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Winter 2015

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for the Bay Boomer and beyond...

by the Bay

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WINTER
2015

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for the Bay Boomer and beyond... *by the Bay*



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In retirement it doesn't matter who you were – who are you now?

Bay View OutLook

For the Bay Boomer and Beyond...

by the Bay

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FROM THE DESK

What an ideal time to get away. It's freezing cold and it's hard to get excited about going outside to play. The dark seems endless and we have to wear far too many clothes. It's also a very long month as all the holiday hoopla is past. It's time to come up with a *tiramisu* – or pick-me-up -- a word loosely translated from an Italian dessert.

Have you ever taken a bit of a sabbatical with a group of like-minded friends? Wouldn't this just be a great time to hole up in front of a roaring fire in a fun ski lodge? There are certainly enough within easy driving distance such as Round Top, Deep Creek or Liberty Mountain. It's not necessary to be a ski bunny to go to the resorts; there's nothing negative about just hanging out and enjoying the snow, hot chocolate and maybe an evening stroll. There are many further afield if you're up for the travel. Have you ever been to Stow, Vermont, or any of the other ski resorts in upstate New England? It's quite a nice treat and there's lots offered such as tobogganing, cross-country skiing, sledding, snowshoeing or walking. There's sure to be something that would get you out there enjoying the great white world. If that's not your cup of tea, there are endless coastal beaches in Florida that are great to explore. The weather is warm and living is easy.

The point is, this is the perfect time to gather friends together and just disappear for a few days of camaraderie, laughs, exercise if you choose, sharing, friendship and good food.

A while back I had gotten together with a group of ladies and we headed out to a house in the mountains of Virginia. Some were good friends and some quickly became good friends. We enjoyed three days of walking, wine, talking, games, good food that we all shared in preparing and lots of good laughs. It was less than a two-hour drive, but it felt like we were all far away from the responsibilities of home and family. And I might point out, the busiest people I know are those who have retired. They're the ones who enjoyed so much just "being away," and taking time off from their albeit self-imposed schedules. This Fall I also had the opportunity to spend time in South Carolina with a couple of friends for just a few days. We walked the beach, did lots of reading, biking, talking and watching "chick flicks." Meals were uncomplicated and dress was super casual. Our uniform of the day was typically our *indecisive* pants – those that aren't quite shorts and can't quite be classified as long pants, but just right for changing weather. Our brief hiatus was enough to recharge and get energized before returning to tackle the holidays.

It's hard to determine what men do while "away." I've heard of a few who head off to a cabin in the woods, ostensibly to go hunting. I have never known any who have returned with anything other than a good case of poison ivy or lack of sleep, but they do seem recharged. And here in the sailing capital of the world, men have been known to sail off for a few days of adventure on the high seas – that would be the Chesapeake. My good friend Ron did this with a couple of his buddies and returned rested and refreshed. I asked what exactly do men do while off on an adventure. He replied that they spend their time talking about "relationships and feelings!" OK, so I know not to ask that again!

Interestingly too, that you feel a new appreciation from those left behind on the return to home base. It's healthy, I think, to have space and to take time to refresh and maybe learn something new. If learning and purpose are your shtick, there are many retreats and seminars that one can try. You can access www.Shawguides.com for an excellent source of the where, when and how of seminars, courses and active vacations located nearby or far away. Check into it, you'll be pleasantly surprised when you find one that's of special interest to you.

It's just as much fun, I've found, to go alone and meet new people as it is to head out with a pack of like-minded friends. And traveling with your spouse is also wonderful, but sometimes it's just fun to change the dynamics of a getaway. The point is to just do it, and from where I sit, there couldn't be a better time than during our freezing, endless days of Winter.

Tecla



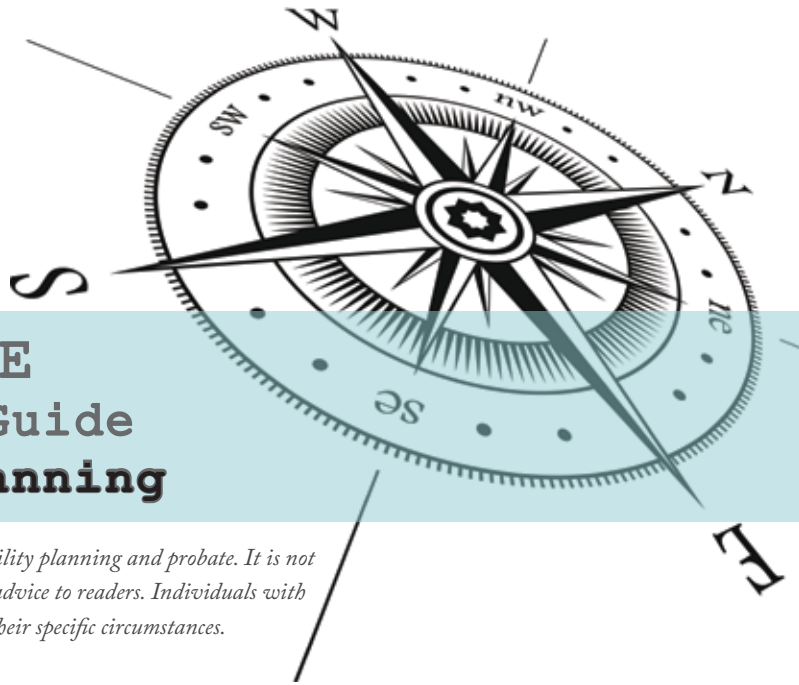


CHART YOUR COURSE

A Legal Navigation Guide

Effective Estate Planning

This column presents general information regarding estate and disability planning and probate. It is not intended to create an attorney-client relationship or constitute legal advice to readers. Individuals with legal concerns should consult with an attorney for advice regarding their specific circumstances.

You made it through the holidays and now you are motivated to start this year off right. If you are like me, you probably have at least 10 New Year's resolutions and most are probably related to diet, exercise and saving money. Well, I have one more to add to your list: estate planning. I cannot stress enough the importance of a proper estate plan.

What is estate planning? A proper estate plan should provide: (1) the ability to control your property while you are alive and able, (2) planning for you and your loved ones should you become disabled, and (3) after you die, making sure your assets go to the people you love without unnecessary cost or delay.

Do I need a will or a trust? Unfortunately for most people, it does not matter. You could have the best will or trust in the world, but because of the way you own your assets, that will or trust will do you no good. For example, think about the type of assets you own and how they are titled. Many people have joint bank accounts, or a pay-on-death beneficiary for the account. If you have life insurance or a retirement account, you most likely have a designated beneficiary. Similarly, if you have stocks, bonds, mutual funds or other investment accounts, you also are likely to have a transfer-on-death beneficiary designation. So, what happens to these assets when you die? They automatically go to the joint owner or designated beneficiary. Is this what you intended? Maybe it is, but maybe

not. What good was that will or trust?

The "Blank Check" story. You may be thinking great, why even consult with an attorney if I can just have joint accounts. Well, let's say you have a joint account with your son. As a joint owner, he has the legal right to withdraw or use that money for any purpose without your permission. In other words, he has a "blank check" to do whatever he wants with the money. In addition, that account could be subject to the claims of his creditors, or possibly subject to his divorce or bankruptcy. Let's take this one step further and suppose that your son is in a car accident and ends up in a coma. Does he have a power of attorney? If so, likely it is his spouse, your daughter-in-law. So now, not only does your daughter-in-law have access to your money but she has a "blank check" to do whatever she wants with it, all because your son is joint on the account. This is probably not what you intended.

What are the keys to an effective estate plan? In order for an estate plan to be effective there needs to be proper asset ownership and control of the process. Every person over the age of 18, at the very least, needs a financial power of attorney, a health care power of attorney and a will. The powers of attorney are for when you are alive, but for whatever reason, are unable to manage your assets or make medical decisions for yourself. The health care power of attorney should also include your wishes and instructions

for life-sustaining treatment should you be terminally ill, in a persistent vegetative state or at the end-stage of a condition. These powers of attorney terminate upon your death. At that time, the will takes effect and your assets would be distributed in accordance with the terms of the will.

Using the example above, rather than naming your son as a joint owner on the account, you could name him as your power of attorney. This way, he is only authorized to use the funds in the account for your benefit, the funds would not be subject to the claims of his creditors or his divorce or bankruptcy, and even if he becomes incapacitated, his power of attorney would not be able to access your funds. Also, the money in the account would be distributed pursuant to your will in accordance with your wishes. This way, you maintain total control.

Are there other considerations? In addition to the powers of attorney and will, every estate plan should include long-term care planning. With the advance of medicine, people are living longer; yet most of us have not made ample provision for our future long-term care needs. Creating an estate plan now ensures that you are in control of your future.

Jessica L. Estes is an elder law and estate-planning attorney at Byrd & Byrd, LLC with offices in Bowie and Prince Frederick. She can be reached at 301.464.7448 or on the website at byrdandbyrd.com

Letters to the editor



YOGURT

The holiday issue of *Outlook* was like a Christmas stocking packed with goodies and great information! Melissa Conroy's article, "Yogurt: Healthy or Not," was spot-on about overly sweet yogurts packaged as health foods. Instead, I sweeten plain Greek yogurt with a tablespoon of unsweetened applesauce. But lately, I've become acquainted with a new product your readers might enjoy. "Siggi's Icelandic Skyr" tastes like super-creamy, Greek-style yogurt and comes in delicious flavors like Pumpkin & Spice, Orange Ginger and Spiced Pear. Available at Target and Whole Foods, each container of delicious tanginess has only 4 grams of sugar. Try it!

Victoria D., Annapolis

HOLIDAY COVER

I really loved your holiday cover for the last issue. My first impression was that it was a departure from all the other *Outlook* covers I've seen. The light background without titles gave it a spacious, clean appearance. And the woman on the front resembles what one might imagine a modern day pilgrim to look like.

Kater L., Annapolis

CECIL MURPHEY

What a happy surprise to discover the holiday issue article on author Cecil Murphey and his lessons on aging! Mr. Murphey happens to be a writing mentor and friend of mine, and I want your readers to know he is "the real deal." This Summer my husband and I were delighted to have him as a houseguest when a book tour brought him nearby. Cecil was up and out for a run before sunrise, full of energy for the rest of the day. His no-fuss approach with vegetarian living convinced me to try the same. More importantly, Cecil's positive outlook, zest for living, and personal faith have been a wonderful example to me for many years. I hope your readers can also enjoy getting to know Cecil through his written words of personal wisdom and abundant books as a ghostwriter. They will not be disappointed.

Sincerely,

L. Payne, Annapolis

DEAR VICKI

Loved Dear Vicki in the holiday *OutLook*! Always do! What a wonderful magazine this is for everyone! I read it cover to cover as soon as I get it!

Thank you.

Lutie R., Annapolis

Outlook

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WHAT'S TRUE, FLU?

By Melissa Conroy

Chicken noodle soup and orange juice to sooth a cold. Sweat it out under a blanket with a growling stomach to cure a fever. Wear a hat every time you go out in the cold. Old wives tales abound when it comes to the annual sniffle fest that is Wintertime. But is any of this really true? Is it dangerous to go outside with wet hair or does garlic really ward off colds? Let's take a look at some common saws about the cold and flu season.

"Feed a cold, starve a fever." This belief can be traced to the 16th century lexicographer John Withals who wrote in his dictionary, "Fasting is a great remedy of fever." Medicine has advanced since the 16th century, and we now know that depriving your body of nutrition only hinders the healing process. Also, during a fever, your body's temperature rises as your immune system combats infection. As a result, your metabolism rises and you burn more calories. Thus, it is important to feed both a cold and a fever with nutritious food.

"You lose 80 percent of your heat through your head." On one episode of Seinfeld, Jerry Springer references this quote and quips, "Sounds like you could go skiing naked if you got a good hat." The truth is, heat will escape from any uncovered part of the body. If you go outside in the cold wearing shorts or a sleeveless shirt, you will lose heat from those exposed areas. Since most people are fully clothed in protective gear when they trot outdoors in bitter weather, the head is the only exposed part of their bodies where heat can escape.

"Drink your orange juice for Vitamin C." While it's vital to stay hydrated while ill, orange juice does not have magical curing properties and Vitamin C won't get you better faster. A 2007 study found that taking Vitamin C supplements at the start of an illness did nothing to shorten its duration. Orange juice is certainly better than soda, but it won't do anything except make

you feel a little better.

"Don't go outside with wet hair." Illnesses are caused by viruses, not by environmental exposure. You may get chilled if you skip the blow dryer, but you won't get sick unless you are exposed to illness-causing viruses.

"Sweat out a fever." Piling blankets on a feverish person will only make them more miserable and overheated. Fevers are caused by viruses and you can't sweat them out of your system: Only your immune system can rid you of viruses. Excess sweating will pull vital moisture out of your body, something you don't want because it is important to stay hydrated while ill. It is better to stay comfortable than roast under a comforter trying to "break" a fever.

"Avoid dairy when sick." This one has some truth to it. Some people report that eating dairy foods while sick makes them produce more mucus and feel more queasy. However, there is no scientific evidence that you should avoid dairy when you are laid low by a cold or flu. If you've got the sniffles and ice cream is the only thing that looks good, go ahead and eat it.

"Put Vicks under your nose." My parents, like many of their generation, greased us kids with Vicks VaporRub and smeared it under our noses when a cold descended on the house. However, putting Vicks under your nose can make it harder to breath. Vicks does not actually open up your nasal passages: What it does is trigger receptors in your brain that make you think your nose is more open. If you use Vicks, rub it on your chest, not under your nose.

Old wives tales persist, but when you are laid flat with a bug, there is not really much you can do except wait it out. Keep hydrated, eat nutritious food and get plenty of rest, and that will eventually put you on the road to recovery.

Bay Bytes

For all the information needed on ski resorts both near and far, including costs, conditions, location, etc., log onto www.SkiTown.com

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Anne Arundel County Department of Aging and Disabilities
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Jan 15, 2015	Arnold Senior Center	Mapping the Final Journey	Lou Lukas, MD, Hospice & Palliative Medicine
Feb 19, 2015	Pascal Senior Center	The Mechanics of Caregiving	Babajide (Ben) Ogundip, PT
Mar 23, 2015	Arnold Senior Center	Behaviors as Communication? A Dementia Patient's Attempt to Connect	Jennifer FitzPatrick, MSW, LCSW-C
Apr 16, 2015	Pascal Senior Center	Communicating with Health Care Providers	Ann Morrison, Ph.D., RN, CS
May 21, 2015	Arnold Senior Center	Family Estrangements in Dementia Care	Jennifer FitzPatrick, MSW, LCSW-C
Jun 18, 2015	Pascal Senior Center	Mental Health Issues for Caregivers	Kimberly Burton, Director of Older Adult Programs, Maryland Coalition on Mental Health & Aging

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Register on-line at: <http://www.aacounty.org/Aging>



MEET FOLKS AND EXPLORE THE WORLD, JOIN A TRAVEL CLUB

By Leah Lancione

Does exploring the Chinese Silk Road or cruising the Galapagos Islands and Ecuador sound alluring? How about “heli-hiking” in the Canadian Rockies, whale watching in Baja, California, or surveying the ancient history of Greece? These adventures and more are examples of trips arranged, scheduled and taken by travel clubs. One in particular, Eldertreks (www.eldertreks.com), is exclusively for travelers over 50. There are countless others, like Women Traveling Together (www.women-traveling.com/), which arrange unique and enthralling tours and vacations just for the ladies.

However, if you want a homegrown club that provides opportunities or excursions within the Old Line State or neighboring states, the Maryland Outdoor Club (MOC) (www.marylandoutdoorclub.org/) does just that. With adventures like kayaking Kent

Narrows, skiing at Wisp or biking on the Eastern Shore as well as social events at popular Maryland locales, this club offers outings for all ages and experience levels. Membership is free. You only pay for the adventures you choose. The MOC website serves as a “virtual clubhouse” and the club keeps members abreast of upcoming events and trips by email twice a month. If you want to join a group of active folks who want to form friendships while experiencing all of Maryland’s natural resources or pick up a new hobby, check out the MOC.

The website www.meetup.com offers a forum for “neighbors” to unite online and form groups with similar interests—particularly travel. The site declares, “meet-ups are neighbors getting together to learn something, do something, share something.” Individuals can start or join any group that peaks their interest. Examples include groups called “single, retired and active.” The group of 45 members meets up for day trips to Atlantic City, New York City, museums, golf outings and more. Another group based out of Bowie called “Dream Getaways Travel Group” is full of self-proclaimed “serious travel enthusiasts” and boasts 130 members. The group has recently cruised together to Honduras and Mexico, sailed to the Cayman Islands and journeyed on an African safari.

To find a group on meetup.com with members who share similar travel interests and/or age and lifestyle, you just need to type in your city or zip code to find folks

close by. Countless opportunities are available to join neighbors who want to spend their free time exploring local and faraway vistas with others.

If spending time in the great outdoors and camping is more “your thing,” the Good Sam RV Club is “a nationally recognized camping club in North America” with nearly 20 official chapters in Maryland. These chapters unite RV and camping enthusiasts who share tips and travel experiences online (www.goodsamclub.com) and plan group outings to nearly 2,000 campgrounds across the nation. In addition to receiving special discounts and rates, group members, who commit to either two or three years membership, also receive possible roadside assistance as another notable perk.

