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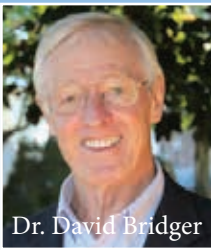
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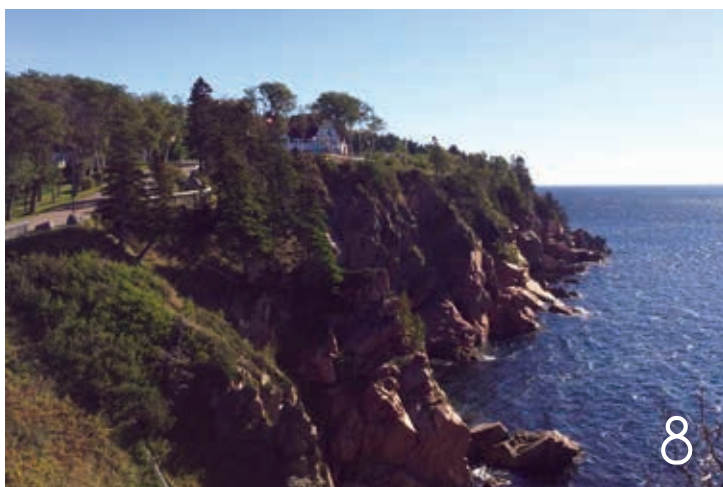


Dr. Faraj Edher

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Cover DOWNCHILD
This year marks 50 years since Donnie Walsh (right) founded Downchild. The legendary Canadian blues band will be touring BC in October.

Photo: True North Records



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DONNIE, MR. DOWNCHILD, WALSH: IT'S BEEN A WHILE

by VERENA FOXX



DOWNCHILD band members (l. to r.) Michael Fonfara, Pat Carey, Donnie Walsh, Chuck Jackson, Mike Fitzpatrick and Gary Kendall. *Photo: True North Records*

Often cited as the “Father of Canadian Blues,” Donnie Walsh co-founded Downchild (known as Downchild Blues Band until the early 1980s) with his late brother Richard “Hock” Walsh in 1969. A whopping 50 years later, he’s still happy making music.

“Yes, I’ve been fortunate,” he says. “I’ve had a good life of doing what I wanted to do.”

It all started in his teen years at a girlfriend’s birthday party in Toronto during the height of The Beatles, when Donnie first heard Jimmy Reed’s album.

“I played that music over and over that night and it totally inspired me to make music.”

Jimmy Reed (1925-1976) influenced many other musicians in his time, including Elvis Presley, Hank Williams Jr. and the Rolling Stones because of his “easily accessible style.”

Donnie says when he and Hock and their founding band members started playing in Toronto 50 years ago in Gross-

man’s Tavern, owner Al Grossman took a chance on them and booked them to follow a previous run of polka band music, some 15 years earlier.

“He knew the times were changing,” says Donnie. “We played there three nights a week for over a year. Grossman’s had a local clientele, and we started a whole new scene there.”

His day job at the time was driving a cartage truck for up to 10 hours a day and then playing music at night. “I was in my 20s, so I had the energy,” laughs the native Torontonian.

“At that time, the Colonial Tavern on Yonge Street was featuring American jazz and blues musicians for a week at a time. I heard so many of them there – like Dizzy Gillespie, Muddy Waters, Earl Garner, Dr. John, Bo Diddley, Bobby Bland. It was unbelievable; it was unreal. Hearing these incredible musicians definitely inspired me to take the plunge and do the music thing full time.”

Downchild was quickly considered the Canadian Blues

Snapshot

with Donnie “Mr. Downchild” Walsh

If you were to meet your 20-year-old self, what advice would you give him?

“Don’t quit your day job when you’re starting out as a musician!”

Who or what has influenced you most? And why?

“Definitely Sonny Boy Williamson II’s music and recordings. He was an incredible singer-songwriter. It was his songs, his band, his guitar playing – all that influenced me. Especially the song ‘Bring it on Home’. I learned a lot about playing the blues from listening to that song.”

What are you most grateful for?

“Being able to live this long. The longer you get to live, the more you get to experience in life. And, of course, my long-time sweetie pie, Erin Darlow.”

What does success mean to you?

“It’s being able to tour around the country and meet people from different places. When I first started touring Canada, I remember Saskatchewan being so different. It was a pretty cool place. We always had a great time in Saskatchewan.” |

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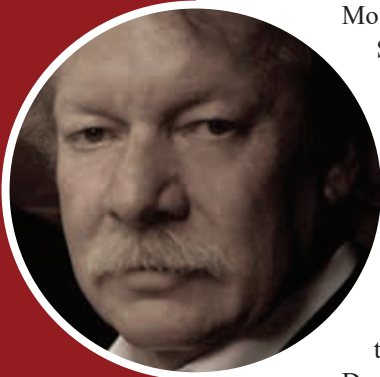
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pioneer in the 1960s. Their adaptation of Joe Turner’s “Flip Flop and Fly” was their most successful single and shot them to fame by the early 1970s.

The band then went on to become the house band at the “happening” El Mo (El Mocambo) on Toronto’s Spadina Avenue in the early 1970s, where Tom Waits, U2, and Elvis Costello performed, and where the Rolling Stones showed up for a surprise performance in ’77.

Other early originals, Donnie’s “I’ve Got Everything I Need (Almost),” and Donnie and Hock’s “Shotgun Blues,” from their 1973 *Straight Up* album were later picked up by The Blues Brothers (John Belushi and Dan Aykroyd), who modelled themselves on the inspiration of Canada’s blues brothers, Donnie and Hock Walsh.

Musician/comedian Dan Aykroyd, who had performed with Downchild in Toronto early on, and who later joined them on their 40th and 45th anniversaries, recently rejoined them on stage at the Rochester and Toronto Jazz Festival for their 50th Anniversary tour.

Aykroyd has been quoted as saying, “There would be no Blues Brothers if it weren’t for Downchild.”

Downchild’s lead singer and harmonica player Chuck Jackson says of Aykroyd, “He truly has been and is a blues brother to us.”

“It’s great to have made a mark in my life, doing what I do,” says Donnie. “We obviously influenced the Blues Brothers, then they influenced a whole bunch more people, and that was pretty great and exciting at the time.”

“The rest,” he says, “is geography,” referring to touring across the country, doing about 300 gigs per year then, and fewer now. “We’d go east to Atlantic Canada, then back to Toronto for a while, and then we’d head out west.” All in vans and buses then, and by airplane and minivans now.

Downchild’s 50th Anniversary Tour kick-off performance at Grossman’s Tavern in Toronto on June 19/19 was sold out minutes after it was announced. “We don’t play in bars anymore, but it was fun to play in the traditional blues-style bar where Downchild

started,” says Chuck.

The band is performing something from every one of their 18 albums on the 2019 Anniversary Tour, including their most recent one, *Something I’ve Done*. Donnie and Chuck will also be doing their powerful double-harmonica duets on the tour, which includes performances at jazz festivals in the east and in theatres across the country.

When Chuck joined Downchild as a vocalist in 1989, the band did 150-200 performances a year. Now, with their ages ranging between 60-75, they play 30-40 gigs a year.

