

Make It Happen with Emily Kimball
.....Creative Aging Expert.....

July 2006

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1-Bike Virginia's Seniors with Attitude

This year I participated in Bike Virginia, a beautiful five-day ride through rural south eastern Virginia and down into Roanoke Rapids, North Carolina. Along with 2,000 other cyclists, I rode the flat roads of Emporia, South Hill, and Halifax, passing by tobacco and soybean fields, cows grazing in fields, and goats munching grass. Each town welcomed us with glorious rest stops stocked with much appreciated treats of homemade cookies, biscuits, sandwiches, watermelon, orange slices, bananas, and lots of ice cold water and Gatorade. We could select between different ride mileages each day. I managed to rack up 258 miles. Cyclists choosing the 100 mile routes rode 500 plus miles. During this adventure I met some interesting seniors with attitude!

First was Bobby, a 66-year-old man from Northern Virginia. Bobby was quite a bit over weight — to put it mildly. The furthest he had pedaled at one time before coming on Bike Virginia was 30 miles. When asked what made him try this long ride, he replied, "I thought it was about time I did something about my weight." He completed 250 miles over those five days! Right on Bobby. He said he'd be back next year.

A sign on the back of a bike pedaled by a gray haired woman rider caught my attention. It read *The Red Tomatoes: Team Tortoise* — nothing like

acknowledging that you ride slowly and naming yourself accordingly. In my Richmond bike club we have the *Turtles* who ride from 10-14 miles an hour and the *Rabbits* who ride 15-20 miles an hour. As a slow rider myself, I appreciate the idea of *Team Tortoise* very much. After all, whether we choose the 55 mile ride or the 100 miler, we all eventually arrive at the same destination, so who cares how long it takes to get there?

One acquaintance from my bike club greeted me with, "Hi there young lady." To which I replied, "I'm not a young lady, I'm an old woman." Okay, he said with a laugh, "I'll call you an old fart." "That's more accurate than young woman," I replied! In hindsight, I realized the better answer to the young woman greeting is to reply, "I'm not a young woman: I'm an old woman with pizzazz."

When I asked Jack, a Bike Virginia rider who had recently retired from a career in computers, how he spent his retirement time he replied, "as far away from computers as possible." He explained that he tutors elementary school children two days a week and loves it. Research shows that often retirees decide to volunteer or work at jobs that are completely different from their former careers.

2. Romeos' Lunch

While visiting my friend Nancy at the Hyatt Retirement Home in Chevy Chase, Maryland, I met an interesting gentleman. Mel, an enterprising 86-year-old, has gathered a group of male retirees living at the Hyatt for weekly lunches out together. They called themselves The ROMEOS. Retired Old Men Eating Out!

3. Linkages, Memory Journals

Addressing a conference on Aging at Shenandoah University in Winchester, Virginia, I attended a workshop where I learned of a series of small diary-like journals enabling parents, grandparents, and

children to share their life with others. I bought, *Mom, Share Your Life with me*. It consists of 352 questions about your life. The naughtiest thing you ever did, first boyfriend, childhood games and songs, favorite aunt, etc. I thought I would answer the questions that were relevant and make up new ones for pages that didn't relate to my life. Once I've filled it in, I will give it to my children. What a great way to share intimate details of your life with your family. For more details, check author Kathleen Lashier's web site at www.mymemoryjournals.com

4. Elderwoman Interview

Elderwoman author Marion van Eyk McCain was recently interviewed by *Aging Horizons Bulletin*, a Canadian publication. I liked what she said so much I am including some of her thoughts here.

“I see old age not as a decline but as the ultimate expression of our womanhood. If our youth was our budding and the middle years our flowering, then old age is our fruiting. What we have to offer, in these later years, is the ripe fruit of ourselves, in whatever form that takes.

“It's not that we have to be forced or self-conscious about it. We simply have to be authentically who we are, with the conscious intention of doing our part as full members of our society. That part may be campaigning, writing a book, answering a grandchild's questions, saying a prayer, or chaining yourself to some railings – it doesn't matter. It is the attitude and the intention which matter. It's about not just coping with old age but using it to grow into your full complete self – a unique old, wise, wonderful woman.” Read the full interview at <http://www.aginghorizons.com/elderwomen.html>

5. Ageism in America Report

Age discrimination is deeply embedded and widespread in American society according to the new report, *Ageism in America*, issued in February

by the International Longevity Center-USA and funded by the Open Society Institute. Ageism, the denial of basic human rights of older persons, is one of the most pervasive prejudices across human society. In the 114-page report, a multidisciplinary task force led by Dr. Robert N. Butler, president and CEO of the ILC-USA, documents and analyzes the numerous aspects of age discrimination. For an Executive Summary or to order your free copy of the report, go to <http://www.ilcusa.org/prj/ageism.htm>

6. Seminar on Aging in Beijing

The American Society on Aging is offering its 6th journey to China May 24-June 8, 2007. Examine issues of aging and care of the elderly and gain an understanding of traditional Chinese culture and how it instills a great reverence for elders. I went to China with ASA several years ago and found it a most enlightening experience. We visited retirement homes, nursing homes, and senior centers and spoke with Chinese experts on aging. Traveling in a van with a student interpreter, we saw the many sights of Beijing and even got to walk on the Great Wall. I highly recommend this experience. There is nothing like visiting a country with a specific focus in mind. Makes it so much more rewarding. For details go to www.asaging.org/enewsletters/ASA2007ChinaResearchForm.pdf or call China Advocates at 888-333-2585.

7. Merrill Lynch Retirement Study

A press release from Merrill Lynch on May 18, 2006, announced the findings of a groundbreaking study that uncovers a startling disconnect between how Americans and their employers view retirement. The study discovered that 76 percent of baby boomers had no intention of seeking a “traditional” retirement. Boomers are looking to cycling in and out of work and/or pursuing an entirely new career in later life as the retirement ideal. The majority say their “retirement career” will last over 9 years and they won’t stop work until

their 70s. Employers, in turn, are more likely to assume that employees want a regular part time schedule rather than to cycle in and out between periods of work and leisure. The study concludes that while the new retirement is on most company radar screens, the challenges that it brings have not been adequately addressed. To access this article go to:

http://ml.com/index.asp?id=7695_7696_8149_63464_66281_66480

8. What's Emily Up To?

During June I addressed the Brandermill Woods Retirement Community residents about the importance of staying active as they age; keynoted the Lynchburg College's Beard Center on Aging Conference – my topic, *Redefining Old Age for the 21st Century*; and spoke at the Shenandoah University Symposium on Aging – my topic, *Life's an Adventure: Live It*.

In the spirit of that final talk I have completed an off-road bike trip from Washington, D.C., to Pittsburgh, PA; canoed with the bateaux at the annual James River Bateaux Festival; and rode my bike with 2,000 others on Bike Virginia. On July 17, I leave for a 3 week backpacking trip in the Adirondacks, and will return to be the luncheon speaker at the Ohio Association on Area Agencies on Aging, where I will deliver an address titled *It's Never Too Late To Make It Happen!*

May you too, have many exciting summer adventures!