

Interview with Herbert W. Hobler, June 2011

On my next birthday in about six months I'll be 89. I don't know whether it's still true today but most people I meet are surprised at my age--they think I'm in my middle 60s early 70s or something.

I remember when I was six years old visiting with my great-grandmother. She was 92 at the time and I loved her. And my grandfather wasn't that old--I guess when I was first growing up, but he was just a marvelous man. And my grandmother on my father's side, I remember I saw her regularly--she lived in the same town as us. When she died she was stretched out in a coffin, and that was the first time I saw a dead person. So my experiences with old people were very positive, except for the last one.

My dad was 83. My mother was a week or two shy of 96. An incredible woman, full of vim and vigor mentally and physically until 3 months before she died of congestive heart failure. She was the glue that held all her descendents together. She had four children, 19 grands and 22 greats when she died. We had family reunions on her 85th, 90th, 93d, and 95th, and 75 of us came together. So it was marvelous.

A man came to visit me about 27 years ago, and during dinner--he was spending the night with us--and I said will you jog with me in the morning, and he said no I don't do that since my heart bypass; I walk. That didn't sound terribly exciting to me, but the next morning we got up at 6:30 and we walked. I had the golden retriever with me. And suddenly I noticed the difference, because joggers they never stop to do anything. I stopped and said hello to people because they had a dog. I looked around and I literally decided to smell some roses.

And after he left I said this was kind of fun. Because I'd been playing full-court basketball with a bunch of younger people when I was 63. So I said maybe I shouldn't be playing basketball at 63 anymore and so I started to walk.

And I walked day after day, I started averaging 3 1/2 or 4 miles before breakfast and always before breakfast, because I realized that there's nothing to prevent me from walking every single day as long as I do it before breakfast.

It's helped me keep my weight down and it sure as heck has stimulated my mind. I always have a pad and pencil with me, and I create my thoughts for the day, or perhaps because I knew I was going to write a book about walking. My walking book is called "Walking: A Moving Experience." On the cover I have a picture of me with my golden (retriever) in the snow, and next to it a picture not snow, suggesting I hope with these two photographs, that this is around the year, and you don't get prevented from having these adventures because it's raining or snowing or what have you.

I'm like a little kid again. So I collected pictures. I took pictures when I was abroad often, I would hand the camera to somebody and have them take a picture of me. And I read this from time to time all over again, and I am just so impressed that I did it and captured all those thoughts.

And I realized I was not walking for my health, I was walking for the stimulation I got watching the sunrises—I saw hundreds of sunrises on these walks, all over the world. Met interesting people. So I've always made an adventure out of my morning walks.

And I decided by the way the very first time I started to walk after my friend left, I said well it would be kind of fun to see how many days I can go out the front door and come back and have a different

walk. I walked about 800 times before I had the same exact walk.

I see so many people when I'm out walking that have a headset on, listening to music, or walking with someone and talking talking talking. And there was one man I would see every day, and he would walk the exact same route exactly. He became a friend and I went up to him and I said let's walk this way he said "Oh no, I go this way." And I said what lack of imagination—he's missing everything out there.

So I got interviewed on television in New York and Philadelphia when I had 5000 days consecutively, interviewed in the newspapers.

And actually I got a phone call from the people that published this for me just four days ago and they're going to put in Barnes & Noble and a few places on the Internet. And hey, I can get four dollars a book—I might retire on that.