“We’ve been together as a solid band now for 30 years,” says Chuck. “We like each other’s company and we will never retire. We do it because we love it, but we do rest a bit more now than then, when we were known as a party band.”

During their long reign as Canada’s celebrated blues band, Downchild has undergone numerous changes. Up to 100 different musicians have played with the band since 1969. As well as co-founding the band, Hock was a songwriter and the original lead singer until the 1990s. The band suffered additional losses with the passing of jazz pianist Jane Vasey (1982) and lead singer Tony Flaim (2000).

“It’s been mostly bass players and drummers that have changed,” says Chuck. “There have only been four singers in Downchild.”

Since 1990, the band comprises of Donnie (guitar, slide guitar, harp), Chuck (vocals, harmonica), Michael Fanfara (keyboard), Pat Carey (saxophone), and Gary Kendall (Bass), with Mike Fitzpatrick (drummer) joining the group in 2004. All musicians have been well recognized and have racked up a long list of nominations and awards during their stellar musical careers.

Downchild won a 2014 Juno after numerous nominations – earlier and since – and the band has been three-time winners of the Maple Blues Award for Recording of the Year or Entertainer of the Year. Additionally, each member has received multiple awards for their individual talents.

“We’ve been lucky. We’ve had a great following all these years, mostly because of the strong leadership of Donnie Walsh,” says Chuck. “The Blues has made us comfortable.”

“We’ve played every town, province and territory in Canada. We’ve played from Nanaimo to Norway, and Denmark, France, Central America and all over the USA. It’s opened up the world to us,” says Chuck, who adds that original fans are now coming back, children and grandchildren in tow. “We’ve played our gigs, and we’ve played at our fans’ weddings and funerals.”

Downchild material is mostly written by either or both Donnie and Chuck. Their latest album, *Something I’ve Done*, is a collaboration of songs and music by all six band members. “We all contributed,” says Chuck. “Everyone wrote at least one song.”

Chuck says the blues lyrics are about the human condition. “Everyone can identify,” he says. “It doesn’t really change that much. You’re writing about what happens in your life: you meet a girl (boy) or lose a girl (boy); you lose a job; your woman (man) breaks up with you, then you’re down; you have a better time, you write a happier song. We all go through it.”

“I can express myself by writing songs; it helps me get through the rough times when I can go out, carry on performing, and then move forward and continue with my life because I see that I’m making other people happy.”

Every Downchild band member, except Donnie, has other side gigs and projects. Most musicians these days don’t have full bands that play regularly. “You can’t be a one-trick pony anymore,” says Chuck. “I love the blues; I always have, but I play other genres now, too. It keeps me fresh.”

Chuck isn’t singing the blues on a personal front these days, though. He is a proud father of two and grandfather to one and is marrying “the love of his life” next year. “It’s all been a wonderful experience for me.”

Donnie, who lost his mother early in his life, ensures he sees his daughter and 24-year-old granddaughter regularly. In turn, they always come out and say hi when he’s performing. And then there’s Erin, Donnie’s long-time sweetheart, who he is grateful to have by his side.

Between playing gigs, when it’s time to get away from it all for a while, Donnie and Downchild Road Manager, Art Theberge, go fishing for trout and perch in the fresh-water-lake-rich Halliburton region of Ontario.

When he’s performing, Mr. Downchild says it’s always the audience that moves him and his band to really “get grooving.”

“People relate to the songs and to the music. It’s mutual inspiration between the audience and us when we play music,” says Donnie.

“Playing the blues is like medicine,” he continues. “It’s a style of music that brings you, if you’re feeling blue, out of that feeling, generally.”

“It’s the difference between when you pick up your guitar and start playing, and when you’ve finally played enough, you can put it down and feel different.”

“I played the blues then, and I play the blues now,” concludes Donnie, Mr. Downchild, Walsh, the award-winning self-taught songwriter, master guitarist, superb harp player, and Canadian Blues Legend, adding that they are looking forward to coming out west. “It’s been a while.” |



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THE COLOURFUL CABOT TRAIL

by JANE CASSIE

“A little wildlife and some colour would be nice to see,” my husband, Brent, says wistfully. “And the occasional ocean view would be great, too. But then, that’s a given.”

We’d planned this trip to Cape Breton on Canada’s east coast with hopes of getting some visual overload, not only of the many dramatic coastlines, vibrant bays and empty beaches, but also the burst of colour that happens every fall. Ruby reds, glorious golds, and outrageous oranges dot the rolling hillsides like a pointillist painting, providing a riot of hues that surpass any artist’s canvas. But Mother Nature seems to be a bit tardy this year in delivering the eye-popping goods and everything in Vancouver is still pretty green.

The Cabot Trail, a 300-kilometre route that loops around the Cape, is touted to be one of Canada’s finest road trips. While embracing the area’s Scottish heritage, it showcases some of the East Coast’s spectacular vistas and landscapes. And during this time of year, it’s usually ablaze with colour. Fingers crossed!

Our home base is in the seaside city of Sydney at Colby House B&B, a 1904 beauty that blends modern-day perks with old world charm – period antiques, cushy robes and scrumptious breakfasts dished up with congenial hospitality by owners, Bev and Gordon Gabriel. After fuelling up

on a two-course, home-cooked feast, we head off with hopes of fulfilling Brent’s dreams.

The views are more dynamic when travelling counter-clockwise around this magnificent land mass, so after taking a 10-minute cable ferry from Englishtown, we veer north onto the Cabot Trail that parallels the shoreline. Within short order, shimmering St. Ann’s Bay melds into the endless Atlantic that stretches to the horizon, and the sun casts a blinding sheen over the ocean’s still surface.

“Can you see Europe out there?” Brent jokes. “That’s the next neighbour across this body of water.”

ABOVE | The author’s husband, Brent, gazes out over the Atlantic Ocean, though Europe is beyond his sights.

PAGE 10 | (Top) Trail vegetation ablazed with colour. (Middle) A moose crosses their path. (Bottom) The winding roadway far below, will soon take them to other villages.

TOC PAGE | Keltic Lodge, a hilltop haven. Photos: Brent & Jane Cassie

Small villages dot our route, and as we rise and dip from mountaintop to sea level, we're privy to impressive vistas along the way. Cape Breton Highland National Park stakes claim to about a third of the Cabot Trail (950-square kilometres) and just beyond the Visitor's Centre is where the real highlights begin.

The first must-stop is Ingonish, a seaside hamlet where there's something for everyone. In warmer weather, swimmers are lured to its expansive beachfront, golfers zero in on the Highland Links Course, and the indulgent set make a beeline year-round to the Keltic Lodge, a hilltop haven overlooking Cape Smokey and South Bay.

A total of 26 hiking trails thread around this natural paradise, two of which are located here. Franey Loop, a steep, three-hour ascension, rewards with ocean and river vistas, while the Middle Head trail descends shoreward where the seabirds hang out.

"Did I tell you that my wish list also includes a hike?" Brent asks. "Which one do you want to go for?"

I check our trusty map that pinpoints the trailheads and provides a brief synopsis of each. A few lead to tranquil lakes, others to cascading waterfalls and many to panoramic viewpoints. It's too difficult a decision, so we mosey on.

