



The
Back Nine
Life Beyond Retirement
Second Edition

DOUG MANNING

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**In-Sight Books, Inc.
Oklahoma City**

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Doug Manning

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Dedicated To

*My friends and fellow seekers at
Mayflower Congregational UCC Church*

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Playing the Back Nine

Life Beyond Retirement

There should be two names for golf. The stuff they show on television should be called golf. The game I play should be called something else. The problem is that the only names that would fit my game could not be repeated in public.

The only redeeming thing about my game is that there is an intermission. For those of you who are not familiar with the game, the golf course is divided into two sets of nine holes each. There is a break between the two nines which provides a time to let off steam, make the appropriate excuses for the bad shots, buy some balls to replace the ones lost on the front, make a pit stop at the club house, and get set to face the back nine.

It becomes a new game. Hope springs eternal in the breast of every golfer as they stride toward the back nine. No matter what the front nine looked like, the back will bring redemption. Then at the bar, when it is all over, the same lament is heard: "I had a pretty good round until I got to the back and fell apart." I always feel like I should have used the transition between the two nines for some lessons and perhaps some knowledge of how to play the game instead of just blasting on to the tenth tee with the same game and same knowledge I used or misused on the front nine.

Golf is a pretty good analogy of life. We have a front nine spent trying to get ahead, make a living, raise a family, and

perhaps make some impact on the world we live in. Then we face the back nine. Retirement looms, age begins to be more than a joke. There are things ahead we don't want to even think about. If the front side was hard, wait until you see what the back nine has to offer.

Fortunately, there is a time of transition. We do know we are getting older and one day will face the retirement years. That time of transition can be vital preparation for the decisions and changes we will face. It needs to be a time of real soul searching and deep thinking. We dare not hide our heads in the sand and rush to the tenth tee with no idea of what is ahead nor how to play the game.

Too often we plunge full speed ahead assuming life will always be the same and we can live just like we are living as long as we want to, and then face the changes and challenges on the fly.

The greatest myth of old age is:

I will know when it is time.

I will know when it is time for me to stop driving my car.

I will know when it is time to change my lifestyle.

I will know when it is time for me to move to different housing.

But you won't know. Age slips up on us. No one really knows how old they are. Most of us think of ourselves as at least twenty years younger than we are. My dad used to say he was going to the nursing home to visit the old people there. He was eighty-five at the time and older than almost everyone in the facility, but he did not know it.

I think I am about fifty-five, or at least I used to think so. I was walking through an airport, late for my connection, and I was walking fast. At least it felt like I was walking

fast. I have always been able to do that and I was laying them down. My hair was flapping in the breeze as I motored through the terminal and two elderly ladies passed me. I sped up but it did not help. I sat down and let the awful realization of my age overwhelm me. Age slips up on us. We are suddenly old and it is too late for us to *know when it is time*. Maybe some planning ahead even when we don't feel like it is time would be smart.

I think the whole thing boils down to wanting to stay in control of our lives no matter what the future holds. Aging is a constant fight for independence. We want to do it our way. We don't want anyone taking over our lives. We don't want decisions made for us or about us. We want to captain our own ship until it reaches the final port.

Control and independence sounds great and that is what we all want and dream of, but doing so demands planning, action, decisions and responsibility on our part. It doesn't just happen. Matter of fact, it sometimes feels like all of nature is engaged in a war against it happening.

Nor will it come by just being stubborn and refusing to respond to advice or help. Too many folks refuse to think through the issues, make the proper judgments, plan, and take the needed action for a good life and they end up with sheer bull headedness being their only defense in the fight for control.

Years of being a counselor and writing books and materials about caring for aging loved ones made it easier for me to realize the need of a careful well-planned approach to life beyond retirement. I had counseled too many families torn apart by the care of their parents, dealt with far too many people who damaged their own marriages and endangered

their health in the caring process. I have seen guilt mangle the futures of folks long after the loved one was gone.

All of these experiences led me to vow that no matter what I had to face, no matter where I had to live, no matter what inconveniences I had to overcome, I was not going to be a problem nor a burden to my children. I made a list of things I do not want to happen. Perhaps the list can help other folks to think ahead and make the choices and plans to prevent these things from happening. My list is:

- I do not want the transition from my being a parent to a new relationship of adult-to-adult with my children to be a civil war they must fight for. I want it to be my gift to them.
- I don't want to be remembered as a hard-headed old coot who fought my caregivers about every decision.
- I don't want someone to have to force me to stop driving when I become a danger to others.
- I do not want to live with my children but, even if I have to do so, I don't want them to sacrifice their lives and happiness in my care.
- I don't want to live longer than I should, no matter what the doctors say is possible.
- I want to make the necessary decisions about my care long before the children have to make them for me.
- Most of all, until the day I die I want to be a nice person to be around, and I hope the children will help me do just that.

My mother-in-law said she wanted to live long enough to get even with her kids. She said that in jest and we all got

great laughs at the idea. Most of us might joke about it, but I don't think any of us want to be a burden to our children or a caregiver. My greatest dread is not death, it is living too long and living beyond my ability to not be a burden. That goal requires us to make some decisions we do not want to make and take some actions we do not feel ready to make. Playing the back nine, the final holes, your way means you have to actually do it.

I had no intentions of writing another book. I am over 80 years old. I had written thirty-six books and truly thought I was through. However, I got tired of reading all the advice to the aging that must have been written by some middle-aged dreamer trying to make old age seem sweet and wonderful. Their stuff sounds like a series of Hallmark cards. Old age isn't golden. I don't think it is even copper. Old age is a series of losses. Everything on my body that doesn't hurt doesn't work. It is a series of adjustments that can either help us function or leave us bitter.

As I thought about it, I realized that maybe my situation makes me somewhat uniquely qualified to write this. My wife of 57 years died a few years ago so I live alone. I live in the same city with all four of my daughters and their families. All of my grandchildren and great grandchildren live here as well. I started a publishing business in my garage in 1980 and it has been my life ever since. Three of my daughters are now fully in charge of that business and they are doing a much better job with it than I ever could. We have made that transition without rancor and worked together since 1996 in peace and love.

On my own initiative I sold my house and now live in a high-rise apartment. When my vision began to fail I gave up driving my car. That decision was mine and done without pressure from anyone. In place of a car, I have a small

About the Author

Doug Manning



Doug's career has included minister, counselor, business executive, author and publisher. He and his wife, Barbara, were parents to four daughters and have been long-term caregivers to three parents.

After thirty years in the ministry, Doug began a new career in 1982 and devoted his time to writing, counseling and leading seminars in the areas of grief and elder care. His publishing company, In-Sight Books, Inc., specializes in books, video and audio productions specifically designed to help people face some of the toughest challenges of life.

Doug's latest efforts have been on the internet as he has become a blogger with his new website dealing with issues in the areas of grief and elder care. The Care Community is a website provided by In-Sight Books, Inc. free of charge to any who wish to join.

It is designed to be a resource of help and support for people in grief or involved in caring for an elderly loved one. Read Doug's blogs and respond with your own experiences. Visit www.TheCareCommunity.com.

Doug has a warm, conversational style in which he shares insights from his various experiences. Sitting down to read a book from Doug is like having a long conversation with a good friend.

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