Working at Cornell

Retiree Report Comments: Creative Endeavors

If you would like to share any details about the kinds of creative endeavors you've undertaken, please do so here.

Note: Many retirees are actively engaged in a range of different creative endeavors. We attempted to list them based on the activity they listed first – or in some cases based on the activity about which they wrote most. A number of retirees shared information about their writing projects in response to this prompt, and all have been included here. Not included here are the responses to a separate prompt about publications.

Photography, Drawing, Painting, Fine Arts

- I am involved with nature photography with a local organization and have displayed work in several exhibits.
- I have become a digital artist and wildlife photographer.
- As a member of the State of the Art Gallery in Ithaca, I have art works on exhibit all through the year. Additionally, I teach classes privately on photography, digital imaging, and art creation.
- Being in Costa Rica for two plus months every year has given me the opportunity to photograph many birds and animals up close and personal!
- I love photography and always have. I went from film to digital a few years back. I take lots of photos of youth sports and creative arts that I share with families. I have always loved building things. I recently finished my deck and many other construction-type projects.
- I enjoy nature photography—just for myself. I like to get outside and having a camera helps me notice more things and relaxes me.
- I've published one paper related to K-12 education and am working on three more for possible publication. I am just starting to return to photography as a hobby. My current interest is in learning more about star/night sky photography.
- I am making cards (for personal use and to sell at a church bazaar) from photographs I have taken.
- I do photography (mostly) and painting.
- As an avid traveler, I create slide shows, photo books, and videos of my travels.
- I am organizing home photos, including framing and developing photo books.
- I curated a large regional juried and judged art exhibit. I have exhibited in many national and regional art exhibits. I became a board member of a large art group. I'm a representative to an arts organization that represents 22 arts groups.
- I do international art sales. I've also written a book containing 62 of my goddess paintings with text and personal notations. I have a publisher and am up for an Editor's Choice recommendation. I work at Gallery 41 two days per month and have an ongoing exhibit there.
- I paint landscapes. I will have a show in the local library in August.
- I began oil painting for the first time in my life and have become serious about it.
- I continue to make pictures—generally drawings, watercolors, and colored pencil.
- Watercolor painting and pastels have become a passion of mine.
- I recently took painting classes and love painting. It seems to be an activity I can do easily. I've been sewing, baking, and writing for years.
I make mosaics using glass smalti from a foundry founded in the late 1800s in Venice. I took a course there in 2006. I attempt watercolor painting. I knit, do a precursor of knitting called nalbinding, and sew Korean style patchwork (bojagi.)

I have done extensive mosaic work at our house in Jamaica during the winters, and design and build pyrotechnic devices during the summers here in Ithaca.

I am an artist and crafts person. I create paintings and beaded jewelry.

I assist my wife in her stained glass and jewelry art that is displayed in museums and studios.

**Quilting, Fabric Arts**

- I do quilting.
- I create fiber art pieces.
- I do quilting, sewing, and stained glass.
- I made art glass beads. I make art and functional quilts.
- I've joined the Tompkins County Quilters Guild and worked a bit putting together the biennial show. I also serve on one of its committees, although my part-time work and home commitments prevent me from doing much more.
- I have really vamped up my quilting since I retired and am thinking of providing free motion quilting to people as a business—but not until I am actually fully retired.
- I am an active quilter and do floral photography.
- I do watercolor, quilting, other needlework, and dyeing.
- I enjoy writing, photography, quilt making, embroidery, and gardening.

