

INSPIRED

55+ lifestyle magazine

OCTOBER 2020

SINGER/SONGWRITER
FRED PENNER

THE ARMCHAIR
TRAVEL ISSUE:

TUCKING INTO
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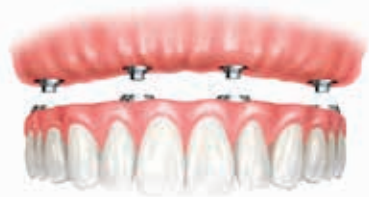
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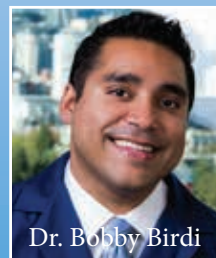


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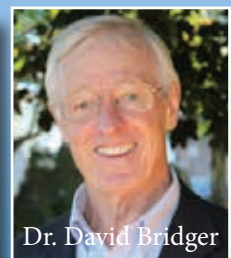
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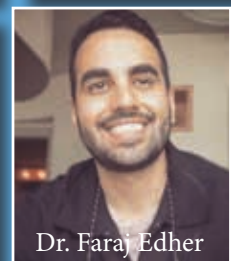
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Cover FRED PENNER

Life for this Canadian icon could have taken a much different path. Luckily, for us, Fred Penner chose the road less travelled.

Photo: True North Records



INSPIRED

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THRIVE BEYOND 55

by BARBARA RISTO, PUBLISHER



“Every word you say is a blueprint that your mind, body and psyche want to make a reality,” says Marisa Peer, a UK therapist and personal coach. “Words are powerful, and the most powerful words are those you say to yourself.”

As many of you know, I closed the magazine for two months due to the impact of COVID-19. During that time of adjustment, I had to take on some complex technology tasks that demanded extensive training.

Amid uncertainty and new challenges, I felt hugely outmatched. Each day produced higher levels of anxiety.

I laid awake at night mentally churning through processes and formulas, turning on the light to write down questions to ask the following day, worrying I would miss something that would later cause havoc. The knot in my stomach grew bigger.

Around the halfway point through this period, I wrote my agonizing thoughts in my daily journal: “This is so hard. I can’t do this!” As I channeled my biggest fears onto paper, little did I realize I was creating a blueprint.

I spent about a minute in the grip of panic, and then it started to soften as I began an internal inquiry to process what I was experiencing.

As the blunt emotion gave way to curiosity, I realized that the conversation I had been having with myself for several weeks was not only blocking my mental ability to absorb the new training material, it was causing immense emotional suffering.

With this realization, I felt the stress drain from my body, and a new question emerged: “What could I believe, to make myself okay with this training experience?”

I took a deep breath and scratched out the word “can’t” in my journal. I wrote instead: “I CAN do this. I can get excited about the opportunity to learn something new. In fact, I will be so much more capable in the end that

I will wonder why I didn’t do this sooner.” As the final residue of anxiety dissolved, I laughed out loud from the relief.

I visualized what it would be like to feel excited about arriving at my next lesson – how it would feel to execute the work with ease and competence.

As I completed the remainder of my training, the crushing anxiety was no longer there to paralyze my mind and undermine my efforts.

It was a poignant lesson for me on how my internal dialogue had the power to cause intense emotional and physical suffering. It also showed me how reframing my words could free me to explore new possibilities.

Shaping our thoughts to serve our wellbeing is not always easy. Sometimes it requires some inner inquiry. Journaling seems to work for me. Sometimes reading a book, meditation or a conversation with a friend will uncover some insight. Numerous teachers on YouTube offer helpful tools and tips.

During this COVID-19 experience, it’s more important than ever to uplift one another. Sharing our successes and inspiring words is one way we can connect and hold space for kindness and wellbeing.

Have you acquired some insight during these past few months that has served and inspired you to greater wellness?

I’d love to hear your reflections and feedback on this topic. I’d also love to hear what books or teachers have propelled you on your journey to overcome the challenges in your life.

I invite you to leave a comment on our website under this article.

