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55+ lifestyle magazine

JANUARY 2020

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MOCHRIE

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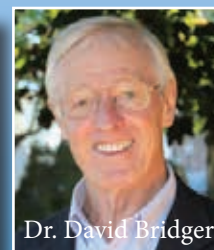
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Cover COLIN MOCHRIE
The *Whose Line is it Anyway?* star
is a busy guy with television,
multiple touring gigs, film cameos
and more!
Photo by Helen Tansey



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resources

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Colin Mochrie
with his wife,
Canadian actor
Deb McGrath.
Photos: Helen Tansey

COLIN MOCHRIE: WE DO GOOFY

by JOHN THOMSON

Goofy is not a derogatory term in the Mochrie household. In fact, it's revered. Colin and his wife, actor Deb McGrath, are true, blue, certified goofballs. They both honed their craft at Second City, perfected their union, (both professionally and personally when they married in 1989) and now hit the road about 20 times a year, as Colin and Deb's *One Couple Show* unleashing their improv skills on unsuspecting yet appreciative audiences.

"We do improv, we talk about our life together, we bring people up on stage and do scenes based upon what they tell us. It's nice. We get a chance to actually work together," says Colin, best known for his role in the TV program *Whose Line is it Anyway?*

Whose Line is classic improvisation. It asks the performer, armed only with their wits, to create a story from words or ideas supplied by the audience, to create something out of nothing. The show is unrehearsed and comics like Colin have to think on their feet.

"Unlike stand-up, you're not by yourself, you're working with people," he says. "With improv, the audience is

sitting back saying, 'all right, you think you're funny? Show us.' They know we have nothing, so they have a vested interest in us doing well because we're using what they gave us."

Whose Line began as a radio show in the UK, moved over to television in 1989, and is still running today. It takes mere weeks to record an entire season, so, for the past 17 years, Colin has been augmenting his TV work with a touring stage show with *Whose Line* regular Brad Sherwood. This year's production, *Scared Scriptless*, ends its 18 US city run in May.

And new this year, a show called *Hyprov*, is the unlikely combination of improv and hypnotism starring Colin and master hypnotist Asad Mecci.

"Asad brings 20 people up, puts them under, picks the five best and then we become an instant improv troupe and do an improv set. It's terrifying," says Colin. "I have no idea where these guys are going. I'm improvising but I'm also a sheep herder."

He's a busy guy with *Whose Line*, two concurrent road shows, and the *One Couple Show* with Deb. And let's not

Snapshot

with Colin Mochrie

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

"I would say see more. I wish I had travelled more, met more people and worked on me a little bit, on who I am. I think that would have helped me."

Who or what has influenced you the most and why?

"Probably the biggest influence for me was Bob Hope. He did everything. He started out in vaudeville, did radio, did movies, did television. He had a work ethic, and I think that inspired me."

What are you most grateful for?

"I'm grateful for my family. Deb has been tremendously supportive. I certainly married above my station. I'm grateful for Kinley. She's taught me a lot about being a father and a person. I'm so grateful they are both wonderfully loving people."

What does success mean to you?

"Success brought me a confidence that I can do more than I thought I could. I've had the opportunity to do so much more because of that success. I've found the more success you get, the more confidence you get in pushing that success and seeing what else you can do." |



forget his book, available from his website or from Amazon, *Not Quite the Classics*. Colin takes the opening and closing lines of 12 familiar novels and makes up the rest. *A Tale of Two*

Cities, for instance, starts with the familiar phrase "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times. It was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity..." To which Colin has added "To be more specific, it was Tuesday." Brilliant.

"I'm glad I did it to say that I did it," he says of his publishing career, but his heart is in performance. Improv, he laughs, is the easiest job he's ever had.

"It's pretty hard to beat. Essentially you just show up, make the audience do most of the work and feed off that."

It's even easier doing TV.

"It's nice and cheap and fast. You meet your friends, you goof around and then go for a beer after and that's it."

It's also the only job he's ever had.

"From the time I did *TheatreSports* to the time *Whose Line* happened, I never really had a real job. My thing has always been stamina. I sort of hang in there until everyone else quits or dies. I have nothing else to fall back on. I have no other skills. So, if [improv] didn't work out, I had no idea about what I would do."

Fortunately, things worked out fine.

Born in Scotland, Colin emigrated to Canada with his parents while still a child. The family settled in Montreal and then Vancouver. He says he had a happy childhood but was painfully shy, which makes his career path a curious one.

"It all started in high school. I tried out for the school play. I got it. I got my first laughs and that was pretty much it. I was in sciences, at that point, and I switched to theatre. I went to theatre school and saw a demonstration of improv and thought, 'Oh, this looks like fun.'"

After theatre school, he spent five years at TheatreSports in Vancouver.

Things were so tight, the troupe went into McDonald's to grab an audience – "Yeah, it's true. We had to get an audience 'cause it's really hard to improvise with nobody," he deadpans – and then to Toronto and Second City. That's where he met Deborah.

"She hired me for Second City," he says. A performer herself, Deb McGrath was directing a touring production of *The Best of Second City*. Colin auditioned.

"He was a quiet killer," says Deb. "He would stand in the back and BAM he'd give you the line. He'd listen, listen and then BAM he'd give you the kicker to the scene. He barely raised an eyebrow, and yet you couldn't take your eyes off him. He was gentle. He was gracious. He was exactly what you wanted in a company."

They married a year-and-a-half later.

"I wasn't interested in him at all at the beginning, except as a performer," admits Deb, "but it grew. I started to see other things in him. I liked his intellect; he was a nice person and he was as cute as a button."

Cute as a button but underemployed. Colin was auditioning for the UK version of *Whose Line* still trying to get established. Deb's career was flourishing.

"We agreed, right at the beginning, we would go with whoever's career was king," says Deb "and, at the beginning, I thought I'd be carrying him."

Their roles flipped when Colin joined the UK cast of *Whose Line*, residing in London for six weeks at a time. Deb became a mom.

"When our daughter was born, my focus shifted. I found something I liked better," she says.

And when Drew Carey imported the format to America in 1998, Colin came along with it, winning viewers over with his quick, dry wit, self-deprecation and gentle demeanour.

"I think I have the guy next door look, the friendly neighbour look," says Colin. "The audience wants me to do well, so when I can get a sarcastic jab out, they feel, 'Oh, the little guy did it.'"

The little guy did indeed do well, motivated by persistence and, as Colin puts it, revenge.

“Revenge on the people who said you’re not going to make it; it’s not going to work for you. That kind of spurs you on hoping that ‘Okay, I’m going to show you.’ It took 40 years, but I got there,” he laughs.

Fame brought him commercials, short films and TV cameos, but Colin says his public persona belies the real Colin Mochrie.

“If someone came over to the house, they would never know what I did for a living,” he says. “Deb calls that person on *Whose Line* ‘The Other’ ’cause it’s so different from me. I’m still shy, and *Whose Line* has drawn me out of my shell, but I tend to sit back and observe more. I think I disappoint a lot of people when they meet me,” he continues. “They expect me to do a dinosaur walk or something. That’s not who I am. I always say acting is my job, it’s not my lifestyle.”

The couple’s Toronto lifestyle is decidedly low key. Colin is an excellent cook, a skill he developed years ago when he and Deb were in Los Angeles. Deb was working full-time on a project she and her writing partner had prepared for American television. Colin didn’t have a work visa. So, the stuck-at-home Canadian turned to the culinary arts.



“I was working 10-, 12-hour days and I was almost eight months pregnant,” says Deb. “At that point, I did all the cooking and when he saw how tired I was, he said what’s the deal with cooking?”

“So, I said, this cooking thing, do you just look at the recipes and do it?” Colin adds.