**Crafts, Sewing, Needlework, Culinary Arts, and Collecting**

- I make greeting cards, sew, and do other crafts.
- I do pottery, knitting, painting, and crafts.
- I have invested in equipment, and participate with an associate in creating greeting cards; I provide computer design services for our association newsletter, including covers, montages and writing articles; I serve as photographer for association and various club events; and continue my interest in many types of needlework, and music (piano and ukuleles) as time permits.
- I bought a Glowforge, which is a 3D laser printer; it engraves and cuts wood, glass, leather, etc. I make presents for family and friends.
- I sing in a faith-based community choir. I've also crocheted lap robes/shawls for those in nursing homes and used scrap yarn for little afghans to be used for felines at the SPCA who are waiting for their “forever” homes.
- I have gotten back into crocheting scarves and afghans.
- I do wedding attire alterations and make table runners.
- I learned to knit when my granddaughter was born—I have made many knitted toys and clothes for her. I took a Jamie Oliver cooking course in Queensland, Australia. I took a cooking class in Chiang Mai, Thailand. I took a dyeing class in Luang Prabang, Laos. I took embroidery and appliqué classes in Queensland.
- I have a "business" at Longview called Simple Sewing. I do clothing repairs and alterations for the older adults who live at Longview.
- I've always enjoyed singing so being part of a choir has been wonderful, meeting new friends each year. I learned to crochet as an adult. I've made afghans for all my nieces and nephew, and then baby afghans for their children. Now I'm working on afghans for the grand nieces and nephews as they graduate from high school. Of course with any crochet project, there is always left over yarn so I've made some small "afghans" for the local SPCA cats and also other pieces that can be used as lap blankets or across the shoulders of those in nursing homes who are less mobile and therefore get more easily chilled.
- I have written online articles on a variety of subjects for Hubpages.com. I've also been part of a painting group with a concentration on watercolors. Another of my interests is crocheting and knitting. With the help of online tutorials, I taught myself more complex stitches and completed several large crochet projects as well as some knitting projects with designs using several colors.
- During the past year of my retirement, I've been traveling, cruising, and camping. At various campgrounds (on or near the beach), I participated in craft activities with shells, beads, and driftwood. I've made jewelry, wind chimes, wine bottle wind chimes, pictures, picture frames, signs, and keychains. I also did some ceramics and acrylic painting (“dirty pours” and "wine & design" classes). I had a lot of fun!
- I play guitar and sing at my church and get-togethers with friends and family. I paint pictures for friends and my own interests on wood, canvas, etc. I joined Catatonk Woodcarvers Guild and am learning various types of woodcarving skills and have entered local shows with my work. I knit the wool yarn I make for myself into clothing.
- I learned how to weave baskets.
I started a home business creating sewn items and selling them at craft shows around southwest Florida.
I sew clothing and gear for hiking, backpacking, and climbing.
I belong to a sewing and quilting ministry through my church. We make quilts for sick children and babies. We also make dresses for girls in Africa. I also bake and cook as needed for church and church families.
I do machine embroidery for fun and profit.
I have spent more time attending culinary arts classes and creating high-end dinner parties.
I began collecting antique (1930s-1960s) metal U.S. made toys. I now volunteer to display a small number of toys from that era.
I spend time refinishing furniture and cooking.
I build model airplanes.

Gardening, Landscaping, Farming

- Each year my flower gardens have expanded and changed. Most of my garden contains perennial plants, but I discovered that placing them for appropriate sun/shade and gauging their projected growth is a full-time job. Every year it's important to reassess growth and move plants if they are not flowering or growing as predicted. Then, there is the balance of color, texture, and leaf colors as well. I started doing this for fun and it has piqued my creative interest through the years. Or maybe I inherited this from my grandmother, whom I lived and grew up with?
- Our garden was on the Dryden Garden tour in 2018; we have created a beautiful environment.
- On our 50 acres, I worked at converting an old 20-acre corn field into a wildlife sanctuary. I planted 150 pine trees, 100 Osier Dogwood bushes, and wildlife food plots.
- I am maintaining and improving lines of day lilies and irises originally developed by a relative of mine.
- I am a gardener and have many flower and herb beds. I am continually expanding and redesigning the layout to add more edible and native plants.
- I enjoy gardening, floral arranging, and calligraphy.
- I had a new home built and I built the decks and did the grounds work, including a never-ending yard that needs care, and expanding the flower gardens.
- I do gardening, landscaping, some woodworking, drone flying, and work on electric bikes.
- While I was at Cornell, our family owned and operated a 130-acre crop farm. After retirement, we rented out both the farmland and tenant house. I'm also part owner of an orange grove in my home state of Florida.