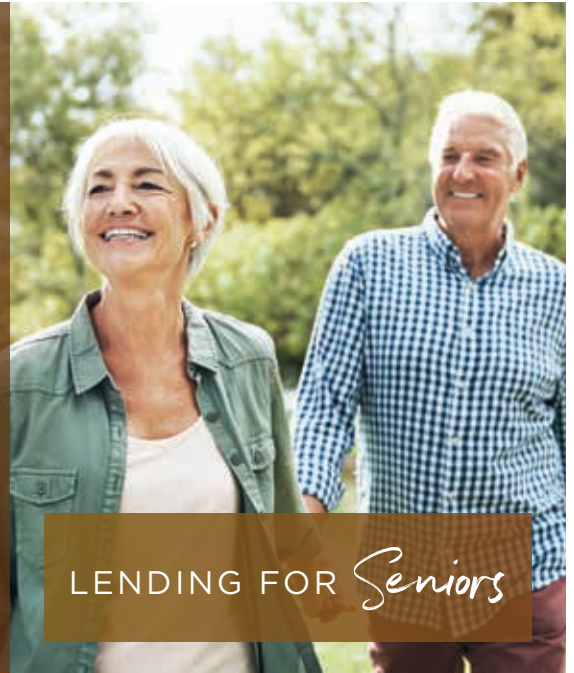
My camera goes into full action mode over the next hour as we wind our way along the Atlantic Coast: Broad Beach's pristine shore, Lakies Head's ruddy-coloured boulders, the delightful rocky curves of Green and MacKinnons Coves. All are picture worthy.

Although there's nothing commercial within the park boundaries, whenever the road veers outside its borders, restaurants, galleries, studios and gift shops pop up along our way. Faux lighthouses sell ice cream, quaint diners feature fresh lobster, and cozy cottages promise a quiet stay.

From Neil's Harbour, we head inland, stopping at Dinena's to fuel up on fresh out-of-the-oven pastries, then continue, carving our way through the lush mounds of still-green deciduous trees. Scenic viewpoints are etched into this route where, in a couple of weeks, the now-vague hues will really pop, transforming the rolling landscape into a Monet-like masterpiece.

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Today, instead of these pullouts, we check out a few picnic stops: the picturesque Big Intervale that straddles the North Aspy River; the trickling falls at MacIntosh Brook; the scenic platforms that view the Gulf of St. Lawrence. After traversing the pristine parkland, we're now looking northwest over this massive waterway. We cruise through Pleasant Bay, a quaint community settled by Scottish immigrants in the early 1800s and now coined the Island's Whale Watching Capital. Based on the advertising billboards, it's a pretty popular pastime.

A few minutes down the road is MacKenzie Mountain lookout where there's another opportunity to witness these breaching mammals. None are performing for us today.

"Well, let's hit the next trail," says Brent, "so at least one of my wishes comes true."

The easy-graded gravel Skyline is so well maintained that even baby buggies can partake. We take the road less travelled and go the longer, more rugged route and, soon after dividing from the masses, Brent's second wish comes true. Bordering our byway is lower vegetation that's ablaze with colour. An orchard-size patch of burnt orange ferns ignite the way and lead to a fork in the trail where we literally cross the path of wish number three: a long-legged and gangly female moose. Fortunately, no calves are around, and she is comfortable being photographed 50 or more times.

The last wish comes to fruition when we rejoin others at literally the highpoint of this jaunt. Wind-torn, stunted trees edging our route are an indication of sub-zero temperatures brought on by Old Man Winter, and a boardwalk that stretches over these Scottish-like highlands protects the fragile alpine growth beneath.

At the end of the path, we can see the winding roadway far below that will soon take us by more villages, townships and vistas along the final leg of this Cabot Trail. But for now, we're riveted to Mother Nature and her glory, a panorama of the craggy headland and the shimmering blue water that stretches beyond – another amazing must-see, and final wish-come-true for one happy husband. |

For *IF YOU GO* information, visit www.seniorlivingmag.com/articles/colourful-cabot-trail



CORRECTION

In the August 2019 issue, we mistakenly stated that William B. Davis joined the British National Theatre School.

In fact, he enrolled in the London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art and, in 1964, joined Britain's National Theatre, working alongside major stars Maggie Smith, Derek Jacobi and Albert Finney. Finney asked him to be his assistant on the first and only movie he ever directed, *Charlie Bubbles*.

We apologize for the error and any inconvenience it may have caused.



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Choosing to stay positive is the secret to aging well. There are many easy life hacks to help you look on the bright side as you age.

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MAKING MUSIC ACCESSIBLE

by MYLES SHANE

This isn't your typical rock star story about a boy discovered while singing his songs on YouTube. This is the tale of real-life guitar playing virtuoso Dr. Alexander Dunn, a professor at the University of Victoria, who started the philanthropic non-profit organization, the Victoria Guitar Society (VGS), almost 30 years ago.

The VGS organizes concerts and teaching opportunities for local professionals, students and some of the world's best guitarists and lutenists. It also sponsors up-and-coming talent from all over the world. Alex has made Victoria, BC a first-choice destination for guitar players across the globe.

Recently, Alex was a pivotal player in helping four Syrian musicians escape their war-torn country and ultimately arrive safely in Victoria. Orwa Al Sharaa, Gaby Al Botros, Nazir Salameh and Mir Mahmoud – The Orontes Guitar Quartet – are survivors. They've been bombed, shelled and had cars explode before their eyes. During their last performance at the Damascus Opera House in Syria, a bomb exploded outside the theatre, transforming their concert into the front lines. The band was shaken to its core. They didn't know whether to continue the performance but, incredibly, a group of audience members stayed. They ignored the hell of war and let music be their sanctuary.

"When we started to play, we forgot everything and just focused on the music," Mir Mahmoud recalls.

Eventually, the band was able to relocate to Lebanon.

"They came to the University of Victoria through the auspices of the Artist Protection Fund (APF), a NYC-based initiative of the Institute of International Education, and the first collective to be named fellows by the APF. Due to the Trump travel ban, however, The Orontes could not be placed in the US," says Alex. "Because of my relationship with Austin-based Susan McDonald, their mentor, who founded the group and steered them towards the APF, it was clear that Canada was the best choice and the University of Victoria was a natural host institution and musical home."

To secure the quartet's arrival in Canada, Alex worked closely for 18 months with the Artist Protection Fund, UVic, and the non-profit organization Remember the River.

But Alex is most proud of his work at the Victoria Guitar Society.

ABOVE | The University of Victoria's Dr. Alexander Dunn and The Orontes Guitar Quartet from Syria. Photo: UVic Photo Services

“We formed the non-profit society to bring top international soloists to Victoria,” he says. “We focus on virtuosity and musicianship, regularly presenting international competition winners, established performers and emerging talent – plus featuring local players.”

Over the past several seasons, VGS has had players from Russia, the US, France, Denmark, Spain, Canada, Cuba and many other countries. Some of the recognizable musicians include Artyom Dervoed, Ana Vidovic, Paul Galbraith and Roland Dyens. The VGS outreach efforts take classical guitar into retirement homes, summer bandshell concerts, seasonal Victoria airport appearances and embraces other efforts to bring their music into public spaces.

As well, the VGS encourage youth to study music and notes the positive influence it has on peoples’ lives. The institution partners with other organizations, like the Conservatory of Music, in aiding the Summer Guitar Academy – a fun week in July where professional players and students gather to share their art, rehearse in an ensemble, play, hear concerts and learn.