I’ll be checking comments regularly and sharing more of the inspirational resources that have contributed to my wellbeing. |



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Celebrated family
entertainer Fred Penner.
Photos: True North Records

FRED PENNER: MAKING A DIFFERENCE

by JOHN KELLY

*Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,
And sorry I could not travel both
And be one traveler, long I stood
And looked down one as far as I could
To where it bent in the undergrowth;*
—Robert Frost

Critics disagree on the poem's meaning. Frost himself told us "The Road Not Taken" was nothing more than a tongue-in-cheek admonition to an indecisive colleague. One thing is certain – the poem has become an anthem for the individual, for the master of your fate, captain of your ship crowd. Before Fred Penner became international troubadour, he stood before a yellow wood, too. And yes, two roads diverged. Sorry he could not travel both? I'm not so sure.

"At that point in my early twenties, I had a BA in economics. I was primed to follow some standard business course because I was not a great student," says Fred.

No one told Fred a career in music was a viable option, let alone encouraged the idea. And so, it remains today for every garage band musician. The times haven't exactly been a-changin' in that regard.

"I was in line to become a civil servant with Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation. I'd written exams for that and I was in the top 10 percentile of the civil service world, so I could have very easily slipped into that," says Fred.

Horror of horrors! Luckily, events conspired to see to it that the only pencil-pushing Fred would do involved song

writing and set lists. The collusion of other events precipitated Fred's thinking about life in a profound manner. He lost his beloved younger sister, Susie, a child with exceptionalities. A year later, Fred's father died.

"It was obviously a major trauma and turning point and it caused me to think deeply about what I wanted to do in my life," he says. "That was the catalyst to actually attempting to figure out what my life was going to be, and I didn't have a real plan of what kind of work I would ever do in my lifetime."

*Then took the other, as just as fair,
And having perhaps the better claim,
Because it was grassy and wanted wear;
Though as for that the passing there
Had worn them really about the same,*

The lounges and bars of Winnipeg were early recipients of the Penner talent and charm. Maybe economics could be a fallback, a plan B. But if one listens hard enough to hear their calling, seldom are alternate plans necessary. It was that way for Fred. The cat, as it turns out in this case, never went back.

"The only thing that has ever given me any kind of real internal spiritual positive bliss is music."

One can almost hear the collective groan of economists everywhere as Fred followed his heart. Or, given Fred's admission that he was not a sparkling student, is what one hears a sigh of their relief?

"As far as making music, in the seventies it was anything

goes. I was doing lots of theatre. I was learning acting skills. I was performing in stage productions and musical comedy. It was never specifically about the children other than learning the value of music with Susie [Fred's sister] because she would just get right inside of a song to the point of tears... I learned how deeply music can affect a child. That was always sitting in me."

Through the course of the old networking wheel, Fred spent the seventies in and out of bands and bars playing songs, and in theatres playing the thespian. The wheel worked but was spinning in place.

"I wasn't sure how things would unfold at that time. The first gig I had was three nights for a total of \$75."

Fast forward to the end of the decade. It was a blur for some, anyway. Not until the latter part of the seventies – when his then-first-wife-to-be and Fred started a children's dance theatre company – did the intersection of music and its profound effect on children come into the kind of focus Fred had first experienced with Susie. That interaction led to doing shows for children in Winnipeg, one of which led to an offer to do a record, which opened the door to "The Cat Came Back."

*And both that morning equally lay
In leaves no step had trodden black.
Oh, I kept the first for another day!
Yet knowing how way leads on to way,
I doubted if I should ever come back.*

Time to get the requisite housekeeping out of the way. It's the Fred Penner refresher. Fred has gotten the word, his word, out through albums, videos, picture books. You or someone you know remembers *Fred Penner's Place*, his television show that ran from the mid-eighties to the late nineties. Juno awards, the Order of Manitoba, the Order of Canada. First children's entertainer to play the Universal Amphitheatre in Los Angeles. Enough already. Hard to stay humble. Unless you're Fred Penner. He refers to the awards and accolades as "distant gravy." Given Fred's true motivation for doing what he does, the intimate connections and the profound effect his music has on people, how could the sparkling hardware not all be just gravy?