Restoration, Renovation, Building

- I am presently converting a 20-year old storage shed into a hobby room. The renovation includes replacing rotten siding and flooring, upgrading the building envelope for energy efficiency, extending electric service from the main residence, providing site drainage (French drains), and providing floor/wall/ceiling finishes.
- I am remodeling a cottage, designing a house renovation, building a workshop in our new home, and designing and performing new landscaping.
- I bought a house in foreclosure. I am redoing the lawn and creating gardens. I am working on remodeling the house.
- I sing and play lap slide guitar—an ongoing discipline. I frequently respond in social media with humorous contributions. Having built my own home, out buildings and structures (12 and counting) plus a 140’x140’ vegetable garden, two large bridges, a rabbit house, and a four-foot high dam, I continue to add to and fine tune these projects. The latest project is a second door in our house, six-feet above ground-level with a porch and flight of stairs, and roofs covering both.
- We've researched, purchased, and furnished a village house in the protected historic quarter of LePuy en Velay, France—a major starting point for the Chemin de St Jacques pilgrimage route to Santiago de Compostella, Spain. Our house was on a 1544 town map and is probably as old as the traffic-free stairedstepped street, Rue du Bessat, which had the same name on a 1283 document.
- I do construction, building maintenance, alteration, new technologies, HVAC, etc.
- I purchased a few acres and endeavor to establish a homestead.
- I'm helping to renovate our daughter's house—painting, carpentry, etc.
- I am doing home improvement in my home and my daughter's home.
- I do woodworking, household repairs, home maintenance, nature photography, and amateur theater.
- I built a wooden boat. I build vintage motorcycles and bicycles. I build guitars. I do various woodworking projects—I make things.
- I am doing the restoration of a mahogany Chris Craft.
- I joined a Veterans for Peace writing group. I acquired a small 1947 sailboat to restore.
- I built a concrete fire pit and concrete border wall and planted trees.
- I helped to restore a Thomas Morse plane.
Music

- My chorus, Harmony Falls, qualified for the international level of competition in the Silver Division of Harmony, Inc. for the first time in 2015 and has continued to qualify every year since.
- We attended the competition in 2015, 2016, and 2018 and won the Division each time. (It was in Halifax in 2017 and you can't get there from here.)
- I play flute in two community bands in the summer. I play flute or piano in pit orchestras in the winter for the community theatre, having just finished “South Pacific” where I played the harp part on an electronic keyboard. I direct also; my bell choir at church will conclude its fifth year under my direction. Creatively, I fill-in for the permanent staff at The History Center when they cannot produce their weekly newspaper column.
- Three examples of my endeavors include: a lecture on Verdi's Requiem for the University of Uppsala, a program note on a Verdi opera for Salzburg, and organizing (with an Italian colleague) a Puccini conference in Lucca.
- I play guitar and do vocals for a classic rock cover band that does 40-to-50 gigs a year in the Finger Lakes region.
- I write and record original worship music. I have a recording studio in my home and I work with other musicians and a music producer and sound engineer. I recently launched a website to host my finished recordings that is free and open to the public.
- I play Irish music with the band Traonach.
- I sing in the Ithaca Community Chorus, as I have for the past 43 years.
- I developed my skills as a jazz pianist.
- I perform as an accompanist to singers. I co-authored a third edition of my textbook.
- I am on the board of directors of the Dryden Intergenerational Band and Chorus. I am a chorus member.
- I play in a community band and sing in a chorus. I also enjoy carpentry and special-interest automobile care and repair. I have done almost all our meals for the past year and have improved my cooking skills immensely.
- I perform in a women's barbershop chorus and competition.
- I have sung with several groups and will be joining others in the community to which I retired.
- I am performing in a community chorus, writing an article for the watershed association newsletter, weaving, painting, and knitting.
- I am singing for residents at senior care facilities.
- I play jazz piano for fundraising and other private events.
- I resumed taking flute lessons, after a 30-year hiatus.

Other Performing Arts

- I am acting in student films at Ithaca College.
- I participated in “The Play's the Thing”—a play-reading group at Lifelong. I also have been playing my flute and singing—at present, only at home. I may join a performing group in Ithaca in the future.
- I do Square Dancing—learning the man's part to assist in dancing – and downhill skiing in Colorado.
- I joined a Zumba Gold class and performed at the Spencer Picnic in 2018.
- I am a storyteller, book author, and public speaker.

