GDJ Biography for Group 22 Reunion

Upon returning from the Peace Corps in 1968, I worked for IBM for 5 years, learning about computers in the process. Met and married Barbara Hopgood. We’ve now been married 48+ years. We had 3 children, a girl and 2 boys. In 1991 Meg, our daughter, was killed in an accident while bicycling to school. Losing a child is a life altering experience.

I never felt I had any special expertise to offer while I was serving in the Peace Corps. After working for IBM and a Cambridge consulting company, I developed a knowledge of computers. In 1975 I applied for a consulting job in Iran. Why Iran? Who knows? I simply answered an ad in the New York Times. We travelled to Iran 10 weeks after our daughter was born. I worked for the Tehran Regional Electric Company for 1976 + 77. Iran has a wonderful culture, and we had a great time there. Our first son was born there, and we almost extended my contract. Luckily, I decided it was time to return to real life, as had we extended, we would have gotten caught up in the Iranian Revolution, which would have been a disaster.

We settled in a leafy, semi-rural suburb west of Boston and proceeded to raise a family of 3. I worked for a technology company, helping them to build financial databases. We became involved in the local community. My wife became a piano teacher and director of the community chorus and orchestra, a position she has enjoyed for over 40 concert seasons. I became a soccer coach, church leader, and town selectman. Eventually I joined a consulting company and brought my technological expertise to a number of companies in Boston, Toronto, New York, and San Francisco.

In 2008 we joined the Friends of Nigeria trip back to Nigeria. The itinerary did not include my town, Maiduguri, so we went 5 days ahead of time and made a side trip to Maiduguri. Maiduguri had been a sleepy provincial capital in our day with a population of 150,000. Now it is a bustling city of 2.5 million! In our day there was a professional class consisting of Europeans running most companies or government ministries. No longer. We were the only Batures we saw in Maiduguri. We had a great time, finding my house in the old city, getting a native dress sewn for my wife, being interviewed on Bornu Radio and TV, and having a meal with the family living across from my old house. It is a good thing we went
in 2008. Boko Haram had been active for a few years then, but not at all militant. In 2008 the police arrested their leader, and somehow he died in jail. The replacement leader was much more militant, and we might be subject to kidnapping for ransom if we were to return there now.

In 2012 I was diagnosed with Multiple Myeloma, a rare form of blood cancer. In my case the symptoms were compression fractures of my vertebrae. The net result is that I am unable to stand up straight and I have lost 7” in height. It turns out that being a cancer patient is almost a full-time job, so I chose to retire. Many people have long periods of remission when they receive treatment for Multiple Myeloma. Not so in my case. Except for a year and a half following a stem cell transplant at the end of 2012, I have required active treatment. After repeated applications, each treatment becomes less effective, thanks to the ability of the disease to evolve. I am what they refer to as a refractory and recurrent Multiple Myeloma patient, which means several treatments have failed and the disease is still active. I have participated in one clinical trial of a breakthrough treatment involving CAR-T cells and will participate in another study when I return after June 20, this one involving a vaccine approach. Maybe eventually they will find the magic bullet for this disease; meanwhile, I am in the hands of the oncologists.

Our two boys each have 3 children and we are proud grandparents of 5 boys and 1 girl. We have a summer cabin on an island in Lake Winnipesaukee in New Hampshire, where we spend time with family.

I still look back at our time in Nigeria as a formative experience for me. Teaching school and experiencing a totally foreign culture gave me a perspective I have come to value over the years. Thank you, Nigeria! Thank you, Peace Corps!