It's easy to fall into condescending mode or at least its appearance when performing for children, but Fred has that rare ability to convey life lessons couched in the playful and deliver them as his audience's equal.

Fred's choice was perhaps as inevitable as inevitable can be. Unlike Frost's narrator, Fred did not make a decision on a whim. In fact, it's more accurate to say the decision was made for him. Jobs come and go. Vocations grab you with their teeth and hold on, and Fred has the bite marks to prove it. If there were a pantheon for people who make us feel good, who, from the time we're children, instill confidence and

kindness in us, there are a few who might occupy a place in it. There's that other Fred. Rogers. There's Bob Ross. And there's Fred Penner.

"What really drives me is finding music that goes deep, that offers something more than just a nice chorus and some fun. It's trying to bring some integrity into the music for me... the message is always deeper for me," says Fred.

Fred understands that music is his medium and as such knows the value of hooking the audience if he wants to have his message delivered and, more importantly, received. But don't think fish on a line yanked from the sea. It's more like coaxing a fawn towards you with kindness. If you can get them to eat out of the palm of your hand, well, all the better!

"Often I find parents telling me that they will use certain songs that I have as a form of encouragement; encouraging their children along the way."

Imagine being a Penner kid. And speaking of Penner kids, humility comes in a variety of disguises. One of them is the desire to toot someone else's horn (even if it happens to be

your daughter's) when you're supposed to be talking about yourself.

"My eldest daughter, her name is Hayley. You can check out her music, Hayley Gene Penner. She's been in L.A. for the last eight years writing music. Lots of interesting placement in films. Much recording. Helping young artists develop their talents. And she just wrote a book released in July," glows Fred.

You know the story. Man or woman works at a career for 40 years chomping at the bit to gallop off into retirement's sunset complete with gold watch around his or her hoof. The exception to that tale is the person who says, "Wait a sec, I have been loving this ride. I don't want to get off." If you've guessed Fred is in the latter group, giddy up.

"I have no intention of stopping because the demand is still there and I'm still enjoying what I'm doing. And I still have the ability to do what I do. It certainly is slowing down. I don't have the energy that I had even 10 years ago. I still practice daily to keep my hands and voice limber, so I'm still working my craft. The 'R' word will not be here for a while I think," says Fred. "You're only as good as your last gig. I've always been a pretty even-keeled, gentle human being, gentle man. Unless I'm feeling physically under the weather, I go, and I work every show to the absolute best of my ability."

In a 40-plus-year career, Fred can count on one hand how many times he feels he hasn't given the audience what it needed. And that's not even using the Pinky or Ruby ring.

Fred is philosophical about the transition from a simpler time to one where device inundation is a concern for so many.

"It's a new day. It's a new life happening. The technology has certainly reared its ugly head or its beautiful head. It's really an unbelievable thing that has evolved, what people are

"Ultimately, what I've done will stay with people as long as they want it to."



able to do with their devices on a very powerful level. Communication obviously has increased. The technology certainly has a place in this world. You can't deny it, that's the bottom line. Where it I think falls down is the entertainment factor. It's all about looking at a video or a cartoon, something on this piece of technology, this screen. From that you start losing the human-to-human connection and to speak to someone about your thoughts and feelings because so much of it is tied into the technology," laments Fred.

It's kind of a case of not shooting the messenger, except that the messenger sometimes needs to take a bullet. Or at least put your phone down now and again. In any case, Fred identifies himself as a sort of antidote to those who have been bitten by the venomous technology bug. Or snake.

"So, what I tell myself is that so much of what I'm doing is a balance to the technology. You know, I'm not a cartoon. I'm a father. I'm a grandfather. I've learned a skill of playing guitar and singing songs that I've written. And when I get up on stage, that's the most fundamental level of communication that I can imagine. How basic, and how pure and beautiful is that? When you think of that whole process, what it takes to go from the safety and comfort of your own home to another venue to share in something, whether it's dance or music or theatre, that really is an important part of our life, of our world. I relish that and I honour that in myself and in other performers who are still doing that. And there's a whack in Canada!"

