

The golden decade

25th October 2021

Next year I am 65 and halfway through 'The golden decade' I used to casually and almost jokingly mention to Richard Meek. It seems like only yesterday we were chatting about retirement and doing things other than paid work. A year ago aged 63 and out of the blue I had a Thalamic Stroke. Luckily I recovered quickly and can't believe my good fortune in having this 'tap on the shoulder' to keep adventuring and letting go of the past. There are sadly stories of folks who have not been so lucky. So this is a story of not wasting time in reinventing yourself because it's a voyage like none you've had before or will ever do again.



Not that long ago I had to fill in a questionnaire where it asked for my occupation. On the spur of the moment and without thinking, I wrote Archaeologist. My strong feeling that day was over the years I had unknowingly 'buried treasure' whilst I was busy being a husband, dad and business guy. As someone who loved the world of paid work it had taken courage to 'jump off the cliff backwards' and fall into the unknown kaleidoscope of adventure which would unravel in looking for that buried treasure.

During my 50's I remember a few times thinking I have an addiction. The buzz from work,

the cut and thrust together with the affirmation you get just keeps coming. It's like 'a fix' and you just want more because it's so compulsive. So many times as a colleague approached retirement the company would ask if you could do another year or even two. Nine times out of ten they carried on working only years later to ask why. During a conversation one day my wife Josie used the phrase 'golden decade' saying we have enough assets and money but our years left on the planet are finite. So why not confront the addiction and not so much retire, as to rewire and rebirth.

So a few months before my 60th birthday I began the adventure that I now call the golden decade. It has taken me to places and given me adventures I could never have imagined. I had always fancied going to art college and so off I went doing one day a week for the autumn term. One day the teacher Esme had the class drawing negative shapes and it was so hard. When I asked why we had to do this exercise Esme said she was trying to get me to see what I didn't instinctively see. I remember thinking at 60 I've got so much to learn.

In the spring of the following year I went to Albuquerque in New Mexico to join a conference on cosmic energy. No body asked me about anything material like what kind of car or house you have. After 5 days people knew I was called Richard and came from England. That was it. My career and everything else never got a mention. I will never forget how amazing it felt to just be me. It was in that moment I got a real sense of what 'buried treasure' could mean. My career had played its part and now the time had come to let that go and see what else was out there. It takes courage to 'jump' and at times you miss the 'addiction' because it feels so safe to be in that world which is so familiar.

In my case it's taken 4 years to get to that point where I can't remember having a job or a career. When I look back I realise I'm living a new life having experienced so many things outside the world of paid work. The feeling is one of gratitude and humility. That 'this' is possible and your boundaries keep moving the more you adventure into the unknown. Last summer I joined some people on Salt Spring Island in Vancouver Bay. For a few days the workshop was about exploring your dreams. Initially I wondered if I could 'open up' enough to really join the others. It was scary at times but I did not want to leave. Most of the other participants were in their 30's so I thought it's taken me so much longer to 'get here'. I felt so blessed to be there.

When I look back it was essential to be talking to my wife Josie and Richard Meek as Financial Advisor about the way things might be. As a 'community' we should talk more about the choices that lie ahead. I remember Richard Meek telling me early on that he has never rung a client to say the money has run out. Everyone cuts their cloth to suit their lifestyle but unfortunately our health works differently. I also remember Richard asking how much did I need financially as opposed to how much can you amass. So you have to think that through. The golden decade is truly a place of finding your buried treasure. It takes courage, expands your awareness beyond words and most importantly is about looking at your whole wellbeing which in turn benefits everyone you love and care for.

At the end of the summer I headed down to the Italian side of the Matterhorn to get some

mountain air and ended up in a place called Baveno on Lake Maggiore. Having had this 'pilot' trip I asked my wife Josie how she felt about a slow road trip down to Sicily. So off we went and what an amazing time we had. Deciding to leave your career has some parallels. If you want to broaden your horizons and make spontaneous choices possible then don't leave it too late. The Golden Decade goes quicker than you think.