Not everyone is born knowing exactly what they are meant to do. Some take longer to set their goals, but as Jack Hautaluoma’s life proves, that’s not a hindrance; it’s an opportunity for change.

Jack was born June 28, 1933 in rural upper-peninsula Michigan, to a butcher with an 8th grade education, and an art teacher. While attending small schools in mining towns in Minnesota, he was a busy, with two paper routes, logging pulp wood, working for local farmers, going to church, reading everything he could get his hands on, and playing all sports.

His mother, a college graduate, always encouraged her children to read and learn. Even though he didn’t have a clear goal for his life, his mother’s influence ensured his continuing education. In 1951, he started at the same university she attended, the University of Minnesota, Duluth. College was a tough transition - “I felt like I was behind... I was shy and introspective, in a bigger town and school.” He found direction in the counseling center and involvement in extra-curricular activities.

After graduating from college in 1955 he worked for five years as an industrial engineer at a steel plant in Duluth. He got married in 1956 and in 1957 was drafted into an air force Critical Skills Reserve program.

He was restless and didn’t know what he wanted to do. “Engineering was fine, but “I didn’t want to be a lifer.” In 1960 he applied to 20 graduate schools and thought “the first good place that makes me a good offer, I’ll take it.” It was the University of Colorado – Boulder with a Nat. Inst. of Mental Health Fellowship in Social Psychology. Another tough switch, after not been a student for five years. The focus of his graduate work was research on social problems. His early interests were mental health and the effects of imprisonment. He remembers his father’s comment, “Jack’s really been doing good. He’s been in the prison and a mental health hospital this year!” Even though his focus was societal problems, he remembers, “I drifted a lot and I wanted to work on international development projects overseas.”

Colorado State University hired him right out of grad school. “I didn’t want to be a professor when I came to CSU!” he chuckles, “I told Dr. Neidt, my department chair, if I’m not overseas in a year, I’m going to quit.” He did get overseas, but he also became involved in CSU’s new Industrial/Organizational Psychology program. Again, it was not easy. In his first year he taught 14 courses over four quarters. “I worked until I couldn’t work anymore. I had to work hard at being a teacher because I wasn’t a natural presenter.” However, he received awards for outstanding graduate teaching and advising.

When he entered the Industrial Psychology field, the general assumption was that psychology's role was to define measures of people that described characteristics workers needed in their jobs and to help people to attain these abilities. The aim was to seek ways of defining a person-organization fit that assumed the organization was good as it was. However, as the field evolved “We started asking - Is the organization okay or not? What’s the best way for the organization to operate?” Questions of change, power, communication, and conflict occupied his time. He worked with organizations in the U.S. and overseas on organization development. He spent a year at Yale on a post-doctoral fellowship to become more capable in the new discipline.

He began work with the Peace Corps in the late 1960s, with projects in Afghanistan, Micronesia, Morocco, and Malaysia. He also started working with water engineers at CSU on project management and helped write two volumes on managing
water development projects. He dedicated his teaching and career in and outside the university to helping organizations reach their potential. He worked with many organizations in the U.S. on development, planning, and conflict. His work included 20 different countries. He had Fulbright Fellowships in Iceland, Finland, and Croatia and taught twice in Turkey. In 1986-88. He worked with the NSF International Programs in Washington, DC.

In the Afghan Peace Corps training programs, he was responsible for evaluating volunteer’s ability to serve. The harsh assessment program was based on a model developed to select spies during World War II.” His influence changed to include more self-assessment.

At CSU, Hautaluoma saw success with the Industrial/Organizational Psychology program. He was half-time Associate Dean of the College of Natural Sciences for 13 years and University Mediator, leading to work with many departments on organizational issues. The graduate students and undergrads he taught and advised were a special source of joy for him. He worries about the “bigger, more mechanical” nature of universities these days. “I just hope the land-grant model isn’t in jeopardy. I always admired it and I’d like to see it strengthened—even around the world” As long as CSU can bring in more people like Hautaluoma, who work hard to find the potential in an organization and extract a plan to reach it, we will be in good hands.