Legacy?

"My answer is always, it's none of my business. I don't do any of this for legacy. I know that people have very deep feelings about what I've contributed to the world. Ultimately, what I've done will stay with people as long as they want it to. They will pass it on if they want to. I can't force the issue in any way at all. So, legacy? I am very proud of what I've done. I've been allowed to do this in a lifetime."

*I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence:
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.*

"The course of my life could easily have gone in another direction," says Fred. "I could have been a bitter young man thinking that my sister and dad died within a year of each other. You know, oh, woe is me. It may have fallen off the path, but it didn't. I didn't allow it to go in any other direction. I learned and gained a sense of strength from that. Where I have always based my career, my life, is that I can make a difference in the lives of others. I can attempt to make a difference in the lives of others through my music and can be a better person on this planet by being friendly, by listening to people, by gaining strength about what life is all about."

Good answer. |



PANAMA CITY'S FOOD REVOLUTION

by KATE ROBERTSON

“It will be pioneer travellers who will tell the rest of the world what Panama is,” says Annie Young, my tour guide. I’m trying to listen intently as she talks about what she calls “authentic” tourism in Panama. But my frontal lobes are abandoning me as my taste buds are seduced by the yuca tostada that I’m eating – my mind reeling to figure out the explosion of taste.

What’s that sauce? Ah, I think it’s garlic mayo (it was, we confirmed with the chef) smeared on the house-made tostada, paper-thin slices of tuna lovingly placed just-so and sprinkled with scallions. It sounds simple, but the flavour profile strikes that perfect umami balance.

We’re at a little hole-in-the-wall fonda or cafeteria, called Lo Que Hay (roughly translates to “what there is”) on a busy side street in Panama City’s old town centre, Casco Antiguo. If there wasn’t a small sandwich board out front, you might miss it as you walk by on the narrow sidewalks, distracted by the pedestrian bustle and the noisy, brightly painted diablos rojos, traditional Panamanian buses with blingy hood ornaments and splashy mural-style paintings of folklore and religious icons on every spare inch.

Lo Que Hay is small, and the daily menu board only offers six or so dishes, featuring what’s fresh and available that day – elevated Panamanian dishes with a twist. It’s run by Chef Jose Carles, who also operates an award-winning fine-dining restaurant called Donde Jose, which takes reservations months in advance.

Panama is sinking money into this trendy, touristy neighbourhood, which is where you can find a lot of the cool new boutiques, breweries and cafés in the city. Casco Antiguo is also where to head for lively nightlife and rooftop bars. I’m sure I’m not the only one to predict that in a few years, Casco Antiguo could be giving Cartagena’s (tourist-filled) Casco Viejo a run for its money.

ABOVE | Grilled Octopus at Mestizo. Photo: Santa Maria Hotel & Golf Resort
RIGHT | Conger Fish Tiradito. Photo: Intimo

PAGE 10 | (Clockwise): Steak at The Grill House FSH & STK. Photo: Santa Maria Hotel & Golf Resort
Kitchen staff at Intimo. Photo: Intimo
Mini arepas with beef. Photo: Kate Robertson

Unlike some Latin American cities, where tasty street food is plentiful, it's rare to see street food carts in Panama. In certain neighbourhoods, though, los fonderos or food shacks, are still a big part of the city's cultural identity. Like at Cuara y Cuara on Avenida Peru, where you can get traditional Panamanian foods like warm patacones (fried plantain) or carimanolas (shredded meat wrapped in dough and deep-fried) served in brown paper bags.

