

Get jubilated!

Lynn Miller

When I was 57 years old I started learning Spanish. I did so because for the last six years my wife had been making two trips a year to Honduras to work with a medical team, and in 1997 she finally relented and invited me to go with her on her next trip. For some reason, we decided that learning Spanish might be helpful for both of us, so we extended our visit by a week and signed up for a one-week immersion course at a language school in Copan, near the Mayan ruins. And since that first week, we have managed to survive seven more weeks of one-on-one lessons, but we are nowhere near fluency.

Maybe it's our age (I'm 68 now), maybe it's because we only do a week or two a year, maybe it's because we are poor students with all the distractions offered by Copan and its amazingly hospitable citizens. For whatever reason, we have a long way to go, but I am really glad I have stuck it out to this point. Because during my last week of lessons, when I was about to end my work with Mennonite Mutual Aid, I learned the Spanish word for

“retired.” I have never really liked the word “retirement”—it sounds so exhausted, like I was tired before and now I am tired all over again. But the Spanish word for that period of life has an entirely different feeling to it, one that describes my current attitude. And that word is, “Jubilado.”

Say it a few times, “jubilado, jubilado,” It doesn't sound at all like “tired again,” does it? To me it sounds like “jubilated,” “I am now full of jubilation,” I am delirious with jubilation now that I can set my own hours and don't need to fill out any more time sheets or expense account forms and don't need to collect those flimsy little receipts to hand into an accountant each month (they don't have those at MMA).

Now I can turn my dreams into reality without destroying my future. Now I can learn to hang glide or scuba dive or hike the Appalachian Trail without damaging my income stream, even if I damage something else in the process. This summer I am going

to head for Montreal from Buffalo on a canal boat that my friend and I have been working on since the day I “jubilated” at the end of 2006, and I don’t have to ask anyone’s permission or take any time off from “work.” In fact, getting to Montreal is my “work” for next summer—work that I have assigned to myself, work that I pay myself to do, and work that will be evaluated not by how close I get to Montreal but by how much fun I am having on the way.

Of course, I had to do some planning while I was working so

that I could financially afford to be “jubilated,” but with some professional advice from my financial planner, that was easy. The hard part was letting go of the affirmation and feeling of “usefulness” that I got from working. So I didn’t! I found that continuing to do what I had done before, but now on my own terms (very part-time with much lower financial expectations), I kept those emotional needs fulfilled.

So here’s my advice (and you don’t need to learn Spanish to do this), “get jubilated!” ✂

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into **reality**
without **destroying my future***