Writing

Research, Papers, Editing, and Translation

- My writing of scientific articles has shifted to more popular papers in part because my neighbor has been so interested in joining me in the project. We have written papers on such topics as why blue minerals are blue, how the Vikings may have used natural crystals of calcite to navigate, how quartz crystals have been used to make high-quality monochromators, mineral inclusions in diamonds, and the nearly forgotten diamond's second cleavage and its importance in making diamond anvil cells for high-pressure research.
- I perform analysis of census data to provide insight on electoral results and analysis of baseball results to identify unheralded players.
- I do research and publication in the fields of folklore, medieval studies, Russian literature and history, literary theory, and philosophy.
- I research physics of quantum matter.
- I am still publishing research findings.
- I published papers in academic journals.
- I have written and published articles in academic and professional journals. I advised deans and program directors about academic and strategic challenges.
- I have done collaborative research resulting in a professional journal article.
I research papers and book new editions.
I wrote articles on water politics in Peru for publication in interdisciplinary journals. I wrote a chapter for "The Andean World" on water in the Andes.
I have attended the Convocation of Academia Sinica every other year since 1994 when I was first elected to Academia Sinica. I am on the editorial board of the Journal of Chinese Linguistics, Zhongguo Yuwen, etc. I continue to publish in leading journals in Chinese historical linguistics.
I have continued my academic work, which I view as creative, though it is not literature in the sense of being, for example, a poem or short story or novel.
I have continued to write and publish in my connected fields of philosophy, law, history, and political theory.
I am writing papers in my field—history.
I am publishing a book about lesser known stories about Abraham Lincoln.
I am working on a book on plants for gardeners and presenting it as talks at the Cornell Botanic Gardens. I do occasional commentaries for GMO Answers.
I presented papers at professional conferences. I co-authored an article for an edited book.
I have been working on multiple blogs. The Earl J. Arnold Advertising Card Collection original scrapbook is part of the Cornell University Library Collection.
I have begun a few unfinished books and translated into Spanish an African folk tales text by A. Sakyiama.

Textbooks, Course Writing

- I write physics textbooks.
- I co-authored a SUNY online career development e-textbook.
- I am co-author of a textbook, scientific journal articles, and computer software.
- I wrote a textbook, which is published, and started a memoir, but could not find a literary agent.
- I have been slowly developing an online "book" for the course CS2110 Object Oriented Programming and Data Structures with over fifty videos, each two to five minutes in length.
- I am writing a blog for my MKMMA (Master Keys Master Mind Alliance) six-month personal development course. I also do oil painting, wildlife photography, and woodburning on shelf fungi of wildlife.

Local History, Family History, Memoirs

- I wrote and self-published a book in 2015 (Welcome to the Witherill) about the hotel in Plattsburgh, NY that my family owned and where I grew up. It was 200+ pages and heavily endorsed by the Clinton County Historical Association. I have gone there each year to give a presentation about the hotel. It was a landmark—hosting presidents and generals, etc.
- I am writing a CU department history and also a personal memoir.
- I am writing memoirs. I learned the Python programming language.
- I transcribed by father's letters home during WWII and made a book with them and photos from the family albums and his military notebooks. I've also undertaken some other projects related to family history. I have been repairing and restoring some family quilts made by my grandmother and great aunt. I created a fairly big garden.
- I have recently written a memoir book, currently in publication: "Open Doors. Memoirs of a Veterinarian Blessed Beyond Measure." I am currently working on a book on the history of our church, Bethel Grove Bible Church in Ithaca. I mill rough lumber on a sawmill, and occasionally produce finished lumber for tables, benches, shelves, etc.
- I write family histories; I do lots of photography—nature, mathematical colleagues, family, etc.
- I am writing memories of places we have lived. I designed landscaping for my property and did major and minor repairs of my home.

Fiction, Drama, Poetry

- I self-produced my play, Maize, in February-March 2018, at Risley Theatre. I belong to the Wolfs Mouth Theatre Collective as a playwright. My plays have appeared in the Spring Writes Literary Festival and will again this year (2019).
- I am a novelist and filmmaker.
- I am writing a screenplay.
I write poetry.

**Video Production, Online Videos, Documentaries, Film, Radio Programs**

- I've been making short videos for faculty to use as video abstracts for papers in journals and I've been posting some on YouTube. I've also been involved with the Internet First University making biographical videos of retiring faculty.
- I am doing a documentary on bird migration via Finger Lakes regions, where I document seeing millions of birds on occasions during migration. Also there are some documentaries about birds of Brazil and butterflies of Ecuador in the pipeline. I am also interested in Indian culinary art and uses of spices and their benefits. I gave a lecture in a class in Nutritional Sciences about the Indian spices. I hope to collaborate with one of the scientists on spice chemistry in the near future.
- I have served as a media producer on video projects that highlight effective career development practices for youth with disabilities.
- Some of my videos on YouTube have been popular; the video about honey bees has had over 200,000 views!

