



# Pulse of '62



Monday, October 18, 2010

(The Saint Louis Class of 1962)  
[www.saintlouis62.org](http://www.saintlouis62.org)

Volume II—Issue IV

## Beyond the Golden Years Part I

At the end of the 1930s the world was in turmoil. Western Civilization tottered and shook, and nearly fell. People in Europe, and in America too, thought, "It will all be fixed. It will all be arranged." But no such thing ever happened; because no one had the guts to do it. And the result of all that turmoil was the greatest war and conflagration yet known to mankind.

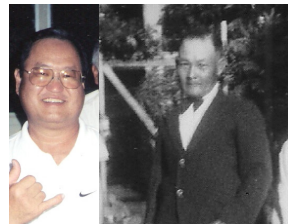
We men of the Class of 1962 were born as the war was being won. Our parents, "The Greatest Generation", fought and won that war. They worked hard to build up the world again. It was our good fortune to grow up in a country of boundless wealth and in a time of unheard of technological advances. Our lives have been easy. Some have given themselves over to careless living, others to selfish pursuits; while most just plugged along trying to make a comfortable life. It has all gone along quite easily. That time is over now.

A very difficult time is coming. Those of us who have parents or older siblings still living are now concerned with their future care. But a far more daunting future looms. The present economic downturn is far more serious than anyone cares to admit. Like the war, it will go on for years, dependent upon public confidence. During the next fifteen years our generation will put a crushing demand on the government's resources, health care system and entitlements programs. Each state will be pushing back upon its people to bear the brunt. This means care giving in the home. And that concerns each of us. We cannot think like our parents' generation, "It will all be fixed. It will all be arranged." No such thing will ever happen. It depends upon us.

The many and grave crises facing our generation are as serious as those of the 1930s if not more so. The ever present worldwide threat of terror; the two Koreas at each other's throats, nuclear threats from Iran, two wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the recent near collapse of the international banking system and the continuing jitters in the stock markets; Greece on the very brink of default and Spain teetering on a banana peel near the edge with 20% unemployed, Italy, Portugal, Ireland all on the same shaky ground; all of these concerns make for an ever present atmosphere of apprehension, foreboding, doom. This article is not meant to read like the 6 o'clock News. But it does seek to underscore the deep and persistent feelings of uncertainty with which each of us lives in our daily lives. Aware or unaware of world events, this malaise – this creeping sickness of uncertainty affects the personal decisions in our own lives.

At a time when we all planned to enjoy our retirements, the recent tumble of the economy makes it necessary for some of us to help our children; some of them have come back home to live with us. Now as some of us are starting to have health issues we find that our parents are seriously ill or simply need care or looking after. This article does not presume to give any answers to these pressing personal questions. It is simply a series of conversations with five of our classmates. Each tells how he met the challenges and stresses of care giving during his proverbial "golden years".

Sipping his Plantation Iced Tea at sunset on the ocean terrace at the Halekulani Hotel, **Steve Kabei** seemed to be a million miles away from the uncertainties of this world. Sitting in the fading light, with palm trees and Hawaiian music in the background; while looking out over the ocean he began, "I did my care giving when I was 10 years old. I couldn't do any after school activities. I couldn't go with my friends. My parents worked so I had



to go home after school and take care of my grandfather. He had lost the control of his bodily functions. I had to clean up after him. I hated it. I was angry and frustrated. Sometimes I was mean to him. But now when I look back on it, I feel guilty." Fortunately for Steve and his grandfather, his family eventually found people to care for the old man. He had been a carpenter foreman at Waialua Sugar Plantation and the company had a care home for its retirees. That was in the mid 1950s. Would that we had such facilities today.

Steve joined the National Guard's Nike Hercules missile unit. He then served in the U. S. Army as an Infantry officer. When he left the service he worked at Honolulu Airport as a U. S. Immigration officer handling the incoming flights from Asia. Now fully retired he lives at the back of Manoa valley in the home his family has owned for over forty years. His sister lives with him. She has some health issues; but he does not have to care for her.

Steve admits, "I'm selfish. I'm not a volunteer and I'm not a care giver. But I will help out with money. If my sister gets to the point where she needs care, I'll get someone to do it." Although he may seem an uncaring sort, he has definite ideas about care giving. "If you're the care giver, don't try to do it all yourself. Get other family members to share in the care—the toll will be too great on you. If family members can't (or won't) help out, communicate with them. You need someone's

shoulder to cry on to relieve the stress. Check available resources and look for a family-type care giver—someone with experience. It's impossible not to become emotional when you are caring for someone 24 hours a day—the cost of that is too high.” When asked about plans for his own future care he said, “As a federal employee I was able to get government sponsored long term care insurance through John Hancock. I've been paying in for about 8 or 9 years. It was \$236 a month; but the premium was recently raised to \$295 a month. I advise anyone who can afford it to buy into a plan. It will relieve you of so much future worry.”

