

RETIREMENT DOESN'T BEGIN UNTIL YOUR SPOUSE IS ABLE TO JOIN YOU

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Older Americans are steadily comparing an ever-larger percentage of our population. This necessarily translates into more retirees. Media programming and advertising agendas have been adjusted to keep pace with the trend. They, like all things in this world, can be classified into many categories.

If you begin with the largest group, they would have to be married people. Of these, the two basic categories are those where only one of the partners is retired and those where both have reached that plateau. According to all the pundits, there can be, and usually are, significant differences between the two.

For the past seven years I supposedly have been retired – at least that is what I fill in on the sheet where it says “occupation” when I have to make one out. To be honest about it, by no stretch of the imagination am I actually retired. I just think it lends a little prestige to my status to say I am. I decided many years before I officially retired to never do so in actuality.

An old retired caretaker named Bill Brack clinched it with some sage advice. Bill was a professional caretaker who worked for many years at a local Adirondack family camp. He retired and moved with his wife downstate to be near their daughter. I ran into him about a year later on the street in Old Forge. I greeted him with, “Hi, Bill how’s it going?”

“Terrible,” was his reply. “Never quit your job.” I had a great deal of respect for Bill and his words, coupled with my own reservations, locked it.

Bill may have retired from his job as he had always known it, but that does not mean he had to quit work.

Andy Rooney was singing my song when he expressed his views on work in his September 14 column in the *Express*. I do not believe in retiring as long as you’re in good health. I can think of many reasons one may wish to pursue a change from a routine he or she has been locked into for years.

On September 1, our household reached a new threshold after 42+ years of marriage. We are both retired, an event that shall have new implications for both of us.

The last seven years that I have been retired presented little change in our relationship. My better half was a flight attendant for US Airways and was away periodically from three to five days at a stretch.

We still have one more level to reach and have at least three more years to go. Our children were barely out of the nest when were joined by a two-year-old granddaughter. She will be 16 in December and is the light of our lives. So you see we are going through the rigors of yet another teenager. I sometimes think we may be just a tad too old to cope with today's teens. Come to think of it, who can? I do know we are both thankful to be able to do it.

Although those circumstances will not change for awhile, we are embarking on a part of our lives that has been unexplored at this juncture. We are very optimistic about the future and sense we have arrived at a point we have worked for all our lives.

Like all couples, there are interests we both have that are divergent and will not be shared with the same enthusiasm. However, there are a great many more that we will.

Fortunately, we both take pleasure in simple pastimes. One of our favorites is driving back roads in the local area where we never been before and stopping to have lunch in a little out of the way place.

Our philosophy on things we enjoy doing is much like my mother's was on finances: "It's not how much money you make, it's how much you spend." It doesn't have to cost a lot to be enjoyed. I could carry on with reams more, but I think you have the point by now.

To make a long story short, I expect a few problems and am well pleased with our progress so far. One minor not of discord did arise, but it's one I am sure that can be overcome. I found out I did not know how to make a peanut butter and jelly sandwich! A situation I assure you, I will overcome.