

On Being Retired

To be clear at the outset, this is an extremely whimsical piece, written on the spur of the moment. Which does NOT mean it is frivolous. Far from it. It is laden with meaning, even significance. [As a lawyer might say, it is certainly substantive and might even be probative.] But that may be difficult to see right away because it is somewhat 'stream of consciousness' and the thread holding it together (which is to say what makes all the various connections clear to Webmaster, but perhaps not to the reader) is a thread from the T-shirt that his son gave Webmaster when he retired (in 2008).

His son knows Webmaster pretty well, including the fact that Webmaster likes to wear T-shirts with 'meaningful' content. [Webmaster is frequently complimented on a T-shirt he is wearing, which bemuses him because it seems to him that people pay more attention to what his T-shirts say than what HE says. There is a message there of course, but Webmaster refuses to open it.] So, when Webmaster retired his son gave him a spiffy T-shirt that says: "Retired. I was tired yesterday and I'm tired again today". People seem to love that T-shirt; in fact it was so popular that Webmaster wore out the first one and has already purchased a new one.

Now being retired means many things and, to some extent, it is factually correct that Webmaster is frequently tired, so the T-shirt is accurate. But that is NOT what Webmaster first thinks of when he thinks of retirement. He thinks of having the time and energy to do so many things (like writing this piece) and the reality that he has so many 'projects' that just trying to do many of them does make him tired. [One could say that Webmaster has more projects than "Carter has little liver pills". And if you don't know what that means, you can Google it, assuming Google is still in existence and they know what it means.]

At this moment - as it happens - Webmaster is in fact tired. Very tired. He is so tired that he added some extra pills (not Carter's) to his afternoon pills; some painkillers because he expects to be very sore in a few hours. He is so tired that he took another hot shower (the second of the day!) and, while putting on fresh clothes he started to laugh and exclaimed "Tired?!! You call this tired?!!!" Which is a shameless take-off on the infamous utterance "Hot?! You call this hot?!!". [That was infamously uttered by one of Webmaster's best friends - KEJ, who was mentioned on the WELCOME page of this website.] Unless you were there (when KEJ made the utterance), you probably don't understand why the phrase was so funny and why it has spawned innumerable take-offs. But that is Beside the Point.

Which, by the way, is precisely where Webmaster is as he writes this piece - which is not surprising because Webmaster works on a very large percentage of his projects at Beside the Point (his vacation/retirement home) and thus it is precisely where he is most likely to be when he gets tired (or retired - as the case may be). It is a lovely early March day, unseasonably warm, which stimulated Webmaster to work on one of his drainage projects. He has been doing battle with entropy again, trying to get water to drain where HE wants it to drain, rather than where Mother Nature wants it to go (and

on his timetable, rather than hers). He dug some more channels yesterday (which got him tired of course) and he dug still more today. And he was putting the piping in those channels when things began to go south. A series of small mistakes - it happens. And pretty soon he was tired again ("retired") and getting sore. And at about 3:00 in the afternoon, he had to admit defeat - in this part of the war. He had to admit he was NOT going to finish the job today. Worse still, he was too tired to go up the road to the college (St. Mary's College of Maryland) to hear the colloquium for today. Which was too bad because now he would not find out about "The Euclidean States of America: Geometry's Influence on Jefferson and Lincoln" - and that was really too bad. And he would not - after the colloquium - go further up the road to the nice little restaurant where he has been working his way down their list of bourbons, two at a time, with some nice bread to 'cut the taste'.

Instead, admitting he was tired - again - and had to be reasonable, Webmaster retired from the battle, packed up what had to be packed up (but only that because he operates 'Marshall's Way'), went inside, showered etc., and began writing this piece. He had two servings of his own bourbon (which is really not bad) and a small dinner. And - *mirabili dictu* - he did not get too sore.

In fact when he awoke the next day (which is today), he was not really sore at all. And not very "re-tired" at all. He had quit just in time and was now in pretty good shape. It was another nice day and he was looking forward to getting on with that project. Maybe he could finish it today! Not that it mattered. He was - after all - retired, with more projects than (well you know). So the really neat thing was that - if he finished the project today, he could simply move on to one of the other projects.

And get retired all over again! The bottom line here (or so it seems to Webmaster) is that retirement - for him at least - is an opportunity to do so many different things that it does not really matter if those things get done, nor does it matter how tired one gets while doing them. It is an opportunity to TRY many things, some new, some old. To make many mistakes, and learn from those mistakes. To go to bed tired, expecting to get up (assuming one does in fact wake up) at least a bit sore. And to try again. After all - that's what life is about, isn't it?