

## Attempting to Avoid a Frivolous Life

“You lead a frivolous life,” an acquaintance told me recently.

We had just been discussing my January trip to Cuba and an upcoming ski trip to Colorado over spring break so I suppose I shouldn't have been surprised, but her comment startled me.

I smiled and nodded as I walked away, which is what I always do when: A) I didn't quite hear what was said, or B) I'm not sure if I was just insulted. So, I looked it up. “Frivolous” can be defined as “not having any serious purpose or value,” which is not the way most of us want to perceive our lives.

On the contrary, I often fret about things like world hunger, social injustice, and dozens of other significant worldwide humanitarian issues that I fully intend to do almost nothing about. I used to think that someday I'd sell all my worldly possessions, live in a grass hut and commit myself to making a difference in the lives of the downtrodden, but I finally decided that throwing money at international agencies was all I could realistically handle.

Forgive me, but my areas of interest can be defined by increasingly large concentric circles of lessening importance that originate from wherever I happen to be standing at the moment.

Not that I'm doing nothing at all of “value.” In a desperate effort to give my waning life meaning, I've increased my donations to charities and volunteerism with various local nonprofits, not to mention rescuing drowning kittens as often as possible. I'm not particularly religious, but I believe in covering my bases.

I'll be 62 years old later this year, one year closer to my significant investment in life insurance actually paying off. Not surprisingly I've been spending more time thinking about retirement, and as near as I can tell the primary goal is for one to be able to do what one wants as much as possible. Is that selfish, shallow and self-indulgent? Sure, that's the point.

I have been living my life as if I could die at any moment (which I could), and I decided long ago that I'm not going to voluntarily take the Great Dirt Nap while there are so many items remaining on my bucket list. I've never believed that the person who dies with the most toys wins, but I do believe that those with the most varied experiences are in the running.

I can see that doing right by one's partner will be a major consideration for anyone expecting to have a worry-free retirement. I recently asked a musician friend of mine if he wanted to go to a Bluegrass jam at Hilltop Tavern after our weekly jazz band rehearsal one evening and he replied, "I don't know if my pass for tonight is good for that long."

I asked if his spouse allows him to accumulate any unused minutes for future use and he said no, it's use it or lose it. I offered to help him procure more favorable terms in his future contract negotiations and he said, "No thanks, I'm just happy it was renewed at all."

LuAnn keeps a significantly looser leash on me – I believe she understands that the amicable nature of our 35-year relationship is largely dependent on us not seeing very much of each other. That applies to most of my friends as well, now that I think about it.

Anyway, who among us is not leading what appears to be a frivolous life? I've seen your Facebook page, and it's dominated by vacations, pets, YouTube videos, games, grandchildren and other activities unrelated to solving any of humanity's overwhelming problems.

Don't expect that to change when you retire. Once you realize there are more dollars flowing out than in for the first time, you'll start rearranging your priorities and examining your expenditures a little more closely. My recommendation is to avoid purchasing any items "not having any serious purpose or value."

*Writers Group member Dave Parsons reluctantly spends his days at the business he co-owns on the Coralville Strip, threatening retirement.*