

**KEEP BUSY, DON'T LOOK BACK – THAT'S THE WAY TO STAY
YOUNG
03/21/00**

I started writing this column for three basic reasons.

First is to leave some insight and history of my life and thoughts for my eight grandchildren. I regret not knowing more about my own grandparents.

The next is based on the old premise, “use it or lose it.” The weekly chore of coming up with a topic and cranking it out challenges the mental processes.

The last is another side of the above statement in that it keeps me from dwelling on negative aspects of my life. I find it helps to keep your mind and body busy with other avenues.

In the interim, since its beginning, I have discovered new incentives. I have found that others enjoy it and I do as well. This had proven to be particularly true with people in my age group, which brings me to the real focus of this article.

People of my age group usually have more time and reasons to dwell on unpleasant conditions or memories. There are countless things we all can do to improve our quality of life regardless of our circumstances.

I learned at an early age to revere and respect old age and a portion of my time and efforts have been spent in that direction. The lessons learned prepared me well for my own transition to that realm. I credit some of the relatively stable and good health I enjoy for my age. It's a condition for which I realize I am very lucky.

In a literal sense, I never retired and never intend to do so until the bitter end. I have always enjoyed work and have only one regret in that respect. It's that much of mine excluded spending as much time with my family as I should have. I try to make amends for that as much as possible today.

In addition to the work I elect to do, I have several other outlets to occupy my time and mind. Woodworking is one that I find very relaxing and satisfying. I have made hat stretchers and retainers for years and am proud to say that they are the best available or ever made. It has not been a lucrative enterprise, but has justified the equipment and materials. I have gained much pride and pleasure hearing from others I have provided with an item they had long-sought and then found it was one of much better quality than they expected.

Improved bird feeders and birdhouses are another one of my interests. It has been a good

use of waste materials otherwise destined for the scrap pile fully appreciated by the recipients. It's one way of saying thanks for the great duck hunting I experienced in the past.

My latest efforts have been directed to perfecting a folding stand that is versatile enough to be used in the house or camp and the porch or patio. They are great for coffee drinks, TV dinners, magazines or plants. There are many other uses for them, which makes the frustration and assembly worth the effort and challenge.

I love to hunt, fish and hike and from the outlook for gasoline and fuel oil prices, I will be adding biking and woodcutting to my itinerary. The house needs painting and the fireplace needs pointing up and a new cap job, things I may farm out. I'll have to if all of the forestry work looming on the horizon materializes.

I could go on ad infinitum in the same vein, but I think my point should have been taken by this time. In short, keep busy if you aren't already.

As one old baseball player so aptly put it, "Don't look back, something might be gaining on you." Good advice for us older folks, but not as good as my old first sergeant gave everybody: "Don't be like the crawdad, look ahead and see where you are going, not behind you to see where you have been."