Alex’s educational journey has taken him across the globe. Perhaps the turning point in his musical exploration occurred when he met Pepe Romero.

“I first heard Pepe Romero in San Francisco and told him I wanted to study with him,” he recalls. “The next thing I knew, I was in La Jolla auditioning for UCSD [University of California San Diego]. While working on a PHD, I began performing with the Romero quartet.”

Immediately after completing his doctorate, Alex was hired by the University of Victoria and revamped their guitar program. The university awarded Pepe Romero an honorary doctorate, and he started coming to BC to perform duo concerts with Alex. They performed together on several CBC national broadcasts with an orchestra.

“When I perform with Pepe, I feel a oneness that is hard to put into words.”

From these experiences, Alex developed a taste for travel and has been fortunate enough to visit many countries, including Eastern Europe, Brazil, Cuba, Mexico, Hong Kong and China, as a soloist.

“My students have gone on to great music careers, teaching and performing in Canada, the US and Europe,” he says.

And Victoria has earned the reputation as one of the best guitar programs in Canada, which was achieved through hard work and persistence. Alex’s program is recognized in the guitar world as a place where people come to train in technique, serious repertoire and to absorb knowledge from their many visitors.

Alex promises to continue to present the finest players and to encourage young talent through education, outreach and opportunities. And he’ll keep promoting the guitar as a concert medium; insist on serious repertoire from all musical periods; and work to reach out into communities to bring music to places where it hasn’t been – but should be – accessible to all. |

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THE GROWTH OF VEGAN LIVING: WHAT'S IT ALL ABOUT?

by SUSIE KEARLEY

Vegan living has seen a global surge in recent years, partly driven by environmental concerns over the greenhouse gases created by animal agriculture. There's also been a growing interest in the health benefits of a vegan diet.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Climate emergencies have been declared around the world. Canada is leading the way on green living with policies in place to use more renewable energy and cut down on fossil fuels. The plan includes carbon pollution pricing, clean electricity, transportation initiatives and a Climate Action Fund. The global climate emergency is also driving some people to try vegan living.

Cattle farming creates more greenhouse gases than any other kind of agriculture, so cutting down on beef and dairy products can help the environment and may benefit your health. If giving up dairy is a struggle, switching to goats' milk reduces the environmental impact of your food, although a plant-based diet is better still, and vegan alternatives are available.

The climate emergency means we all need to make radical changes to our lifestyles to prevent runaway global warming and mass extinction of species. One of the easiest things we can do as individuals is adopt a plant-based diet.

VEGAN ALTERNATIVES

Another factor driving the growth of vegan living is the ready availability of vegan alternatives to traditional favourites. There's now an incredible range of vegan cheeses, from vegan soft cheese to vegan cashew cheese infused with cranberry. These alternatives to dairy are mostly made from vegetable oils, flavourings and starch. I've yet to find a vegan cheese that's as tasty as a chunk of cheddar, but many rank as close seconds.

Milk alternatives include rice milk, oat milk, almond milk, pea milk and coconut milk. My favourite is soya milk, but everyone has their favourite. Vegan convenience foods are readily available and vegan cooking has become fashionable. This is good news for those who've adopted a vegan lifestyle due to concerns over animal welfare, better health or to save the planet.

ABOVE | What do vegans eat? While vegan convenience foods are more available now, health-conscious vegans focus on fruits, vegetables, whole grains, bean, lentils, legumes, nuts and seeds. *Photo: Susie Kearley*

HEALTH BENEFITS

A vegan diet can be very healthy – if you do it properly. Vegans typically eat more fresh fruit and vegetables. So, they're consuming loads of heart-healthy fibre, vitamins, minerals and antioxidants. They're also more likely to eat whole grains, beans, lentils, nuts and seeds. These nutritionally-dense foods can help to prevent cardiovascular disease, cognitive decline and even cancer.

A review of studies published in the British Medical Journal in October 2018 showed that plant-based diets may reduce your risk of type 2 diabetes, being overweight and high cholesterol. The studies showed that those people on a plant-based diet saw an improvement in their quality of life – both physically and emotionally. They were less likely to feel depressed than other groups, saw improvements in nerve pain, and the researchers thought that a plant-based diet slowed the nerve damage associated with diabetes.

ESSENTIAL NUTRIENTS

Concerns that vegans may not get the full range of essential nutrients, however, is always a worry among skeptics and people considering veganism for the first time. Vegans need to make sure they have a source of vitamin B12 in their diet, and plant foods are not reliable sources, so a good quality vitamin B12 supplement is advisable.

Some people worry about protein, but vegans who eat a good range of plant foods including beans, pulses, nuts and seeds, get plenty of protein to keep them fit and healthy.

Other nutrients often associated with animal products are omega 3, vitamin D, calcium and iron. Omega 3 is found in walnuts, linseed, chia seeds, hemp oil and, to some extent, soya products. Leafy green vegetables are good sources of calcium and iron (remember Popeye?). The best source of vitamin D is the sun – people only get a small amount from food; getting

sunlight on your skin gives you a big boost. Avoid the heat of the midday summer sun and don't get burnt.

In 2016, the Mayo Clinic looked at vegan diets and whether vegans were getting all the nutrients they need. Heather Fields, MD, says, "We found that some of these nutrients, which can have implications in neurologic disorders, anemia, bone strength and other health concerns, can be deficient in poorly planned vegan diets."

Many dedicated vegans avoid animal products in foods, clothing, and other items they buy and consume.

Why? Because some vegans eat a lot of heavily processed foods and don't get enough fruits, vegetables, and other whole foods in their diets. Vegans surviving on a diet of chips and Oreo cookies (yes, they're vegan) probably won't benefit from the vegan lifestyle. Choosing healthy foods is important to prevent nutritional deficiencies, whether you eat plant-based or not.

With regards to protein, however, which is often thought to be in short supply in plant foods, Dr Fields says, "Vegans have not been shown to be deficient in protein intake or in any specific amino acids."

The lesson is to take nutrition seriously if you go vegan: plan ahead; choose whole foods; and educate yourself about the nutritional requirements of a vegan diet.

If you're interested in going vegan, but are not 100 per cent sure, why not cut down on animal products slowly, or go vegetarian first? A plant-based diet promotes good health, puts less pressure on the environment, and does not involve animal cruelty. Choosing organic products also helps to reduce the pressures on our fragile eco-systems.

WHAT ABOUT RAW VEGAN DIETS?

Raw vegan diets have become fashionable in recent years, with some people claiming miraculous health benefits from eating 100 per cent raw food. While fascinating, it's controversial. There are clear nutritional benefits from eating some raw salad and fresh fruit because raw food has all its nutrients intact. Heating destroys some of the nutrients, so cooked foods are generally less nutritious. Raw foods also have their enzymes intact, which some people claim can help digestion and may prolong your life. However, others say cooked food is easier to digest because it's softer. Both arguments have merits. On balance, including some raw food in your diet is a good idea, but 100 per cent raw is hard to achieve, and certainly does not suit everyone. |

Susie Kearley is a freelance writer and journalist from Buckinghamshire, UK. www.susiekearley.co.uk

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DEFINITELY NOT KARATE KID

by MAY Q. WONG

We were all on our knees, my husband, Michael, facing one great-niece, I another. As one, we lowered our heads towards the ground; a solemn bow of greeting. Michael and I undid the knots of our belts, carefully folded the fabric, placed them on the ground, and pushed them toward the girls, bowing again. With a third bow, each of the girls presented us with a respective new belt, which we proudly tied on.

