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Whats Important: Retirement, Viewed 2 Years Later

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At the age of 77, I retired from an active hand and upper extremity practice at an academic institution. I had been involved in leadership positions in many national orthopaedic organizations and most recently have served on the Board of Trustees for The Journal of Bone and Joint Surgery. For over 46 years, I enjoyed the interactions with residents and fellows. Fortunately, I remained healthy and active with no major medical issues and prided myself on being an excellent surgeon and mentor with a busy practice. The decision to retire did not come lightly. After decades of dedication to orthopaedic health care, what would it feel like to step away? Would there be a “void” in my life? I was shocked to discover that I am far from bored in retirement. Now 2 years in, I am fully embracing this new phase of life. As I reflect on why that is, I realize that the seeds of a “successful” retirement are sown over the course of many years—and that while retirement may involve stepping away from work, it does not necessarily mean stepping away from one’s community. If asked to list the keys to a successful retirement, I would offer the following: When in a busy practice, remember to make time for life outside of work.

I have been blessed with a wonderful family, including 2 children, both of whom are now surgeons, and 6 healthy grandchildren. My wife and I have been married for 56 years. While my career involved long hours and numerous professional activities, to have focused solely on my career would not have led to a successful or fulfilling professional life. Balance is needed and lays the foundation for a rich life. As much as possible, plan ahead financially. To be sure, life is expensive. My wife and I made a point to live within our means and started saving early on. We sought the counsel of advisers at different stages so that, from a financial standpoint, we would be ready to retire if and when retirement beckoned. Physical activity and social engagement are extremely important.

We enjoy shared activities with family and friends, with travel, skiing, biking, golf, and sailing among our interests. We are fortunate to spend winters in Florida in a golfing and sports community, and summers at our cottage in Maine. We have actively enjoyed the company of friends, old and new, as much as possible during the pandemic. I am more involved now in social activities, sports, reading, and travel than at any other period of my life. Maintain contact with your peers. Among those I regularly see are several friends from the orthopaedic community whom I’ve known for more than 40 years. The enthusiasm we shared for our work during our lengthy careers has transferred to new interests in retirement, enjoyed together. The bonds of friendship are lasting and personally very gratifying.

Recent Publications

1. Pyrocarbon Arthroplasty Implants in the Upper Extremity: A Systematic Review of Outcomes and Pooled Analysis of Complications 29 November 2021, pp. 946e-958e
2. Total Wrist Replacement: A Retrospective Comparative Study, 2012 Nov; 1(2): 165–172.
3. Metacarpophalangeal joint replacement in Novosibirsk Research Institute of Traumatology and Orthopedics Simonova E.N., T. I. Aleksandrov, Prokhorenko V.M., S.I. Chorny, 2019, 200-201

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