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## **I THINK I'M FLUNKING RETIREMENT**

**by Dr. Anne Lee**

In 1998, Betty Weir Anderson wrote "Flunking Retirement" in the magazine *Remedy: Prescriptions for Healthy Living*. In attempting to clean out 45 years of accumulated treasures, I discovered many old magazines kept for one reason or another - all important for one valid reason or another. (Possibly included was a great recipe, a remodeling idea, an article relevant to a class taught or a good short story).

However, this article caught my eye NOW because I can't figure out why I am busier in retirement than when I taught full time, had three children at home and was very active in community and school activities. There were fast food restaurants all along Mission Gorge Road, but most of the nights we had what the kids called "real dinner". I cooked.

But, I digress. Why do I feel I'm now flunking retirement? When I worked, my career gave me status, ego gratification, and a sense of identity. I have had the old Puritan work ethic ingrained in me for over 60 years. Downsizing the garage does not exactly suit the established work ethic. The losses after retiring are monumental. First to go is one's identity. I am no longer Dr. Lee. The second to go is a planned calendar. I still keep daily calendars now full of doctor's appointments, volunteer activities and family occasions -- birthdays, weddings, anniversaries, graduations, etc. Gone are the "power" meetings, faculty meetings, staff development, evaluations, and meetings with the state and hours of grant writing. I no longer have a staff or "people". I used to feel the need for three calendars -- work, home, and vacation.

Another loss in retirement is the loss of respect. You are definitely "out of the loop". Retirement is not for sissies; retirement may not be easy or "idyllic." When I started looking longingly at out-of-the-home offices, my husband asked, "What will you do in your office?" I couldn't pinpoint one thing. Right then I knew I'd flunked retirement. I am becoming an expert downsizer, but this doesn't really offer status, ego gratification, a sense of identity or respect. There is no one saying "great job" when I finish cleaning out one more box of treasures. My job is secure because the garage always needs cleaning out. And, I still have one calendar.

Maybe I should start a group; I don't think I'm alone. However, my July calendar is full. Maybe there will be time in the fall. I'll have my people call your people.