Our Sensei, also on his knees, supervised our first-degree black belt ceremony at the dojo where all four of us had been training for the past four years. If anyone had told me I would be getting a black belt in kenpo karate at any time in my life, I would have dismissed the suggestion immediately. Not for a moment, until I was 59 years old, did I ever wonder about, let alone want to spend up to 12 hours a week, learning how to punch, kick, strike, and intentionally hurt another person.

So why did I? Well, it started with this conversation, when Michael said: “I just met a really nice guy who owns a karate dojo.” Michael has a black belt in judo from his twenties and was a naval officer, so he is well-trained in self-defence, and has always been my “protector.”

We travel widely, but we are not always together. I

enjoy my independence and, to maintain that solitude, I needed to be more vigilant and learn how to react appropriately to danger. We have encountered personal threats, such as potential pickpockets in St. Mark’s Square in Venice. Over the years, he had mentioned wanting to get back into martial arts training to renew his skills.

“Sounds like a good idea,” I said.

“I thought you and I could do this together.” After seeing the look of horror on my face, he said, “It’ll be fun!”

“No, martial arts are definitely not for me; I don’t like the idea of hitting anyone,” I said. “I have never even made a fist!”

ABOVE | The author, her husband and their great-nieces recently performing their black belt ceremony. Photo: M. Collins

Imagine two rabbits sitting on their hind legs, waving their front paws (like the dog-paddle swim stroke) at one another – this is how my childhood friend and I would “fight,” faces averted, of course.

“I heard the group class is a great workout, and we are looking to add more aerobics to our routine....” We have both kept active throughout our lives, he with golf, me with group classes at the recreation centre, and we walked/jogged together. But the jogging was affecting my knees and hips – and not in a good way.

I was hooked after the first group class. It was a great workout, even though I was not familiar with many of the moves. And yes, the class did involve punching and kicking but because the targets were handheld pads, it all seemed less “violent.” By the end of the hour, I was breathing hard and glad to have worn a headband (which did not quite stop the sweat from dripping into my eyes.) The men and women were welcoming and not as aggressive as I had imagined. Even the brawny guys were friendly and helpful. There was a mix of ages, although we were definitely amongst the most chronologically advanced! And perhaps more important to me, the gym was clean; it didn’t smell sweaty (other gyms we visited had triggered my gag reflex).

The next thing I knew, I had joined Michael in taking private lessons, three times a week, to learn the karate moves and work our way up the belts. These lessons took an hour, after which we would join in the group workout class. At home, we spent about an hour every day, practicing the moves we had learned up to that point.

Starting karate at an older age meant we had some limitations. I had some difficulty matching esoteric names to the moves (e.g. Opening the Fan or Legions of Ming). Our balance wasn’t as good; our knees didn’t bend as deeply; our arms and shoulders didn’t reach as high; we were not as strong as in our younger years; and occasionally I got woozy. But our

instructors took it all into consideration during our training, and practice of proper techniques helps to “make perfect.”

We have built strength, stamina and speed. My roundhouse kick has improved but I admit my flying back-kick needs much more practice. So, even when we are on vacation, we bring our kenpo books and drill; it is a good way to pass the time between flights or waiting for appointments.

So, what are the basic requirements for a first-degree black belt? We memorized the names and performed 250 moves/sequences (as well as their variations and mirror images), divided into nine belt levels. Through repetition, we have built muscle-memory, which helps the body react automatically to dangerous situations.

Kenpo is a self-defence practice, which means that unless someone attacks us, we maintain self-control. There is no question the moves can be violent, but they can also be adjusted to fit the situation. For example, diverting a drunken colleague from an unwanted hug may not require breaking an arm, but that and more might be needed to stop a stranger grabbing you on the street.

The benefits for me have included improved memory, stamina, strength, a shared activity with my husband and new friendships. I have reshaped and resized my body, and I am proud to show off my sculpted arms, shoulders and back! As I mentioned, our teen-aged great-nieces have been practicing as well, and we have seen the boost in their confidence. The benefits to our intergenerational relationship have been priceless (but that is another story).

An Interview with Sensei David Jaenen, 4th Degree Black Belt, Kenpo Karate, Victoria Professional Self Defence

Q: What are some benefits of practicing Kenpo karate?

Research has shown that physical exercise helps individuals fight depression,

decrease stress, increase physical and mental resilience, and thus improves mood.

Moving builds and/or maintains muscle mass, helps seniors retain balance and stability, prevents falls, and enables them to keep living independently.

Moving strengthens the heart and keeps blood circulating efficiently.

Learning the moves helps the brain maintain cognitive function.

Kenpo karate builds self-reliance and might even save your life.

Q: What adjustments do you make for an older person learning karate?

To accommodate for diminished range of motion, strength, speed and/or stability, some moves might be modified; we emphasize learning proper technique.

While any belt system requires a test of all the moves, it is more about understanding the move than being able to demonstrate the whole sequence. Students must describe the attack, the physical components of the defence, and walk through the move to pass the test.

Q: Who participates in group classes?

Our group classes are co-ed (60 per cent female), with ages ranging from teens upwards. New students are guided by experienced individuals to ensure a safe workout at their own pace.

Q: Do you offer any other classes?

We offer private lessons for anyone going through the belt system, self-defence seminars for women and/or schools, and are creating a seniors-only program.

Q: What do you, as a Sensei, gain from teaching?

I am passionate about self-defence and love teaching it. To see the amazement on a student’s face when they complete a move effortlessly and confidently is so gratifying.

It has been said: “I would rather be a warrior in a garden than a gardener in a war.” Staying physically and mentally active as we age is important, and the improved quality of life is a gift. |



by BARBARA RISTO

SAIL THE SEINE RIVER WITH *INSPIRED* MAGAZINE PUBLISHER

When I heard Collette was adding this tour to their roster, I couldn't imagine a more idyllic way to enjoy the pastoral countryside of France's Normandy region and celebrate my 60th birthday than aboard the MS *Amadeus Diamond* on "La Belle Seine River Cruise."

In June of 2020, I will set sail from Paris to explore the region many of Europe's most influential painters called home. I'm inviting you to join me on this epic 9-day trip.

We'll unpack and relax aboard the MS *Amadeus Diamond*, with a Collette tour guide by our side each time we step ashore, ensuring we get the most out of every moment.

Our first stop will be Auvers-sur Oise, home to the 19th-century painters Cézanne, Daubigny, Pissaro and Van Gogh. We will trace the footsteps of Van Gogh through the countryside that inspired his last masterpiece "Wheatfield with Crows," and visit the room he rented at the Auberge Ravoux.

Next stop, Rouen, the historical capital of Normandy. Friendly and filled with architectural treats. Here we'll visit the Place du Vieux Marché, where Joan of Ark was burned at the stake in the 15th century.

Then on to the coast where the harbour city of Le Havre guards the mouth of the Seine along the English Channel. We'll stroll the charming fishing village of Étretat, made famous by the various artists who painted its coasts and cliffs.

We'll visit the old cobbled port of Honfleur for a taste of the rich naval and shipping history of northern France and shop at the Old Salt Stores!