“And I, heart pounding and eyes aflutter, said it’s both. As soon as he started doing it, he was sending me off to work with packed lunches and dinner was on the table. It has never waned. He loves it. It’s his happy place.”

“She hated it and I found I enjoyed it. It’s something I love doing,” he confirms.

More recently, Colin and Deb have incorporated the principles of their profession into their personal lives.

“One of the main rules of improv is to say ‘yes,’ where you accept people’s ideas and build on it. Deb and I had a discussion. Why don’t we do that more in our own life? Some things we may not feel comfortable with, so we tried saying ‘yes’ to things that were outside our comfort zone and, so far, everything has been amazing.”

Case in point, visiting the Democratic Republic of the Congo, a volatile part of the world, to film World Vision commercials. Or when Deb took a course to overcome her fear of flying.

Family is also important. And here, the jokester turns serious. When their daughter, Kinley, started questioning her birth gender, they jumped in immediately to support her choice and her decision. Kinley is presently transitioning, and Colin has taken a pro-active stance, meeting the public and spreading the word.

“I was never in any real danger when I was shy,” he says. “It’s different for people who are transitioning. There’s a hatred out there. There’s a distrust and a lot of misinformation, so I’m just trying to give people more information about it. I’m learning so much about the community and about people. And watching her deal with grace and a lot of tolerance. I go man, it’s 2019. There are so many other things we should be worrying about. People’s sexuality or gender is not one of them.”

Societal norms are rapidly changing and it’s happening in entertainment, too. Colin talks about new ideas in improv, about a show he saw at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival in which the performer pretends she’s going on a date with a young man she has pulled from the audience. And, of course, there’s his own foray into combining improvisation with hypnotism, *Hyprov*. As for the future, he says there will always be a place for goofy.

“As you get older, you think how much longer can this last and how acceptable will it be to see a 65-year-old jumping around as if he’s a chicken? *Hyprov* came out of nowhere, so I’m hoping some other new and challenging thing will come up for me.”

“I think it’ll always be improv. I’m confident in what I can do. I’ve been doing it for almost 40 years and it’s more fun now than ever. It’s the most comfortable I am at life, going out on stage in front of a paying audience with nothing.” |



“HELMS ALEE”: LEARNING TO SAIL AT 62

by PAMELA BAKER

It's my turn at bow watch. I look to the sides, then straight ahead as the ship motors through water smooth as glass. The morning mist still hangs on the deeply forested islands surrounding us and the rising sun shimmers on the water like a million sparkling diamonds. A cool breeze blows gently through my hair, and I breathe deeply, filling my lungs with the clean air of the Salish Sea. Content, I'm mesmerized by the beauty of the San Juan Islands. There's something peaceful about being here on this classic schooner in a part of the country that I've longed to visit.

But that calm is quickly shattered when the First Mate barks out “Sailing stations, all hands on deck!” It's time to raise the mainsail. Everyone scrambles to their assigned stations on deck, working as a team to sail this 218-tonne boat.

I'm here aboard the *Schooner Zodiac*, a historic tall ship that sails out of Bellingham, Washington. She's a beautifully restored windjammer with the classic grandeur of a 1920s billionaire's yacht. With room for just 49 passengers, we're headed to the San Juan Islands for three nights and four days.

Assigned “sailing stations” and guided by the Captain, the First Mate and a team of experienced volunteer sailors, passengers are encouraged to take an active part in sailing.

And that is why I'm here. A passenger on many sailing trips but never a sailor, I've always wanted to learn how to sail.

Weighing 272 kg, the mainsail is 372 square metres of canvas. The deck spans a length of 39 metres. Perhaps I should have picked a smaller boat for my first lesson in sailing. But I'm fit, I'm strong and I'm learning to sail at 62.

On this journey, passengers rotate through a two-hour watch shift by taking turns attending four different half-hour stations for running a tall ship: (1) manning the helm, (2) reading charts to plot the ship's course, (3) keeping watch on deck at the bow, and (4) messengering at the stern by the wheel. At all stations, participating passengers are carefully guided by an experienced crew member.

ABOVE | Everyone works together to bring about the sail.

RIGHT | (Top) Volunteer sailor, Dennis, instructing the author at the helm. (Middle) Relaxing in the evening. (Bottom) Schooner Zodiac. Photo: Visit Bellingham

PAGE 10 | (Left) Bringing about the mainsail. (Right) The author and her husband, Gary, enjoying a glass of wine.

TOC | Volunteer, Dennis, guiding the author at the helm. Photos: Pam & Gary Baker



By the end of four days, if we've participated, we'll know the basics of sailing and its terminology. Hoisting the sails is hard work, but exhilarating. At first, I'm part of the "sweat and tail" team, working together to pull the rope that raises the mainsail. Once the mainsail is hoisted and the lines secured, we're told to stand down and resume our watch sequence. Proud of our morning's work, we're enjoying the majesty of tall ship sailing.

We sail all day. The weather is divine. The strong wind fills the firm sails. In the shrouds, lines moan under tension in their blocks. The large, two-and-a-half cm thick ropes, stretched and lashed to marlinspikes at one end, groan under pressure as the sea gently tosses the ship, creating a constant tautness of line against flowing wind and stable wooden block. Despite glorious sunshine and a cloudless sky, as the wind increases our speed under full sail, we need a jacket to deal with the cold wind rushing across the deck.

In the afternoon, we head to Spieden Island known for its wildlife. In the 1960s, when two taxidermist brothers purchased the island and imported several species of exotic animals and birds from around the world, it became a hunting preserve for a short time. Today, some of the wildlife, including Mouflon sheep of Corsica and Sika deer of Asia, remain. If you travel there by boat, you can see them grazing on the island's grassy slopes.

But it's my turn at the helm. As we cross the currents, they



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JULY 16-18 - Hells Gate, Wells Gray Park, Railway. Kamloops Heritage Railway (3 days)
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NOV. 17-19 - Storm Watch on Vancouver Island. Best Western Tin Wis, Tofino (3 days)
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push the boat back and forth from left to right, and I am struggling. The First Mate gives me a command. I look at him and ask, “What? You want me to parallel park this thing alongside that island?” I’m pretty sure I had the most stressful shift that day. “Turn hard right, fast,” barked the First Mate, Henry. The currents were strong. Maybe he wasn’t nervous, but I was. “Are you sure you want me at the helm of this boat,” I asked. “What if I crash this thing?”

But the First Mate is calm, and we easily pull up along Spieden before heading off to Parks Bay on Shaw Island. Once again, the First Mate announces, “Sailing stations, all hands on deck!” It’s time to lower the sails. I find myself down on one knee helping to lower the mainsail by feeding the rope to my partner as fast as I can. Next, it’s time to climb up on the mainsail’s boom and start pulling up the canvas. We’ll fold the sail and secure it before motoring into our quiet cove and dropping anchor for the night.

Other boats, large and small yachts, are doing the same thing. Sheltered by land on three sides, the greenish-blue waters of the cove are calm and reassuring.

For our work on deck as “sailors,” we’re rewarded daily with three square meals, featuring a variety of freshly caught and prepared Pacific Northwest regional seafood. Steamed Dungeness crab, lemon grilled whole trout, seafood cioppino, every meal is a gourmet surprise. Caz, the onboard cook (I would call her a “chef”) prides herself with creating a different gourmet menu every day, never serving the same dish twice to her grateful passengers.

Sitting together on the schooner deck, I chat with the crew and other guests while watching the sun meet the sea on the western horizon, transforming our vista into brilliant, multicoloured hues. With a glass of wine in hand, we savour the day, discussing what we’ve learned about sailing this classic boat.

In the morning, when the breeze is up and the sails are full,

we’re ready for another day’s adventure. We’ll visit the green-fir-tree-fringed bays of San Juan Island today.