Maryland chapters range from the Annapolis-based “Maryland Capital Sams,” Baltimore’s “Maryland Stinkers” and the “Eastern Shore Sea Gulls” with a state director who oversees all clubs. For more information on membership or chapter activities, email the director at mdgsdirector@gmail.com

If you are an active single or part of a family of travel buffs, think about sharing your enthusiasm and knowledge with others. Travel clubs enable folks to explore new places while also providing opportunities to make new friends in the process. Ernest Hemingway once said, “It is good to have an end to journey toward; but it is the journey that matters, in the end.”

Bay Bytes

To determine if it’s worth your while to pay off your mortgage, log onto bankrate.com/mortgages/mortgage-calculator.aspx

Get past what could have been and tackle what’s there for you today.

DENTAL IMPLANTS: NOT SUCH A CLEAR CHOICE

By Dr. Woody Wooddell, D.D.S.

Perhaps no single development in dentistry has been more profound than dental implants. A dental implant is an artificial tooth root upon which a tooth restoration is built, such as crowns, bridges or dentures. They are made from titanium, a strong and lightweight metal that has been used successfully in dentistry for more than 40 years. Dental implants provide the strength and stability necessary to eat without struggling to chew, prevent bone loss and help maintain facial features.

A dental implant is composed of three parts: the titanium implant that fuses with the jawbone; a small metal post or abutment, which fits over the portion of the implant that protrudes above the gum line; and the crown, or restoration, which fits onto the abutment and is created to look like your natural tooth.

In the last two decades, implants have become a popular solution for adult patients of all ages who have lost a tooth

or teeth due to gum disease, an injury, tooth decay or some other reason. Today, many practitioners include implants in the services they provide. Some even boast a "one-stop shop" for the entire process from implant placement to restoration. However, it is important to know that not all implants are created equally.

The exact placement of the implant(s), as well as the size, shape and color of the restoration, must be carefully determined as part of the patient's individual esthetic plan. Oral surgeons and periodontists have the ideal expertise necessary to successfully place implants. Many times, surgery to the gum and/or bone is required prior to implant placement. So, the patient is best served by a specialist.

Experienced restorative dentists have the knowledge and skill to develop a comprehensive plan that will guide all aspects of treatment. Some implants may look pretty, but not fit properly, eventually

resulting in the failure of the implant(s) and/or damage to natural teeth because the patient's bite is not balanced. Also, the skill of the lab selected to fabricate the crown or restoration and the quality of materials used can vary greatly.

In summary, the expertise of the practitioners who place implants, the skill of the restorative dentist and the quality of the lab making the final restorations can vary widely. It is important for a patient to carefully consider all of these factors when choosing the right team for dental implants.

Dr. Woody Wooddell and his partner, Dr. Joe Passaro, opened the doors to their dental practice in Davidsonville in 1981. In addition to caring for their patients' dental health by offering general dentistry services, Drs. Wooddell and Passaro provide expert restorative and esthetic dental solutions. Visit their website at www.wp dentalgroup.com or call 410.956.5555 for more information.

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It's a Great Time to be Over 50

By Terry Portis

A few weeks ago I asked one of our 18-year-old college freshmen when middle age begins. Her reply was "around 30." While this is just a little earlier than I was expecting, the fact is that middle age is starting later and lasting longer. If you were born 100 years ago, you were not likely to make it to 50. Some people today don't even consider themselves middle-aged until they reach 50.

The impact of living longer and staying relatively healthy is having a ripple effect throughout our society. The age of first marriage is now just under 30 (that's why they keep moving back in with you). According to National Institutes of Health, more middle-aged people have living parents than ever before in history. Most counties in Maryland will see a 50 percent growth in the people over 60 in the next 15 years. If you are a woman, you are quite likely to know your great-grandchildren. The good news about all this is that you have more choices in life.

You can stay in the workforce longer

One German study found that worker productivity continued to increase until the age of 65. There are many more jobs today that require less physical exertion or long hours. Economic changes also mean more quality part-time jobs. These part-time jobs might not be desirable for younger workers who are looking for full-time work, but might be a perfect fit for someone in their 60s or 70s.

In order to work longer (or better), you might need to sharpen your skills or do some retraining. The good news is that community colleges like Anne Arundel Community College (AACC) have dozens of programs that will get you the training you need and even a credential for your resume. There are literally thousands

of adults over 50 who are doing this at AACC (www.AACC.edu), so you will not be alone.

Retirement might be the most meaningful time of your life

It is not unusual anymore for retirement to last 20 years. That is a career, so what are you going to do with it? At AACC, many people have decided to get involved in peer learning programs, learn a language, test out whether they are artistic, or finally take the time to learn about a favorite topic like history.

Others get involved in small nonprofits, some of which are desperately hoping people like you walk through the door. Some might write that novel that has been inside their head for years. It is never too late.

Living longer means you can get to know and influence more generations than ever before. Older people have long been an important resource to younger generations. Get involved as a positive motivator who shares a hopeful outlook. I have heard many students say that a grandparent encouraged them, believed in them and that's why they were in school, or finally made it to that elusive career they wanted.

So, despite creaky knees and other aches and pains, it's a great time to be over 50!

Dr. Terry Portis, director of the Center on Aging at Anne Arundel Community College, holds a doctorate in counseling psychology and can be reached at tportis@aacc.edu

Think about the impact you can have on multiple generations



TRACKING A PRECURSOR OF OSTEOPOROSIS

By Christina Morganti, MD

You can't see it or feel it. But if you're a woman older than 50, you're likely losing some bone mass.

Don't worry, it's a normal process. But it's also something to pay attention to. In some people, it can reach a point called osteopenia, also known as low bone density.

Osteopenia is not a disease. It's a term that describes the bone mineral density as somewhat low, but not low enough to be considered osteoporosis, which is where bones are brittle and easily break.

For women, bone loss speeds up after menopause. According to the National Osteoporosis Foundation (NOF), you may be at a higher risk for bone loss if you:

- Are over age 50
- Eat a low-calcium diet
- Smoke
- Have a family history of weak bones
- Are physically inactive
- Take certain medicines such as corticosteroids

A simple, painless bone mineral density test, called a DEXA scan, can determine your bone health. The U.S. Preventive Services Task Force recommends that women age 65 and older have this test.

Younger women may also benefit from screening if they are at increased risk for fractures. Risk factors include smoking, drinking excessive amounts of alcohol and having a low body mass or a parental or personal history of fractures. Ask your doctor if you should be screened.

If you learn you have osteopenia, follow these steps from the NOF to help protect your bone health:

- **Get plenty of calcium.** You can get it from foods such as dairy products and leafy green vegetables. Ask your doctor if you also need to take a supplement.

- **Get plenty of vitamin D.** Your skin makes it when exposed to sunlight, but most people need to get vitamin D from other sources, such as fortified foods or supplements.
- **If you smoke, quit.**
- **Get some weight-bearing exercise every day.**

Christina Morganti, MD, is a sports medicine orthopedic surgeon with Anne Arundel Medical Center where she specializes in aging and its effects on bone density, muscles and balance. She can be reached at 410.268.8862. Visit OSMC.net for more information.

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Stinkin' Thinkin'

By Dr. James David

Recently, while vacationing in Kerrville, Texas, we visited the Western Museum of Art, an impressive collection of paintings, sculpture and artifacts commemorating our pioneer ancestors. In the gift shop, we purchased a book, *Western Movie: Wit and Wisdom*, authored by Jim Kane.

The *Western Wit and Wisdom* reminded me of our wonderful human capacity to view a half-glass of water as either half-full or half-empty. Some of us seem to stay very positive, some very negative, while most of us probably vacillate between the two extremes. Actually, the latest behavioral research explains our tendency toward negativity or caution as resulting from our evolutionary ancestors' efforts to survive in dangerous settings. There certainly is ample validity to have appropriate levels of cautiousness.

Two prominent cognitive-behavioral therapists, Dr. Aaron Beck and Dr. David D. Burns, have identified common patterns of thinking that often constitute the underlying basis for our being stressed-out, anxious or depressed. They use the sophisticated term, "cognitive distortions" to label these negative habits or patterns of thinking. In Alcoholics Anonymous, they use the vernacular "Stinkin' Thinkin'." Let's explore the 11 common cognitive distortions the therapists describe.

Before we do, I must mention the critical or pivotal variable of awareness. We can't change what we don't notice or recognize. It's very easy to employ cognitive distortions without realizing it. Taking the time for self-reflection, self-examination or requesting feedback from others, is generally necessary for self-awareness to grow and our evolutionary development to proceed. Here we go!

- **All or Nothing Thinking:** Things or people are all good or all bad. This is black-and-white thinking. There is no gray or common ground. Generally, most of us can see the fallacy of this stance if someone gently points it out to us. If we all adhered to this, we'd have 100 percent divorce rate rather

than our current 50 percent. Examples of this position are endless in our personal lives, nationally and internationally. For example, "I'll never get the job I want!"

- **Overgeneralization:** One negative experience occurs and we quickly move to extreme thinking such as, "No one likes me," or, "I never have a great vacation." Think like this and you're bound to be depressed, anxious, stressed-out or all three.
- **Mental Filter:** We all make our own reality. One bad thing happens, like a negative interaction with someone, and we stay with a negative filter. This is similar to overgeneralization above. "No one ever calls me!"
- **Disqualifying the Positive:** Most of us have trouble accepting compliments, praise or love at some time. We tend to push it away or aside by self-deprecation such as, "Anyone would have done it." "It was no big deal!" Some of us have learned to simply say, "Thank you," even though it might feel a bit uncomfortable.
- **Overemphasizing the Negative:** These folks are usually very stuck in their negative view of life. Constantly challenging the negative assertion is often necessary. It's very tiring. Negativity does seem to attract negativity. The glass of water is half-empty.
- **Magnification and/or Minimization:** This one amazes me. Our human tendency is to magnify and fixate on the negative while minimizing and quickly ignoring or forgetting a positive event. This frequently occurs in work settings where an employer's enlightened policies and deeds are overlooked, but any misstep is kept forever alive, never to be forgotten.
- **Emotional Reasoning:** This occurs when our negative thinking and feelings are so ingrained in us that they are in fact us. Unless we have a profound transformative experience, we stay encapsulated in a prison of negativity. This can occur due to social class or racial identity. With feelings of inferiority, my negative belief or self-talk might be, "I'm not as good as others." With our children and grandchildren, it's wise to guide them toward objective appraisals and accurate assessments of themselves and others.
- **"Shoulda, Woulda, Coulda" Statements:** This is a rigid, pervasive pattern of believing that nothing you do is good enough. You chronically second-guess yourself and say, "I should have, could have or would have done better if I had done it differently." This is the opposite of self-acceptance, which flows out of self-love.
- **Labeling:** This is similar to, "All or Nothing Thinking," in

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that the label we apply to ourselves or another is so absolute. We say, "I am so lazy," or "He is so controlling," instead of, "Sometimes I have low energy," or, "Under stress he can become dictatorial at times."

- **Personalization:** Most of us, I guess, do this occasionally. We take things personally. We misinterpret words, facial expressions or behaviors that may have nothing to do with how we are perceived by others. Sometimes we take personalization to an extreme level where we enter into self-blame. For example, "If I had been a better parent, my child would have graduated from college."

How Do We Cease "Stinkin' Thinkin'?"

Here are some important steps:

1. Be still and listen. Take the time to tune into your thoughts and feelings. Write in a journal.
2. Change negative beliefs and self-talk to the positive. Repeat until you believe it and you change your self-identity.
3. Sometimes we need to escape a negative environment or person. Remember, "Life is too short to dance with ugly men or women."
4. Reflect and ask yourself these questions: Is this thought

or belief true? Did I jump to a conclusion? What evidence for the thought or belief do I have? Am I letting negative thoughts balloon out of proportion? Is there another, more realistic way to view the situation? What would be the worst that could happen? Does it help me to think this way? What would be the best that could happen?"

5. Choose to decide how to deal with the source of your stress. (Don't just "try." Instead, be powerful and "decide.") Ask yourself: "How else can I think about this? What could I do to cope more effectively with this situation? How could I view this more positively and more accurately?" You should practice these restructuring thoughts until they become automatic when facing stressful situations.

This doesn't mean ignoring reality or putting a false happy face on unpleasant situations. However, it is often possible to focus on the positive side of a situation just as easily as on the negative side. You can acknowledge a painful truth while still understanding that there are positive aspects to the bigger picture. Stamp out "Stinkin' Thinkin'."

Dr. Jim David is a practicing psychotherapist in Silver Spring who adheres to positivity in all areas of life. Visit his website at www.askdrdavidnow.com or email james519@comcast.net



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IS THIS
THE YEAR

TO JOIN A HEALTH CLUB?

By Leah Lancione

"Oh no," you say. "Not again. Not another plea to make a New Year's resolution involving diet and exercise!" OK, I won't do my usual spiel about how your food choices affect your health, both short- and long-term, and how adding daily exercise (at least 30 minutes) can improve your overall well-being and prevent illness. So, I'll just help you decide whether it's time to join a health club since you already want to exercise more or better.

According to the President's Council on Fitness, Sports & Nutrition (www.fitness.gov/be-active/physical-activity-guidelines-for-americans), the Department of Health and Human Services issued "Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans" in 2008 to recommend exercise for folks by age groups. The 30

minutes a day recommended for adults 18 to 64 can include daily activities that involve exerting energy—from walking the dog, cleaning the house and doing yard work to other routine chores. These chores, however, may not be enough to raise your heart rate, burn sufficient calories, increase flexibility or tone and strengthen muscles. Not to mention that some people find it hard to break out of a mostly sedentary lifestyle. Therefore, joining a health club might be just the ticket to escape your comfort zone to get healthy.

If you find it hard to get inspired by exercise every day, let alone weekly, a health club can provide motivation. If you join the gym and sign up for a class—say, aquatics programs sponsored by the Arthritis Foundation, tai chi or yoga—you will feel more obligated to continue the program if you know your instructor or classmates are expecting you. Another option is hiring a personal trainer to specifically design a workout program tailored to your age, fitness level and preferences. A trainer will surely enhance your strengths, help you improve your weaknesses and inspire you to move with a purpose and push yourself each visit. Not to mention, a personal trainer will explain and demonstrate how to use each piece of strength and cardiovascular equipment safely and to the fullest.

If you think that joining this Winter, like all the usual folks who make New Year's resolutions to get fit and crowd all the gyms for a couple of months before

dropping out is a waste of money, it's not. In an ABC News interview, Tim Keightley, the executive vice president of operations for the popular health club chain Gold's Gym, said December and early January is a perfect time to join at a discounted rate. "You actually get a better deal in December going into early January," he said, even though gyms are most crowded this time of year. So why not get yourself into the groove now before the foot traffic increases? Just think of how good it will feel to work off all those extra calories from holiday sweets.

Another reason to join a club is to find a partner or a group if you don't already have a workout buddy to make your workout time enjoyable. If taking a brisk walk or popping in a fitness video at home sounds boring, joining a group or signing up for sessions with a personal trainer will eliminate that excuse for not exercising. In fact, the American College of Sports Medicine says "group exercise provides us with an opportunity to feel young again and be physically active with others." When you're exercising in a group you will receive encouragement as well as laugh, sweat and even moan a little to upbeat music right along with everyone else.

An added bonus to joining a health club is that members form lasting friendships outside the gym class walls. If your gym has the full range of amenities like most, there's more to experience with your new workout buddies than just the exercise programs. Many have juice or oxygen bars, saunas, a swimming pool and hot tub, a racquetball court, tanning beds (something I don't recommend) and boutiques with workout gear. Who would've thought joining a health club would include all these amenities to share with your new pack of "gym rats."

Trust me, you will feel empowered when your strength, balance and coordination, agility and overall fitness is improved. In all probability, if you keep your commitment and take advantage of all the resources available to you at the health club, you will see results you didn't expect. Hey, it's worth it to at least take advantage of the free trial offers available to find out if it's time to join.

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DON'T LEAVE HOME WITHOUT THESE NECESSITIES

By Penelope Folsom

Going on a trip? Even for a short jaunt of just a few days by car, train or flying off to somewhere exotic, there are a few must have items that you won't regret including in your easily-accessible-take-with-you bag.

- Address book that includes email addresses and coded in passwords. This will prove invaluable when you draw a blank while standing in front of the ATM machine.
- A Kindle or iPad or other device for online reading.
- Small notebook with pen and pencil.
- Paper map of your destination. There are times when the big picture just seems to work better. This in addition to your GPS or on line MapQuest.
- Personal size book light for low light areas or download the "flashlight" app on your iPhone.
- Cell phone with recharge wire and/or connector. Your camera can be packed elsewhere as pictures can easily be taken with iPhone.

- Easy to eat snack food such as granola bars. These may have to be purchased along with any beverage after going through security if checking in at an airport.
- Magazines and paperback books that you've been meaning to get to. After finishing, why cart them back home -leave them behind for someone else to enjoy.
- Business cards with your contact information – you never know who you may meet.

With the delays that we all encounter these few items will make your journey just a bit more comfortable and enjoyable. And, if you're flying off to somewhere wonderful, you'll find it worthwhile to check with the airport to determine current TSA rules regarding required identification and allowable carry-on's. Log onto www.tsa.gov/traveler-information



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Journey to the Old Country

By Pat Jurgens

There comes a time in life when you want to know where your people came from. You want to see with your own eyes the country of your forefathers. This year my husband and I took a Rhine River cruise, followed by a week of independent travel to our ancestors' villages in Germany.

