

Should I Learn to Tango and Ride a Horse at Ninety?

By Irv Sternberg

Upon my early retirement in the 1980s, I assumed I had enough years left to accomplish a number of goals that had eluded me. Moreover, I was in good health and financially able to pursue those goals. I prepared a list, subsequently known as My Bucket List.

So at the age of 57, these are the items I placed in my bucket, things I hoped to accomplish in my remaining years:

1. Without a job to distract me, I could now turn my attention to my family--my wife, my son and daughter, my mother and countless uncles, aunts and cousins. I became much more of helpmate to my wife, and tried (not always successfully) to involve myself in my children's lives. I brought my aging mother from New Jersey to live with us, and reached out to friends and other relatives who were dispersed across the country. The process of re-connecting was joyful and heartwarming.
2. I'd always wanted to write and publish a novel. I joined a writers' group, shared manuscripts with its members and, after many rejections, found an agent and publisher. I became a published author at the age of 62. What pleases me the most is that I published nine more books and I continue to write in my 90's.
3. Although I did some traveling while working in the corporate world, which enabled me to see Iran, Barcelona, Jerusalem, Rome, Zurich and Copenhagen, I wanted to travel for fun and education in my retirement. This desire took me to Tuscany in Italy, to England and Scotland, Budapest, Vienna, Nuremburg, Cologne and Amsterdam, and to the four corners of the U.S.—from Alaska to Hawaii and from Maine to the Florida Keys—with lots of places in between.
4. I also wanted to learn to ride a horse and learn to dance (I mean real dancing, not what I've been doing all my life). I wanted to cruise both the southeast and northeast coasts of the U.S. and visit Savannah, Chicago, Boston, Quebec City and Tel Aviv. I've not done that. So they remain unaccomplished in my bucket. Given more time and continued good health, maybe I'll be able to cross some of those off my list, too.

Well, not all of them. I think I'll forget about learning to ride a horse and doing the tango.