Steve enjoys meeting up with former classmates. He appreciates them more now in a way he never did before. He likes to sit out in his driveway late at night, looking up at the sky and watching the activity up there.”

At 6:00 pm one evening at the Saint Louis Alumni Clubhouse, Gary DeMello sat drinking a 7Up and talking quietly in a corner of the lounge. Suddenly the place filled up with different groups of alumni laughing and talking at a low roar. With this considerable distraction in the background, Gary told of his 15 years giving care to his mother.



“We were all still working when my mom had a stroke. My wife and I cared for her for about five months. The strain became physical and financial—and you can quote me, it put a very great strain on our marriage. My wife's mom

was living on the Big Island. At this time she became very ill and needed care too. Luckily, in her case we found someone in Wai'anae to care for her. But my mom continued on and we knew that we had to get help. My brother was working and he couldn't help out that much.” Gary advises that anyone who finds himself in this position to, “Get help. Don't wait, because the stress is tremendous.” They went to Catholic Charities for a list of care givers. They compared possible candidates. They put an ad in the newspaper. They found a nurse who was retiring and she agreed to care for his mom in her own home. Gary said, “She was a godsend and she stayed with my mom almost until the end. My mom fell and we were forced to put her into a care home where she remained until her death four years later.” It was a long and difficult time. This ordeal prompted Gary to buy long term care plans for himself and his wife. The plan is with John Hancock and they are now paying about \$4,300 a year for both of them. Gary confides, “When I told my son and daughter that we bought the plans they said, ‘Oh, thank you so much, Mom and Dad’.”

Now fully retired he lives in Kailua. He worked as manager of data processing at Liberty House and then at Macy's for 28 years. As recreation he takes his small boat into Kāne'ōhe Bay and goes fishing. He enjoys helping friends and family with their home improvement projects. At present he is helping his brother restore a 1931 Ford pickup truck. What fun. Maintenance of the

Class Roster is another of Gary's activities. He helps with the distribution of the class newsletter and says he has the contact data for 125 men from the Class of 1962.

In Chinatown at noon in the favorite lunchtime restaurant Little Village Noodle House, **Jeff Ignacio** talked in a room jammed with people. The super-charged activity of the waiters and the clatter of plates made taking notes impossible. But the food and the atmosphere made for very good conversation and none of it was forgotten.



Jeff served in the Viet Nam conflict. Returning to America he married and had two daughters. He settled in Orange County. He has been running a catering business. His specialty is Hawaiian theme parties and even lū'au with kalua pig. Over the last year he realized that his 95 year-old mother needed care. She lives on the second floor of her house in Aiea and has rental units below. This means managing the stairs every day. Jeff's mom is still active at her church and takes part in all the events. Jeff said, “She doesn't have any health issues; but just being 95 is enough to worry about. So I shipped over my van and came to stay for awhile.” He was planning to stay until after the Christmas holidays (2009) and return to the mainland. But by all indications he has had to move back to Hawaii temporarily. Naturally, this has had a negative effect on his business. He said, “My mom needs looking after. I have to do it.”

When the subject turned to his own health he said, “You can quote me. I was exposed to Agent Orange when I was in 'Nam. I'm starting to have serious health issues. The government is taking care of it; but...” He stopped himself. And then he started on again describing some of his physical complaints. Not good. And yet the delicious food and the happy pre-Christmas atmosphere in the restaurant kept the conversation upbeat and free of gloom – albeit a little wistful. Asked as to his concerns about his own future health care, he sat back in his chair and looked down at his dish of chicken e-min – longevity noodles. And then he looked up with a misty, faraway look in his eyes and said, “I have two beautiful daughters. I know they will take care of me.”

*(To be continued in January, 2011)*

#### **Invitation to Respond:**

It is the objective of “Pulse of '62” to present a broad cross section of contemporary subjects & views that will stimulate interest & promote positive response from our classmates. You are invited to respond by e-mail ([garydemello@yahoo.com](mailto:garydemello@yahoo.com) or postal service (SLS Class of '62, 4207 Carnation Place, Honolulu, HI 96816-3905).

#### **Disclaimer:**

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