

EDITOR'S CORNER

Thoughts on Someone Else's Retirement

It seems like more and more of my friends and relatives are talking about retirement these days and some actually did retire. Just the other day my sister, a few years older than I, announced the joint retirement of herself and her husband. They live in Hawaii. I always thought that when I retired I would go to a place like Hawaii to soak up some sun and fun. I wonder what people in Hawaii do when *they* retire. Maybe they can come to Kansas to hear the wheat grow!!

I started my teaching career at the Pennsylvania State University in 1969 and so I am in that age range to think about these things. When I was a young man, my goals were to have a successful career with financial security for my family and make a real contribution to science and education. Graduate a bunch of students and publish a ton of papers. Along the way I want to be happy and seek fame and glory. I have had a bit of everything in the past 30 years; along with some ups and downs. I consider my life somewhat successful with lots of friends and students from all walks of life around the globe.

Let me see what the dictionary says about retirement. **Retirement, n. 1. The act of retiring or condition of being retired; withdrawal, removal, etc. "Retirement is as necessary to me as it will be welcome," said Washington. 2. Privacy; seclusion. 3. A place of privacy or seclusion.** (Webster's New Twentieth Century Dictionary, Unabridged 1979). Well, nothing fits me so far!!

I wonder what it would be like for me to do nothing for science and education and just hang around the house or do some good deeds for neighbors and friends. I cannot imagine myself not reading a journal, writing an article, conducting an experiment, giving a lecture, running around airports, platforms, and piers to catch a plane, a train, or a boat to go somewhere around the world for the sake of microbiology!! One day may come that I HAVE to retire; when my bones become too fragile, muscles too weak, eyes too dim, ears too hard of hearing, or memories too short, and speech too meek. Hopefully, that day does not come too soon. For now I have too much to do.

I do see some people who never really retired even though they officially retired years ago. There are several Institute of Food Technologists past presidents who are so energetic and enthusiastic in promoting the advancement of food science. I truly admire their willingness to work hard for the society even when they are in their late 70's and 80's. I hope when I get to that age I will still go to IFT and ASM meetings and shake up the discussions in the food safety and public health. I hope I will still have the joy of going to scientific sessions to express my opinions on rapid methods and automation in microbiology.

On the other hand, I have seen some professionals "retired" on the job, counting every year, every month and every day to get out of the place. I feel a bit sorry for them and wish them well when they truly retire and wander into the sunset.

I do not know why, as a rule, I dislike retirement parties. First, I have to get dressed up nicely since everybody else is dressed up in their "Sunday clothes". Then I have to smile at many people I have no idea who they are. If I am lucky, I will find a couple of good friends whom I can sit with to eat. The gathering is usually long (the last one I attended lasted four and half hours!) and the occasion is usually quite serious. There are baby pictures, grandma/grandpa pictures, faded pictures of father and mother, sisters and brothers, dogs and cats and goldfish, junior high picture, senior high picture, first date, great wife, great former students, great former professors, great former jobs, wonderful awards, old cars, new cars, etc. etc. A million thank you's. A million hand claps. A million hugs and maybe even some tears of joy and nostalgia and then those embarrassing "roasting". Who needs the recounting of mishaps and blunders in ones life which may have happened 50 years ago?

I had a great plan for a retirement party of a great friend. I arranged to pay for the retirement party with a whole hog roast, lots of food and drink, music and fun in the park. I liked that party. Everybody was there happily laughing, playing, relaxing, running around in the woods. No formal dress. No formalities. Babies, children, friends and relatives, old people, young people, important people, not so important people, minimum amount of talks and roastings. It was a great afternoon and everybody went home happy.

Come to think of it I would like my retirement party like that, if I agree to have one or if I live long enough to have one!! In the meantime do not expect me to hang up my test tubes and inoculating loops and my motto of "**Have slides; will travel**". My best wishes to all of you who are retiring or planning to retire and especially to those who are retired but still contribute to your profession and society with enthusiasm and vigor. A famous Chinese saying "Old professors never retire, they just doze away."

DANIEL Y.C. FUNG