Next, we'll turn our attention to the D-Day beaches of Normandy, paying tribute to one of our darkest but most courageous moments in history.

Our final stop along the Seine will take us into the beautiful French countryside to Château Gaillard, constructed by Richard the Lionheart. We will stroll the tranquil gardens of Giverny featuring weeping willows, wisteria and rhodos – where Monet worked feverishly to immortalize his beloved garden on canvas, including his enchanting "Water Lilies" and other masterpieces devoted to the play of light and colour.



This truly is a memorable trip for anyone who appreciates the artistic contributions of the Impressionist painters.

Our journey ends as it began, in Paris. The final morning of our tour will take us by coach past Paris' most famous sites including the Eiffel Tower, Notre Dame Cathedral, the Louvre, the Champs Elysées and the Jardin des Tuileries.

In the afternoon, you can visit the largest palace in Europe, the magnificent Palace of Versailles, or take a guided walking tour of the Montmartre district whose quaint winding streets are filled with artists and their works. You can't go wrong with either choice.

If you wish to prolong your stay in Paris, or add a couple days in London, our specially selected agent, Teresa Marshall of Pitmar Tours, will be happy to arrange it.

For my part, I'm counting the days until departure. June is sure to be perfect weather for the excursion of a lifetime. I hope you'll join me! |

Departure: June 23, 2020

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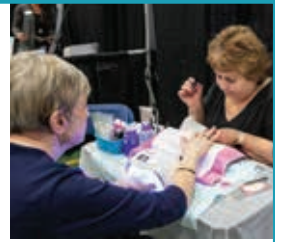
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FOREVER FIT

by EVE LEES



QUALITY SLEEP FOR GOOD HEALTH

If you regularly lose sleep or have poor sleeping habits, you can increase your risk for poor health.

Ongoing loss of sleep is linked to cardiovascular disease, high blood pressure, diabetes, depression and obesity. It's also linked to memory problems, forgetfulness, and more falls or accidents, largely due to the low energy levels and inability to focus or concentrate that is caused by sleep loss.

So far, research finds most people need about seven to nine hours of sleep every night.

Here are tips to achieve quality sleep:

Establish a pattern of going to bed and waking at the same time every day (yes, even on non-workdays).

Get into the habit of relaxing and winding down before bedtime. Try meditating, doing a gentle stretching routine, taking a warm bath or shower or drinking herbal teas that promote relaxation (chamomile, passionflower, or lemon balm are some examples).

Avoid having your cell phone, computer, tablet or a television in your bedroom. While some people find they can fall asleep quickly watching television, the quality of sleep is highly debatable. Blue light emitted from tablets, cell phones and even the television can affect your body's ability to have a deep, uninterrupted sleep as some of us are more sensitive to the light from electronic devices (children especially).

Experiment with avoiding electronic devices 30 minutes before bedtime, if you have trouble sleeping. In addition, overwhelming the mind with information, particularly stressful information on the late-night news, may also interfere with falling and staying asleep.

Caffeine before bed may or may not affect sleep quality. You'll have to decide for yourself how caffeine affects you. However, alcohol consumed too close to bedtime has shown consistent negative effects on the majority. Studies show alcohol before bed may help you fall asleep but, unfortunately, it may not be quality sleep. Instead, you could experience frequent awakenings, less restful sleep, headaches, night sweats and even nightmares. Balance each alcoholic drink you have with a glass of water to help dilute the alcohol's side effects.

A better idea is to try to avoid alcohol four to six hours before bedtime, especially on those nights when you are really in need of a deep, restful sleep.

Large meals, especially those higher in fat and protein, take longer and are more work for the body to digest, therefore large meals may affect sleep. However, if you are hungry, you won't be able to fall asleep. Therefore, opt for smaller meals of mostly vegetables, which are easier to digest. There is no truth to the belief that any food eaten before bedtime becomes body fat. It really depends on who you are: we are all individual and too many other factors are involved.

Generally, if you overeat the amount of food you need daily, no matter what time of day it is, you will gain weight. But the veggies you eat before your head hits the pillow won't go to your hips if your body didn't meet its caloric needs throughout the day.

Other more long-term habits to add to your lifestyle are getting regular, moderate exercise, eating a healthy diet and

learning stress control techniques (like meditation). Experiment with these or the other suggestions in this article, and hopefully your sleep quality will improve. |

Eve Lees has been active in the health & fitness industry since 1979. Currently, she is a Freelance Health Writer for several publications and speaks to business and private groups on various health topics. www.artnews-healthnews.com

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by VERENA FOXF



ANN MUNRO is completing her 28th year as a Bard on the Beach volunteer. She's aiming to get to 30 years in support of the internationally recognized organization she and husband, Patrick Munro, a former CBC radio host, first became aware of when Patrick interviewed Christopher Gaze, founder of the Bard festival, in 1989.

Ann says she loves live theatre, and that's why she has committed so much time to support it. While working full time, first as a critical care nurse and then as a seniors' residential care

manager until four years ago, Ann says she still managed to average 100 volunteer hours/season at Bard. She has taken on every possible role while she's watched the festival grow and change over time.

"I've always believed in giving back to my communities," says the mother of two, who also handmade 80,000 pink ribbons for an early Run for the Cure.

Now a Pender Harbour resident, the former Vancouverite also sits on the Reading Centre Board and serves as Hospitality Chair for the Chamber Festival in her community. "I couldn't imagine not doing all this," says Ann. "It keeps you young to keep your mind and body active."

MICHAEL SHAMAN, originally from Winnipeg, and now based in Nanoose Bay, Vancouver Island, says he's been a lifetime rail transport guy. Fifty years ago, he worked his way from apprentice technician to an executive position with CN Rail and then went on to be COO with Bombardier Systems Division, designing and selling engineering services and maintenance contracts to UK's Virgin Trains and the US and Europe's ADtranz.

After working and living around the globe, he was ready to retire a few years ago to pursue leisure activities that include photography, gardening, cycling, kayaking and hanging out with his wife of 51 years, Gloria, and their grown children.

But, "I got itchy again," admits the grandfather of one. So, when he was invited to apply his systems skills to the Canada Line for their future planning, he went back to work part-time.

"I love the challenge," says Michael. "I like to transfer my



knowledge and my years of experience to new projects. The mind is like a muscle that needs to be used."

Even though he is still being headhunted for new projects worldwide, Michael has now found balance in his life – and hopes to keep it. "I like to have no plan when I get up in the morning," he says, "but I'm not ready to shut down yet." |

Verena Foxx is a Vancouver writer/educator. If you have a story to share, contact her at: verena.foxx@gmail.com



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IF ROMEO AND JULIET TRAVELLED ITALY TODAY

by JAMES ELLSWORTH

We were milling with other tourists in the shaded cul-de-sac under the putative Juliet's Balcony in Verona, replete with love locks, kissing couples, graffiti hearts pierced with Eros' arrows, pledges of undying love, and twee trinkets as souvenirs. It was hot, humid and pressing. Even a little depressing.

"Do you think the star-crossed lovers would appreciate this throng or laugh at it?" I whispered into the ear of my own beloved.

"Mmm, interesting thought. Let's get ourselves to a café, if not a nunnery, and think upon it," she replied with a smile worthy of Mona Lisa, if not Ophelia.

