groupies wouldn't hurt either.

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