At the Mercado de Mariscos, the seafood market at the foot of the Casco

lovers will rejoice over the juicy tomahawk steak at The Grill House FSH & STK. At Mestizo, you can sample modern Panamanian dishes infused with Mediterranean flavours – things like tender char-grilled octopus served with fresh watercress and heart of palm salad on a creamy hummus pixbae (a typical Panamanian palm tree fruit) purée. Or mini arepas (like a pancake, but made with ground maize) topped with slivers of roast beef, a dollop of chimichurri and microgreens, and one of Santa Maria's famous chichitas, a distinctive



Viejo, there are also a dozen or so outdoor food stalls, with cheap plastic tables and upbeat Latin music, serving killer seafood dishes like ceviche, paired with Balboa beer or a freshly made mojito, for a reasonable price.

I'm staying on the other side of the city at the Santa Maria Hotel & Golf Resort, a recent addition to the Marriott Luxury Collection. Although it's only a 15 minute drive from here to the downtown skyscrapers, with a crystal blue pool tucked next to the sweeping emerald golf course and palm trees swaying in the breeze, it really feels like an oasis of cool, calm greenery.

The property has five on-site dining options, making it easy to continue my Panamanian culinary adventure. Here, innovative dishes are created with local, seasonal ingredients by Executive Chef Dani Osorio.

For upscale dinner options, meat

cocktail made with seco herrerano, a sugar cane alcohol.

When it comes to food, the San Francisco neighbourhood is the city's new gem. Undergoing gentrification over the last several years, the area is filled with food trucks, boutiques, and cafes where you're more apt to see locals than tourists. Local restaurants and chefs are moving in.

"We opened in San Francisco in 2014 because we didn't want to be in areas that were overrun," says Robert Martin, co-owner of Intimo and El Solar. Martin saw a future in the neighbourhood due to its geographic position in the city – in the middle of city traffic, and everything is no more than 30 minutes away.

For Martin, San Francisco is what Casco Antiguo was seven years ago. "It's a new neighbourhood with innovative restaurants and bars that welcomes



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tourists and locals alike. Casco Antiguo has maintained more of its spirit in tourism.”

Intimo is a small, intimate restaurant with an atmospheric long bar that beckons to you to pull up a stool and order one of their special house cocktails. A few tables skirt the windowed walls and there’s picnic table seating on the back patio.

The menu is seasonal and uses 90 per cent local ingredients, including from the garden behind the patio. Although inspiration for the menu comes from all over the world, Chef Chombolin Alba creates twists with Panamanian ingredients and always injects Intimo’s DNA. With so many enticing selections – like frijoles, beans cooked with tamarind, pickled watermelon and local cheese, and arroz con pifia, rice cooked with vegetable stock, sweet crispy plantain cubes, and puffed crispy corn and cashews – choosing becomes difficult.

Martin’s second collaboration, El Solar, opened in the neighbourhood in spring 2020, a Franco-Caribbean restaurant that he declares is serving a cuisine that has not yet been merged in Panama’s gastronomic history.

Panama has long been known as a melting pot of ethnicities, and the nation’s cuisine reflects that. There’s an influence from the country’s native indigenous communities and the fact that Panama, at its narrowest, is only 48 kilometres, means flavours and ingredients from both Caribbean and Pacific communities are prevalent. A history of international diversity is thanks to the canal, which took centuries to bring to a reality, and workers from all over the world were brought to build it and now operate it.

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Even the national dish, sancocho de gallina, a chicken stew, pays homage to this diversity, standing as a symbol for the regional variations on ingredients that are added, depending on what’s available.

“The food scene in Panama City is solid and continuously evolving,” says Martin. “It has also made a difference that local chefs like Felipe Milanes, Mario Castellon and Carlos Chombolin Alba have returned from overseas. The next step is having the world know more of what’s going on here – more critics, both locally and internationally.”

Thinking back to Young’s words, you might say there’s a food revolution taking place in Panama City, and pioneer food lovers are catching on. They will tell the rest of the world about it. |

For *IF YOU GO* information, visit www.seniorlivingmag.com/articles/panama-food-revolution

FOREVER FIT

by EVE LEES

STAYING FIT – YET SAFE – DURING A PANDEMIC

Research shows being indoors among many people increases the risk of contracting COVID-19. That may make you uncomfortable visiting the gym. Like other sectors, however, the fitness industry has made changes to lower that risk.