Sipping a cappuccino, far from the madding crowd, I started in with a bit of counterfactual history. "What if Romeo and Juliet, who were not real anyway ...what if they awoke today from their self-induced sleeps, like modern Rip Van Winkles? How different would Verona and environs appear to them, do you think?"

"Well, apart from the obvious of clothing and technology you mean?" My wife looked at me seriously over her amber-coloured aperitivo and said, "Couldn't you picture Olivia Hussey or Claire Danes perched on that balcony? I loved those film versions of *Romeo and Juliet*."

"I did too, but romance aside, their lives were tragic, hoisted on the petards of violent feuds, prejudice and discrimination, not to mention gender inequality. Maybe the heat has addled me, but I can't help wondering if essentially the world would be that different for them."

Perhaps to grant my mood some credence, she negoti-

ated, "Well, why don't we filter our holiday through that lens? A bit of Romeo and Juliet reflection to go along with pre-dinner drinks."

We had chosen to holiday in northern Italy: first a rendezvous with British friends in Verona; then on our own, cycling in the Adige River valley; followed by a road trip along the Po River.

Verona is a lovely city, small as cities go, a pretty riverscape with numerous bridges, medieval towers and peeling bells, Roman antiquities and shaded cobbled streets that open to sunlit piazzas and faded wall murals. Our British friends had met us there, after a two-year hiatus, so we walked and chatted incessantly. At dinner, I tabled my hypothesis of *plus ça change, plus la même chose* [what goes around comes around].

My friend remonstrated. "You know Romeo and Juliet were fictitious, and what you're observing about progress is just human nature at work. I know it's one of the most popular and most produced of Shakespeare's plays, but it's romance, not fact."

ABOVE | Verona piazza.

TOC PAGE | Throng of visitors flock to "Juliet's balcony" in Verona each year for inspiration in their own love lives. *Photos: James Ellsworth*

“No wait. It’s the symbolism and timelessness of it. There isn’t a lot of love in the world, you have to admit, and that young couple would see far worse violence today, don’t you think? What’s changed in the world? The Capulets and Montagues were a small spat compared to other feuds that still continue. Look how your Brexit vote split the country, not just towns or families. Would you exile anyone to achieve peace, as the Prince of Verona did?”

Sensing I had thrown the cat among the pigeons, my wife put her hand on my arm and whispered, “Not politics or religion, please. And yes, you may refill our glasses.”

My friend raised a conciliatory glass, “To us.” I muttered sotto voce, “To Romeo and Juliet’s woe everywhere.”

We sheathed the topic until we were travelling alone. The Adige River half encircles Verona and we meant to follow it northward by train and then cycle down the upper reaches of its tributary from the Alps, the Isarco, or Eisack in German. Our stop was not far from the Austrian border, and place names were in two languages. We got off at Bressanone, puzzled by the name Brixen at the station. “Do you think we got off at a suburb?” I asked, only to be told by the taxi driver that Brixen is the German name.

Our 17th century hotel sat along the riverbank, flower boxes adorned and rushing stream gurgling. It was a sensory pleasure. The hotel arranged a taxi to get our bikes.

“A Brunico, per favore,” I confidently ordered, only to be corrected. “You mean Bruneck.”

“Where are you going after here?” the concierge asked.

“Bolzano.”

“You mean Bozen.” And so it went in the isolated river valleys of the Dolomites.

A habit of ours is to read literature connected to the area we are visiting. We do our prior research but were unprepared for the fractious focus that our Romeo and Juliet lens would put on this holiday. Shakespeare was part of that, as well as Hemingway’s *A Farewell To Arms*, set in WWI and the Italian/Austrian front. Throw in the WWII atrocities and there was ample proof of nations set against each other, let alone “two households, both alike in dignity.” One source, in particular, clarified so much (*Eva Sleeps* by Francesca Milandri, a historical fiction/family saga covering 75 years from 1920).

We had ventured into the two solitudes of Alto Adige (Italian)/Südtirol (German). The region was ceded to Italy as part of the WWI settlement and underwent Italianization as pre- and post-WWII political strategies. The language and cultural tensions that ensued reminded us of separatist movements in our time. It explained why we didn’t see Italian flags, only the Südtirol white and red pennant more akin to the Austrian flag, until we reached the city of Trento.

Trento, the city of compromise and reconciliation, where the Catholic Church held three sessions over 20 years in the 16th century to deal with its own Reformation challenges. Trento was our last cycling destination; our hotel near the Piazza del Duomo, where we stopped to have a cappuccino and prosecco. We scanned the elegant ambler, arm-in-arm managing cobblestones in their high heels as if on a catwalk.

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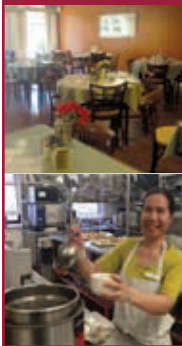


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My wife said, "I think Romeo and Juliet would have enjoyed the cycling, the prosperity of their country, hiking the mountains. It would have been a marvel to them, and romantic, don't you think?"

I replied, "And they probably would have settled right here. Look at the peace here." Then I espied a huge banner above us commemorating Cesare Battisti, an irredentist patriot killed in 1916. "Look, we're outside the house of a man executed by the Austrians for wanting Italian territory returned. Egad."

The next day, we were confronted with more paradoxes and hypocrisies that our tragic couple would have recognized. While walking to the Castello del Buonoconsiglio, site of the Council of Trent, we passed a giant wall etching of a Fascisti centurion with rifle facing a park statue dedicated to the post-war prime minister, the rebuilder De Gaspari who led eight coalition governments, no mean feat of tact and tolerance. There was also some wall graffiti, saying "Leave Italy, Leave Rome." And the castle itself was the site of a lengthy Renaissance conflict. Sure, there were beautiful wall paintings in the castello's conciliatory meeting rooms, but they contrasted the small unadorned basement cell of Battisti, not unlike those of Irish "martyrs" of the Easter Uprising.

And later we happened upon a cemetery by the River Adige, a quiet and cool refuge we had sought until we saw a stark statue of father, mother and child atop barbed wire, commemorating Alto Adige feuding from the 1930s to 1960s. It was difficult to stave off a feeling of misanthropy.

Would the Po Valley, specifically Mantua, the city of Romeo's exile, offer some respite? It was a lovely city bound by two lakes and shady nooks, which offered a break from the shimmering heat. Vergil, The Roman epic poet of the Aeneid, of the doomed love of Aeneas and Dido, was born here; Verdi's Rigoletto, the opera of revenge and lost love was set here; and Romeo heard of Juliet's "death" here.

We took advantage of a gallery display about Fate and Destiny in the ducal palace, cool and contemplative. Two paintings spoke to our musings on the tragic couple: one of two elderly spouses napping but having the same dream of their young love on a balcony (Morbelli, 1905); and a mother and child waiting on a hard bench in a spare room for their returning "hero" who is actually laying in a coffin (Bresciani, 1920). Alas!

Returning cross-country to our farm holiday digs, we sipped some local wine poolside under the pergola. I felt the need for a positive twist.

My wife said, "You know Romeo and Juliet would still see a lot of suffering today, but it shouldn't blight us to the better angels of our nature."

