

## Life story of David Winslow

David Winslow is 60 years old, retired from life-long work in computer systems, now living in a rural area of New Hampshire, USA, working at consulting and taking care of his family and his home.

When he first started working, for IBM at age 21, following completion of his military service, IBM was a wonderful company to work for, he says. He moved several times, usually at those times when he moved up in the firm. “Most of us moved around as we got promoted. It was a great deal for us employees,” he says, “especially those like myself without academic credentials,” and it was great for IBM since it made for a very loyal work force.” Places he has lived over the years include the states of Georgia and Pennsylvania, and in the sixties, Woodstock, New York, home of the celebrated festival.

He does not recall signing a contract when he was first employed, but IBM’s well-published retirement benefits were part of their understanding. Dave says no pressure was put on any of them to retire from IBM. The company offered severance packages to all, he says, but the amount was based on length of service, however, so it would have appealed more to the older employees. Having taken an early retirement at just fifty-one – actually taking a leave of absence three years before that – Dave became a consultant working from home. When an opportunity came for him to return to the workforce for three months with another company he accepted it, the short-term position becoming five years. He left at age 53, when the company relocated, retiring for the second time and returning to consulting from home.

Dave tells me he came from old Yankee stock, born in 1943 and growing up with his mother, brother, and grandparents. The fact that he only saw his father on weekends has had a tremendous influence on the way he views fatherhood, and he regrets that he was not able to spend more time with his own two boys from his first marriage. A short time after he began working for IBM he had married, and the birth of two sons followed. Within a few years Dave and his wife were divorced, their two young sons going to live with their mother.

Dave remarried, and from this marriage came a third son. When this marriage ended their son stayed with Dave, enabling him to form a close relationship with this, his youngest son, in a way not possible, he believes, with the sons who grew up, for the most part, without their dad’s presence. The family continues to grow, however. His eldest son, now married, has made him a grandfather.

His home sits on a few acres, so he hopes eventually to plant a vegetable garden and probably get a few chickens and plant some trees. Dave enjoys winter, he says, when everything is still and silent, though he finds the warmth inside appealing too. Winters in the rural areas of New Hampshire can bring a lot of snow, but he is prepared, with a 4 wheel drive pickup and snow blowers on hand.

Dave says he feels fulfilled, “as much as any sixty-year old who is done working, done raising children, done with those years of high hormone levels.” Now, he says,

life seems to be about little things, fixing something, or meeting friends during the week for coffee or lunch, or mowing the grass. Few things I do seem very significant, but I am very grateful for having loved ones around and lots of good memories and my wonderful partner to pass the time with.

He visits his youngest son quite often, and meets with friends, on a fairly regular basis, for coffee and long talks. Dave is in a relationship, and though his lady-friend is important to him, his children from his earlier marriages and his one grandson also claim a special part in his life. On asking him what his goals in life had been, when he was a teenager, he responds,

To be a husband and Dad was the biggest goal of my life, having been brought up without my dad. Second was to work with electronics which was my interest as a nerdy kid. That is how I got the first job at IBM. I was not blocked by academic credential bias because they hired purely by test scores.

Dave has thought about the significance of his first two marriages and his relationship with his new partner, who has been part of his life for several years now. “Styles become outdated,” he says.

That which is popular or socially accepted may become outdated. What sustains us emotionally and gives us purpose is more than such things, and it is in that sense that I say we are supposed to grow old with our lifetime partners. What I mean is that a lifetime partner, who has shared our most significant ups and downs, who knows us most intimately, who has loved us and been the one we loved, can provide something no one else can. It’s hard to define, a sort of belonging, an identity that is bigger than you are, a sharing that runs deeper. It seems to me, the way we are supposed to grow old is with our lifetime partner. That way we look back together on a whole life, share grandchildren, that kind of thing. My partner and I share each other’s memories and grandchildren. It’s the next best thing.

Although he retired earlier than most, Dave believes individuals should have the choice of continuing to work rather than being forced to retire. He explains his views:

I do not believe in forced anything. Put another way, some Libertarians say, we are free choice on everything! This is an ethical issue, if I want to work and another wants to hire me, by what ethical right does any authority preclude our mutual deal?

On the practical side, it strikes me as bad economics, political economics. I suppose they say ending employment at 65 increases the jobs available to others. True as far as it goes, but the ultimate object of the game is not to create jobs, but to efficiently produce goods. When the economy is efficient, investment is strong, and jobs and other opportunities abound. When the economy suffers from political manipulation, for the sake of jobs or anything else, efficiency is lost, investment (of time or money or human aspiration) declines or is distorted, and the machine slows down. Mandatory retirement is like deliberately removing the star players in hopes of having a better team.

Life story of David Winslow written by Sue McPherson following email interview in 2004.