If such a trip strikes a chord, try following our plan. First, research your family genealogy to find the locale where your family originated. Second, look into travel options to that area. Third, open yourself for adventure, get out your credit card, and go!

RESEARCH

For genealogy research, start well ahead of your anticipated departure. If you are new to this and have little family information, give yourself at least a year to research and discover connections. The best resources we found were <https://familysearch.org> and www.ancestry.com. For personal support and help, the local genealogy society and the public library are invaluable.

Start with what you know. Talk with your living relatives. Identify the family name and given name of a great grandfather or grandmother. Make note of any dates. Once a birthplace is determined, that can be searched as well. Many immigration and church records (baptismal, marriage and death records) are available on microfilm. If they're not on the Web, they can be ordered through the Mormon Church's Family Search and sent to a local LDS library for you to study. This research is a project all in itself. One thing leads to another; there are many dead ends. It's like a puzzle -- it takes time to fit the pieces together.

TRAVEL

A tour is a great way to familiarize yourself with the country before going off on your own. My husband had never been to Europe or Germany, so we elected to do a Rhine River cruise from Basel to Amsterdam. It's smart to give yourself a day or two to decompress after 20 hours of flight time. Make reservations ahead for a hotel through a site such as www.tripadvisor.com or www.expedia.com that will include reviews. You can email a hotel with questions in English and pay online.

There are a number of recommended companies for river cruises. Just enter "river cruises" on Google. Viking is perhaps the

largest and best known. We chose Avalon because of the dates available. We were not disappointed; it is a high quality tour company with excellent guides, food and accommodations.

The delight of a river cruise is that you unpack your suitcase once and sleep in the same bed every night. Yet each day the ship stops at a different town. River cruise ships are relatively small, with around 100 to 150 people on board. You don't have to lift a finger as everything is provided. We were catered to and waited on, as well as being guided by a local whenever we stepped off the ship. Disabled passengers as well as the able-bodied are able to enjoy the experience.

If you like cathedrals, old towns with cobblestone streets and castles, this is a cruise for you. We enjoyed the cathedral at Strasbourg, the castle at Heidelberg, Gutenberg's Bible at Mainz, antique musical instruments at Rudesheim, passed through the castle-studded Rhine Gorge to Koblenz and the magnificent Cologne cathedral, before arriving at the canals of Amsterdam. We enjoyed three delicious meals a day on board, and the pace was relaxed and easy.

INDEPENDENT DISCOVERY

In Amsterdam, after a canal tour and our last night on the ship, we were on our own. A tour of windmills and the islands of Volendam and Marken is a return to another century. The Rijksmuseum is a marvelous place to spend half a day. Buy an e-ticket before you leave home and be sure to get the multimedia tour, essentially a mini iPad with self-guided tours and details about individual paintings.

From Amsterdam we planned to ride the rails to Osnabruck, Germany. We checked out the railroad station a day ahead, in order to know where to go and what to do. Tickets are best purchased stateside, and it's smart to reserve a seat, in addition to a ticket in first or second-class. The second-class coach has comfortable, upholstered seats with overhead racks for luggage. It's necessary to be ready on the railroad platform when the train arrives because it will only pause at the station for a few minutes.

Renting a car in Germany is best arranged before you leave home as well. We taxied to the Hertz rental office on arrival in Osnabruck, and set out for our hotel. The GPS we brought had been loaded with European maps, so we thought we were all

set. At first, it took us in circles, so we named it "Brunhilde" for its stubbornness. But once at the hotel "she" became a virtual lifesaver, directing us along the Autobahn to unmarked roads and insisting we turn at lanes that looked like driveways. Without her we would still be looking for the villages.

Identifying a central location, we stayed at the same hotel each night. This plan works well because you don't need to pack and carry luggage with you every day. Each day, we drove to a different ancestor's village. There we explored churches and cemeteries, hoping to find our predecessors' names on the tombstones. Much to our surprise we discovered that there were almost no gravestones prior to the 1970s and '80s. In Germany gravesites are leased for 15 or 25 years, and if the family does not pay to renew, someone else is buried there. A dead end, so to speak.

The countryside in west-central Germany is lush green and rolling, each neat little village surrounded by fields of hay, corn, millet, etc. Entering a village, three-story, half-timbered houses are snug up to the street where pavement or cobblestones cover the surface. Everything is in its place and clean as a whistle, as if the streets are swept each morning.

After our wonderful journey there is still much that we need to discover about our ancestors. But visiting their country, even 150 years later, brought us much closer to our heritage. An adventure like this can be the trip of a lifetime.

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Happy Birthday, Queen Anne, Our Town's Namesake

By Ellen Moyer

On this upcoming 350th anniversary of Queen Anne's birth, it is good to remember that our town was named for then Princess Anne, who was soon to become queen of England.

Born on Feb. 6, 1665, in London, Anne spent her earliest years with her sister Mary and her grandmother, the queen dowager, near Paris. Groomed for leadership, the popular Anne was crowned on St. Georges Day, April 23, 1702, at age 37 as queen of England, Scotland and Ireland with a little bit of France mixed in. Midway through her reign, England and Scotland united after centuries of battle. From 1707 on, Anne was recognized as the queen of the United Kingdom of Great Britain.

From the beginning of her reign she surrounded herself with able men, keen negotiators who kept her reign free from constitutional conflict with Parliament. Accused of lacking political astuteness by her longtime friend from whom she was estranged near the end of her life, her reign nevertheless was marked by stability and prosperity.

Annapolis streets in the heart of the city also bear the names of royals important to her life:

- Prince George (of Denmark her husband)
- King George (of the House of Hanover, her successor)
- Duke of Gloucester (her son who died at age 11)
- Hyde (her mother Anne Hyde)
- Maryland (her paternal grandmother and Queen Dowager Henrietta Maria who gave her name to our state)
- Charles (her grandfather who granted the colony of Maryland to Lord Calvert)

Her government created the East India Company, which brought British Rule to India, blunted French power in Europe, unified England and Scotland, and weeded out corruption to preserve the British Constitution and a Protestant monarchy. Integrity, stability, continuity, predictability and prosperity marked her reign and ushered in an age of artistic, literary, economic and political advancement.

If her government was marked by stability, her personal life was not. She and her husband, Prince George of Denmark, on all accounts had a strong partnership that left her devastated when he died in 1708. None of their children survived. Pregnant 17 times, 12 children were stillborn, four died before the age of 2 and her longest living child, a son and heir apparent, died when he was 11 years old.

The queen suffered from gout and painful inflammatory diseases. Confined to a wheel chair, she was carried to functions of state in a chaise. She drove her favorite one-horse chaise "furiously like Jehu and a mighty hunter like Nimrod," according to the author Jonathan Swift. Despite afflictions that left her overweight and her skin ruddy, her estranged friend Sarah Churchill would describe her as having "something of majesty in her look, but mixed with a gloominess of soul."

Queen Anne, like her treasurer Lord Godolphin, whose family's line of horses would produce the great Man of War, thrived on card playing and horse racing. Of all the monarchs, this queen did the most to establish thoroughbred racing. On Aug. 11, 1711, Queen Anne opened the world-famous Ascot Race Course immortalized in a scene of "My Fair Lady." Every royal family since has attended the opening day at Ascot, arriving in a horse-drawn carriage, to bet on the horses in the Queen Anne Stakes.

Toward the end of her reign, political differences soured her relationship with her lifelong friend, the Duchess of Marlborough, Sarah Churchill, who accused her through her Whig enemies of a lesbian relationship. The queen, who was a lifelong Anglican and favored moderate Tory politicians, dismissed many Whigs from office, giving credence to a two-party political system.

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When she died in London on Aug. 1, 1714, at age 49, Anne left a prosperous nation with a treasury that would ensure solvency for Great Britain throughout the 18th century.

Queen Anne was the last of the Stuart Dynasty to rule the United Kingdom.

How Contact Lenses Have Evolved

By Michael J. Dodd, MD

Contact lenses are an option to correct optical (refractive) errors of the human eye. There are four general types of refractive errors: myopia (nearsightedness), hyperopia (farsightedness), astigmatism and presbyopia (aging eyes which requires reading glasses). Combinations of these can occur. For example, a patient may have myopia with astigmatism, or astigmatism with presbyopia.

In the 1600s glass could be ground with increasing accuracy and precision. The optical profession emerged once it was realized that certain people could see improvements in vision when looking through certain shaped lenses. Trial and error led the glass merchants to assist people with optical errors.

Over the past 300 years many obvious improvements in spectacles have been developed, but correction of refractive errors always involved placing the corrective lenses in front of the eyes. It was not until 1887 that someone developed lenses small enough to be placed on the surface of the eye (although da Vinci illustrated the concept in 1508). These early contacts were made of glass, were very large and covered part of the white of the eye and were quite uncomfortable. These were the first "hard contact lenses."

By 1939 the first plastic hard contact lenses were developed. These were still large and uncomfortable. But clever scientists were able to manufacture smaller and more precise contact lenses and improve the comfort with better plastics like "polymethylmethacrylate." These small contacts became popular in the 1950s and 1960s and for the first time, realistically allowed patients to temporarily get rid of their glasses. However, there were limitations; it took several days to build up wearing time and they could not be worn for more than about 10 hours a day.

Since then, new materials have been developed, including silicone, which makes the lenses more comfortable and allows for longer wearing times. These silicone lenses are known as

"gas permeable lenses," which means they allow oxygen in the air to penetrate the lens and assist nourishing the corneal surface cells. This extra oxygen improves comfort in addition to allowing longer use.

The next development was soft contact lenses. These are made of soft flexible polymers. These are very easy to wear in terms of comfort and are now the most popular type of contacts. However, they do require more maintenance; they must be kept in a fluid-filled container when not worn, and they must be cleaned after each use. With reduced manufacturing costs and to avoid the storage and cleaning issues, now "daily wear soft lenses" are available which can be thrown away after one day of use.

Today most patients with the four refractive errors I noted first can be fit accurately with soft contact lenses. There still are some patients today who enjoy both hard and gas permeable contacts and wear them with great success. Consult your eye physician to see if you are a candidate for contacts and be sure to follow your doctor's instructions to avoid any complications.

Dr. Dodd is a practicing ophthalmologist at Maryland Eye Associates located in Annapolis, Prince Frederick and Upper Marlboro, as well as an instructor at the University of Maryland Department of Ophthalmology. He can be reached at 410.224.4550 or mjdmd1@gmail.com

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Many Ways to Travel?

By Pat Jurgens

The lure of the unknown is enticing, intoxicating, and hard to resist. What is it that spurs us to pack our bags, get on a plane or ship and go miles away from everything familiar? Is it the excitement of new places, people, and experiences? Or the need to get away from the humdrum of everyday life? Maybe in part it's the sense that life is shorter now than ever, and we'd better go "while we still can." With Internet information instantaneous, there are more possibilities than ever before.

ADVENTURE

The excitement of an active vacation draws those who are young at heart. You can ride on a zip line in the rain forest of Costa Rica, kayak in the Puget Sound, go rafting in the Grand Canyon, or hike to Machu Picchu in Peru. You can bicycle in China or go on walking tours in Ireland. The choices are endless.

- www.adventuretravel.com
- www.oattravel.com
- www.backroads.com
- www.gapadventures.com

Eco tours are an environmentally friendly way to see the world. They focus on sustainable tourism of the natural world. It's possible to explore archaeological ruins in Central America, go whale watching off the New Zealand coast, trek with gorillas in Africa, snorkel on a Brazilian reef, or ride horses in a Costa Rican rain forest. An Eco tour works in harmony with the land and people, employing locals, and using local goods, services and accommodations. Destinations are likely to be remote and wild.

- www.ecotours.com
- www.ecotourdirectory.com
- www.nathab.com
- www.eldertreks.com

LEARN

Every travel experience is educational in one way or another. An educational tour will stimulate your brain, and you'll enjoy being with like-minded people. You're taken out of your comfort zone and opened to new ideas and perspectives. Educational travel is perfect for those who want to understand the history, culture, and customs of a country or region. Lectures by local experts and discussions are an integral part of the experience.

- www.roadsscholar.org

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Focused vacations are popular for those who want to concentrate on one kind of experience or skill. You can study Spanish in Oaxaca, Mexico; learn the art of Italian cooking in Tuscany, Italy, or go bird watching in the Caribbean. A week of yoga, meditation, writing, art, scuba diving, or you name it - can be found in many beautiful and exotic locations.

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RELAX

Many of us yearn for a "get away" vacation, where we can settle back in the sun with a cool drink and relax. Beach vacations are the traditional antidote to a cold northern Winter. Hilton Head, S.C., Myrtle Beach, S.C., Siesta Key, Sanibel Island and many other locations in Florida are annual pilgrimages for some families. The coasts of Louisiana, Texas and California are popular destinations, as are the Baja and coasts of Mexico, Belize and Costa Rica. More recently the beaches of Thailand and Malaysia have lured Americans and Europeans alike.

Ask yourself: Do I prefer an all-inclusive resort package that includes airfare, hotel, meals and drinks in the price? Or do I want to find my own slice of heaven and pay as I go? If you're a do-it-yourselfer you'll need time and patience for extensive research on the Internet. The amount of information is overwhelming, but with persistence you'll pay less and hopefully find what you want. Or you can contact a travel agent, give her your preferences and budget limit, and let her narrow the field of choices and plan your trip. It's a matter of how much time, effort, and money you are willing to spend in the process.

- www.travelzoo.com
Top 20 weekly Deals
- www.applevacations.com
All inclusive vacations / Caribbean
- www.kayak.com
Cost comparisons

- www.southwest.com
And other airline websites for "Deals"
- www.tripadvisor.com
Destinations/accommodations/ reviews

Does a cruise beckon in your future? There are large ships and small ships. You can cruise around the world for six months, to Nassau over a long weekend and anything in between. The myriad of cruise companies create many choices and costs vary considerably. Discounts of 50 percent can be found, particularly over holidays and off-season. Some companies are all-inclusive, others more commonly charge extra for land excursions. Then there's insurance to be considered, as well as accommodations at the arrival and departure city. A cruise can be a major investment, but when you find one that suits you, you can unpack just once and relax with all your needs met onboard. This is luxury travel, with a variety of food to tempt your palate 24-7, onboard entertainment, personal services and shopping.

- www.royalcaribbean.com
- www.princess.com
- www.celebritycruises.com
- www.azamarclubcruises.com

Small ships take passengers on more individual itineraries to specialized destinations. The advantage is fewer people, greater identification with the destination land and people; a downside can be higher cost.

- www.expeditions.com
- www.travelwithachallenge.com
- www.windstarcruises.com
- www.un-cruise.com

River cruises are increasingly popular. Sailing down the Rhine and the Danube, the Amazon, the Yangtze or the Nile are all possibilities. Viewing the countryside as your boat gently moves along, stopping at places of interest are all part of the fun. It's a combination of land tour and water transport - the best of both worlds.

- www.vikingrivercruises.com
- www.tauck.com/river-cruises
- www.avalonwaterways.com
- www.gct.com

The mountains provide a different kind of relaxing vacation. How many of us recall family vacations at a cabin in our youth? Swimming in a lake, cooking

hamburgers over an open fire, and roasting marshmallows as the stars came out are happy memories. Many old cabins are for rent by owner. Mountain resorts in the Adirondacks, Catskills and Appalachian Mountains provide meals, horseback riding, hiking trails and a variety of pastimes to enjoy. National parks in the West provide a sunny Winter alternative with lodge and cabin accommodations. Whether you are vacationing as a couple or planning a family reunion, rustic mountain holidays are never outdated. The key is to make your reservations early – sometimes a year in advance.

- www.ymcarockies.org Rocky Mt. National Park
- www.nps.gov/GRSM Great Smoky Mt. National Park
- www.nps.gov/BRCA Bryce Canyon National Park
- www.yosemitepark.com Yosemite National Park

RENT/ EXCHANGE A HOME

Sometimes it's nice to vacation in a place that feels like home. Vacation rentals are now available all over the world. It may be a condo rented when the family doesn't use it, or an investment property that's a full-time rental. Some allow pets; others don't.

Be sure if you sign an agreement to know if utilities are included, if deposit is refundable and the cancellation terms.

- www.vrbo.com
- www.homeaway.com
- www.craigslist.org

Home exchange organizations provide listings of properties, photos, and dates available. It's necessary to pay a fee to join, but then you arrange to swap houses on your own. It's as if you lived there as you shop for groceries, meet neighbors and explore the locale. Many people find this a money-smart way to travel the world.

- www.seniorhomeexchange.com
- www.intervac.com
- www.exchangehomes.com
- www.homelink-usa.org

VOLUNTEER

To volunteer is to have a completely different kind of travel experience. You enter into the life of a place or culture by working there. Generally, basic accommodations and meals are provided. A fee is charged and transportation costs to get to the site are also your responsibility. There are volunteer opportunities in the U.S. for building houses through Habitat for Humanity or

birthing lambs at Heifer International. Non-profit organizations called NGOs recruit volunteers worldwide. Time periods may be anything from several weeks to six months. Teaching English to hill tribe children in Thailand, as I did last year, or caring for orphans, building water systems in rural villages, helping women make and sell their textiles, providing computer assistance are all possibilities. Whatever your professional and personal skills, they can be used. To share your knowledge and experience with others is very satisfying. In the process you learn about another way of life and challenge yourself to adapt to new situations.

