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IN SIGHT for Oregon Lawyers

IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF YOUR PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL LIFE

MEANING AT MIDCOURSE

The British call the period of life when children are grown and most of us are nearing completion of our first career “the third age.” Life course scholar Phyllis Moen refers to this life stage as the “*midcourse*.”

This stage – roughly the fifties, sixties and seventies – connotes the period in which individuals begin to think about, plan for, and actually disengage from their primary career occupations and the raising of children, launch second or third careers, develop new identities and new ways to be productively engaged, establish new patterns of relating to spouses, children, siblings, parents, friends, leave some existing relationships and begin new ones.¹

The baby boom generation (born 1946-1964) is rapidly approaching the midcourse stage of life. On July 1, 2005, the leading edge of the boomers turned 59 1/2 and can access their tax-deferred retirement accounts without penalty. In 2008, they will turn 62 and be eligible for Social Security. There are between 75 and 80 million baby boomers in America. Boomers constitute approximately 60% of the membership in the Oregon State Bar.

“The baby boom is not a single homogeneous social entity. It is made up of several different generational cohorts, each with its own somewhat distinctive stamp. There is far more cultural, economic, and social diversity among the boomers than there was among generations of Americans who came of age in the 1940s and 1950s.”²

Nearly 75% of baby boomers come

from economically poor, working class, or family-owned business roots.³ The socio-economic origins shared by a majority of baby boomers have helped shape certain lifelong traits and values they have embodied, such as self-reliance, independence, self-indulgence, a sense of entitlement, and a motivation to give something back to society.

Several studies have reported that between 65% and 80% of baby boomers plan to work in retirement. The MetLife Foundation/Civic Ventures *New Face of Work Survey* published in June 2005 focused on identifying the kind of work the generation of Americans now in their 50s and 60s want to do after the traditional working years. Fully 56% of leading-edge baby boomers envision retirement as a time to begin a new chapter in life by setting new goals, being active and involved, starting new activities, and even starting new jobs and careers. In contrast, 38% envision retirement as a time to take it easy, take care of oneself, enjoy leisure activities, and take a much-deserved rest from work and daily responsibilities.

Half of the survey participants as a whole and 60% of the leading-edge boomer survey participants said it is important that work in retirement benefit the community in at least one of three specific ways:

- It helps to improve the quality of life.
- It provides an opportunity to help the poor, the elderly, and other people in need.
- It provides the opportunity to work with children and young people.

Almost 60% of leading-edge baby

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boomers report that they are interested in taking jobs now or in the future that would serve and improve the quality of life in their communities in one of the following areas: education, health care, helping those in need, working with youth, civic activism, arts and culture, and the environment.

For lawyers who are interested in transitioning into a community service job either now or in retirement, the Civic Ventures Web site www.civicventures.org is a treasure trove of information and resource references. In conjunction with the release of the *New Face of Work Survey*, Civic Ventures also released *The Boomer's Guide to Good Work: An Introduction to Jobs That Make a Difference* to help boomers and pre-boomers find public service jobs. Both the *Survey* and the *Guide* are available free online at the Civic Ventures Web site.

At the OAAP, we regularly have lawyers at midcourse who choose to participate in the evening career satisfaction workshop that we offer. The workshop provides lawyers with the opportunity to engage in a structured process of self-assessment. Participants complete survey instruments and engage in exercises that are designed to identify general personality preferences, interests, skills they most prefer using, and values. They then discuss these with a small group of fellow lawyers. The workshop is facilitated by an OAAP attorney counselor. The workshop is not designed with a bias either toward lawyers who intend to remain in traditional legal practice or toward those who are considering moving from law to alternative jobs or careers. The workshop's focus is to provide an opportunity to explore the major factors that contribute to job and career satisfaction.

If you would like more information about the career satisfaction workshop, call Mike Long or Shari R. Gregory at 503-226-1057 or 800-321-6227.

Mike Long
OAAP Attorney Counselor

¹ Phyllis Moen, "Midcourse: Navigating Retirement and a New Life Stage," In Jeylan Mortimer and Michael J. Shanahan, eds., *Handbook of the Life Course*. New York: Kluwer Publishers, 2003, p.274.

² *Reinventing Aging: Baby Boomers and Civic Engagement:*

Harvard School of Public Health-MetLife Foundation Initiative on Retirement and Civic Engagement, www.Hsph.harvard.edu/chc/reinventingaging/Report.pdf:p.9.

³ James Gambone, "Refirement: A Boomer's Guide to Life After 50," Kirk House, 2000, p.10.