

## **77 and Still Going**

Okay Don, I'll tell you what I've been doing in my senior years (now 77). I've been a teacher, a veteran, a father by choice, and a caregiver.

For over 40 years I've taught in different settings, mostly on a junior college level. For the past 14 years I've been working as an instructional assistant in a local inner city high school with special needs. I just enjoy being useful and helping young people to grow.

During this time I maintained a four-family house: my 82 year old widowed brother lives on the first floor and my 52 year old deaf foster-son lives in the other rear apartment; I live on the second floor with my shared-living room-mate, Gerry, who is mentally challenged, age 74.

I was in my early thirties when I took on the task of raising teen-age twins (boy and girl) and their mentally challenged younger brother after their mother had an untimely death. Later, I added a deaf teenager who had been in 15 different foster homes prior to my taking him in and who still resides in one of my apartments referenced above.

When the others left my domicile and moved on, I added two more brothers who also had a mother who died untimely. They too eventually moved out and went on with their lives. Now through their efforts, I became a grandfather and a great-grandfather.

Finally, at the age of 64 I got involved with a small agency helping the mentally challenged and eventually was elected President of the Board of Directors, a position I still hold; and that's how Gerry came to live with me these 13 years.

My board built a new house for four wheel-chair adults, expanded our out-reach programs with state contracts; and thanks to a dedicated staff we continue providing care and enjoyment to those entrusted to us.

I always felt deeply that life, although difficult, is a gift and a gift is to be enjoyed. I rather be busy living than the alternative. Existentially, I spread the message that life challenges us every day. Experience has shown me that loving people are living people and vice versa.

That's my story until the last chapter is written.....

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