- www.AARP.org-givingback
- www.volunteerinternational.org
- www.transitionsabroad.com/listings/travel/senior
- www.peacecorps.gov
- www.friendsforasia.org

There are so many ways to see and experience the world. This is our time of life to explore what's out there.

Pat is a writer who has traveled abroad on student exchange, as a volunteer, with her family and on solo adventures. She can be contacted at 4louises@comcast.net



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"LET THE JOURNEY BEGIN!"

By Kathryn Marchi

"A journey of a thousand miles begins with one small step." Or so goes an old Chinese proverb. For my husband and me, one "small step" is the "destination." Then "planning" becomes one "large step."

For a long road trip of perhaps six weeks, one should sit down and decide where to go, what to see and who to visit, if appropriate. No matter whether traveling by car or by recreational vehicle, the drill is the same. In our case, we made our first trip several years ago to California in our RV.

Since we now travel often, we have developed a check system to help with planning. Printing out the information and putting it in a loose-leaf notebook is our preference and gives us easier access along the way. Others may prefer to use their computer only. Below are suggestions, which we always personalize for each trip. (This works for overseas travel as well.)

The first page should be a standard checklist of items that need to be addressed before leaving: stop newspapers and mail, alert neighbors, inform children, set up online banking for paying bills, etc.

Recurring pages should contain:

1. A checklist of items to take on the trip: cell phones and computers with chargers, pertinent medical and insurance cards, prescription drugs, doctors' names and phone numbers, personal medical conditions, passports if applicable, road maps and either hotel or RV park listings.
2. Names, addresses and phone numbers of persons whom you may want to contact for any reason along the way.

3. Addresses of places you are visiting for entering into your GPS.
4. Confirmations of reservations.
5. Complete itinerary with locations, mileages, dates and times. (Googlemaps.com will help here.)

First things first: select dates for the trip. A Winter trip requires a southern route and a Summer trek, a northern one. With sightseeing and visiting friends along the way, plot your route carefully and pace yourselves to no more than 350 miles per day. This is for your safety and conservation of energy. Some days might require a bit more for your destinations, but it somehow evens out. At the end of the day, it's important to unwind with friends, at a pool, the beach or an exercise room. Taking a walk is also a good idea; even on rainy days, one can grab a basket and "walk" around WalMart or Home Depot!

Since we are RVers and love to plan trips on our own, we have maps that outline RV parks all over the United States and Canada. For both RV and automobile travel, there is another book, *The Next Exit*, that lists facilities all along the major Interstate routes in the US and Canada. (www.thenextexit.com). Some of our friends who are not RVers tell us that they select a favorite hotel chain and plan their journey around that. By joining a hotel rewards club, they accrue points for each stay to help defray costs and enjoy other perks. (Go to your hotel website or to www.intercontinentalhotelsgroup.com) Cell phones are also a good resource for help along the way. We use an app called Gas Buddy that will list gas stations and prices along your itinerary.

There are other resources for planning a long-distance trip if you prefer; you can Google "road trip planning" or simply go to www.roadtripamerica.com and let them plan your trip for you.

My husband and I have planned and made five successful long-distance trips in the United States and Canada using the tools described above. We're look forward to planning our sixth in the coming year.

Kathryn, an avid traveler, can be reached at marchi-wre@mris.com

Bay Bytes

It's now possible to check your credit report once a year for free. Log onto AnnualCreditReport.com for information.

Finding Your Place as a Writer

By Penelope Folsom

Have you ever thought of writing a memoir? Or is there a book tucked somewhere in the dark recesses of your mind that you know needs to be written? Why not get started in 2015 with that novel or book of poetry that's been tweaking your creative juices for so long?

There are a number of courses available to help with direction and instructions, such as those offered at Anne Arundel Community College (www.aacc.edu/writing/) or through the continuing education program at St. John's College (www.sjc.edu). The University of Maryland and Loyola University also offer courses that last for a semester. Or how about joining a writer's group? There are a few in the area and they often provide inspiration and the mechanics behind getting your work published. Give the one that's based in Annapolis a try at www.MarylandWriters.com or the Eastern Shore group, which offers helpful workshops throughout the year (easternshorewriters@gmail.com).

It's also now possible to publish it yourself, which is worth checking into. Try Lulu.com or www.go-publish-yourself.com for lots of good ideas and online assistance. And for a fun and informative time, try one of the many conferences such as the one taking place in January at Eckerd College www.WritersinParadise.com in Florida or www.pubsensesummit.com

in Charleston in March. Closer to home, try the www.writertowriter.com conference in Hershey, Pa., in January, which promises to be an inspirational weekend with well-qualified speakers.

There are retreats available where you get to spend time with other writers such as www.thefictionwritersjourney.com located in Pennsylvania. This year it takes place in May and offers five fun-filled days. Here in Maryland they have the creativewritingcenter.com/writers-retreat/herring-creek/ which not only has quiet time, but offers the opportunity to share ideas and thoughts with other writers.

And if that book that needs to be written is just a matter of carving out the time and a quiet place, there are various supportive retreat houses such as the one located in Virginia www.porcheswritingretreat.com or in Maryland www.dayspringretreat.org. Both promise as much creative alone time as you'd like.

If that's not enough, log onto www.ShawGuides.com for a lengthy list of writer workshops and retreats both locally and from around the world.

It's all out there -- a smorgasbord of whatever you'd like to help launch you on your way to creating, publishing and marketing that next great American novel.



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800 Prince Frederick Blvd
Prince Frederick, MD 20678

UPPER MARLBORO
14460 Old Mill Rd, Suite #101
Upper Marlboro, MD 20772

OUTDOOR FUN ON A WINTER'S DAY

By Penelope Folsom

The nights are long and the days can be freezing, but what a great time to get out there and enjoy an adventure. The following are some Winter venues you might want to try. Perhaps you'll get to revisit a sport you once enjoyed or maybe you'll discover something new and fun. Most are close by, and if you're not up to being an active participant, why not enjoy others at play while observing and enjoying a cup of hot chocolate.

SKATING RINKS

QUIET WATERS PARK

off Hillsmere Drive, Annapolis

Hours: Closed on Tuesdays. Other days hours vary.

Cost: \$5 seniors, \$6 others (park entry fee).

Perks: Lots of fun programs such as "Mozart Mornings" with a nearby venue for snacks and treats.

Contact: www.aacounty.org/RecParks/qwickerink.cfm or 410.222.1711

USNA HOCKEY ARENA

64 Greenbury Point Rd., Annapolis

Hours: Hours vary. Closed to public Monday, Wednesday, Friday.

Cost: \$7.

Perks: Olympic-size rink. Lessons available.

Contact: www.usnabsd.com/brigade-sports-complex/ice-rink/ or 410.293.9700

NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

Seventh St. and Constitution Ave., NW, Washington, D.C.

Hours: Most days open at 10 a.m. Hours vary.

Cost: \$7 seniors, \$8 others.

Perks: Located in the heart of downtown Washington with views of the National Gallery's Sculpture Garden. Refreshments available close by in the Pavilion café.

Contact: www.nga.gov or 202.216.9397

WASHINGTON HARBOR

3050 K St., NW, Washington, D.C.

Hours: Most days open at noon. Hours vary.

Cost: \$9 seniors, \$10 others.

Perks: Located in Georgetown. Shops and restaurants abound.

Contact: www.thewashingtonharbour.com or 202.706.7666

SKIING

ROUND TOP MOUNTAIN RESORT

925 Roundtop Rd., Lewisberry, Pa.

Hours: 9 a.m.-10 p.m. weekdays; 8 a.m.-10 p.m. weekends and holidays.

Cost: An eight-hour lift ticket is \$55 midweek, \$64 on weekends and holidays.

Perks: Fireside Pub and Grill, sports shop, ski and snowboard schools, and tubing.

Contact: skiroundtop.com or 717.432.9631

LIBERTY MOUNTAIN RESORT

78 Country Club Trail, Carroll Valley, Pa.

Hours: 9 a.m.-10 p.m. Monday-Friday; 8 a.m.-10 p.m. weekends and holidays.

Cost: \$55 midweek, \$67 weekends and holidays.

Perks: Tubing, lessons, equipment rental, childcare center, hotel, restaurants and bars.

Contact: libertymountainresort.com or 717.642.8282

WHITETAIL

13805 Blairs Valley Rd., Mercersburg, Pa.

Hours: 8:30 a.m.-10 p.m. daily.

Cost: Eight-hour lift ticket is \$58 midweek, \$69 weekends and holidays.

Perks: Tubing, childcare, ski and snowboard lessons, food court, slope-side Windows Restaurant, and adaptive snow sports program for children and adults with mental and physical challenges.

Contact: skiwhitetail.com or 717.328.9400

WISP RESORT

296 Marsh Hill Rd., McHenry, Md.

Hours: 9 a.m.-5 p.m. Sunday-Thursday, 9 a.m.-9 p.m.; Friday-Saturday.

Cost: Varies widely, but starts at \$29.

Perks: Tubing, outdoor ice-skating, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, and snowmobile tours. Hotel available or rent a townhouse or condo.

Contact: wispresort.com or 301.387.4000

MARYLAND RESORTS FEATURING CROSS-COUNTRY SKIING AND SNOWSHOEING

JOYCE'S DEEP CREEK RENTALS

Oakland

Cost: \$75-plus per night.

Perks: Ski weekend packages, guided trips for groups of about 10-12 people.

Contact: jjoyce@closecall.com 877.774.8482

HERRINGTON MANOR STATE PARK

222 Herrington Lane, Oakland

Cost: Call 1.888.432.2267 for rates.

Perks: A 53-acre lake and many wooded trails. In the Winter, the park offers cross-country ski trails along with ski rentals. There are 20 log cabins available for rent.

Contact: www.dnr.maryland.gov/plw/herringtonmanor.html or 301.334.9180

NEW GERMANY STATE PARK

349 Headquarters Lane, Grantsville

Cost: Call for current rates.

Perks: 455 acres, 13-acre lake and 11 rental cabins.

Contact: www.dnr.maryland.gov/plw/newgermany.html or 301.895.5453

SAVAGE RIVER LODGE

1600 Mt. Aetna Road, Frostburg

Cost: \$200-plus

Perks: Eighteen luxury log cabins on site and eight yurts.

Contact: www.savageriverlodge.com/ or 301.689.3200

SKI CLUBS IN THE AREA

- Baltimore Ski Club, Baltimore
www.baltimoreskiclub.com
- Chesapeake Ski and Board Club, Baltimore
www.chesapeakeskiandboard.org
- Columbia Ski Club, Columbia
www.columbiaskiclub.org
- Crabtowne Skiers, Annapolis
www.clubcrabtowne.org/skiing.html
- Deep Creek Winter Sports Team, Oakland
www.dcwst.org
- Disabled Sports USA, Rockville
www.disabledsportsusa.org
- Frederick Ski Club, Frederick
www.frederickskiclub.com
- Goddard Ski Club, Greenbelt
gewa.gsfc.nasa.gov/
- Harford Ski Club, Aberdeen
www.harfordskiclub.org
- Little Heiskell Ski Club, Hagerstown
www.littleheiskellskiclub.com
- ATC Ski Touring Section, Kensington
www.patc.us/chapters/ski/
- Salisbury Ski Club, Salisbury
www.salisburyskiclub.com
- Skidome Ski & Snowboard Club, Owings
http://skidome2.skidome.org
- Southern Maryland Ski Club, Waldorf
www.southernmarylandskiclub.org



Live Opera is Alive and Well in Annapolis

By Lee Finney

Opera? In Annapolis? Absolutely! How impressive that a city this size has sustained a professional opera company for over 40 years. In 1972 a group of artists from the Annapolis Summer Garden Theater Youth Group got together to give birth to the Annapolis Opera Company. Martha Wright, who was then a producer of children's musicals with the Tom Thumb Players at the Plaza movie theater in Parole, where Outback Steakhouse and Bertucci's are now located, agreed to produce a version of Gian-Carlo Menotti's *The Medium*. This became the very first Annapolis Opera production.

From the beginning Annapolis Opera hired professional singers for the principal roles, but for the first few years, the operas were accompanied by one or two pianos rather than an orchestra. The performances grew in both scope and audience size. In 1984, for the first time, the Annapolis Symphony Orchestra accompanied the singers in a performance of *Rigoletto*. Today, members of the ASO are regularly the opera's orchestra.

In the early days the opera moved around from the Annapolis Hilton Ballroom to Mitschner Hall at the Naval Academy to the Key Auditorium at St. John's College to the auditorium at Annapolis High School. Finally, the company landed at Maryland Hall for the Creative Arts when it first opened as a performing arts space in 1979. Since then the Annapolis Opera, one of the resident companies, has regularly presented its fully staged operas at Maryland Hall. Today, in addition to the main stage opera, the company also performs concerts at various locations in the community and annually presents a children's opera for area schools and as a family performance at Maryland Hall.

In the 1982-1983 season, the Annapolis Opera began a creative relationship with artistic director and conductor, Ronald J. Gretz. A year later, Braxton Peters came on board as the stage director. Both of these artists brought a new level of professionalism to the Annapolis Opera. Gretz knows an amazing network of singers that he has brought to Annapolis to perform.

Recognizing that we are located in a very singer-rich

environment, in 1987 the Annapolis Opera initiated an annual vocal competition. The competition has grown over the years so that now more than \$10,000 in prizes are awarded to eight finalists each Spring. Up to 100 applicants compete before expert judges who select 25 to 30 semifinalists. A second panel of judges then chooses eight finalists to be heard in concert by other judges and the public on Sunday. Many singers who were vocal competition winners or appeared in one of our operas at an early stage in their careers, have gone on to professional careers that include singing with the Metropolitan Opera or other major opera companies. The cost of presenting the annual vocal competition is generously underwritten by the Helena Foundation so that several hundred opera patrons attend free of charge in the hope of hearing one of opera's superstars of tomorrow.

This year for the first time, the Annapolis Opera production of Mozart's *Così fan tutte*, will be presented with the Annapolis Symphony Orchestra settled in their proper places in the new orchestra pit that was installed this past Summer as part of the first phase of major renovations to turn Maryland Hall into a modern concert hall, theater and opera house. The renovations have resulted in greatly improved acoustics, plus the changes in the floor plan, combined with the new pit, mean that the company will be performing with the sightlines from anywhere in the house.

Così fan tutte, the tale of two young couples who learn some painful lessons about the unintended consequences of deceptive manipulation in affairs of the heart, contains some of Mozart's loveliest arias. Maestro Gretz has again assembled a stellar cast to bring Mozart's beautiful music to life.

Tickets are available at the Maryland Hall for the Creative Arts box office or at the Annapolis Opera website where you can find more information: www.annapolisopera.org Lee Finney is the president of the Board of Trustees of the Annapolis Opera Company and can be reached at President@annapolisopera.org

Faith is taking the first step even though the end result is unclear.

NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS - BOOMER STYLE

By Joanne R. Alloway

Now that we're past all of the holiday excitement, we can take a moment to reflect on one of our favorite and most ancient of all festivities, celebrating our new year. The history of the resolutions that many of us make is interesting, considering how the world has changed. In 46 B.C., Jan. 1 became the first day of the new year, when the Romans decided to move the holiday from March to January. The double-headed god, Janus, whose heads face forward and backward to signify the end of one year and the beginning of another was the basis of January, coming from Janus.

With the Romans embracing Christianity, most of the early resolutions were moral and ethical. Those not into faith chose resolves related to Janus' luck. By the 17th century, Colonial Americans avoided references to Janus, and called it "First Month." The Puritans reflected and contemplated before making resolutions. During the next 50 years, writing resolutions became an art form for many that took years to develop, encompassing all phases of life. These were to be reviewed weekly. Since then, as the world became more competitive, resolutions became practical and not as spiritual or ethical.

As we age, it is well-documented that we turn to more self-improving, humanitarian or altruistic goals. The following, an unscientific survey of 25 boomers, will show how or what they plan to resolve in 2015.

Of the 25 respondents, to the survey ages 56 to 68 years old, 13 said they don't make them anymore; they explained that they never kept a single one, making them feel worse. Instead they just enjoyed the holiday for what it is – a new beginning.

Others who don't like making resolutions, had something else to say:

"... being good to myself and holding my values, I know God will help me keep resolves I made years ago." *Laura C., Md.*

"Other than trying to stay healthy in the new year, I've learned from my southern friends to always eat black-eyed peas and collards on Jan. 1 to assure a healthy and prosperous year!" *JoAnn D, Ga.*

"I don't make yearly ones. But I do make resolutions every day. Some I keep, some I don't." *Elizabeth D., Md.*

Others haven't given up on making plans for 2015:

"Next year I'd like to spend more time with my grandchildren and children, hopefully take a vacation, and have more grandchildren! All in all, to have a blessed year." *Doris R., Md.*

"Retirement started a second career for me in art. This year, I will work on improving my photography skills and participate in art festivals, so I can build a successful business." *Judy F, Fla.*

"For the most part, I've given up on resolutions, but I would say going forward I will do the things that bring happiness to me and my family, not put other's agendas ahead of mine. To spend less time being 'obligated' and putting everyone else first. It's time for me to be first." *Inette W., Del.*

"To enjoy life – not look back or forward too much – but to find beauty and blessings daily." *Mary V., Md.*

"In 2015 I plan to reinvent myself! After many years in an unhappy marriage, I'm free to be me. The areas I'll look to improve are: new employment, updated look and time for fun and happiness. My parents always said, 'Life is what you make it.'" *Mary W., N.Y.*

"I resolve to contact friends more often. Enduring friendships have become more precious as the years roll on. There's no excuse for missing opportunities for making my life and others' a little happier. Also, I will shamelessly ask for the senior discount, without embarrassment. A 15 percent discount puts a smile on my face!" *Irene S., Ala.*

"I hope to continue my health and fitness regimen, and to acquire new interests and volunteer opportunities. I've never felt better about myself in years, and I hope to keep it up." *Kathy H., N.Y.*

"I've always wanted to learn how to paint. I've been told I might have some talent. After working for 40 years, it's time to take a class or two and find out. This could be my time." *Sophie M., Ill.*

"I want to work less and enjoy life more, especially with my grandchildren. I missed my own kids growing up because I was always working or traveling, so this is my second chance; I won't blow this one, too." *James T., Va.*

Clearly optimism still rings in with the new year for many boomers. Interestingly, they are focused on different values now. The importance of family, friendships and being true to oneself has replaced losing weight and finding a pot of gold – a change we can all welcome.

