



## The View from Right Field

by Rick Ohler

a bi-weekly column in the

**East Aurora Advertiser**

**“AARP: Avocational Angst of Retired  
Persons”**

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**W**e all embrace some sort of fantasy in our lives. Those of us who are hurtling headlong toward the end of our seventh decade on the blue and green planet often embrace this one: retirement. The etymology (RIP Snake) of the word “retire” comes from a couple of French words: *re*, meaning “back,” and *tirer*, meaning “to draw.” Literally, then, retire means to draw back from, or to withdraw, as from a career. A secondary definition of “retire” comes from the world of ballet: “a movement in which one leg is bent and raised at right angles to the body until the toe is in line with the knee of the supporting leg.” That’s a different fantasy altogether, and we won’t bother with that one here—it sounds way too painful.

I retired from the only bonafide, full-time, show-up-at-7:20 a.m., clean hands, coat and tie and non-sneakers on my feet job I ever had a few months ago. Brad Rogers, headmaster at The Gow School, gave me a wonderful gift of a position as an English teacher at the school in January of 2017 when a vacancy arose mid-year. It’s not like I had sat around all day before 2017, waiting for his call; I put in 46 years on ladders as a self-employed painting contractor, working anywhere from 25-75 hours a week, whatever the situation called for. But I made my own hours, earned from a few pennies to several dollars an hour, had employees then thought better of it, had great successes and cataclysmic failures, funded my IRAs with about enough money for the first fortnight of retirement. But a year and a half of teaching gave me a sort of legitimacy I’d never known, not to mention my first-ever guaranteed paycheck with regular contributions to Social Security and the taxman.

So, in May of 2018, after all the seniors I’d had in class graduated, I officially retired. I was entitled to “draw back from” work. Except, the notion of drawing back from work, had its drawbacks.

I drew back from the house painting, leaving the high ladder acrobatics for younger folk at the request of my sweetheart, and took only occasional, smaller, theoretically less dangerous jobs. I cut one session from my adult writing classes, but kept the two that have been at the core of my teaching for three decades. And, I asked if I might be a part-time writer for the world best hometown newspaper. Perhaps instead of writing just a column every other week and a feature article now and again, I might ramp up my contributions and get more involved. After all, I'd have nothing but time on my hands. It would be a comfortable slide into the gentler, kinder world of retirement.

Or not. You know those guys who say that they're so busy in retirement that they can't imagine how they had time to go to work? I can identify. Not because of the painting, not because of the adult writing classes, not even because of all the home repair and maintenance projects out here at Right Field World Headquarters that I could finally attend to after pretending they were invisible for so long. Nope, it's all because of the part-time job at that darned *East Aurora Advertiser*.

Which brings me, at long last, to the point of this week's missive from Right Field: part-time work.

Part-time work, I'm finding, is a fool's errand, especially when it involves something the retiree enjoys doing, such as covering the old hometown for the newspaper. In a little town of 13,000 souls, there are so many stories. As soon as I answered the inevitable question, "So whatcha gonna do in retirement?" with, "I'm hoping to do a little more with the *Advertiser*," the suggestions came pouring in. I made lists of potential story ideas on my phone, on scraps of paper I lost in my wallet, in the dust on my dashboard. I'm working hard, turning in stories every week, trying to keep up with everything that goes on around here, well aware that I could claim retirement status and draw back, but I probably never will. I'm buried in ideas, all of them deserving, some that have been in the cogitative stage for six months or better.

In order that these ideas don't escape me totally and perhaps never get their moment in print, let me give you a brief synopsis of the stories I promise I'll get to, sometime in my retirement.

-Back in February, I promised East Auroran **Dr. Sarah Pictor** that I would showcase the wonderful work she does in hippotherapy (therapy involving equestrian activities). A clinical associate professor of physical therapy at D'Youville College, she has spearheaded the program that helps youngsters reap the physical, emotional and psychological benefits of hippotherapy. She also was involved with a team of PTs in the Haiti Rehab Project, which provides interprofessional education and collaboration for medical personnel in Haiti. Thank you for your patience, Sarah, I will get to this story.

-Months ago, I promised the 90-year-old lifelong town resident **Clayt Bailey** that we would tape a long conversation about village history, of which he knows more than almost anyone living today. I'll get there, Clayt.

-It's been a decade since we caught up with **Dr. Don Birdd**, the West Falls science teacher, who's well known for cycling to raise money for Roswell and other organizations.

-A subscriber emailed me the other day to tell me that a 30-year-old East Auroran, **Dan Weidenhaupt**, has just written the screenplay for the recently released movie "Alpha," which is showing right this minute at Regal Quaker Crossing.

-A subscriber called the other day to suggest that since the six papers of Neighbor-to-Neighbor News (the parent company of the *Advertiser*) roughly cover the 147<sup>th</sup> NYS Assembly district, perhaps the papers should host a **debate** between the candidates, incumbent David DiPietro and challenger Luke Wochensky. I'll pass the idea along to management and be in touch with the League of Women Voters, as well.

-A member of the **Rural Outreach Center** board of directors asked if all six papers—the *Advertiser*, *Elma Review*, *Warsaw Courier*, *Arcade Herald*, *Franklinville Mercury-Gazette*, *Springville Journal*—might collaborate to get the word out about the fine work that the ROC does to assist, elevate and empower those in need throughout rural localities. I hope we can help.

And many other stories: We need to feature **Robert Urbanski**, benefactor of the Iroquois High School music program; **Emily Janiga**, of Marilla, who will play for the Beauts of the Women's National Hockey League this year; **Mat Uszewski**, a brewer at 42 North, one of the first graduates of ECC's Brewing Science and Service program; **J.R. Seeger**, EAHS class of '72, career CIA agent who has written a novel based on his experiences called *Mike4*; **Chad Kapturowski**, a 2012 Iroquois High School graduate and East Aurora, New York, native who is currently serving with a U.S. Navy strike fighter squadron; and just as I was sending this column in, I received an email: "Story idea. Blueberry Tree House farm in West Falls. A magical, fantastical place to go and pick blueberries." You see how it goes in retirement?

Luckily, the *Advertiser* has outstanding, full-time professionals like Adam Zaremski and Shelly Ferullo, who can pick up the slack for this retired guy as he struggles to figure out this part-time "draw back" thing.