We repeat this delightful experience for three more days. Our journey includes stops at a winery on Lopez Island and a distillery on San Juan Island. Twice we encounter pods of playful orca whales. Oblivious to us, they rambunctiously flip their tales and slap their dorsal fins against the water.

On our last day aboard, we rise for one more gourmet breakfast of salmon quiche. With winds too calm to raise sails, we sailors-in-training happily assume our turn in the day’s watch sequence rotation as we motor back to Fairhaven, Bellingham.



As I reflect on my experience, I discover a timeless value. It’s not just the hard, physical work of hoisting sails or wrestling the helm through rip tide currents, but the reward that comes from such a personal and genuine nautical adventure. Seafaring is a fully lived lifestyle, striving for personal excellence, while working with a team in tight quarters. We were successful at sailing this tall ship through Washington’s pristine Salish Sea and its magical San Juan Islands. I was successful, learning to sail at 62.

There’s something about the slow, unfolding of time at sea, with the perennial horizon almost a metaphor juxtaposed to the firm, aged sturdiness of this tall ship. It took me back to a time when I imagined all sailors, including old salts and the newly trained, would want to sail on forever.

Later, walking back to my hotel to pick up bags I left behind, I smile to feel the sway of the ocean still in my legs. And then I understand why people fall in love with tall ships and never want to see a place any other way. |

For IF YOU GO information, visit www.seniorlivingmag.com/articles/learning-to-sail



by VERENA FOXX

KEVIN MCKENZIE first taught himself the blues harp/harmonica when he was travelling country roads in Alberta 40 years ago.

“I was a closet player until I turned 50, and then I came out playing harmonica at my birthday party,” says the Nelson chiropractor of all things vertebrate, including humans from babies to adults, and horses, pigs, dogs, parakeets and iguanas.

While he’s in the process of slowly cutting back on work-days, he’s revving up his love of the blues, which includes playing and performing with his Nelson group, White Lightning Blues Band, often at the local Finley’s Bar & Grill, and also in neighbouring Creston and the Slocan Valley.

“There’s a bit of a blues revolution in Nelson,” adds the father and grandfather.



Kevin is now learning the guitar, albeit with the support of a teacher because he admits it’s best not to build bad habits.

“It was really *Holger Petersen’s Blues* (CBC) Radio Show that introduced me to the blues. That’s when I gravitated to the harmonica,” he says, adding that music was always around him when he was growing up. “My mother, in bringing music groups to our small Alberta town, was most instrumental in my early interest in music.”

Hear White Lightning Blues Band on YouTube: White Lightning Blues Band Live Kootenay Sound Studios



KATHY O’SULLIVAN and THERESA McNICOLL were neighbours, friends and teacher-colleagues when they started drinking coffee together at 7 a.m. on Saturday mornings in 2003, while their spouses and kids were still sleeping.

“We wanted to have some ‘we’ time as friends, before our family weekend time started, so we got going early,” says Kathy. “Then we started recording and keeping track of where we went,” adds Theresa, who, with the encouragement of her son Duncan, started their coffee review blog some years later. “We had so much data,” she says, “it just evolved into keeping a formal record.”

Now retired, both friends say going to a different coffee shop every week has been fun and has helped them get to know many neighbourhoods in Vancouver.

“We don’t cross bridges or leave the city,” adds Kathy. “There is so much variety in Vancouver.”

To date, they have records of more than 380 coffee houses, with Theresa critiquing tea and Kathy, coffee. They rate their experiences out of 10, but both say it’s their curiosity and their special time together to continue learning that keeps them exploring and having fun while they are doing it. |

For more information on Vancouver coffee shops, check out: vancouvercoffeereview.com

THERE MUST BE PASSION

by MYLES SHANE

Amanda Hale has been writing for as long as she can remember.

“I wrote my first novel at age 11,” she says. “It was an illustrated work, a love story between two frogs set against the rich cultural background of the rock ‘n’ roll era – Bill Haley and the Comets, Elvis Presley, Little Richard.”

Inevitably, the frogs depart England, journey to the US for their honeymoon, stopover at a dude ranch, go dancing and end the night with a movie. The book young Amanda wrote, in some ways, became a metaphor for her life.

She departed England in her 20s and settled in Montreal where she studied at Concordia University for six years. There, Amanda became consumed with playwriting.

“Having been a listener for 28 years, I had developed a good ear for dialogue.” Her studies also included the visual arts. “Since then, I have bounced back and forth between the visual arts and literary worlds, often combining them in art installations, especially during the 1980s in Toronto where I was involved in theatre, journalism and the visual arts as a feminist and social activist.”

Her social activism was no doubt influenced by her father’s actions during WWII, which inspired her most recent book, *Mad Hatter*.

It was 1943 and WWII was still raging. Amanda hadn’t met her father yet. In fact, she wasn’t born until the war took him away.

“As a loyal member of Oswald Mosley’s British Union of Fascists, he had been interned throughout the war in various prisons, ending up on the Isle of Man with thousands of other men and some women – concentrated in camps, in detention without trial,” says Amanda.

In her mid-fifties, Amanda began to research *Mad Hatter*, which turned into a quest project to gather more information about her father and family.



“My father’s experience of detainment began with his arrest at our home in June 1940,” she says. “He was taken to Walton Gaol near Liverpool, where he remained in solitary until early August when he was moved to Ascot Camp with 750 men to be housed in the winter quarters of Ringling’s circus animals.”

“He was taken to Latchmere House in London for special interrogation by MI5,” Amanda continues. “This outfit was run by Lieutenant-Colonel Robin Stephens, nicknamed ‘Tin-Eye’ for the monocle he wore.”

Upon returning home, Amanda’s father showed signs of what modern psychiatrists would label PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder) but in those days was known as “shell shock.” Almost a decade later, he took his own life.

While researching the project, Amanda was stunned by the information she discovered. It was life changing.

“A big moment was finding a newspaper clipping saying that my father had been taken to court in 1953 for child support of an infant girl. This confirmed what my mother had sometimes hinted at. Five years after posting information on Genealogy.com about this supposed half-sister, I received an email confirming that Anne was indeed my half-sister and lived in New Zealand. She travelled to England to meet me and my two sisters.”

Rewind two decades and Amanda was writing her first literary novel, *Sounding the Blood*. The novel was published by Raincoast Books in 2001 and was inspired by Amanda’s visit to the ruins of a whaling station at Rose Harbour on Haida Gwaii. The novel was a finalist for the BC Relit Awards and was voted one of the Top Ten novels of 2001 by Toronto’s prestigious *Now Magazine*.

Amanda's second novel *The Reddening Path* was published by Thistle-down Press in 2007. Following, *My Sweet Curiosity* was considered for the 2010 Relit award for fiction. Amanda has also published two poetry chapbooks, *Crocodile Sugar* in 2005 with Lynn Hutchinson, and *Pomegranate*, a tale of remembering in 2007.

Amanda's poetry and short stories have appeared in countless Canadian and US magazines. In 2008, she won the Prism International Creative Non-Fiction Award for *The Death of Pedro Iván* and was a finalist for the *Malahat Review's* Creative Non-Fiction Award with *Señora Amable Ponce*.

At 75, Amanda is still as motivated to write as the 11-year-old child who created the story about anthropomorphized frogs.

"I write to make sense of things," she says. "Writing is an activity, together with painting and sculpture, that has literally saved my life, which makes me as I make it. I used to think there were solutions to be reached, answers to be discovered, but there are no answers, only the slow and painstaking examination of all the evidence as we creep forward."

Through writing, painting and sculpting, Amanda has learned a lot about herself and the world she lives in.

"I have learned patience through writing. Novels, poems, short stories, paintings and sculpture are living things and require the utmost care and attention to bring them fully to life. There must be passion – without it, who can afford such care?"