"Agreed. Maybe Romeo and Juliet were like an eclipse on this holiday and we're seeing the light again. Certainly, vino is preferable to belladonna. Here's to appreciating the beauty and goodness life has to offer but remembering also those who suffer. Such is fato e destino. And let's pledge to not thwart love."

We clinked a salute to Romeo and Juliet's plight. |

For IF YOU GO information, visit www.seniorlivingmag.com/articles/romeo-and-juliets-italy

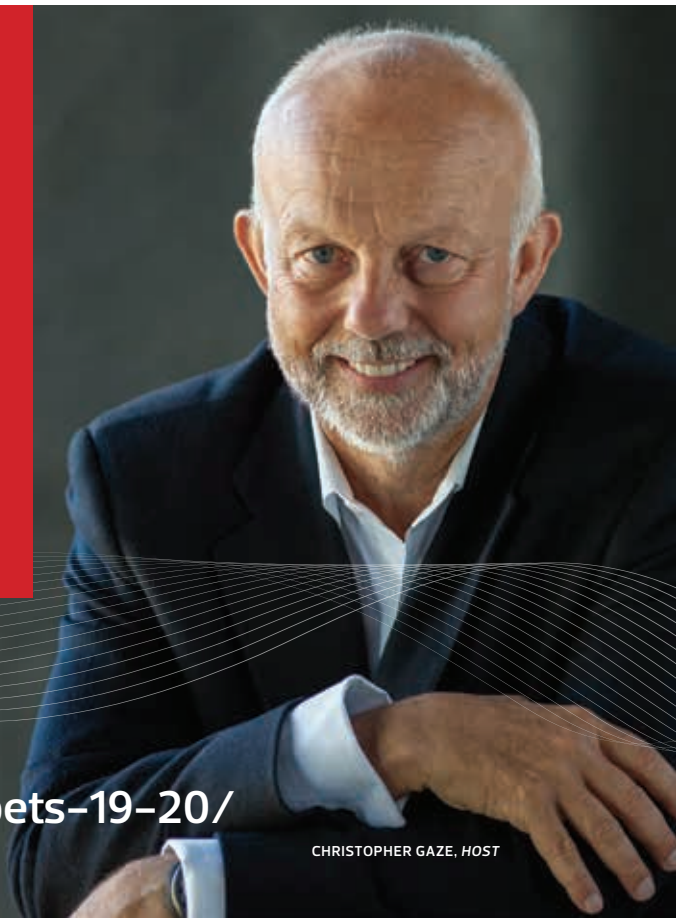
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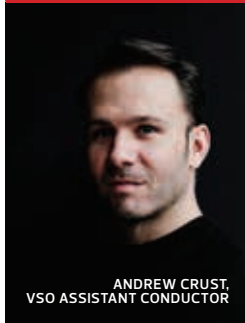
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Setting Boundaries Takes Practice

By Wendy Johnstone

“Sure, Mom, I’ll help.” As soon as she spoke the words, Mary thought, “I do not have the time or energy for this! Why did I agree to help?”

Sometimes we say “yes” automatically because we are people-pleasers. We could be feeling guilty or emotionally tied to a situation and, before we even think about the effort involved, we slip out a “yes” response. Being mindlessly agreeable can become a habit and develop into a standard we struggle to maintain.

Setting boundaries and being a resilient caregiver is about recognizing the importance of our own lives, family and work. It is striving towards caregiving within those limits. It doesn’t mean we aren’t dedicated to caring. Quite the opposite. Setting boundaries allows caregivers to continue caring with compassion and devotion. It’s a sign of self-respect: to not feel lost or swallowed up by the caregiving role. Healthy boundaries let caregivers maintain an emotional connection to the person they are caring for without the negative results of feeling they “need” to rescue, enable, fix or control.

TIPS FOR SETTING BOUNDARIES

- What keeps you coming back for more? It takes two to do the shaky boundary-tango! Are you feeling guilty because you think you aren’t doing enough? Is the person you are caring for pushing your buttons? Maybe it’s a desire to please? Do you feel you want to rescue them? Once you figure out the underlying reason, it can be easier to set boundaries.
- Know your limits. You can’t set healthy boundaries if you’re unsure of where you stand. Consider what you can tolerate and accept physically, emotionally and mentally. Identify what makes you feel uncomfortable or stressed. Feeling discomfort and resentment are warning signs we are out of sync with our boundaries. If you feel you are being taken advantage of or not being appreciated, it may manifest in pushing yourself too hard (due to guilt, wanting to please or rescue). Or the person we are caring for is imposing their expectations, views or values on us.



- When someone acts in a way that results in feelings of discomfort, it is a sign they may be crossing a boundary. Ideas for managing your role as a caregiver can start with determining what parts of caregiving you – and only you – can fulfill. Ask yourself if someone else can meet the care recipient’s needs. Although it can be uncomfortable, sit down with the person you are caring for and discuss what you can and can’t (or won’t) do. Being clear on your boundaries is beneficial to both you and your loved one.
- Give yourself permission to find small ways to take care of yourself. Setting boundaries is usually in direct conflict with feelings of guilt, fear or self-doubt. Caregivers can often worry about the other person’s response when a boundary is set and adhered to. Caregivers also can feel they “should” be able to cope with a situation even though they feel their boundaries are being violated.
- Find support. Having a group of peers to talk to or a close and trusted confidante makes it easier to set boundaries and remain accountable. It takes courage and practice to establish healthy boundaries and stay the course. |

Wendy Johnstone is a Gerontologist and a consultant with Family Caregivers of British Columbia in Victoria, BC.



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CONSCIOUS CONNECTIONS

For me, September has always felt as much of a new beginning as January. To that end, I would like to share some ideas for a new beginning by unlocking the amazing power you carry within you. None of these ideas are grandiose, none are hugely noticeable – except to you. And though they may appear small or insignificant, they are not! There is no small or insignificant act of service.

Begin and end your day thinking about doing or accepting an act of kindness. By doing so, you acknowledge the power you have to make a difference in your life and the lives of others.

Some of these may not seem like power tools. But they are.

by PAT NICHOL



COURAGEOUS & OUTRAGEOUS

Smile. Smile at those you know, and then smile at strangers. I make it my purpose each day to make someone else smile. Then I go one step further and try to consciously notice them. I often stop people I pass and compliment them on their outfit, a hat, a hairstyle. It is wonderful to see them smile and then walk away still smiling.

Listen. One of the greatest gifts we can give another is to simply listen. Listen without interruption. Listen not only with your ears, but also with your eyes and your heart.

Share. A great way to connect with each other is around a meal table. Why not invite several friends that may not know each other to a potluck? Ask them to bring a dish to share food and ideas. It is amazing what can happen. I often do this with three or four people I know, and the energy and power that swirls around the room is delightful! We learn, we laugh, and sometimes, we cry. I find this particularly uplifting when I am feeling a little down or lonely. Another idea along this line is to prepare a meal for a friend and deliver it.

Be open. Let go of the need to judge others harshly. Keep an open mind. Be aware of what is going on around you. Make it a goal each day to help someone else "have a good day."

I look forward to seeing you at *INSPIRED's* 55+ Lifestyle Show in Nanaimo on September 14th. It is going to be such fun! Be sure to come by to say hi and share a hug. |

Pat Nichol is a speaker and published author. Reach her by email at mpatnichol@gmail.com

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