

Forever Young At Heart

By Rene Agredano and Jim Nelson #103274

In 2007, we shocked our colleagues, friends and family by selling everything to buy an RV and hit the road with our terminally ill dog, Jerry. We were 40 and 37 years old.

Doctors had just told us Jerry had an aggressive form of bone cancer, and statistics said he probably wouldn't live another year.

With this awful news in hand, we decided to give our furry kid the road trip of a lifetime, a final gift for the many years he was so patient while we grew our business.

Our budget would see us through one year on the road, because we thought one year would be long enough to explore the country. How wrong we were.

Extending Our Travels

As our year on the road began closing in on us, we knew we couldn't return to life as we used to know it. Jerry was still thriving, and we wanted to spend every moment we had left with him.

We investigated ways to extend our budget and continue this adventurous lifestyle. RVers we met along the way repeatedly told us we should join Escapees to make the most of our time on the road.

"They're the best people you'll ever meet!" they said.

As we looked into Escapees, we couldn't help but notice that most members were twice our age. We wondered if a club with mostly seniors (some older than our parents) would be worthwhile. What could we possibly have in common with them? After perusing the Escapees discussion forums, it didn't take long to figure out that, if we joined, we would be the new "kids" on the block—literally. But as believers in the adage that with age comes wisdom, we decided to take a trip to Livingston, Texas, Escapees headquarters, to see what the club was all about.

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Rene Agredano and Jim Nelson #103274 and their beloved dog, Jerry. Photo taken on the Alpine Loop in the San Juan Mountains, near Lake City, Colorado.



Without Regard to Age

We pulled into Rainbow's End and were greeted warmly without regard to our ages. Our neighbors made us feel like long-lost family members, and we were quickly given the lay of the land.

Much to our surprise, the park felt more like a college campus than a retirement village. Everyone seemed to defy their age, zipping around visiting with neighbors. The park calendar was so packed with activities every day, we could hardly keep up.

One day I joined a yoga class, snickering to myself that it was probably going to be too easy for me. It turned out to be an excellent workout.

And, although we did feel a little too young to be part of the crowd, when the daily social hour featured introductions of members, we got a kick out of hearing about all their travels and latest adventures.

What a surprise to learn that many of these same people started out just as we did, by bucking the norm and living life out of the box.

The highlight was hearing Escapees founders Joe and Kay Peterson give a talk and discovering that they started out just as we did, at about the same age too! (Note: When Kay is in Livingston, she now greets visitors in the memorial garden on her property when they come around on the trolley tour—not the same without Joe, but still a highlight.)

Even though we were generations apart with most of the people, it suddenly became clear that we had a lot in common

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with many of them; we're all just a bunch of adventurous souls who have chosen to defy the norm and live life to the fullest. There's a real camaraderie in that, one that you can't find in the predictable life of a stick-house dweller in suburbia.

As we watched the Petersons' vibrant spirits, there was no question in our minds about becoming members. Joining was the best thing we ever did, and it has given us the foundation we need to continue living this unusual lifestyle that most people just don't understand.

Escapees is truly a testament to how people with a common identity and purpose can create a tight-knit community that bridges any generation gap. 🐾

Jim and Rene are the founders of Tripawds.com, a worldwide community for three-legged dogs and their humans. They run the Website in honor of their beloved Jerry, who left this world in November 2008 but whose spirit is still with them as they roam across North America. The couple continue to travel and work as freelance writers, marketing consultants and graphic designers, documenting their adventures at LiveWorkDream.com.

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