Amanda will be returning to her home on Hornby Island for the winter, while promoting her new book, *Mad Hatter*, in Vancouver, Victoria, the Gulf Islands, libraries, universities and colleges. |

Amanda Hale is available for book-clubs, readings and author presentations in Victoria, Vancouver and on Vancouver Island. To learn more, visit www.amandahale.com or search Amanda Hale on www.guernicaeditions.com



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*Wingfield, A., Tun, P. A., & McCoy, S. L. (2005). Hearing Loss in Older Adulthood: What It Is and How It Interacts With Cognitive Performance. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 14(3), 144–148. † Study participants must be over 50 years of age and have never worn hearing aids. No fees and no purchase necessary. 1. Cruickshanks, K. L., Wiley, T. L., Tweed, T. S., Klein, B. E. K., Klein, R., Mares-Perlman, J. A., & Nondahl, D. M. (1998). Prevalence of Hearing Loss in Beaver Dam, Wisconsin: The Epidemiology of Hearing Loss Study. *Am. J. Epidemiol.* 148 (9), 879–886. 2. National Institutes of Health. (2010).

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HOUSE EXCHANGE EXPERIENCE

by JOSEPH BLAKE

Back in the early 1990s, when my family joined Intervac, an original home exchange network and pioneer in the sharing economy, we didn't have a home computer. Intervac, short for International Vacation, was launched in 1953 by a group of Swiss teachers with more vacation time than money and the idea to exchange homes during school holidays. Intervac now facilitates exchanges for 30,000 families.

When we did our first house exchange with a family in France, back before personal computers and the World Wide Web, Intervac mailed us a catalog of the homes available for exchange. My wife would write letters to the potential house exchange families, and it would take weeks, sometimes months to arrange an exchange.

Now with the internet, email, and jpeg photos, introductions and information on possible home exchange is easy and instantaneous, but it's still more work than booking a hotel or other rental accommodation.

We have organized almost two dozen exchanges in the last three decades, ranging from that first French family's tiny apartment near Centre Pompidou in Paris and their charming, heritage farmhouse on the Gironde River (and an almost-equally ancient Volkswagen Beetle), to a coffee plantation on the big island of Hawaii, a two-bedroom, two-bath apartment in Reykjavik, Iceland, and a large, gated home with a swimming pool and a brand new Renault sedan in Aix En Provence.

We've exchanged our tiny (less than 1,400 square feet) home in Victoria's prestigious Oak Bay municipality, a

converted dairyman's shed from the neighbourhood's original, 19th century farmhouse, with a variety of homes in Europe, Canada, Mexico, Guatemala and the US. Despite our 40-year-old garden of flowers, fruit trees, berry bushes and vegetables, a large collection of local art, and an even-larger collection of books and recordings (10,000 and still collecting!), we've always traded up.

We've exchanged for homes in Madrid, San Sebastian, and Grenada, Spain, a couple of apartments in trendy Brooklyn, New York, an apartment and car in a Montreal suburb with a coveted parking place in the city, a beautiful home in the hills above Berkeley, California, and a luxurious home in a gated community in Santa Fe, New Mexico.

We've visited San Miguel de Allende twice and stayed in lovely, gated homes on the edge of the old, Mexican colonial town. In Guatemala, we exchanged with a family who had a sprawling estate on the shores of Lake Atitlan with a staff of five including maids, gardeners, and a property manager who brought us fresh fruit and bottled water daily. Aldous Huxley called the volcano-rimmed Lake Atitlan the most beautiful lake in the world.

ABOVE | The author and his wife visiting Grenada and Seville on one of their house exchange experiences.

RIGHT | (Top) Visiting Rome and Sicily. (Bottom) The Blake home in Oak Bay, BC. Photos: Lynne Milnes

Not all exchanges have been simultaneous, and we sometimes take extended road trips and visit grown children and our six grandchildren while our home is occupied by exchange families who share their second homes with us. Some non-simultaneous exchanges lead to shared experiences and friendships. A Portuguese couple with an apartment in Lisbon and a pair of beachfront apartments in the Algarve shared a couple of weeks with us in Portugal, taking us to their favourite restaurant and a wine tasting event, shared birthday celebrations, and spent two days driving us through local towns and countryside, pointing out the estates of international celebrities. Our host was a real estate lawyer who shared lots of local tales of the rich and famous.



Sometimes the non-simultaneous exchanges are never completed. One couple broke up before they could visit our home in Victoria. A quirky Brooklyn bachelor couldn't come because his dog was too old to travel. He calls every year or two to say his dog died and he still plans to come in our home.

One Italian couple, who we met while visiting Cuba, didn't want to come to Victoria but offered us one of their homes in Macerata on the Adriatic coast and one of their cars. My wife and I spent three, wonderful workweeks visiting Venice and the hill towns and glorious beach and wine lands of the Marche region, driving south as far as Puglia then returning to spend weekends with our Italian hosts and their extended family of close-knit, childhood friends.

Our last meal in a Macerata restaurant included almost two dozen new Italian friends asking, "Joseph, when are you coming back?" I'm working on getting them to come to Victoria.

House exchange saves money on accommodation, but

more importantly you're not isolated in a hotel zone. House exchange allows a traveller greater access to the country, community and lives you're visiting. Cooking and shopping for food is a great way to learn about another culture. So is sharing an apartment building. So is sharing a gated community. When the exchange includes a car, you have an economical way to discover even more far-flung parts of the countryside.

We offer our guests the use of my old Subaru, my wife's bike, and our kayaks and kayak equipment. We leave a pile of books, magazines and newspaper clippings about life in our neighbourhood, Victoria, Vancouver Island and Vancouver. We leave ferry boat schedules, tourist brochures for Butchart Gardens and whale watching tours.

We love to share our home and its nearby amenities with hand-drawn maps to the nearest gas stations, supermarkets, corner stores, bakeries and coffee shops. We direct our guests to favourite local art galleries, bookstores, restaurants and theatres. More than once during non-simultaneous exchanges, we've stayed in Victoria with neighbours and enjoyed serving as local tour guides for our new friends.

In semi-retirement with more time for travel and less income, house exchange is a great way to travel. You meet interesting people from all around the world, and it's lots of fun! |

For more information, visit www.seniorlivingmag.com/articles/home-exchange-experience



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INSPIRED MAKEOVER NANAIMO EDITION

by **INSPIRED STAFF**

For over 30 years, *INSPIRED Magazine* contributor Jane Cassie worked as a nurse in a program caring for children with chronic health care needs.

While her career was rewarding, it didn't cater to her creative side. So, in 1996, Jane started freelance travel writing part-time. With her photographer husband, Brent, by her side, the couple enjoyed some of the world's most fabulous destinations.

"As well as romantic retreats and spa resorts, I focused on family getaways, and we'd often take one or more of our five children," she says. "On one cruise to Mexico, they all tagged along. What great memories I have of that trip!"

Jane planned to continue travel writing well into her retirement until invasive breast cancer knocked her off course in 2014. The treatment required a radical mastectomy, chemotherapy and radiation – and consumed a year of her life.

"It was time to re-evaluate my life, do a little soul searching, gain some spiritual growth and do a lot less of the go, go, go," says Jane. "Although energy is just part of my personality, the feelings of anxiety stemming from the writing requirements and family responsibilities were way over the top."

Jane decided to make some changes and bring more peace and joy into her life. Full-on travel assignments had to go.

"Even though I continue to write on every trip we take, the pressure is a lot less, and the writing is a lot more enjoyable," she says. "It's great when I have the opportunity to share my stories with readers."

Another change Jane made was to become more physically fit by getting off the computer and into the gym. Pickleball games and fitness classes now trump writing sessions.

