

## My Hobbies and Life After Retirement

by  
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**I**F you ask me, I really cannot tell you exactly when I retired from my working life. All I remember is that, in 2000, I decided that I had enough of the mental pressure that came from my job as a contractor, that I did not want to have big ulcers in my stomach, and that I wanted to have some time to really indulge in my hobbies, so I reorganised my business that year. After that exercise, I only went to my office in the morning, and even then, I did not do much work there as far as the business was concerned. I devoted more and more time to things that I found pleasure in doing.

About four years ago, my eldest son left his job in Singapore to completely relieve me of my remaining responsibilities in running the business. Since then, I have been able to enjoy my hobbies without undue concern for worldly considerations such as time and financial constraints.

Strictly speaking, life after retirement is, like life before retirement, a very personal thing and it need not be shared with others. However, since I have come across quite a number of cases where people (not necessarily engineers) were unwilling to retire because they do not know what to do with their time when they stop going to work, I guess my little experience in managing my life before and after retirement may help some would-be retirees overcome their initial phobia for the unknown world of retirement and, at the same time, help some younger people prepare themselves for the unavoidable eventuality of retirement.

You will have recognised by now that, unlike certain people, I actually looked forward to my retirement from work. Now that I have been a retiree for four years, I am also very pleased to report that not only have I not become a couch potato, I

have, in fact, not watched any TV programs for quite sometime, not even my favourite National Geographic and Animal Planet channels. I simply do not have enough time to do all the things that I like to do.

Many of my hobbies and interests were cultivated during my school days. I started to collect stamps when I was very young. When I was still in Standard Six, I began to contribute essays to Chinese magazines and newspapers. I even wrote some short stories and poems during my secondary school and varsity days. To date, I have written three books; all three are travel stories. When I saved enough of my meagre pocket money, I bought a pinhole camera and started shooting away. At one time, I also enjoyed playing the harmonica.

In those days, the only time I travelled outside of my hometown in Teluk Intan (known as Telok Anson then) was to visit my grandparents in Singapore with my mother and younger sister during the year-end school holidays, cycling to Bidor for its waterfall, and cycling to Sabak Bernam to visit classmates. My first overseas trip was to Bangkok and Hong Kong with several of my classmates under the banner of the "Engineering Study Tour" organised during my undergraduate days as an engineering student at the University of Malaya.

When my children were still young, my wife and I used to take them on motoring holidays, at times, making a complete trip around the peninsula from north to south and from coast to coast. That helped cultivate our children's liking for travel too. Without making any conscious effort on my part, I picked up new interests as time went by. One of them was the collection of matchboxes. I now have a few thousand matchboxes in my collection.





I also started to collect turtle replicas about 15 years ago. With a collection of more than 450 replicas now, I am listed in the Malaysia Book of Records as having the largest collection in this category. My interest in collecting turtle replicas was actually kindled by another interest of mine. About 20 years ago, I became a certified scuba diver. In a diving expedition at Pulau Sipadan off the southeastern coast of Sabah, I encountered so many green and hawksbill turtles in the sea and became so fascinated with them that I made up my mind there and then to start collecting turtle replicas.

My interest in trekking and mountain climbing evolved out of my curiosity for the unknown, including my own physical stamina and mental tenacity. About 15 years ago, I attended IEM's AGM that was held in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah. I decided on the spur of the moment to join in for the climb up Mt. Kinabalu which was organised for the attendees of the AGM.

Without any preparation or knowing what to expect and wearing only a jacket over my normal clothing which I had bought at the eleventh hour, I ended up among the last to reach Laban Rata, completely soaked in the rain and shivering from the cold. It was one of the rare occasions when Sabah was hit by a typhoon that also thwarted the mountaineering engineers' hope of reaching the peak.

I was subsequently able to have my photo taken at Low's Peak in 2000 when I joined a group of Rotarians for the millennium climb. I made it to the peak again a few years later. It was during this second successful climb that I met a young lady who was a very keen trekker. My interest in trekking developed from there as my circle of trekking friends grew.

Since then, I have trekked many different parts of our country as well as in Nepal, India, Bhutan, China, Mongolia, Russia, Indonesia, Thailand, Philippines, South Korea, Iran, Turkey, New Zealand, Australia, Tanzania, Cyprus, Scotland, Peru, Ecuador, United States and Canada. I have also successfully climbed Gunung Rinjani on Lombok Island, Indonesia, and Mt. Kilimanjaro in Tanzania, East Africa.

So you realise by now why my life after retirement appears to be as busy as before retirement. It is certainly more colourful than before because of the great varieties of activities that I allocate my time for. However, from the adage that "all work and no play makes Jack a dull boy", I believe in the corollary that "all play and no work makes Jack a playboy". As such, I re-

main an active member of the Institution of Engineers, Malaysia and of the Rotary Club of Shah Alam.

IEM is a learned society to which I, as a professional engineer, rightly belong. It was through my training as a civil engineer that I was able to build a career and achieve financial freedom in the process of advancing my career. So it is only natural for me to try to play a small role to give back a little of my time and know-how for the advancement of the engineering profession. My contribution may not be significant, nevertheless, if the little that I do can make some engineers happy, I consider it meaningful enough and I shall continue to do it.

I became a Rotarian at the end of 1983. My involvement with the Rotary movement actually started in 1962 when I joined the Interact Club of my school. Interact Clubs, as you probably already know, are sponsored by Rotary Clubs for school pupils between the age of 14 and 18. I became the president of my school's Interact Club in 1964. Almost 20 years later, I was invited to join the Rotary Club of Shah Alam. I became its president in 1994/5.

Through my involvement in the Rotary movement, I was not only able to widen my social circle substantially beyond the engineering fraternity, I was also able to render service to some less fortunate members of our society in ways that I alone would find difficult to do.

I consider myself very lucky to be able to pull out from the quagmire of poverty and enjoy relative affluence when many people still have to struggle to make ends meet. Therefore, if I can help bring a little sunshine to some people's life or replace tears with a smile on a child's face, let me do it. If my strength and means are too insignificant, let me join hands with other like-minded people and do it together.

I have also been a member of the Malaysian Nature Society for about 30 years now and I participate in many of the society's activities. I have delivered several talks with slide shows to some of the society's members.

Yes, I may be as busy as when I was working, but there is a significant difference. I am now busy doing things without feeling any mental pressure, and all the things that I do are things that I LIKE to do, not things that I HAVE to do. So I derive a lot of pleasure and satisfaction from doing those things, and I look forward to the arrival of every new day as each new day signifies more time for the enjoyment of all my hobbies and interests.

I am thankful that my hobbies and interests cover both the physical and mental aspects of my life. I am able to maintain my physical health through trekking, mountain climbing, scuba diving and even travelling, and I am also able to derive a lot of satisfaction and spiritual fulfilment from my mental pursuits such as writing travel stories, sharing my travel photos and travel experiences with friends, reading, and even just looking at my collection of stamps and turtle replicas.

Last but not least, I am thankful that through sheer hard work, careful planning and prudent investment, I have been able to achieve financial freedom which allows me to indulge in all of my hobbies and interests while continuing to support my family and I with a reasonably high standard of living. ■