

RETIREMENT A New Adventure

Newsletter

July 2021
Vol. 1, No. 10

Introducing The 73rd Birthday Edition

Recently, I had a most distressing task to perform; playing the organ at the funeral of a very dear friend, one who had always been cheerful, chatty, and full of life. For most of the service, I found myself just staring at the programme, trying to process the occasion and asking God, "Is this for real?" Days later, I remained rattled, fully conscious of my mortality.

I recall a time in my thirties when I would tease my late mother about the diligence with which she studied the obituary pages in the Sunday Gleaner and the numerous funerals she attended. I teased her about being a professional mourner because, at the time, the only funerals I attended were the ones I had to play the organ for and an occasional one of an old family friend who had lived a long life. So, at that time funerals for me were simply clinical events, unlike my mother whose emotions were invested in each one she attended.

Fast forward to today, and I have become my mother! Over the last three years, I have been losing relatives, friends, former schoolmates, boys I taught in high school, colleagues I worked with, church brothers and sisters I worshiped with, and other acquaintances with disturbing regularity. Covid-19 has only served to amplify the incidence and impact of these losses. In essence, my physical and virtual funeral attendance as a personal mourner and as organist have now "tun up" as we say in Jamaican parlance.

On the positive side though, what this has done is given me a greater appreciation for life and all that it offers; the potpourri of good, bad and ugly that make up another day, month, and year of life. With the arrival of July, a fresh wave of thanksgiving and gratitude wash over me. This year is even more significant because of the pandemic and I am just grateful to be alive to enjoy another celebration.

So in this issue, I invite you to celebrate with me as I share with you some of the experiences that make July 16 such a special day for me. I give a glimpse into the annual photoshoot which has become the highlight of my year. I also recount some amazing travel experiences that appeared to be divine appointments to make this day even more special. And finally, I share a very special poem that I wrote titled *My Family* to give recognition to all the groups of persons who have contributed to the richness of my life.

Let's celebrate life with gratitude!

"Studies show that for most people, happiness comes not from comfort and convenience, but from facing and surmounting challenges."

~Patricia Reid-Waugh

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"Photographs are a very visual way of recording memories that really capture the atmosphere and feeling of a time and place."

~Patricia Reid-Waugh



Boosting A Senior's Spirit With A Birthday Photoshoot

Since 2017, the thing I look forward to most in any year is my birthday photoshoot. This ritual was triggered by the experience in October 2016 when I turned up at Bryan Studios Ltd. to take the photograph for my book cover. When the skilled make-up artist worked her magic on my face, I could hardly believe my eyes. I was delighted with the result as all evidence of the many hours spent in the sun watching West Indies Cricket and US Open Tennis was gone. I saw a beautiful image smiling back at me in the mirror and immediately felt a new rush of confidence and self-love gushing through my veins. She then handed me over to a talented photographer who manipulated the lighting to capture the perfect shot for the book cover.

After experiencing the magic of photography, I decided then and there that I would be back in July 2017 for a full-blown photoshoot to ensure there was a beautiful photograph to adorn the cover of my funeral programme in case I passed away before the next birthday. That's the genesis of this annual ritual which has become such a fun experience for me and also for the team at Bryan Studios. I feel like a seasoned model, following instructions, twisting and turning, and feeling a rush of adrenaline with every click of the camera. It is a boost to my spirit as a senior citizen to see myself looking fashionable and fresh.

I am therefore making a case for all the seniors in the lives of subscribers to this newsletter. If you are thinking of your next gift for your parents, grandparents, favourite aunties, mentors, or those who have contributed significantly to your success in life, do consider gifting a photoshoot. There comes a time where we seniors have accumulated enough stuff and should be de-cluttering instead of acquiring more tangible items. We relish the gifts of experiences because these generally enable us to rekindle memories of our younger days. A photoshoot is a great experience that will warm every senior's heart, especially the ladies.

I hope the photos above from this year's birthday photoshoot provide convincing evidence for you to give a gift of beauty (even once) to the seniors you love and cherish.



The Joy of Meeting New People When You Travel

In October 2018, as I hustled to get to Miami International Airport Rental Center to return a car, I knew I was late and would miss the 12-noon flight to Kingston. Not surprisingly, by the time I got to the check-in counter the flight was closed. Next flight - 6:44pm. I was angry with myself for not making the flight resulting in my missing my friend, Jean Lee's Book Launch in Kingston set for 6 pm that evening.

Seething, I checked in for the later flight, cleared Immigration, and settled in the Departure area for the torturous 7-hour wait. Eventually, I boarded and settled into my middle seat feeling a little better knowing that we would soon be on our way.

One of the last passengers to board the flight was a woman who wanted to get to the window seat beside me. As I let her in I joked, "I was keeping that seat for you." She flashed a wide smile and said, "oh, thank you". That broke the ice and we started chatting. She lived in New York but was then setting up some business ventures in Jamaica intending to return home permanently within a year.

