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Orinda Author's New Book Offers Monetary Roadmap for Retirees

By *Bobbie Dodson*



Orinda author Steve Butler Photo provided

Steve Butler says his latest book, "Roadmap to Retirement Security: How to Build and Conserve Retirement Wealth" has a focus on retirement fund money for the same reason Willie Sutton robbed banks. It's where the money is. At least, one hopes that's true. If not, Butler wants to guide you through steps that will demonstrate how to effectively self-manage assets and implement a mix of cost-effective investments.

Well known to the 3 million readers of his column which has appeared on Sunday in 20 Bay Area newspapers for 10 years, Butler explains, "I decided to put a culmination of basic ideas I've expressed over the years in a single book rather than have people save some 800 columns."

The book is divided into two parts: Building Financial Security and How to Live a Life and Not Outlive Your Retirement Resources.

Butler lays emphasis on putting money in 401 (k) plans. In fact, he was among the first to implement this plan when it was adopted in the early '80s during the Reagan administration. "It was cited as being a portable pension plan, one which could be taken from job to job. Until then retirement plans were not effective for most workers as they changed jobs on an average every seven years and once you left a company you also left your pension plan and had to start all over again," Butler says.

Once people began investing in 401(k) plans they accumulated funds for retirement. Butler estimates the most people who have been contributing for a 30 year period have somewhere between \$300,000 and \$1 million in a combination of their current, company sponsored retirement plan and the rollover IRA account (or accounts) formed as they changed jobs over the years. His book explains the reasons for this estimate and, if a person hasn't reached these amounts, why it probably happened. "To invest intelligently, one needs to understand the following: a fundamental cornerstone of investment decision-making is the time frame, or length of time that money can be committed to an investment."

Butler wants you in for the long term.

Even before this, people throughout the country were paying attention to Butler. He developed the "Butler Index" which was a measurement of hidden costs in 401(k) plans. This work was the subject of numerous articles in major national news outlets such as the Wall Street Journal and New York Times and culminated in a cover article in MONEY magazine entitled, "Beware, Retirement Plan Rip-off." Following this publicity he testified in hearings at the U.S. Department of Labor as well as before the Congressional Committee on Education and Labor. The result was new legislation, in 2012, requiring the disclosure of otherwise hidden fees. He appeared on CBS News with Tom Brokaw, and was interviewed on National Public Radio at the time.

CEO of Pension Dynamics Corporation, Butler founded the company in Orinda in 1980. Their offices are now in Pleasant Hill with 25 employees: two men and 23 women. Melania Budiman, of Orinda, has worked at the company for 28 years and has been president for three. "There's no glass ceiling in our company," he declares.

A graduate of Harvard College, Butler then attended the University of California at Berkeley Graduate School of Business Administration. He is the author of two other books, "The Decision-Maker's Guide to 401(k) Plans" and "401(k) Today."

Butler lives in Orinda with his wife of 40 years, Fran. Their daughter, Elsa, a graduate of Miramonte High School, is a journalist in New York City while son, Mason, graduated from Acalanes and now practices veterinary medicine. He is an active outdoorsman enjoying golf, skiing, sailing and is a tri-athlete. He's also a jazz musician playing the bass violin.

A recent column bears the title, "Fear of unknown at retirement age." Butler believes his book can do away with that fear.

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[back](#)

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