Joanne, an author and freelance writer, can be reached at jrwrite@aol.com

Your dreams don't have an expiration date. What's keeping you from accomplishing them?

Why Should I Attend?

By Ryan Helfenbein

We do not like funerals or visitations. It is typically a time of sadness, mourning and much awkwardness felt by both the family and friends all jumbled together in one room. So then why go to a funeral or visitation? What are we to do when we get there?

These are actually very common questions. Perhaps you have asked this of a friend or relative, "Are you going to her visitation tomorrow night?" We ask this because we want to go to show our love and support, but we truly don't want to be there.

A common reason we go to funerals and visitations is that we want to be of assistance to the survivors, let them know we are here for them in their time of difficulty and ultimately make them aware that we care. While very important, these are also the reasons why everyone else is there, and this can become quite overwhelming to the bereaved. Perhaps it shouldn't be so much about letting them know how we feel, rather we should let the family know how their loved one impacted our lives and how they will never be forgotten for it. The answer may be to come to the funeral or visitation with a funny story, or a memory that we will never forget about the one who died. It could have happened on the golf course, on a boat, or during a walk in downtown

Annapolis. This shared memory not only shows the family that we are there for them and truly care, but that their loved one mattered.

Another common question: "But hold on, what if I don't know the deceased and only know one of the relatives?" This happens all the time. For example, the person who died is the father of a friend at our place of work. In this case it is next to impossible to bring a story of the person who has passed, because we most likely have never met them or any of their family members. When it comes time to walk up to see this dear friend, we are first greeted by the widow, then the siblings and so on. This often creates an awkward feeling and ends up with the well-worn sentiment, "I'm sorry for your loss."

Fortunately, many bereaved families work with progressive undertakers who place nostalgic items around the room that remind them of their loved one. It could be golf clubs, fishing rods, pictures of favorite vacations or Christmas decorations. The memorabilia allows the bereaved to gain a personal connection through sharing memories with visitors, who also can take advantage of these displays as conversation points.

Visual displays are not the only sense called upon at today's funerals. It has become common to see things such

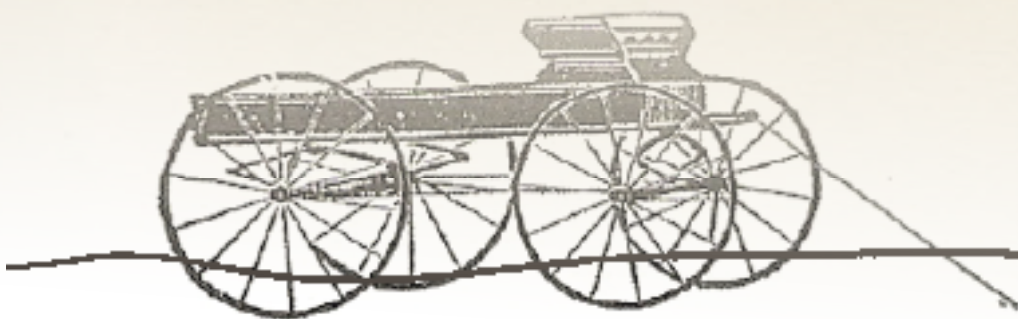
as wine bars, ice cream sundae stations, steel drum music in the background. The point is to create surroundings that avoid the stereotypical morbid dark "funeral" feel and provide a comfortable home-like environment for family and friends to share in the memories of a life lived.

In doing this, we have seen people walk out of a funeral home with a tear in their eye and a smile on their face, both at the same time. While the loss of a loved one is not easy for anyone, distant relatives and friends want to be there to help the family in their time of need. Sharing memories is a wonderful way to lend support to the bereaved, something we won't dread doing at a funeral or visitation.

Ryan, owner, supervising mortician and preplanning counselor at Lasting Tributes on Bestgate Road in Annapolis, offers solutions to high-cost funerals. He can be reached at 410.897.4852 or Ryan@LastingTributesFuneralCare.com

Bay Bytes

To help in identifying prescription pills in an easy-to-follow guide log onto www.drugs.com/pill_identification.html. It includes pictures.



The Transition Months

By Nancy Lincoln Reynolds

I call January and February the "transition months." It is a time for living between endings and beginnings. Parents bundle babies in warm blankets and dress children in snowsuits as they head into these weeks. We adjust our own clothing and tend to individual needs that remind us that we may not be equipped in quite the same ways as we once were, even just last year. For some, bones and joints hurt and we may even claim to predict Winter storms by the aching of this or that. Some hunker down inside houses stocked with comfort foods and family. Others head south until the whole thing blows over. Still others persevere with determination to conduct "business as usual." One Bay resident tells me that he and his friends call these days "reflection times" when they sit around the hearth late into the evenings "talking about how we come up." New Year's Eve heard us singing "Auld Lang Syne," Robert Burns' poem first printed in 1711 and put to music in Scotland, which encourages that we remember long-standing friendships. At the same time that we remember them, we are grieved to recall those who are no longer with us. Still, we are hopeful as we anticipate another year filled with new life. Transition months make us nostalgic and expectant at the same time.

On the Bay, we have winterized boats and placed them into an imposed hibernation at docks, in slips or in boatyards. For a time, they and we, like Winter itself, will wait for the warmth of Spring and the opportunity to respond to breezes and other horizons. But until then we are in between seasons of sailing and must find other aspects of freedom within ourselves that may console and soothe us.

Living between endings and beginnings is by definition ambiguous. Boundaries are blurred and overlaps are many among what "was," "is" and "will be." Transition months compel us to take stock of all three. For most of us, letting go of the old and welcoming or accepting the new (sometimes the only option) can be confusing. "All of us stand between the fascination of life and the anxiety of death and sometimes between the anxiety of life and the fascination of death," wrote Paul Tillich, 20th century philosopher, theologian and author of *The Courage to Be*. (Perhaps he wrote the book during the transition months.)

In a course on conscious aging at AACC, Spiritual Director Bill Hocking talks about the second half of life, wherein we do reflect on our past and determine to be intentional in our living with renewed energy and determination. In this second half of life we begin, ever so slowly if we are lucky, to transition out of the first half's emphasis on preparation and accumulation with its life fascinations on career, wealth, home ownership and raising children. There, endings and death seem threatening, but mercifully, far away. As we let go of that mindset, in the second half of life, we may hold onto only those things which are priorities: family, close friends and things that we truly enjoy doing. Endings and even death may become more expected and natural and often, therefore, less frightening scenarios.

If it is "the fear of death that binds us to an idolatry of life," says Peter Gomes, former preacher and professor at Harvard University, then it may benefit us to be less fearful so that our obsession with living life may be relaxed. Straddling the fine line between life and death is not a comfortable situation, but a reality for all of us at all times. In religious traditions death is not the final word in mortality, only the end to life as we know it. The door remains open to life as we *may come to know it*. While it is true that "you cannot take it with you," neither can "it" be taken from you if we intentionally live life in this ambiguous time...and tend to the importance of reflection and honoring these times of transition.

Transition months, with their stillness and quiet, offer us time for reflection on the past and adaptation to the future. This time is an invitation to grow within ourselves so that we may eventually blossom in new and abundant life.

Nancy is the associate pastor of Woods Presbyterian Church in Severna Park and can be contacted at nreynolds@woodschurch.org



ONLY THREE INGREDIENTS?

By Louise Whiteside

That's right – only three ingredients each to prepare an appetizer, a soup, a salad, an entree or even a dessert to be proud of!

You may have thought that meal preparation couldn't get any easier with all the modern appliances and quick cooking methods available. But did you know that you could prepare a delicious, home-cooked meal, one fit for a holiday feast, using a mere three ingredients for each dish?

The following recipes can help the busiest person to cook a memorable meal in minutes. Here are just a few samples of easy, short-cut meals which will save time but not jeopardize taste.

APPETIZER

Easy Vegetable Dip

1 cup cottage cheese, drained
1 cup low-fat mayonnaise
1 1-ounce package ranch-style salad dressing mix

Combine all ingredients and mix well. Chill until ready to serve. Serve with raw vegetables or crackers.

SOUP

Tortilla Soup (2 servings)

1 can (10-1/2 ounces) low-sodium chicken and rice soup
1 can (10 ounces) diced tomatoes and green chiles
12 baked or low-fat tortilla chips

In a saucepan combine soup and tomatoes with chiles. Bring to a boil. Place tortilla chips in the bottom of two soup bowls, then pour soup mixture over them. Serve immediately.

SALAD OR RELISH

Applesauce De Luxe (4 servings)

1 package sugar-free raspberry or cherry gelatin
1-1/2 cups sugar-free applesauce
1 teaspoon lemon juice

Dissolve gelatin in one cup boiling water. Blend in applesauce and lemon juice. Pour into individual molds or a serving dish. Chill until firm. (A wonderful accompaniment for poultry or ham.)

ENTREE

Crispy Baked Chicken (8 servings)

8 boneless, skinless chicken breast halves
2 eggs, beaten
Crushed corn flakes (or any crushed cereal), seasoned to taste

Dip chicken in eggs and roll in crushed, seasoned cereal until well coated. Place

chicken on baking sheet sprayed with nonstick cooking spray. Bake at 350 degrees for one hour or until golden brown.

DESSERT

Fruit Cocktail Cake

1 18-ounce box yellow or white cake mix
3 eggs
1 15-ounce can juice-packed fruit cocktail (with juice)

In large bowl, combine all ingredients and mix well.

Pour into 9 x 13-inch baking pan sprayed with nonstick cooking spray. Bake at 350 degrees for 45 to 50 minutes.

Be easy on yourself! Check out the references below for many additional delicious, quick-to-prepare meals in all categories.

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The Holiday Pet How-To

By Kirstyn Northrop Cobb

Congratulations, if you were one of the lucky families to adopt a new family member over the holidays! Bringing a new pet into your home is a joyous and exciting time, but it is also an adjustment for both your family and your new pet. Here are a few things to make that adjustment a little more enjoyable.

Supplies: If you haven't done so already your new pet will need a few supplies to help settle in. If it's a pup, you will need a leash and collar. To properly fit a collar, you should be able to place two fingers between the collar and his neck. You will also need food and water bowls. Metal bowls are best and you will want to avoid plastic bowls as they can cause a skin reaction in some of our four-legged friends. You should also bring home some toys for your new pet.

Roles: Take time to establish roles in your home. For instance, who will be in charge of the feeding? Who will be walking the dog? Remember that if children are present, it's good to teach them to be responsible and help with the care of a pet, but it is ultimately the responsibility of the parent.

Crate Training: Crate training is a great way to help house train dogs and to establish a place that is theirs exclusively. Remember, a dog is a den animal by nature and should enjoy having a safe place to call its own. A crate should never be used as a punishment. Place clean bedding in

the crate as well as toys to make the crate a happy place for your pet.

Training: It is very strongly recommended that you take a dog to obedience classes. This is a great way to bond. And, the whole family would benefit by being included in the training classes so that everyone is learning the same thing. If your pup was adopted from a local shelter, many do offer follow-up training at no charge, however, a group training class is still recommended.

Patience: Bringing in a new pet is always an adjustment and a confusing time. Remember, their world has changed quite a bit and they are probably overwhelmed. It can take two days to two months for a pet to really acclimate. Be as patient as possible during the adjustment period.

Fun Time: With all of the training and feeding and other information that you are now probably focusing on, don't forget to have fun!

Kirstyn can be contacted at the Humane Society of Calvert County at 410.257.4908 or kirstyn@calverthumane.org



Let There Be Light:

When the Winter Doldrums Get You Down

By Victoria A. Duncan

Lois recognized that the Winter gloomies were back. She remembered feeling this way every year after she took down the Christmas tree and faced the five or so extra pounds on the bathroom scale. The post-holiday bills waited on her desk and the weather reflected her outlook: grim and gray. Short of booking an extended trip to Florida, she wondered what she could do to perk up.

Our friend Lois has lots of company. When the days are short and sunlight is in limited supply, more than 25 million Americans (mostly women) are afflicted with similar feelings of apathy, lack of energy and cravings for carbohydrates. If you're one of those who regularly feel down during the Winter, you could be experiencing a mood disorder known as SAD, or seasonal affective disorder.

If you think these feelings are all in your head, you're right—but maybe not in the sense that you think. Deep within your brain, hormonal changes occur in response to certain times of the year. Experts have found that we produce less serotonin, a major feel-good neurotransmitter, when we are exposed to the reduced amount of natural sunlight in the colder and darker seasons of the year. Lower serotonin can lead to feelings of depression, fatigue, increased appetite, difficulty in concentrating and weight gain. Some folks only experience mild irritability and lethargy, while others suffer from debilitating symptoms that interfere with their lives at home and on the job.

The first line of attack must be to get a correct diagnosis. If you think you are suffering from SAD, check with your medical doctor to rule out other physical

problems or another form of depression. A correct diagnosis is essential to finding the right treatment, which may include dietary adjustments, exercise, medication or counseling. Treatment could be as simple as turning on a light.

Light therapy, the primary treatment for SAD, is prescribed in one of two ways. In dawn simulation, a special type of light comes on when you are still asleep and gradually becomes brighter. Traditional light box therapy, proven to be more effective than dawn simulation, involves sitting in front of a light for a specific amount of time, usually 30 minutes daily. Commercially available light boxes usually providing 10,000 lux (a measurement of light intensity) must be used for effective treatment and may be covered by insurance plans. Based upon your individual symptoms, your physician will recommend the best time of day and amount of time for treatment.

You can use this treatment, which must be daily during the darker months, while eating breakfast or reading the newspaper. Because light therapy works by stimulating your brain to produce more serotonin, most people will experience increased feelings of well-being in a short time -- somewhere between a couple of days and two weeks.

So, let there be light! Instead of heading for that chocolate bar, turn on the light, a specialized light, that is, to perk yourself up on those gloomy days of Winter. And even if you don't suffer from SAD, get outside on a crisp sunny day for a brisk walk. It will boost your mood, cut down on your carb cravings and make your Winter much more enjoyable.

Cautions:

- Consult your doctor for an accurate diagnosis and effective treatment plan.
- Light therapy may be inappropriate for those with certain eye problems or for those taking medications that produce light sensitivity.
- While light therapy is generally safe, side effects may include headache, eyestrain and nausea.
- Avoid full-spectrum, ultraviolet or tanning lights.

Vicki is a licensed professional counselor and welcomes your questions. She can be reached at Victoria2write@aol.com

WINTER QUIZ-ACROSTIC
In nineteen ninety-eight, the American Film Institute compiled a list of the one hundred best American movies of all time as recognized by fifteen hundred leaders in the film industry. Which movie ranked number one?
MOTION PICTURES: CITIZEN KANE
A. M elded
B. O ld money
C. T hief
D. I mitative
E. O mniscience
F. N ibble
G. P reemie
H. I nterest
I. C ommune
J. T ether
K. U nicorn
L. R efund
M. E ndleaf
N. S tiffel
O. C heever
P. I mmigrant
Q. T urn down
R. I nfidel
S. Z enith
T. E thyl
U. N ation
V. K iddush
W. A thanasia
X. N eighbor
Y. E ssay

Babe Ruth struck out 1330 times – that didn't stop him!

THE CANARY ISLANDS: A UNIQUE GETAWAY

By Peggy Kiefer

Like most avid travelers, I'm always on the lookout for new and unusual parts of the world to explore and experience. When an opportunity came up to visit the Canary Islands on the sailing cruise ship *Wind Star*, I couldn't resist.

A popular vacation destination for Europeans, Americans seldom visit these islands. Owned by Spain, the Canary Islands are comprised of seven major and six very small islands situated 55 to 180 miles off the Northwest coast of North Africa. The official language is Spanish, but many people spoke English, especially those dealing with tourists. My friend and I visited four of the islands: Lanzarote, Gran Canary, La Gomera and Tenerife.

Some impressions: Lanzarote is striking but not what one would call pretty. It, like the others, is volcanic and has a stark landscape broken up visually by traditional white houses. There is so much wind here that stone walls are built around shrubs to protect them and capture any moisture that collects at night. The treeless landscape is similar to Iceland, but this island most reminded me of the big island of Hawaii, due to its abundant black lava flows. A camel ride across the sand dunes was a highlight for most cruise passengers. We chose to rent a car and drove with no difficulty. It certainly was less bumpy and dusty.