I introduced her to my book and we chatted about all the exciting retirement adventures I had been up to. I regaled her with jokes, keeping her in stitches. Just as the flight started its descent into Kingston we began showing each other photographs from our phones. She showed me a photo stating it was taken in July on her birthday. I squealed, "yuh born in July too? What date?" She responded, "the 16th." In disbelief, I pull out my passport and showed her my birthdate, July 16, 1948. She pulled out hers and showed me the birthdate, July 16, 19xx!

In June 2019, on a flight from Kingston to Miami, I went to the galley to give the flight attendants a few of my book flyers for the crew. One of them remarked that I didn't look old enough to be retired. I boasted that in a month I would clock 71. She replied, "You don't look anywhere near 71! My mother is born in July too; on the 16th. What date is yours?" You can well understand it took me a while to find my voice and respond

I write in my book *Retirement A New Adventure*, "There are benefits to traveling alone and keeping your own schedule - but there is great value in reaching out to others. Making new friends is one of the most fulfilling parts of the travel experience." You might just be as lucky as me to have some of those new friends sharing the same birthday with you!

Photo:

Hanging out with Flight Attendant, Jacquelyn in the galley of AA flight from Jamaica to Miami.

I believed this to be another divine appointment after discovering that her mother's birthday was also July 16.

*"Gratitude is a must (yeah)
Mi see blessings fall by mi right
hand.
Buss a toast fi di friends weh
tek off heavy load."*

~Koffee

Let's Acknowledge Those Who Lift Us Up Along The Way

Remember that song *No Man is an Island*? None of us are totally self-made. Every last person has had someone lift him/her up at some point along the way. We must admit though that some of us have been more fortunate than others to have a complete network of actors supporting us all throughout our lives. The poem *My Family* was written to acknowledge with gratitude my support system. It is written using a mixture of standard English and Jamaican dialect.

MY FAMILY

My family is people dat share de same blood wid me, blood dat tic, tic, ticker dan water;

An my family is people dat tie to me through marriage an adoption, an de rope tie so tight it can't break;

My family is neighbour dat always keep dem eye cross de fence to mek sure everything alright pon my side,

Neighbour dat check fe find out if me dead when dem don't see me window open or when me curtain don't draw in de morning;

Neighbour dat air out me house when me gone to foreign and tek care of all me business just like dem own;

My family is friend who listen to me problems and give me good advice; and don't 'fraid fe tell me when me wrong;

Friend who me can depend pon fe drop a dollar in me hand when me short and know dem would never to tell a sole bout me temporary state of poverty;

My family is co-worker dat work wid me from morning till night, rain or shine.

Co-worker dat cover fe me when me running late, and have me back when me mek mistake,

Co-worker dat no jealous a me when me get elevate!

My family is church brother an church sister dat greet me wid a smile when dem see me and call to find out if me hearty when dem don't see me;

Church brother an church sister dat pray for me even if me don't sick or dead;

My family have eighty and ninety year old dat wiser dan Solomon; who can tell you every story from the good old days like it just happen dis morning;

An my family have baby dat just, just born and don't even learn fe suck finger yet;

My family had magician; like me modda who would kiss me knee an mek de cut stop bleed and de pain disappear same time and me father who could lift me up and throw me in the air and catch me with one finger;

My family have people name Chin and Chance but dem is not full Chinese; an my family have people name Whyte but dem black like me;

My family have God fearing people dat serve the Lord faithfully day in and day out;

An my family have some people dat might fear Him but nah serve Him;

My family spread out all over de world; America, Jamaica, Cayman, St. Martin, Nevis, England, Sweden, all over; and me don't forget de ones in Africa dat me never meet;

My family; it big, big, big, big, you see; and you, and you, and you is my family too.

Editor's Special Note

*"If I can help somebody as
I pass along,
If I can cheer somebody
with a word or song,
If I can show somebody
that they're travelling
wrong,
Then my living shall not be
in vain."*

~ Alma Irene Thompson

On this day 73 years ago at the Percy Junior Hospital in Spalding, Manchester, Jamaica, a doctor coaxed in soft tones, "push." The expectant mother, Mrs. Maude Reid co-operated obediently and I popped out smiling.

My joy at being born was short-lived when the doctor slapped me on my slimy buttocks. For a moment I was in shock, but soon decided to fight back by screaming as loudly as my under developed lungs could muster. Everybody in that room got the message, "this one is going to be a fire-cracker." Most persons who know me well will readily agree that I have lived up to that promise.

Each birthday presents new opportunity for us to reflect on our lives and assess what kind of contribution we have made to those in our immediate family circle, to the community in which we function and to the world at large. I am pleased that in this past year I had the vision to launch this newsletter to bring greater awareness to matters that impact on the type of retirement experience persons will have when the time comes.

I am grateful for those who have subscribed and put themselves in a position to receive the information and advice that the newsletter provides. I am appreciative to those subscribers who have so willingly shared their experiences and expertise to ensure that the newsletter brings value to those reading it.

To every subscriber I say, "Thank You!"

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