When Jane heard about *INSPIRED*'s makeover opportunity, she says she knew it would take her out of her comfort zone. Undeterred, she decided to treat herself with a new experience.

"Although I'm not one for clichés, 'a change is as good as a rest' holds a lot of truth. And what a change it was!"

"Hana listened to everything I had in mind and she



After photo: Ramona Lam Photography



did a fabulous colour that I felt was a total transformation," says Jane. "She explained how to maintain the colour and pamper my hair so it would be healthier. I have had so many compliments on my new auburn tone. I feel 10 years younger and even more energized."

Jane's friends and family love her new look, too.

"I realize that taking a little time for myself is essential for my overall well-being," she says. "I would recommend this experience to anyone who is willing to take the leap of faith. As quoted by Mark Twain: 'Why not go out on a limb? That's where all the fruit is.'"

WHAT THE STYLISTS DID:

Hair by Hana Akai: When I first met Jane, I immediately noticed her beautiful, youthful personality and her striking smile. Jane had blond colour on her hair with quite a bit of gold in it. She was willing to go for a change, so together we decided to darken her hair to a medium auburn that gives her hair a richness and fullness. I used the Redken Color Fusion permanent hair colour and Redken Shades EQ Color Gloss.

Then, I added balayage highlights using Redken lightener, which has an additive to keep the hair in healthy condition. I then added warm gold colour with Shades EQ Color Gloss to add some depth and dimension. For the cut, we kept the shape of a classic bob, a style that will be simple for Jane to style, yet still have a modern, classy look.

When I styled Jane's hair, I used the new Redken Extreme Play Safe 450 to nourish her hair and protect it from the hot styling tools. I then used the Redken Aerate 08 Bodifying Cream Mousse to blow dry her hair and give it some volume. Finally, to hold the style, I used Triple Pure 32, Redken's new neutral fragrance hairspray.

Hana Akai of Akai Hair Design, 2559 Quadra St. Call 250-383-3227 or visit www.akaihairdesign.com

Makeup by Jeanna Duke: To start, I ask all my clients key questions about colours they typically wear, how much makeup they normally wear and how much change they want to see in their makeover.

To prepare the face for cosmetics, I apply concealer to lighten any dark areas and then use primer to correct any discoloration. I select the foundation and powder based on skin type and natural skin tone. Eyebrows are shaped to maximize the eye shape.

Jane wears makeup daily but she got stuck in a rut of doing the same routine when applying it. I changed her black eyeliner, which was closing off her eyes, to a deep purple and carried that colour onto the crease of the eyelid. I added a few false eyelashes to the outside lash line to lift and lengthen the look of the eyes. I accented her lovely cheekbones with a soft, peachy pink colour. A softer lip helps bring attention to the eyes while still completing the look. |

Jeanna Duke of Simply Beautiful Spa, 6224 Siros Place, Nanaimo. Call 250-585-4070 or www.simplybeautifulspainc.com

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JOINING THE CLASS OF 2021

by PAT PRESTON

“The two best decisions I ever made were to marry my husband and enroll in this writing program,” she said. “It’s just what you need.”

We’d been sipping chai lattes at the local café and talking about my dream of writing a memoir of my 40-year search for my birth parents. Over the years, I’d written copiously – the pages, yellow with age, now lying in various stages of completion around the house.

To emphasize her point, Margaret leaned forward, gripped my hand and whispered, “Do it now or you will regret foregoing the opportunity forever.”

After leaning back in her chair, she enthusiastically outlined her experience with the writing program she earlier described as one of two best decisions she’d ever made. I nodded, sighed and promised to consider the idea seriously. I was envisioning my book and the possibility of assembling the many pages already written about my search for my birth parents.

“Maybe this deserves serious consideration,” I thought.

After my mother reluctantly agreed to my adoption, I spent 16 months transferred from the hospital to an infants’ home for children difficult to place, then to a couple of foster homes. Leaving those behind and being adopted by a middle-class couple marked the start of a complicated journey to find my birth parents. I was happy to have a “real” home but, as I matured, I wanted to know if I had a “real” family.

I let my thoughts drift back to the café, just as Margaret reached into her bag and thrust a brochure toward me. I was captivated by its front page: “We’ve Got Your Book.” I scanned the photos. No gray heads to be seen. Then I read, “we started the program in Halifax.”

Right away, I balked. I had no interest in relocating to Halifax. My husband and I had just settled happily in Victoria.

“Wait,” Margaret insisted. “The program doesn’t mean you have to move to Halifax.”

I read on and learned this would lead to an MFA (not of interest at my age). It was a two-year, limited residency program consisting of two summer residencies in Halifax and winter residencies that alternated between New York and Toronto. We would work long-distance with mentors in between residencies – all to move our manuscripts forward. As students (a label I thought I’d left behind), we’d learn research skills and structure through lectures and mentorships and solidify our book proposals. I envisioned myself once again in a lecture hall.

ABOVE | King’s College Master of Fine Arts in Creative Nonfiction Class of 2021; the author is third from the left, second row from the bottom.

Photo: Michael Creagen

We walked to the door of the café with Margaret extolling the value of this program for me. The next intake was a few months away in August. “You need to decide quickly,” she added, as we parted ways.

I knew she had no idea of my age, a major factor in my decision making.

“Who goes back to university as she’s turning 80?” I asked myself as I trudged home in the rain.

Not long after I’d closed my umbrella and hung up my coat, the phone rang.

“I forgot to mention that it’s one of the premier degree programs in North America for authors writing in this genre,” said Margaret. I could hear excitement in her voice as she explained that all the lecturers and mentors had published books. She ended with, “I know you can do it. You’ve been a journalist and a professional communicator.”

Before I could remind her my journalism days were long past their due date, she’d hung up.

I sat in our most comfortable chair, tilted it back, eased the footrest up, leaned into the soft leather and opened the brochure again.

Missing: grey hair. Instead, young, keen, energetic students. I couldn’t see any of “me.” My energy level had dipped in the past few months, in my view a result of aging. My husband attributes it to my over-involvement as a volunteer. We agree to disagree. But I still had reservations about taking on a challenge that would demand intense concentration, lots of enthusiasm and energy and a commitment to write seriously, every day.

Another look at the brochure. “We’ll help you learn the craft and practice of being an author... with additional help of top publishing professionals in Canada and the United States.” Just what I had wanted and, if those musty papers I’d written over the years could be incorporated into a manuscript maybe, just maybe, I should embrace the opportunity before me.

Returning to school as you reach your eighth decade isn’t for the faint of heart, but here I was. My first day of school, I am outside the gate of the University of King’s College, founded in 1789, the oldest chartered university in Canada. Nervous and in awe, I proceed along the quadrangle to the lecture hall.

I nod and smile on my way to a seat. Because my hearing is diminishing—confirmed by an audiologist in recent testing—I sit near the front. Scanning the room, I notice two other grey heads. One might be older. I remember him from Ottawa when he was a diplomat. People say I look younger than my age. Today, the opposite would apply. I feel old. I took the elevator not the stairs, saving my energy for what lay ahead.

We are greeted by the head of the journalism school, our program executive director and two teaching colleagues. I distil from an hour-and-a-half, first-year greeting: rules, direction to washrooms, the school’s “rubric” (a grade below B-equals an F), the course load is intensive and challenging, the style manual is 1,144 pages (too heavy for me to carry), 5,000 words a month toward my manuscript is mandatory and our

class numbers 31, ranging in age from 24 to me.

As the two weeks progress, the class grows close and protective of one other as we’ve been forced to. My first attempt at a “pitch” in front of the group was scary: I was revealing parts of my life kept secret until now. I hadn’t slept the night before and my tremor was fully operational. After I finished, silence. My classmates explained it was a sign that meant I’d presented well, and no questions needed to be asked. Relief.