Gran Canaria Island, despite its name, is not the largest of the Canaries. It is possible to drive around the entire island in a day, and nowhere are you out of driving distance from Las Palmas, the most populous and dynamic city in the archipelago. We found the city to be as bustling as Honolulu, rush hour traffic and all. Nearby Maspalomas is one of Europe's largest resort complexes, and many Europeans own or rent condos along the beautiful white beaches. The island has extremes of landscape and climate, which can change quickly from Wild West canyons to Sahara-like sand dunes or to snow along the mountaintops. A rich collection of archeological sites are scattered around the island. Renting a car here makes exploring easy.

La Gomera is a dome-shaped island with a sunken central plateau and many narrow, winding mountain roads. The barren landscape around the capital of San Sebastian soon gives way to the most beautiful, luxuriant valleys. The center of the island



is almost permanently covered in mist and it's here you'll find a prehistoric national park rain forest. This is a quiet island that draws fewer tourists and has no beaches to speak of. We enjoyed it for its peace and serenity. Wisely, we hired a driver to navigate the scary roads to the rainforest.

Tenerife is the largest Canary Island and boasts the highest point of all Spanish territories. The south of the island is hot, dry and arid, with little of sightseeing interest. For history, culture and scenery you have to go north to the old colonial cities including the capital, Santa Cruz. We took a tour to the National Park of del Tiede, which was well worth the trip. Offering the most dramatic volcanic landscape on the island, we were driven very close to the top of this dormant volcano. Some adventuresome souls were climbing to the summit, but a cable car does the job with less strain, that is when it's working. The system is subject to breakdowns and wind closures. No one from the ship chose to take the chance of being left behind, swaying on the mountainside.

The Canary Islands were an interesting one-time trip, but I did not leave with a strong desire to return. I felt the island of Madeira, where the cruise started and ended, was most beautiful, and I would have enjoyed spending more time there.

Unfortunately our itinerary is no longer offered. *Wind Star* still sails to the Canary Islands, but it goes to Casablanca first and does not visit all the islands that we visited. Perhaps this might be a more interesting trip, as Casablanca is a fascinating city to explore and the two main islands of the Canary Islands, Gran Canaria and Tenerife, are the most tourist-friendly. But knowing the changing itineraries of cruise lines, the original cruise might be reinstated or they might cancel the Canary Islands altogether. Be sure to check carefully before setting your heart on a particular schedule.

The *Wind Star* is a real sailing ship that utilizes the sails as much as possible, while relying on the engines for most of the trip. It is small, holding only 148-310 passengers, depending on the model, which makes for a friendlier, more attentive and less crowded experience.



What Does Mary Say?

Dear Mary,

My dad was recently diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease. He is willing to sell his house and move in with my husband and me, but I don't know what to do or where to go for help when we need it.

Dear Reader,

You are fortunate to live in Anne Arundel County where the Department of Aging and Disabilities has excellent support services. As you wait for your dad to arrive, pick up the 2014-2015 *Services for Seniors, Adults with Disabilities, and Caregivers* directory which can be found at area libraries, local stores, county senior centers or at the Department of Aging and Disabilities office on Riva Road. You can also view the online version on our website at www.aacounty.org/aging. The directory provides brief descriptions of department programs as well as a multitude of community resources.

Information and assistance (I&A) staff (410.222.4257) are the gateway to the many programs at the Department. Even when you don't know what questions to ask, I&A specialists will help you navigate systems and resources and make sure that you speak to the right folks.

Through I&A staff, you can request an adult evaluation and review (AERS) for your dad. A nurse or social worker will conduct a physical and psychosocial examination in the home and help the family develop a care management plan, linking them to resources within the department and the community.

The Respite Care Referral Program maintains a registry of self-employed caregivers. Although they are not employees of the department, a background check is conducted on each worker (annually) and they receive initial and ongoing training by the department. The workers provide in-home care, allowing family members to take a break or to maintain their employment.

Should you have any questions regarding your dad's health insurance plan, you can speak with staff or trained volunteers from the State Health Insurance Assistance Program. It assists clients with understanding Medicare benefits, supplemental options, Part D and Medicare Advantage options.

If your dad is still active, he can participate in events at one of the seven local senior centers. As the disease progresses, he may be able to attend a Senior Center Plus program which provides some personal assistance for frail seniors to participate in senior center activities. If needed, a Department of Aging and Disabilities van can provide curb-to-curb transportation to a senior center or to a doctor's appointment.

For you, the National Family Caregiver Support Program (NFCSP) facilitates monthly family support groups, caregiver education programs, an annual caregivers' conference and caregiver appreciation events. When funding is available, the program provides small stipends to family caregivers for respite care or grants for an emergency response system for those who are at risk of falling. You can find the 2015 Winter-Spring Caregiver Workshop schedule online at www.aacounty.org/aging and in the Winter edition of *Outlook by the Bay*. The 2015 Support Group schedule can be found online or by calling 410.222.4464, ext. 3043. Join our mail and email list so that you can receive up-to-date information on caregiver events.

Dear Mary,

I take care of my aunt who has dementia. All she wants to do all day is sit in a chair and watch television. I know physical activity is important so how do I motivate her?

Dear Reader,

There can be several reasons why your aunt wants to sit. Was an active person before the dementia? It could be that she was never interested in exercise. She may be unsure of what she is supposed to do or afraid of doing something wrong so she feels safe just staying in one place. She could be experiencing pain and unable to let you know. Talk to her physician about what is going on.

If you are not able to budge her and the doctor says there is nothing physically wrong, interact with her throughout the day, playing card games, looking through photo albums, listening to music. Be careful what shows she is watching on television; individuals with dementia often have a difficult time ascertaining what is real in their world. Put on some old musicals or comedies and watch with her.

Do make sure that she goes to the toilet on a regular basis throughout the day.

I encourage you to participate in the virtual dementia tour run by the Education Program Department of Aging and Disabilities, which will be operated throughout 2015. The education session is an excellent tool for family members, as well as the general community, in understanding the physical and mental challenges of those with dementia.

Questions and comments can be sent to Mary Chaput at the Department of Aging & Disabilities, 2666 Riva Road, Suite 400, Annapolis, or emailed to agchap01@aacounty.org

MORE THOUGHTS ON RIGHT-SIZING

By Steven Fleming

In an earlier article, I reflected on a recent move and “right-sizing” for this particular time in my life. In the hundreds of pre-retirement planning seminars I led across the USA, a major concern was what to do with belongings accumulated over the years. Participants were encouraged to avoid the term “downsizing” which, for many, has a negative connotation. Instead, it was suggested that we think of “right-sizing,” when we keep only those items that seem “right” for the next chapter of our lives.

Having just completed a move from a fairly large house to a much smaller duplex with limited storage and no basement, a few things were learned that may be helpful to you when your time to “right-size” comes.

First, recognize your physical limitations. In my last move at age 47, lifting heavier items was not a problem and it wasn't too difficult to do most of the work myself. Now at age 63, it was time to reevaluate what realistically could be

accomplished, although I am still in fairly good physical condition. That led to doing several things differently this time around.

Hiring some neighborhood teenagers to help pack and move a significant amount of my things was a good beginning. They loaded and unloaded the small moving van a realtor provided free of charge that was used in his real estate services. For the larger pieces of furniture, bedding and appliances, it was necessary to hire a local “handyman” service on an hourly basis. They carefully wrapped and packed the various pieces into their van, then placed and set the items up at the new location.

It was worthwhile to purchase so-called “bankers boxes” from a local office supply superstore to pack items both for moving and for storage (more about storage shortly). The basic quality boxes work just fine and using these provides uniformity in size and their “cut-outs” make handling them easier. Their size does limit how much you can put into them and thus their weight. Content of the boxes can easily be labeled. Another bonus is that any empty boxes and lids can be refolded back to their original, flat state to save or sell.

Second, I rented several climate-controlled storage units. While it was expected that there would be several months before the house sold and new owners wanted possession, it didn't turn out that way. The house sold in 10 days and the buyers wanted possession in seven weeks. There wasn't time to sort through the many things, which had accumulated

over the years, so I located a nearby storage unit business. Renting clean, dry, pest-free space to put things temporarily (using those easy-to-stack boxes) enabled me to get out of the house quickly and not stress over what to keep when time was short. Once the main move to the new home was completed, it was possible to work in the storage units to continue “right-sizing” in comfort. As a unit was emptied, the lease was terminated. Eight climate-controlled units have now been reduced to two.

While working through the accumulation, a woman visited her unit nearby. In the course of conversation, she had revealed that she had “right-sized” a few years earlier. She kept a unit for her seasonal items and clothes. Holiday decorations, items used for gardening, and clothes were stored properly there “off season.” “It makes my life so much easier,” she said. “I just get what I need for the time I need it.”

One final thought about “right-sizing.” When your life changes and you begin a new chapter, don't forget to review your insurance and legal papers. At the very least, be sure to give notice as soon as possible of your new address, phone number, even e-mail. If you are going to store items “off site,” discuss how your homeowners or renters insurance will work for that. And most importantly, don't begin a new chapter of your life without reviewing and updating your health care power of attorney, will and estate plans. These are also part of “right-sizing!”

Steven grew up in Hagerstown and has spent his life working with people in their life journeys. For more information or free resources, go to www.SRFLifeRetirementCoach.com

WINTER RAMBLE IN NEARBY NEW CASTLE

By Barbara Aiken

If a Winter getaway is in order, how about trying historic New Castle, Delaware, on for size? Nestled on the banks of the Delaware River, the state's first capital was founded by the Dutch in 1651. Once named Ft. Casimir, New Castle received its current name in 1664. The town's design was laid out by Peter Stuyvesant. Today this charming hamlet remains yours to examine for the day. New Castle is a compact square of four or five blocks, which makes for an easy walk, although the brick sidewalks have their ups and downs and mossy adornments. This town is a feast for the senses.

In the center, historic eye candy is everywhere. Dominating Delaware Street is the 1732 red brick New Castle Court House, Delaware's first. This fine example of Georgian architecture has a rich history and flags of the Netherlands, Sweden, Great Britain and the United States adorn its balcony. A short stroll away on New Castle Common is a statue of William Penn. Penn, as we all remember, first landed here when he made his way to the New World. In 1701 he set aside 1,000 acres for the people of New Castle. Today New Castle is part of that original acreage. As an occasional car rumbles by, the nearby cobblestone street tickles the ears with sounds of the past.

The Amstel House, Dutch House and Old Library Museum greet you with their collective charm. The Amstel House is a handsome example of Georgian architecture built in the 1730s. A dreamy soft, Wythe-blue-like trim is set off by the mature brick structure. One of the oldest homes in the state is the 17th century Dutch House. Rusty barn-red trim pops against the time-worn look and feel of its brick façade. Victorian is the style that shines at the Old Library. The building's 1892 hexagonal form is a gem complete with a treat on top, a soaring skylight.

Make your way to The Strand and the 14,000-square-foot

Read House which overlooks the Delaware River. This sturdy brick home built for attorney George Read II, son of a signer of the Declaration of Independence, is one of the finest examples of Federal architecture in the country. The bones of the formal gardens from 1848 are a feast for the eyes even on a Winter day and the distinctive aroma of boxwood fills the air.

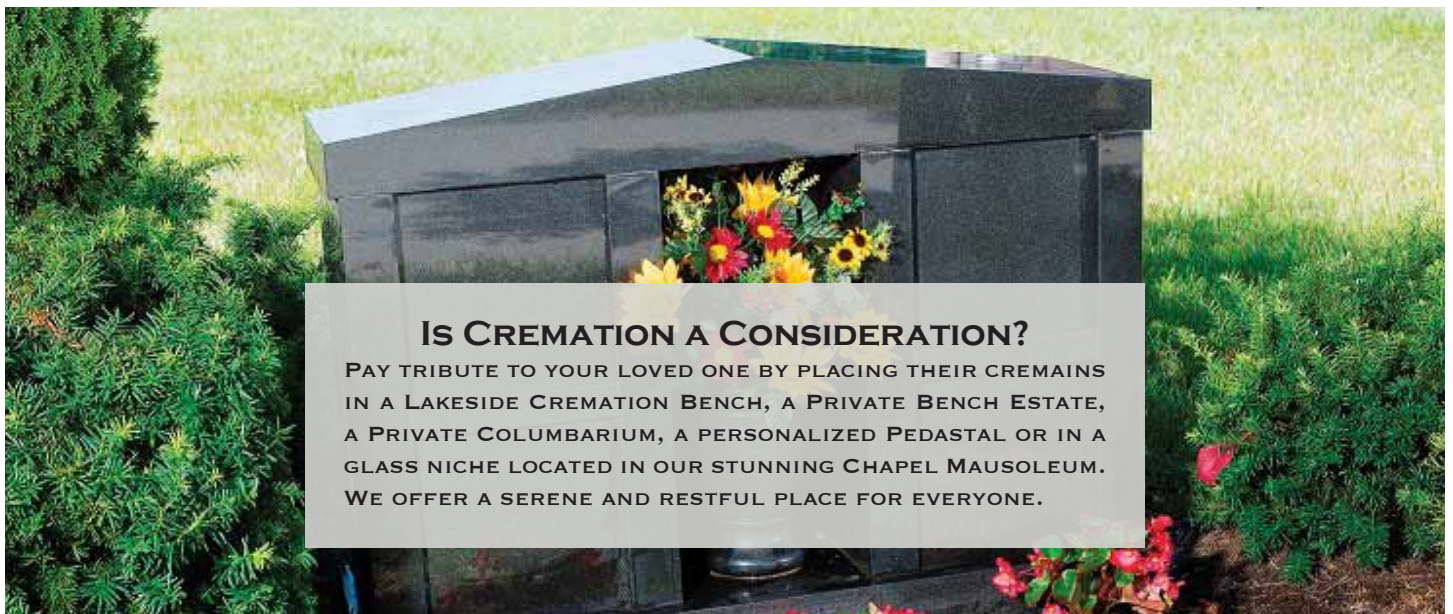
A break from all this historical charm is in order. Make your way to Traders Cove Coffee Shop at Penn's Place for a steaming hot beverage or a bite to eat. If the weather is mild, find a spot outside in the quirky courtyard to enjoy your treat.

There are a bevy of tantalizing shops and galleries tempting all who visit into loosening their wallet straps. Jewelry shops, antique stores and art galleries filled with treasures are just a few of the shopping gems to explore.

A few steps down the street, Jessop's Tavern beckons. Is that the fresh scent of pine smoke from a cozy fire nearby? Filled with Colonial charm and a roaring fireplace on a Wintry day, this handsome building was first a residence built in 1674. The tavern has been voted "Best of Delaware" for its fish and chips.

If the weather is pleasant, perhaps a picnic is in order. Battery Park provides views of the Delaware River and Delaware Bridge beyond. Seagulls routinely rip the sky with their crystalline cries. The air off the water may be noticeably cooler here. There are picnic tables, play areas for the wee ones, a riverfront path to walk and a pier -- a lovely place to while away some extra time.

A day spent with New Castle's grand architecture, Colonial gardens and the majestic river are just the right mix to refresh body and soul. New Castle had me under its spell and charmed me with a warm hug on a cold Winter day. Only about two hours from the Annapolis area, you may want to return to sample more of New Castle's treasures and congeniality. I know I will.



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Let's Make Dinner



with Mac Millhone

There was a time when you could expect to see beef stroganoff on about any menu. It was "American normal" for guest fair or a special occasion. I have neither seen nor heard a mention of this easy and especially good meal in years. It seems that it was at its most popular during the height of the Cold War. Like many things that do not make much sense, I'm fairly certain that it was the end of the pressures of that same Cold War that eliminated this preparation from our collective recipe boxes. Let's be glad that vodka was not sacrificed on the same political altar. The basic idea here is to combine mushrooms, onions, stock and sour cream and then cook something else in it. Let's reconsider this fabulous concoction of rich and wonderful flavors. I will first give you the classic recipe and then use the basic idea to create some other gastric happiness.

As always, you need kosher or sea salt, fresh ground pepper and good olive oil.

Beef Stroganoff Serves 4

1 lb. beef sirloin 1/2 to 3/4 inch thick
 1/4 cup flour
 2 Tbs. butter
 2 Tbs. olive oil
 2 to 3 cups sliced mushrooms
 1 medium onion sliced thin
 1 can beef broth 14.5 oz.
 1 8 oz. package sour cream
 1 package large egg noodles

Prepare noodles per package directions. You may not need the entire package, but you will need three-fourths of it. Figure something like 25 minutes total for the noodles and 30 to 45 minutes for the stroganoff.

Cut beef into bite-sized strips. In a paper bag, mix flour with several generous grinds of pepper and a teaspoon of salt. Add meat strips and shake the bag with serious vigor. Remove meat from bag, shaking off any excess flour. Heat butter and oil in a 10- to 12-inch skillet over medium heat. When fat starts shimmering,

add meat strips and stir fry to your liking. I prefer a little crust on the edges. Set meat aside on a clean plate and add more oil and butter to the skillet as necessary. Reheat skillet and when fat is shimmering add onions and mushrooms. Stir fry until onions are cooked and mushrooms give up their liquid. Add stock and scrape those precious browned bits from the skillet bottom. This is pure flavor. Allow liquid to reduce by half. Taste for seasoning and adjust as necessary. Canned stock can be quite salty so be aware. Add beef strips and any accumulated juices to the skillet and stir to mix. Here is where you control texture. If it is soupy, let it reduce more. When you like the texture, add sour cream and just heat through. Check seasoning one more time and serve over prepared noodles. Gluten-free? Omit flour and the bag trick and serve over the starch of your choice.