**Journalism, Essays**

- I continue to write and publish essays. Essays of mine have recently appeared in *Epoch, Kenyon Review*, and *Antioch Review*.
- I have written a paid column for the last ten years. Many columns highlighted inspirational folks and projects affiliated with Cornell.
- I write six to eight opinion essays for the *Rochester Democrat and Chronicle* (a Gannett paper) per year.
- I have had three articles published in a local magazine and continue writing for pleasure. I continue to enjoy arts and crafts for personal satisfaction.
- I write guest opinions and articles for "Leisure and Entertainment" for the *Finger Lakes Times*.
- I wrote an almanac for the *Upstate Gardeners Journal* twice.

**Writing Across Many Genres**

- I am now a published author of contemporary romance novels with The Wild Rose Press, Inc. publishing company; I engage in writing for various local newspapers on various human interest articles; I am an international traveler and travel writer; I have written various pamphlets, articles, and booklets about the History of Candor; and I assist various organizations with their press releases, etc. I have given many educational talks and workshops in regard to writing. I am a member of several national writing groups.
- I became editor of a journal published by a national educational organization; I have also researched and written individual historical nonfiction stories that have been published.
- I have been published in or submitted essays and a short story to various anthologies, including *Chicken Soup for the Soul* books. I have played guitar/bass guitar and sung in local bands. I have also written and recorded original songs. I directed a short documentary for Willow’s Wings Animal Sanctuary, and I shot and edited a promotional film for an Adirondack community.
- I created a small children's book about ants for our granddaughter, using watercolor illustrations.

**Writing (not specified)**

- My writing has been published in the USA, Canada, India, Germany, Mexico, and Luxembourg.
- I've written several self-published books and have an active blog.
- I am working on a nonfiction book (I hope it will be a book).
- I'm writing a book and revising a published book.
- I co-authored a book.
- I have a substantial backlog of unpublished writings; I am a woodworking hobbyist.
- I am blogging, writing books and articles, and doing wildlife photography.

**Other**

- I was an event planner for the athletic department, then for the president of Cornell University for all the events taking place in their home. People who knew me began to ask me to plan their personal events. I stopped because I was getting too busy! But I loved it.
I joined the Tompkins County Amateur Radio Association. I earned an extra class license, helped with giving classes to would-be new radio operators, and did several events where radio communication was needed in case of an emergency.

I provided material for a museum exhibit at the Museum of the High Desert (Bend, OR) on animal navigation. I provided original (from late 1960s) Emlen funnels showing a method of collecting data on the orientation of caged nocturnal migrating songbirds.

Colleagues and I have continued with a very active exploratory project on re-imaging scholarly publishing. I've worked, perhaps as much as half time, for 14 years into my retirement.

I commissioned natural resource studies of Minnegar Brook, a Class C stream in Minnegar Woods in Unique Natural Area 54, to identify hydroelectric-generation potential and to assess general wildlife health. Cornell Sustainable Energy engineering students performed site studies of Minnegar Brook for a course project, incorporating and analyzing my study data in their reports. I also experiment with a gravity-powered ram pump and fountain projects, fed by numerous waterfalls on the property, to explore and evaluate renewable energy potential and other possibilities. I construct hiking trails and resting areas to allow better access to the property.

My volunteer work with Department of Defense is on a new facial recognition technology which removes clocking objects via spectral analysis.

I'm working to understand, and try to solve, long-lasting problems in biophysics.

I perform specific tests for food additives.

I have many interests and have prepared original slide shows for the public using Powerpoint. I have also put together several displays for public educational programs. I write and revise brochures about various topics concerning funeral planning. I help collect data for and write an analysis of prices for services at funeral homes in Tompkins and surrounding counties.

I write grants, create agendas for a church and a food cupboard, write for both, including year-end reports—narrative and statistical — and create data bases, etc.

I post occasionally under a gender-nonspecific screen name. Recently someone commented that mine had been the best comment he'd read in 35 years on the internet. I didn't agree with him, but it was nice of him to take to time to comment.

I don't know if you consider golf as a creative art. I have played and taken golf lessons.