Small groups found commonalities during the semester. Two younger women and I began to get to know each other well enough to share frustrations, challenges, home lives and lunch. When we walked together, they slowed to accommodate my arthritic gait. And they offered help when I got lost in the technology we were required to use.

On our final day, as I once again passed through the King’s College gates, I was proud that I’d risen to the challenges and sad at leaving the security and support of the class of 2021. I will be 80 the next time I see them, and I know my age won’t matter to any of them. |

Pat Preston is a former journalist, journalism instructor, public school teacher, public affairs executive, media advisor to a federal cabinet minister and feature writer for a city magazine. She lives in Victoria where she curates art in a popular café and a wine bar/kitchen and volunteers as a Gallery Associate for the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria.



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SOCIAL TRAVEL ADVENTURES FOR SINGLES AND COUPLES

by **INSPIRED STAFF**

INSPIRED Magazine publisher Barbara Risto is fulfilling one of her most passionate intentions – to do more travelling with interesting people.

It became obvious as she tracked the interests of *INSPIRED* readers that she wasn't alone. Many had travel at the top of their must-do list. So, in 2019, Barbara launched the 55+ Travel Club.

A monthly travel newsletter quickly morphed into evening presentations featuring travel destinations offered by specially selected tour companies. As a follow-up to the presentations, Barbara began facilitating Buddy Brunches to help connect solo travellers.

Now, for 2020, she is inviting readers to become part of a personalized group called VIVA Vagabonds – designed for people who would like to travel with her to destinations around the globe.

"I never considered being a travel facilitator but as I took the first steps to help people connect, it became obvious this was an idea whose time had come."

"I decided to use the 'voice' of the magazine I had created to reach out to the community and bring 55+ travellers together," says Barbara. "Whether it is a partnered couple or a single person, we share a common interest in travel. This club brings us all together for mutual support."

Within just a few months of spreading the word through the magazine, the club membership grew to over 400 and Barbara launched chapters in Victoria, Vancouver and Nanaimo.

"I represent a large subset of travellers – adventuresome women over 55 without partners," explains Barbara. "Many of us enjoy travel but we don't necessarily have ready access to companions to share the cost and provide the social element that can make travel so much more enjoyable, and sometimes safer."

The brunches hosted by Barbara following each club event give singles an opportunity to meet each other in a small interactive environment of about 10-15 people, without obligation.

"The buddy brunch allows single travellers to get a good sense of one another. You are encouraged to exchange contact information with anyone who feels like a match," she says. "I suggest a couple follow-up meetings, or maybe a short 1- or 2-day trip together to see if it really is a fit, before you embark on a longer trip."

As the travel club membership continued to grow, Barbara wondered how she could personalize the experience further.

"I thought how wonderful it would be to gather together a group of people who shared my love of travel. I envisioned

people who could become lifelong travel companions, so that every time we get together, it's just a bunch of good friends on an adventure."

Out of those musings sprang the idea of the VIVA Vagabond group.

"Over time, my hope is that VIVA Vagabonds will become a close-knit group of familiar faces who return time and again to travel together to different destinations."

For her first VIVA Vagabond trip for 2020, Barbara has chosen a 10-day guided tour of Ireland with Collette Vacations. (*See page 21*)

"Whether you want to see Ireland's many historic sites or absorb some of the Irish culture, this trip will not disappoint. Everyone I've talked to has given it top marks as a destination. It's one of Collette's most enjoyable tours. I encourage readers of *INSPIRED* who haven't yet visited Ireland to join me in September for an unforgettable adventure."

Guided travel provides the first level of security and sociability. When deciding on presenters at her magazine-sponsored travel club events, Barbara has sought out companies that offer guided tours and are keen on serving 55+ travellers – partnered or single – who are looking for worry-free adventure.

Travel industry presenters at the 55+ Travel Club events must be regular advertisers with the magazine.

"In selecting the presenters for the travel club events, I turn first to those who have an established history with *INSPIRED Magazine* because I know they have a keen interest in 55+ travellers," says Barbara. "I also rely upon the testimonials of readers who have travelled with these companies. It's important to me that these companies have a solid reputation for serving this unique demographic."

"When I introduce them to our club members, I put my reputation on the line. If I give a company my endorsement, it's with the certainty this company will do everything in their power to make every club members' travel experience the best it can be."

For those not familiar with the 55+ Travel Club, the Buddy Brunches, or the VIVA Vagabonds group, here's a short refresher:

55+ TRAVEL CLUB

The 55+ Travel Club is for anyone around or over the age of 55 who want to pursue more travel and are looking for opportunities to network with other travellers in this age group. The travel club is particularly helpful for solo travellers,

especially women, who find themselves without companions either because they are single, divorced or widowed – or they have a partner who doesn't want to or can't travel due to illness or disability.

Currently around 400 members. Two events per year are held in each of these three cities: Victoria, Vancouver and Nanaimo. The first Victoria club event brought about 60 club members together at the elegant Berwick Royal Oak in May, followed by 85 attendees in October. A smaller September event in Vancouver brought 35 enthusiastic people together at the Renfrew Library.

On February 10, 2020, Barbara will host the first club event in Nanaimo at Berwick on the Lake. (See page 28 for details.) Visit www.seniorlivingmag.com/travelclub to RSVP if you'd like to attend.

BUDDY BRUNCH

Following each travel club event, Barbara hosts a Buddy Brunch where she invites single travellers to join her for a meal at a local restaurant to meet other single travellers looking for companions. Buddy Brunches provide a fun social opportunity for single travellers to share their travel plans with each other in hopes of finding someone to share one of their next excursions.

VIVA VAGABONDS

The VIVA Vagabonds group (VI for Vancouver Island, VA for Vancouver) is for people who would like to travel with Barbara. The goal is to build a nucleus of travellers so there's always familiar faces – friends looking out for friends. Singles and couples are welcome. Barbara will offer 2-3 trips per year, with varying destinations and price points. There is no obligation to be part of all the trips. If you'd like to receive notification of next trips hosted by Barbara, email your contact information to travel@seniorlivingmag.com and ask to be added to the VIVA Vagabonds list. |

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CRUISING THE MEKONG

by RICK & CHRIS MILLIKAN

A shuttle from Ho Chi Minh City's airport kicks off our Uniworld holiday. Introducing himself as AK, our guide discusses this dynamic city's traffic congestion and motor-bike culture. Tours reveal old Saigon's colonial beauty and Vietnam's final push for independence.

Mekong Navigator awaits us at My Tho. Aboard this classy French colonial-style riverboat, we savour buffet breakfasts, lunches and sumptuous wine-toasting dinners. Evening entertainment concludes with top-deck nightcaps. Comfortable sampans facilitate morning and afternoon excursions.

Monday: Off Cai Be, a floating market of boats fly flags advertising merchandise. On an offshore island, blue-jacketed women row us in smaller sampans along a French-built canal. On the opposite shore, gathered in an open-air shelter, we watch women braid water hyacinths into lovely baskets. In another, an 83-year old weaves roofing pallets from palm fronds.

Greeting uniformed students and smiling moms on bicycles, we survey surrounding pastel homes. Stilted to

survive flooding by October-November monsoons, they now shelter boats, hammocks... and snoozing cows. Giant jack-fruit and black pepper pods flourish on the shoreline.

Afternoon investigations involve Vinh Long's sweets enterprise. Under a high, corrugated roof, workers boil cane sugar into caramel candy. Nearby, ladies add shredded coconut and cane sweetener to rice popped in an enormous wok. Poured into rimmed sheets, they cut the cooled confection into bars. Tasting samples with green tea, we buy several goodies. Outside, boa constrictors in terrariums discourage hungry rats.