Pork Chops Stroganoff Serves 4

Substitute four or more boneless pork chops, depending on size and follow the above recipe. Yes, do the flour-in-the bag trick. It is all about texture. You may prefer using chicken stock instead of beef stock, but either will be just fine. Serve this with applesauce or baked apples. Pork needs something a little sweet. Substitute mashed potatoes for noodles if you like.

For a "master recipe," take the above recipe and leave out the beef and flour to create a decadent sauce or gravy product. Serve it over scrambled eggs on toast, or how about over baked or skillet-fried potatoes? For an easy and elegant meal, get a supermarket rotisserie chicken or turkey breast and smother warm slices with this rich creamy mixture. This stuff is good for your soul. If you run out of other ideas, just serve the master recipe over pasta or rice. This sauce is pure magic and lucky you are to have it in your recipe box.



Garnish any of the above with chopped herbs, especially parsley or chopped green onions. Lots of fresh ground pepper works well too. Yum.

Mac, a retired airline captain, is currently living in Annapolis. He enjoys researching food, cooking and baking. He can be reached at macmilllbone@me.net



Celebrating Valentine's Day is Good for Your Health

By Leah Lancione

Heart-shaped boxes of chocolates, lovey-dovey cards, packed restaurants, florists working overtime to deliver roses — all of this and more signifies the holiday that romantics from around the world celebrate — Valentine's Day. On Feb. 14, when the weather is still cold and dreary, gestures of love and affection warm the hearts of those who appreciate the opportunity to express their sentimental side. So, why is this holiday celebrated?

The federal government doesn't recognize Valentine's Day as a holiday. Calling it an observance, the government website (www.usa.gov/citizens/holidays.shtml) chronicles that the day was named after an early Christian martyr and is commemorated by Americans giving cards, presents and flowers, with the first mass-produced valentine cards sold in the 1840s.

Without delving too far into the biography of the aforementioned Christian martyr, Valentine, it's enough to say the priest was beaten and killed for continuing to perform marriages despite Emperor Claudius II's ban on the institution because he believed men weren't joining his army due to attachment to their wives and children. Valentine's death sentence was carried out on Feb. 14, in about the year 270.

Knowing this, it makes the otherwise frivolous and fun holiday for starry-eyed lovers and Valentine-toting school kids somehow more legitimate. So what if Hallmark and other retailers capitalize on romantics' desire to show love by opening their wallets. Is it not a medical fact that

love is good for one's health and general well-being? Sure there is. Research done at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill has shown hugging and hand-holding release the hormone oxytocin, which lowers the levels of stress hormones in the body, reducing blood pressure, improving mood and increasing tolerance for pain.

Additionally, *Psychology Today* has referred to a large body of research that demonstrates that a "loving connection is beneficial to long-term physical health—and loneliness and a lack of social connection have been shown to shorten our lifespan as much as smoking." Perhaps this large body of research should compel all of us—married or not—to engage in some type of social connection this Valentine's Day. There is no prescribed set of events or date-night essentials to define Valentine's Day.

If you want to cuddle up to the fire with your loved one, spend a carefree night out with your girlfriends, or guys, have a poker night and skip the hugs, go ahead. Grandparents, V-Day may just be your opportunity to hang out with your beloved grandchildren. Make the case to your children that they need and deserve a night out and arrange some quality time with those grandkids.

Date night with the grandchildren? What could that entail? The meal could include a fun heart-themed (and maybe not the healthiest) dinner and dessert. Think heart-shaped pancakes or waffles, strawberries cut into hearts and cookies or cupcakes frosted pink or red and adorned with candy-heart love messages.

After dinner and dessert keep your small guests engaged by playing games like conversation hearts bingo. Just visit www.createcraftlove.com/2014/02/conversation-heart-bingo.html for printable directions. You could also play tick-tac-toe using red and pink M&Ms or Cherry Cordial Hershey's kisses. Little ones will love the extra lovey-dovey details, but if your V-Day dates are in their teens, consider ordering pizza or getting takeout and renting a newly released movie. Serve Shirley Temples with a cherry as they are a perfect "mocktail" for all ages, and pink popcorn will do the trick at movie time as well. Visit www.food.com/recipe/sweet-pink-popcorn-327787 for the recipe. If you want to wow both the teenager and the youngster, rent or purchase a chocolate fountain and have bite-size morsels of fruit, cookies and brownies on skewers for an evening of dipping fun!

Just remember, if you decide to take the traditional route and celebrate this Feb. 14 with your significant other, it doesn't have to be the same old dinner and dessert deal. Think outside the heart-shaped box and do something new like booking a couples' massage at a spa, take a cooking or dance class together (think salsa or tango), or if you really want to make something of this holiday, book a weekend at a romantic resort or bed and breakfast since Valentine's Day falls on a Saturday in 2015.

Whatever you decide to do or not do, remember the people in your life that you love and how you can show them. That's a good start to making any day special.

KATERING TO YOUR LIFE

The Seven-Year Cycle

By Kater Leatherman

Did you know that every seven years there is a natural release of energy that inspires you to make changes and move forward?

Think transition. Metamorphosis. The dark night of the soul. It is a journey of unexpected challenges, uncertainty and confusion. You will be exposed to aspects of yourself and your life that aren't working, which will require releasing, reflecting and rediscovering in order to create the life you truly want.

Welcome to the seven-year cycle. For us baby boomers and beyond, we're talking about the ages of 56, 63, 70, 77, 84, 91 and 98.

This is the human version of a snake shedding its skin. When the skin becomes stretched and worn, the snake is unable to accommodate further growth. We, too, outgrow people, places, situations, interests, beliefs and, if we don't periodically stretch beyond what no longer serves our highest ideals, then we will feel stuck, stagnant and always searching for something outside of ourselves.

So, here's what to expect if you are in a "seven year." You may feel sad and/or depressed without knowing why. Things that you used to enjoy will hold little or no

interest. The career that brought fulfillment is boring. You feel disconnected from the people you love the most. Old ways of thinking or behaviors are sabotaging your happiness. You don't know what you want.

All or any one of these feelings is quite normal. For comfort, remember that letting go creates space for something new, better and different to come into your life. You may have to wait (some people call a seven year "the waiting year") for your core wishes and desires to emerge, but they will. Patience, therefore, is one of the hallmarks of a seven year.

Cycles of seven will ask you to observe rather than do. Instead of forcing outcomes, you are choosing a more passive, "organic" approach. You're still putting one foot in front of the other, determining what needs to change, gaining insight and staying focused. But you are allowing opportunities to come to you.

Loneliness is a call to spend more time in solitude, another essential on the list of things that will work for you during this time. Keep distractions to a minimum; they can keep us from hearing our intuition as well as from feeling. We heal by going through our feelings, not going around them. And the sneaker, the

one that has the most impact, may be to face your reality. This is not the time to deny or avoid anything.

Here are some tips to help you navigate this year of growth and opportunity. Give up the need to rush the process; finding your way can take time, especially if you don't know what direction you're going. Learn to be calm when you aren't in your comfort zone; fighting discomfort just creates more discomfort. And do not be afraid, have faith that you are being guided toward your full potential.

Looking back on my life, there have been significant changes during my seven-year cycles. At 21, I got married, moved out of state and lived off the land in Colorado where I was inspired to simplify my life. In my 36th year, I got sober (not a seven year, but close enough) and began the journey to recover the life I was meant to live at that time. And at 56, I suffered five major losses. After having been broken, I felt empowered enough to face any challenge. Now, in the early stages of my 63rd year, I am ready for the next adventure. This cycle is about less attachment to things, seeking new creative outlets from accumulated experiences and gaining a deeper acceptance, appreciation and understanding of others.

Once you have laid down new tracks in your seven year, you will feel confident, less encumbered and at peace. Your life will make more sense. The mental and emotional experience that you endured will generate greater achievements. And, above all, you will know who you are, what you want and where you're going in the next phase of your life.

Kater is a professional organizer/home stager, yoga teacher and self-published author who inspires others to live better. Visit her website at www.katerleatherman.com or email katerleatherman@gmail.com

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WHO IS PUNXSUTAWNEY PHIL?

By Leah Lancione

The Christmas or Hanukkah decorations are put away and the New Year's ball already dropped, so what's next? Valentine's Day? Presidents' Day? St. Patty's? Now, just hold on. Don't forget about observing Groundhog Day on Feb. 2, though it is not recognized as a federal holiday. Americans either choose to observe this day as a national tradition and predictor of the onset or delay of Spring, or they ignore it all together. Whether the day passes by without your attention or you anxiously wait to find out if the groundhog ("Phil") in Gobblers Knob in Punxsutawney, Pa., sees his shadow along with the thousands of people who flock to the event each year, it's likely you don't know all the rich folklore surrounding this fuzzy rodent.

So who is this elusive woodchuck, whistle pig or land beaver, most commonly referred to as a groundhog? It is a rodent of the family Sciuridae that belongs to the group of large ground squirrels known as marmots, according to Wikipedia. Punxsutawney Phil is esteemed above all other groundhogs because his emergence on the early morning of Feb. 2 each year to provide a prognostication to the president of the Punxsutawney Groundhog Club: It's either six more weeks of Winter weather if he sees his shadow and returns to his burrow, or it's the unofficial start of Spring if he doesn't see his shadow and remains above ground.

When and why did this tradition start? Well, according to

the Punxsutawney Groundhog Club (www.groundhog.org), established in 1887, the legend stems from the ancient customs of ethnic cultures that viewed nature as playing a strong role in daily life. Often, popular myths involved animals waking from hibernation on particular days. "The groundhog tradition stems from similar beliefs associated with Candlemas Day and the days of early Christians in Europe." The ritual carried out on Feb. 2 involved a priest blessing and passing out candles to people to ward off the darkness of Winter. It later evolved with German settlers, many of whom populated Pennsylvania, picking up the tradition and varying it to include the integration of a hedgehog (eventually a groundhog) that predicted the continuation of Winter if the sun came out that day and the animal saw his shadow.

That slice of history details the past inclusion of a groundhog to foretell seasonal weather occurrences, but how did the chief player become "Punxsutawney Phil" in the 1800s—the frisky fellow who will surface at approximately 7:20 a.m. this year?

The first official Groundhog Day was celebrated in Punxsutawney in 1886 with a decree in *The Punxsutawney Spirit* newspaper stating, "Today is groundhog day and up to the time of going to press the beast has not seen its shadow." The following year the first trek to Gobbler's Knob was made.

Furthermore, according to the club, Phil is the one and only and is taken care of by an inner circle of members. He was named after King Philip, has visited presidents, supported politicians on the campaign trail, appeared at sporting events, guest-starred on the Oprah Winfrey show in the 1990s, and is even the subject of the popular Bill Murray movie "Groundhog Day!"

Adding to the mystical allure, the club gives Phil a drink of a magical punch called "the elixir of life" during the Annual Groundhog Picnic each Summer to give him seven more years of life (a groundhog's lifespan is usually six to eight years)—ensuring the ritual will continue forever.

If you want to witness Phil emerge from his simulated and heated tree trunk at Gobblers Knob on Groundhog Day, set your alarm clock to start the festivities off at 3 a.m. for the opening bonfire and commencement of activities. Just pray you don't suffer the same fate of Bill Murray in the movie and wake up to a repeat of the same day over and over again.



BOOKS:

Old, New and Obscure

THE ROSIE PROJECT: A NOVEL

By Graeme Simsion

Simon & Schuster, New York (2014)

Don Tillman, handsome university professor of genetics in Melbourne, knows he's wired differently, but is unaware that he has Asperger's Syndrome. He flinches from physical contact, is socially challenged and has a rigid, measured order to his life, timing every action down to the second. Tillman, 39, decides it's time to find a wife and devises a 16-page scientific questionnaire to find the perfect compatible mate. He plans to filter out drinkers, smokers and late arrivers.

Enter Rosie, who possesses all of these traits and is easily disqualified. She is the wrong person and has her own agenda: seeking Don's expertise in finding her biological father. She has a plan to collect DNA samples of her late mother's entire medical graduating class reunion. Rosie is like a keg of dynamite in Don's compulsively correct world, but oddly enough their every chaotic encounter leaves him pleasantly intrigued.

Their first *potential* dinner together involves a sport coat (or lack thereof) and a flurry of marshal arts that left Don atop two felled bouncers.

Rosie gives Don a cocktail mixing manual and a list of the class reunion males, which he quickly memorizes, verbatim. (Shades of Raymond in the movie *Rainman* as he memorized the phone book). They then pose as cocktail servers, secretly swabbing and labeling DNA samples from glasses in an attempt to discover the mystery paternal parent. This fiasco results in a job offer from the bar owner for the increase in his business but no DNA match.

There are incidents in which Don attempts to learn dancing and the art of sexual positions from how-to books with the aid of the biology department's skeleton.

The book is clever, humorous and heartwarming. It is a fascinating peek into the mindset of an Asperger's individual, and it brings an understanding of the syndrome and its effect on one's daily life.

There's talk of a movie about this oddly charming professor and the spike-haired, red-headed, Rosie. It will be difficult to wait patiently for what could be a most memorable movie.

~ Carol Van Epps

THE EAR OF THE HEART AN ACTRESS' JOURNEY FROM HOLLYWOOD TO HOLY VOWS

By Mother Dolores Hart, O.S.B and Richard DeNeut

Ignatius Press, San Francisco (2013)

It's hard not to be inspired by this book; a journey of the heart and soul by an actress who had the world at her fingertips, but chose instead to enter a cloistered monastery. Dolores Hart, talented and beautiful, was in 10 box-office Hollywood films, beginning in 1957 with Elvis Presley in "Loving You." She always wanted to be an actress and was well on her way to becoming more than a feature or supporting actress. But something stopped her.

Dolores came from a broken family. Her father was a sometimes actor and an alcoholic, her mother also drank and suffered from mental illness. Young Dolores was often sent to live with her maternal grandparents for long periods of time, so she would have a more "normal" childhood. They sent her to a Catholic school in Chicago, where daily mass was standard. Dolores felt a presence there and asked the nuns if she could take communion, like the others. Eventually she made all her sacraments and cherished her time in church. A family life was something she longed for, but never had, except with her grandparents who did not practice any faith. Dolores eventually found her family at the Benedictine Abbey.

As her Hollywood career blossomed, Dolores felt the strong tug of her soul. To answer some mysterious call, she had to find God; so she began secretly visiting the Abbey of Regina Laudis in Bethlehem, Pa. She went on with her career and her relationships with friends, including becoming engaged to Don Robinson, before realizing that she must be true to herself to be happy. Very few people knew when Dolores entered the Benedictine Monastery to become a bride of Christ. Her early struggles with silence and rules are well-documented, but that did not deter her. She knew how she would make things better for future newcomers to the order.

This book is packed with her first-person writings, photos from Dolores' Hollywood days and her abbey days. There are interesting, wonderful accounts of how she fared as a cloistered nun. As Mother Dolores, she made significant changes in the Regina Laudis community, and celebrated 50 years there. A fascinating story of faith and of running to heartfelt love. Readers of any faith will enjoy it, especially if they remember Dolores Hart, the actress.

~Joanne Alloway

STATE OF WONDER

By Ann Patchett

Harper Collins Publishing, New York (2011)

For any readers who have read and enjoyed *River of Doubt*, the true story of Teddy Roosevelt's journey down this remote river in the Amazon jungle, *State of Wonder* may evoke memories

of similar, though not as treacherous situations.

The novel, written by award-winning novelist Ann Patchett, who wrote *Bel Canto*, takes place mainly in the Manaus area of Brazil. It starts with a researcher, Dr. Marina Singh, reading a letter from Dr. Annick Swenson to Mr. Fox, CEO of the pharmaceutical company where she works. Mr. Fox is the recipient of the letter and is not only the CEO of Vogel Pharmaceutical Company, but Marina's well-hidden lover. The letter states that Marina's co-worker, Anders Eckman, has died while at the research site in the Amazon rainforest.

Marina is sent to the jungle to not only discover what has happened to Eckman, but to investigate the progress of Dr. Swenson, who is being funded by her company. It seems that Dr. Swenson has been very noncommunicative about the progress of her research.

Dr. Swenson is difficult to find, and we discover she has not only found a miracle drug from the bark of a unique tree in the jungle that allows women to bear children until the end of their lives, but it also is a cure for malaria. The tree is only found in a remote part of the jungle inhabited by an indigenous tribe called the Lakashi. Dr. Vogel worries that the cure for malaria would not be profitable enough for the Vogel Company, and would destroy the culture and home of the Lakashi people.

There are several subplots in the story, one of which involves a young deaf boy named Easter who was found and is being raised by Dr. Swenson. Others are the relationship between Marina and Mr. Fox and the pressure from Eckman's wife to find out what happened to her husband.

The descriptions of life in the jungle, the city of Manaus, the constant battle with heat, humidity, insects and lack of the facilities which Marina enjoyed at home might remind you of *The River of Doubt*, Candice Millard's gripping book on Theodore Roosevelt's near-death experience along the Amazon.

There are parts of this novel that seem a bit unbelievable, but it holds your attention and is an interesting study of an indigenous people and their struggle to survive in our ever-changing technological society.

~ Peggy Kiefer

AND THE MOUNTAINS ECHOED

By Khaled Hosseini

Riverhead Books, New York (2013)

Khaled Hosseini's first two books, *The Kite Runner* and *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, established him as a best-selling author. His third book, *And the Mountains Echoed*, was much anticipated by many readers.

