

Executive Briefing

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The Power of Lifetime Learning

A local magazine featured the story of Weldon Bigony, a man from West Texas, who returned to college at 82 to finish what he'd started six decades earlier, his bachelor's degree in business. His education had been interrupted by World War II and several other things.

Mr. Bigony never stopped learning, thanks to his own determination and his mother's good example. She enrolled in college, in her 70s, to earn a teaching certificate.

Famous tenor, Luciano Pavarotti, learned about lifetime study when he was only 12. He'd heard a performance by Beniamino Gigli, a tenor who was then in his 50s. "I was watching from below," Luciano recalled, "and when he came down into the audience, I said, 'I, a contralto now, want to become a tenor. What do you think my chances are?' Gigli told the young boy

that if he were a contralto, he would certainly become a tenor. Young Pavarotti then asked him how long he had to study. Gigli responded, "I just finished five minutes ago!"

We frequently hear about outstanding examples of lifetime students, and it often makes us think there is something unusual about people pursuing knowledge. They seem to possess an unquenchable thirst to know more.

But being a student for life doesn't mean we must be famous, return to college as an octogenarian, or even go to college at all. Being a student for life merely means opening our mind to allow it to absorb new things, no matter what our age. This is the kind of learning that prompts a nurse to learn about art, an artist to take up a new medium, a physician to turn to law, and a lawyer to

create objects from wood. Perhaps the woodworker studies law, medicine, physics, or oil painting.

Opening ourselves up to new possibilities, no matter what our age, keeps us fresh, young, inquiring, and growing. We are not "Einsteins", but his words, touting imagination as more important than knowledge, carry a universal message, even if it merely inspires us to think about the things we do not know that we would like to know.

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