ABOVE | Inside Angkor Thom in Cambodia.

PAGE 24 | (Top) Wat Hanchey monk. (Bottom) Sa Dec Street Market on the Mekong River waterfront, Vietnam.

TOC | The authors posing at Ta Prohm temple. Photos: Rick & Chris Millikan

Tuesday: Past barges heaped with rice and some with sand, we debark at Sa Dec. Our destination is House of Romance, the setting of a steamy novel and movie, *The Lover*. The 19th century salon exudes the wealth of the owner, a Chinese rice merchant. Photos document his son's passionate affair with a French schoolgirl. But, like Romeo and Juliet, lasting love proved impossible. Other photos show his "approved" Chinese wife and children... and lover's family in France.

Two temples reveal Vietnamese adaptations. Outside one, a good-hearted local spirit joins familiar Chinese Lion Dancers. Inside, porcelain idols venerate local ancestors. The other rises flamboyantly across the river. "Saints" like Sun Yat-sen, China's first president, and French novelist Victor Hugo decorate the foyer. "Conceived near Hanoi in 1926, Cao Dai professes a universal outlook," AK explains. "Above the inner shrine, you'll find divine prophets representing eight world religions."

Returning via an endless street market, we see every imaginable edible including exotic produce, live fish, eels, chickens, snakes... and rice-fed rats.

On Gieng Island, fourth-generation craftsmen build fishing boats with water compartments to keep live fish. One fellow describes wood bending and caulking techniques.

Next, motorbike-powered tuk-tuks zip us along tropical greenery to the Mekong Delta's largest Catholic Church. Under cool shadows, a Friar describes his mission to help lepers. While viewing ornate tombstones, thunderous drums, cymbals and dirges emanate from the church. A grieving family dressed in white leads a solemn funeral procession into the cemetery.

Wednesday: Vinh Long's shoreline boasts tilapia, catfish and basa farms. Bags of manioc fish food border large net enclosures. "A returning Mississippi veteran inspired this profitable enterprise," AK says. "Unlike ocean pens, Mekong currents wash away debris."

Long Khanh Island's pathways lead past houses, open-to-view ceramic-tiled interiors, polished wood furnishings and flat screen TVs. At another comfortable home, a Viet Cong veteran describes his hardships as a medic during the Vietnam War – and appreciation for American opposition. A plastic Statue of Liberty aptly shares a shelf with Ho Chi Minh's photo. Continuing into another community, skeins of washed and beautifully dyed cotton dry on fences. At one house, weavers operating motorized looms produce fine textiles for scarves, shawls and hats.

Thursday: Moored at Phnom Penh, Cambodia's capital, new guide, Tri, shepherds us to waiting tuk-tuks. Bordering wide boulevards, manicured

parks display statues of prominent Cambodians and wild-life. Stops include the King's opulent palace grounds, Silver Pagoda and National Museum, exhibiting wondrous artifacts from Angkor Wat.

Friday: A motorcoach takes us to sobering memorial sites. Encompassing mass graves, Killing Fields Park recalls Khmer Rouge's victims. A modern Buddhist stupa honours these Cambodians. A 1970s school-turned-prison further recounts this regime's torture and slaughter of millions.

Saturday: In Angkor Ban village, the Chinese zodiac's colourful animals line our pathway toward a resplendent Buddhist Monastery. Walking in the adjacent neighbourhood, we meet a woman grinding sugar cane and ice into slushies. She invites us to look inside her spacious, reed-matted home. Onward along the path, two couples shuck corn for their Brahman cattle. And an English teacher welcomes us into his classroom to converse with eager students.

After lunch, our ship heads to Wat Hanchey. Inside its hill-top temple, we sit on a marble floor surrounded by glorious frescos. Saffron-robed monks chant blessings while sprinkling us with water.

Sunday: Disembarking at Kampong Cham, we travel 260 km through Cambodian countryside to Siem Reap, gateway to World Heritage Angkor Wat.

Afternoon tuk-tuks transport us to an historic city park. Women at a corner market sell lotus blossoms and tiny birds. Hundreds of bats hang from huge trees. Putt-putting onward


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to a vocational school, we witness students developing their artistry: sculpting sandstone, carving wood, painting, casting bronze and weaving silk.

Monday: Rising above moated walls, Angkor Wat's iconic spires form five mythical mountains. In the 12th century temple grounds, we pass archival structures and a large pond filled with pink blossoming lotus.

At the outer gallery, long bas-relief walls portray fabled Hindu gods and demons battling over Amrita, elixir of life. In the majestic upper courtyard, 1,500 dancers are immortalized in stone. Remarkably, these celestial apsara display distinctive coiffures, headdresses and jewellery.

Tonight, we attend a drama. An overhead screen subtitles the Cambodian dialogue. Set in a bar, actors perform thrilling acrobatic feats, innovative rock music and resolve modern social dilemmas.

Tuesday: Before dawn, flashlights help us ascend the walkway to Phnom Bakheng, a 10th century hilltop temple. These ruins offer bedazzling sunrise views over Angkor Wat. Following picnic basket breakfasts, gondoliers punt us around an early moat in classic swan boats.

Our mini-bus whisks us to a bridge spanning the moat. We cross between sculpted monsters and angels lining its railings. On through a Buddha-faced tower, we re-board the bus. "Welcome to Angkor Thom! Two 13th-century kings, a Buddhist and his Hindu cousin, constructed this ancient Khmer capital," Tri smiles, pointing. "And that ornate platform is the Terrace



of the Elephants, built to review troops."

Our tour continues in Bayon, Angkor Thom's most beloved temple. Inside, its outer gallery's bas-reliefs gloriously depict a legendary Khmer naval battle. Beneath, panels of domestic scenes illustrate hunting, fishing, tending children, market-place bartering and more. Above two libraries' deep courtyard cisterns, another gallery displays a Hindu epic. Vishnu is pictured as an archer atop a chariot; nearby appears his foe, an eight-armed monster. A high terrace overlooks Buddha-faced spires, sporting gigantic smiles. Shipmates pose beside the jolliest, clicking selfies.

Explorations end at Ta Prohm, the jungle temple seen in *Lara Croft: Tomb Raider*. Massive strangler fig trees have reclaimed this manmade wonder. Left largely unrestored, tendrils drill into stonework, cover walls and embrace doorways. Tri photographs us framed by thick, gnarly roots.

Buddha smiled warmly on our travels. Engaging experiences help us better appreciate Vietnamese and Cambodian history, industry and culture. |

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SHOULD WE TAKE NUTRITIONAL SUPPLEMENTS?

FOREVER FIT

by EVE LEES



Diet plays a major role in healthy aging. But can nutritional supplements boost our health more?

Most sources agree supplements aren't necessary when eating healthfully. But supplements can have a place in a healthy diet – ideally, while still prioritizing nutritious foods. Supplements are advised if you lack a nutrient and can't derive it from food.

We all have unique nutrition needs, due to genetics, lifestyle choices, and our environment. There are also differing needs during pregnancy or in our senior years, and in conditions like osteoporosis, digestive problems, even injury recovery.

Therefore, some people can benefit from dietary supplements, even if used short term. But any supplement regimen should be designed for your personal health status – there is no one-size-fits-all protocol. Our individuality is why, for example, glucosamine (used for joint pain) doesn't work for everyone. Similarly, attributing nutrients with special functions – like vitamin A for eyesight – isn't accurate: you may be getting plenty of vitamin A, yet have poor eyesight due to lack of vitamin C or E.

Supplements are intended to supplement foods – not replace them. Many of us just need to eat better. Consuming more refined, nutrient-depleted foods than whole foods and/or having very little variety can severely limit nutrient intake. Cultures with long, healthy life spans (like the Okinawans) eat a wide variety of whole foods without using supplements, showing food can provide the nutrients humans need.