The author has changed his format for this book into a collection of short stories, each told by a different narrator, instead of concentrating on one or two main characters. I found this rather hard to follow at times, as the names are not ones we are familiar with and many look and sound similar.

Hosseini has said that he wanted to make these characters more complex and sometimes it seems he has overdone it. The book starts off with a relatively simple theme. It concentrates on the close relationship of two siblings, 10-year-old Abdullah and his three-year-old sister Pari. When Pari is sold to a childless couple in Afghanistan by her impoverished father who has lost

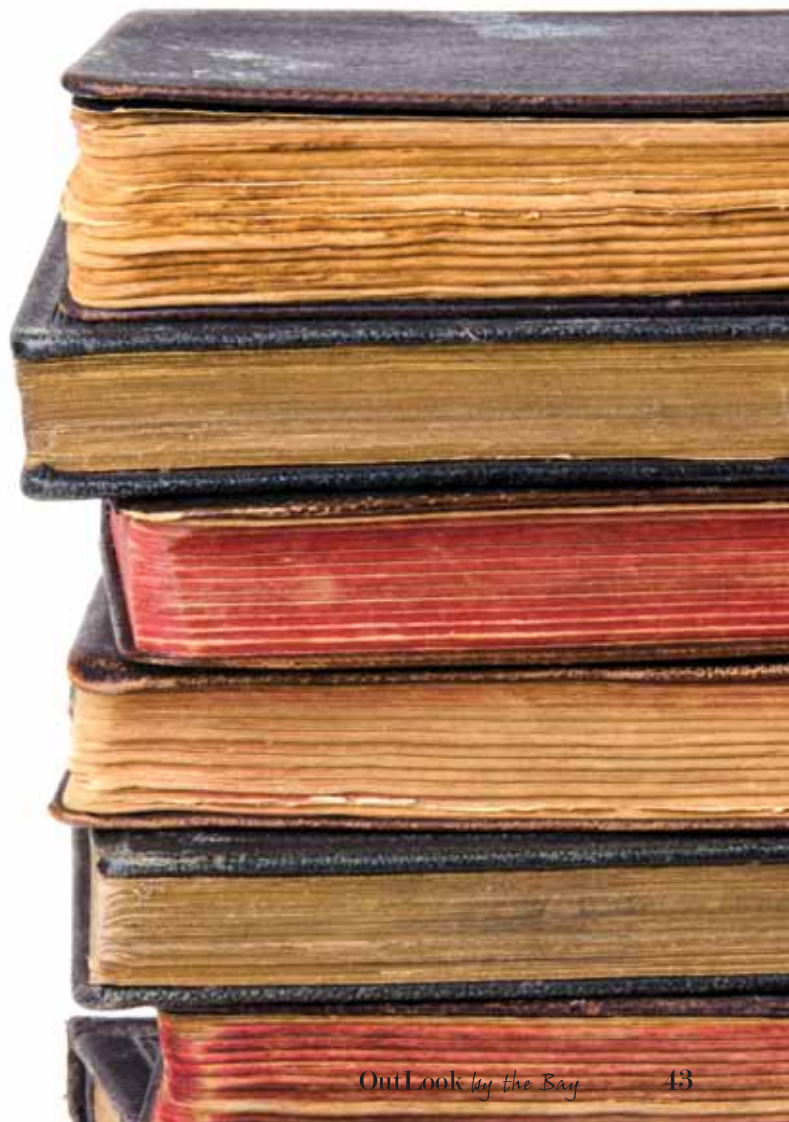
his wife, the plot becomes more complicated. This loss of his sister, Pari, devastates Abdullah and when they are finally united at the end of the story, his Alzheimer's disease is so advanced he doesn't recognize her.

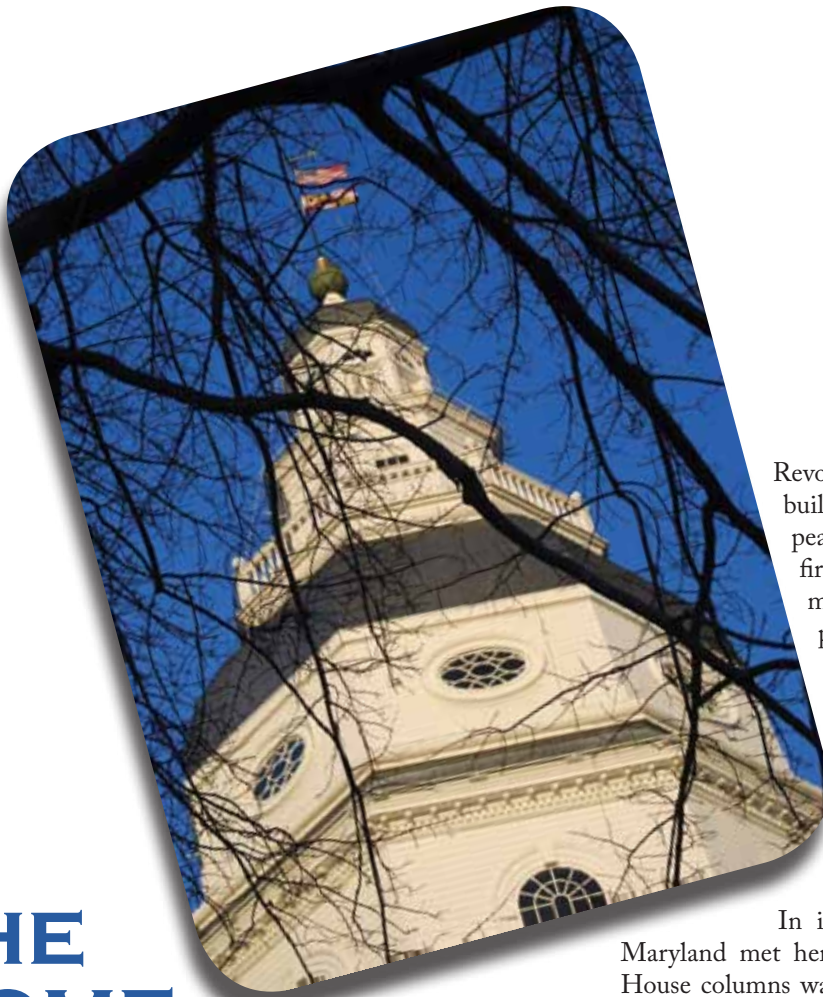
We are then introduced to the new adoptive parents, a very troubled but beautiful woman named Nila Wahdati and her wealthy, emotionally distant husband. It gets more convoluted from there, as the characters progress in relationships and move to Paris, Afghanistan and San Francisco. The stepmother of Abdullah and Pari enters the story with her twin sister and a different dynamic develops. The relationship of Mr. Wahdati, the new adoptive father of Pari, and Pari's step-uncle, Nabi, is another chapter that loosely connects to the plot.

There are eight main characters, each with a different story, yet interconnected to the other characters in the book. Are you confused yet? It takes much concentration and rereading and going back over chapters to keep up with Hosseini's plot. Woven into the whole narrative are the problems being faced in Afghanistan.

The author maintains his usual flowing and descriptive style, but I found it much easier to enjoy in his first two books, especially *The Kite Runner*, which found much international acclaim and won several awards. Yet everyone finds something different in a book. Give *And the Mountains Echoed* a try and see what you think.

~ Peggy Kiefer





THE DOME REVEALED

By Ellen Moyer

It is back! Shed of its veil and gloriously white, the State House dome is once again watching over the citizens of Annapolis as it has for almost 250 years. The distinctive towering wooden dome is rich in history and beauty. Designed by Joseph H. Andersen, built by Charles Wallace and repaired by Joseph Clark in the 1770s, it is the largest in the nation constructed entirely of wood. Wooden pegs and iron straps secure it. No iron nails puncture it.

The dome is crowned with an acorn, the fruit of the mighty oak tree, long a sacred symbol of strength. It is skewered by a lightning rod, the largest constructed in its time, and was designed and supervised by the innovative Benjamin Franklin himself. Thought to be more grand than any in England, it too symbolized a statement commemorating the ingenuity of a new nation. Even today the dome radiates the spirit of pride, power and confidence built on the values of sturdiness of character and ingenuity that would lead the new nation.

George Washington resigned his commission as commander of the Continental Army under this dome, symbolically ensuring the nation would be governed by civilian, not military rule. Here too the Treaty of Paris was signed, officially ending the

Revolutionary War. This oldest of state capitol buildings still in use was for nine months the first peacetime capital of the new nation where the first governing body, the Continental Congress met. For a time it was a candidate for the permanent national capital. Instead Maryland gave land on the Potomac River for the new capital, what is now Washington, D.C. The State House in Annapolis is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and as a National Landmark. The restored rooms of the 1783 Senate Chamber and the 1867 House of Delegates are open to the public most every day of the year.

In its first decade, the U.S. District Court of Maryland met here too. As the story goes, one of the State House columns was used to punish a local postmaster charged with embezzlement by Judge Samuel Chase and sentenced to 39 lashes. Oh the stories the dome could tell.

In 1781 Gov. Thomas Sim Lee, in the final act of formation of the Colonies as a nation, ratified the Articles of Confederation, forming a perpetual union and removing doubt about the resolve of states to unite during the Revolutionary War. Years later in 1861, President Lincoln confronted with Civil War, would use the fact that "the faith of all the then 13 States was expressly plighted and engaged that the union should be perpetual," declaring therefore the secession of the southern states to be illegal.

By the 20th century Maryland had grown and the State House did too. By 1905 the new marble-lined chambers of the House of Delegates and Senate were added with a Tiffany skylight and galleries for the public. Portraits of Maryland's signers of The Declaration of Independence, all from the City of Annapolis, decorate the Senate chamber. Outside in Lawyers Mall is a statue of Thurgood Marshall, America's first African-American justice on the U.S. Supreme Court.

The General Assembly convenes here and under the dome are the offices of the governor and lieutenant governor and speaker of the House and president of the Senate. It is the center of the state's executive and legislative power. Above them, the State House dome, repaired and repainted in 2011, continues to watch over us, radiating pride and confidence for the future.

Ellen, a former mayor of Annapolis, can be reached at ellenmoyer@yahoo.com

Life is tough. Put on a helmet.



RELATING TO THE SERIOUSLY ILL

My friend has been diagnosed with a serious illness and I feel horrible because I have been avoiding visiting her. I am concerned about her and but am really uncomfortable in dealing with sickness. Any thoughts?

Unless we've worked on the frontlines in health care, we've probably had limited experience with being around people facing serious illness. Some feelings of inadequacy and discomfort are normal. We're not sure what to say and fear making our loved ones feel worse than they already feel. Such experiences can also make us painfully aware of our own mortality.

As a former nurse, I promise you that nothing comforts a patient like a visit from a warm and accepting friend or relative. More importantly for the seriously ill, the feeling that they've been forgotten is hurtful, demoralizing and can negatively impact already precarious health. So, it is important to find the strength and learn skills to foster such relationships. Eventually, we all will have someone we love who is confined to a sick bed.

The good news is that there are practical skills that will help you to make a difference at a crucial time. Here are some guidelines:

- Call first, especially if you are coming to someone's home. You may be more comfortable if you have a particular agenda. For example, "I just read the best book! Could I drop by for a short visit and share it with you?" Another idea, "I bought extra peaches (or made a double batch of soup) and would like to bring some over. Is this a good time?"
- Be yourself. You are not expected to fix things or to make them better. There's no need to try to be your friend's doctor, pastor or psychologist. Just be yourself, be sincere and warm, and try to interact as you usually do -- with sensitivity.
- Avoid false assurances and fake cheerfulness. It's OK to express your sadness and concern for the difficulties she faces.
- Listen, but don't pry. If she wants to talk about her illness and her fears, she'll bring it up. Know that she may need to "think out loud," sometimes over and over again, to come to grips with what is happening.

- Accept tears or silence. Pass the tissues, but allow the tears because they are natural and therapeutic. Sometimes the best gift that you can give is simply to act as a kind witness to suffering.
- Touch. A hug, a squeeze of the hand or a pat on the shoulder can be healing and compassionate. Be gentle and be genuine. If hugging is not normal for your relationship, ask first.
- Keep your visits short, but regular. Decide how often you'll reach out and remember to do it. Send an email, a "thinking of you" card or phone if you can't stop by often, but make time for those short, but uplifting, face-to-face contacts too.
- Know your limits. If you sense your friend is not receiving the care she needs, call in a close family member or the professionals. She may have spiritual, medical, legal or financial advice that require more than your listening ear. Do not be afraid to say, "I don't know" and to kindly say no when there is a need that demands more of you than you can or are willing to do.
- Make offers. That common line, "Just call me if you need anything" is inadequate for those facing a serious crisis. Patients fear being a bother and may struggle in silence rather than ask for help. Offer specifics: "I'm running by the pharmacy later. Is there something I can pick up for you?" or, "What night next week could I bring dinner to you?"

Remember that your friend is still the same person and is more than the illness that she now faces. Illness and death will come to us all. Facing your fears and learning these skills will allow you to make a positive difference, but you will receive even more than you give. Spending meaningful time with our seriously ill loved ones can foster deep emotional and spiritual growth and be a gift and privilege rather than a burden. For further suggestions, check out this book:

Solace: How Caregivers and Others Can Relate, Listen, and Respond Effectively to a Chronically Ill Person by Walter St. John.

Vicki is a licensed professional counselor and welcomes your questions. She can be reached at Victoria2write@aol.com

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		163	J	164	Y	165	W	166	V	167	B	168	A			169	R	170	L	171	I	172	X	173	M	174	K			175	B	176	E	177	L									

Winter 2015

WINTER DUCKS ON THE BAY

Where Have all the Waterfowl Gone?

By Henry S. Parker

In the frigid mid-Winter, when it might seem that nothing could stir in the Chesapeake's congealed waters, ducks bring life to the Bay. They're active throughout the estuary in the Winter, from ice-free quiet coves to white-capped open waters. If you'd like to see for yourself, grab your binoculars and go exploring some cold, February day. With luck you'll find buffleheads bobbing on the lower Patuxent, mergansers meandering through pancake ice at the Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge, scaup diving in the whitecaps off Sandy Point and surf scoters rafting up in Herring Bay. You may also find hunters who know that the coldest months are the best times to bag their limits.

About a million waterfowl spend the Winter on Chesapeake Bay—nearly one-third of all those migrating along the Atlantic Flyway. These include diving ducks, like redheads, canvasbacks, scaup and scoters; surface-feeders like teal and mallards; and geese. While a million birds may seem like a lot, that's only a fraction of the numbers that historically stayed on at the Bay. In the mid-1800s populations began to plummet, primarily because of commercial hunting. The Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918 banned this practice, but the numbers never recovered from what they once had been. The reasons are complex. They have little to do with sports hunting and a lot to do with the distressingly poor health of the Bay.

Question: What time does a duck wake up?

Answer: At the quack of dawn.

Sorry, thought it was time for a little levity.

The simplest explanation for the declines in overwintering duck populations is insufficient food. But that needs some elaboration. Cold-season numbers of some waterfowl have substantially *increased*. Canada geese and mallards are examples. Their populations have swelled, in part because of hand-rearing and release of mallards for sport-shooting, and extensive grain production on the Eastern Shore, which benefits geese. Both species are now so numerous that they've become a problem and neither bird has to cope with food shortages. The geese have found good gleanings in Bay-area farm fields, and mallards can eat about anything.

On the other hand, some of the Chesapeake's most emblematic ducks are finding it hard to sustain themselves. Black ducks are a good example. As recently as the 1950s, more than

200,000 overwintered on the Bay. Today that number is down to 37,000. The precipitous drop is due to a major reduction in their primary food source: submerged aquatic vegetation (SAV). SAV losses, in turn, result from deteriorating water quality.

Similarly, the numbers of redheads and canvasbacks now spending the Winter on the Bay have declined significantly since the 1950s, also because of SAV loss. Winter populations of redheads have dwindled from 70,000 to 2,000, while canvasbacks have diminished from 250,000 to 50,000.

A decline of food sources—SAV in particular—is not the only reason that Bay Winter duck populations have dropped. Other factors, including diseases, habitat degradation, competition with mallards and geese for space and resources, chemical contaminants, oil spills, predation on eggs and illegal hunting have also played a role. But the primary issue remains the loss of aquatic grasses from deteriorating water quality.

All is not lost, and there are signs of hope for Winter ducks on the Bay. Black ducks have recently received special attention, as scientists have concluded that remedial actions to restore this species will improve the environmental status of the Bay as a whole. Spurred by a Chesapeake Bay restoration goal of increasing overwintering populations to 100,000 black ducks by 2025, the Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge has committed to increasing aquatic food sources by 10 percent by 2017, through wetlands protection and expansion and elimination of invasive species.

Research is critically important. Ongoing studies that will help move Chesapeake Bay duck populations back toward historical levels include investigations of duck feeding behavior and migration patterns, habitat restoration, and SAV responses to water quality. Equally essential are efforts to expand public education, as the more we all know about these special birds and their importance to the Bay, the more likely we'll make a strong commitment to protect them.

Now, how many ducks *does* it take to change a light bulb?

Henry is an adjunct associate professor at Georgetown University. He previously directed research programs at the U.S. Department of Agriculture and taught marine sciences at the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth. He can be reached at hspbp@gmail.com

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