Nutrients (vitamins, minerals, antioxidants, etc.) are the “tools” we need to function. Food provides these tools in ways we do not fully understand. We continue to learn how they function and interact with each other. And we haven't discovered all of them. Therefore, there's no guarantee your multivitamin/mineral provides all the nutrients you need – or that the nutrients will work synergistically as they do within a food. A vitamin C-rich orange also provides other nutrients to help you absorb the vitamin C. Not so with a vitamin C pill.

Many studies have explored the efficacy of nutrition supplements, but we remain unsure for several reasons: The studies aren't long enough to reach a definitive conclusion; our individuality creates many confounding variables; and nutrition is still a young science. We continually learn more – and debunk what we learned in the past.

A 2019 study on dietary supplements, reported in the *Annals of Internal Medicine*, found supplements did not extend life and may be harmful in large quantities. Studies aren't always conclusive – particularly regarding the young science of nutrition – but the researchers made the same general observation as hundreds of other studies: dietary supplements are not

a substitute for a healthful, balanced diet.

But shouldn't we take supplements because soil is nutrient-depleted? That depends on your source; even the experts can't agree. The *Journal of Food Composition and Analysis* reports the allegations of nutrient-depleted soil are unfounded. Yet other scientists claim soil today is degraded, decreasing plant nutrients. But is soil depleted everywhere? Does a study showing poor soil in one area reflect soil conditions worldwide? Many botanists say plants wouldn't grow properly without the soil nutrients they require (and vegetables today still resemble vegetables 50 years ago). The increase of organic and other regenerative farming methods can maintain and regenerate soil fertility. And despite soil conditions, plants will always offer vital properties – particularly fibre.

Supplement advocates also warn our modern diet doesn't provide all the nutrients we need. But that's likely because many people make unhealthy food choices. Therefore, we should make better choices. Taking pills won't fix a poor diet.

However, older adults may want to consider supplementation. As we age, our bodies can develop challenges absorbing some nutrients. Seniors may become less efficient absorbing vitamin B12 and they may produce less vitamin D from the sun than younger adults. Incidentally, have your blood tested for vitamin D levels before self-prescribing large doses. Vitamin D overdose is as harmful as a deficiency; likewise with other nutrient pills.

Population studies find seniors often lack certain nutrients – although usually from inadequate diets. Common deficiencies among older adults include folate, fibre, protein, calcium, potassium, magnesium, omega-3 fatty acids and water. If you are deficient in any of these, alter your diet. But if, for some reason, you can't obtain or absorb these nutrients via food, supplementation may be necessary. Consult a registered dietitian or other specialist trained in nutrition science.

To boost your nutrients, a wide variety of foods offers a wider variety of nutrients (be cautious with diets that omit certain foods or food groups). Another nutrition-boosting tip: Choose foods as whole and unrefined as possible because the more a food is refined (changed), the more nutrients are lost.

Should you take supplements? That's up to you and your health professional. You are a unique individual with unique needs. However, always prioritize food and healthy habits over taking pills. |

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

Managing Risk When Caring for Someone

By Wendy Johnstone

In general, the term “living at-risk” means individuals are free to engage in activities or act in certain ways that might be considered risky, so long as they are mentally competent and don’t place others at risk or expose them to harm. This includes a range of activities, including getting up on a ladder with no safety measures and poor balance. Other activities might include eating when at risk of aspiration, riding a bike without a helmet, smoking around oxygen supplies or refusing to use a walker to minimize the likelihood of falls.

With age or someone living with a chronic disease or injury comes a higher likelihood of exposure to risk than other adults. Changes in health, presence of chronic disease or varying mental capacity can make the people we care for more vulnerable to accidents or injuries.

There are no easy answers and each situation bring its own set of complex circumstances. A good starting place is to start by evaluating and assessing the risk including the following:

- Is the assessment of the risk influenced by personal fears or desires?
- Is the risk real, or would less guilt and worry be experienced knowing the person being cared for is safe?
- What is the major risk the person being cared for is choosing and why are they choosing it?
- Is person being cared for capable to make decisions for themselves or is an assessment required?
- Is the person being cared for aware of the impacts of their decisions and choices on others?
- What are possible ways to eliminate or minimize the risk?



What possible interventions or planning can be done that satisfies both the needs of the care recipient and the caregiver?

Family caregivers are often challenged to respect the person they are caring for and their choices and accept risk while continuing to offer support. The goal is to find a way to balance and respect the needs of both the person being cared for and the caregiver. It shouldn’t, however, be limited to non-interference. Caregivers also have the right to negotiate ways of honouring their own limitations and to not cause greater harm to themselves and the person for whom they are caring.

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



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THE IMPORTANCE OF FAMILY

by PAT NICHOL



COURAGEOUS
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A group of 13 women have been part of my life for years – some since the early '90s. And though we are not related by blood or marriage, I consider them family. Some have come for a while and then moved on, but their memory stays with those of us that are still together. They have been replaced with other good friends.

We meet for breakfast every second Thursday in a large booth at a local restaurant that we consider “ours.” The staff now knows our preferences.

When we began in the early '90s, we started out as a business networking group. Each of us came from a different professional background: An accountant, banker,

investment broker, travel agent, lawyer, curator of Emily Carr House and speaker. Over the years, we have been joined by an executive director of a senior's residence and a politician.

We have shared thoughts on growing businesses, raising kids, and multiple issues and ideas. We have sympathized with loss; we have cheered success.

After 25 years together, we are not working as hard as we did once upon a time. Now the ideas we share are the best places to ski, where to stay while travelling, stories and pictures about where we have been and what we've done.

Twice a year, we get together in the evening and share time with partners and quaff a few while nibbling favourite snacks.

I do have other special people in my life, but this group of women are my go-to when I need an answer, an ear or a shoulder because mine aren't strong enough at that moment.

I sent a note out to members and asked what the group meant to them. L's reply captured the sentiment of everyone in the group.

“I don't have sisters,” says L. “This group gives me the kind of space in which I find I can talk about anything from travel to children to personal challenges. We console each other, trade recipes and travel tips. As I led a friend's husband's celebration of life, I saw the rest of our breakfast club assembled around the room. I'm new; I have only been part of the group for 15 years, but it has made a big difference in my life.”

As we move into this new decade, my New Year's wish for you is that you have a family you can count on, lean on, learn from and share with – whether they're in your life by chance – or by choice. |

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

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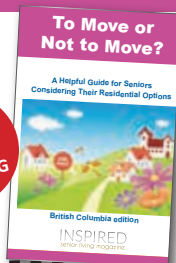
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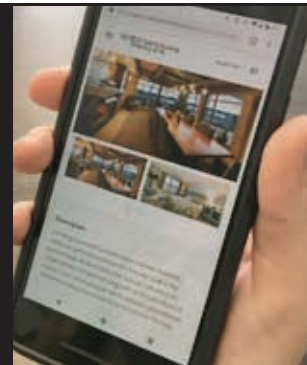
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move into a
Harrison Residence
because of
What We Do.
They move in
because of
*Why We Do It!***

***The Harrisons Offer:* Complete Condo-style Suites, Chef Prepared Meals, Active Lifestyle Options, Assistance 24/7 if needed, Outstanding Essentials, Amazing Amenities, Wonderful Optional Services and so much more!**

**Come for a *TOUR & COMPLIMENTARY CHEF PREPARED LUNCH* anytime and
see *Why The Harrisons Really Do Offer A Better Way of Life!***



**Harrison Landing
20899 Douglas Crescent
Langley, BC V3A 9L3
604.530.7075
www.harrisonlanding.com**



**Harrison Pointe
21616 -52 Avenue
Langley, BC V2Y 1L7
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