Kevin Reid, a Certified Personal Trainer in Surrey, has offered his fitness facility to individuals and couples since 2004. Now, during these extraordinary times, he realizes his facility is inherently COVID-friendly.

“It’s private, allowing for social distancing with up to two people in a family or friend social bubble. But more important, it’s equipped with fresh, circulating air,” says Reid.

In his home-based facility, fresh air flows through the overhead garage doors and out the rear doors to the backyard. He adds, “COVID-19 is prone to airborne transmissions in closed environments, especially among larger groups of people, which makes fresh air workouts a much safer alternative.”

Reid changed his fee structure to accommodate private workouts for one or two people. He also offers workouts with or without a trainer. No walk-ins are allowed, appointments must be made in advance, and there is a one-hour disinfecting and deep cleaning of equipment between each appointment.

Do your research when shopping for an indoor exercise facility, advises Reid, whether it’s a public centre or a private gym like his. Enquire about cleaning and disinfecting policies, what physical-distance protocols are enforced, what the capacity limits are and if reservations are necessary. Check also for fresh air circulation from open doors and windows, or the use of outdoor areas for fitness classes.

Wearing a face mask is advised when physical distancing in the gym is a challenge. However, it is not advised for very intense activity. The mask may make you feel the workout more, even for those very fit, says Reid.

“Covering your mouth and nose makes it difficult for air and heat to leave your body, so it’s important to adjust your workout accordingly by how you feel,” he says.

If you must wear a mask, reduce your intensity if you feel dizzy, lightheaded, short of breath, or extreme fatigue during and after the workout. Reid suggests saving your higher intensity workouts for when you can safely exercise without a mask.



ABOVE | (top) Kevin Reid, Certified Personal Trainer, South Surrey. Photo: Tyler Reid (Bottom) Reid's private gym allows for safe workouts during COVID-19. Photo: Kevin Reid

To further minimize your risk and exposure in the gym, consider shortening your workout, using fewer pieces of equipment, and perhaps (for peace of mind) bring your own stretching mat, foam roller, elastics, etc.

If you’re still uncomfortable visiting the gym, there are other fitness options: Consider online exercise classes or a walking or jogging program alone or with those in your social bubble. Perhaps hire a personal trainer to design your own home workout (indoors or outdoors). Certified Personal Trainers renew their certificates yearly and are regularly updated on exercise issues, including dealing with a pandemic, assures Reid.

“COVID-19 will be around for some time,” says Reid. “Being active is a huge factor for good health – but do it safely.” |

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-health-news.com



CAMPFIRE CONNECTIONS

by JANE CASSIE

There's nothing like campfires; the mesmerizing flame, the scent of burning bark, the warmth from red hot embers. They have a magical way of drawing us near, whether it's to roast marshmallows, share a story or strum a guitar. And though they can instantly revive childhood memories of family vacations and summer camp, they keep us spellbound to the present while flickering beneath a star-lit sky.

For three years, while we were building our lakefront home, the fire pit was held in high regard. As well as being our primary heat source and outdoor cooking range, it became our family's communal meeting place. It warmed us up on chilly mornings, provided grand finale comfort at the end of each day and offered an ongoing panorama from its pretty hillside perch – encompassing everything from our evolving log home and jewel-toned shoreline to the majestic inky-blue mountains that framed the backdrop.

It's a place where we shared many thoughts, goals, dreams and, yes, the occasional song. I can't think of another spot on this earth where I could challenge my adult kids to a game of 20 questions, share a spooky story (accentuated by eerie flashlight effects), or sing a chorus of "Five Hundred Miles."

Whether the mood was as lively as the crackling flames, or quieter than the soothing glow, beneath the big Cariboo sky, there was always a feeling of connectedness. Looking back, I realize some of our best family memories were created around this sizzling circle.

So, what happens now? The house is built. We have a cozy roof over our heads and the luxury of an indoor firebox. The hand-picked rocky hearth is certainly a highlight of the homestead, but it doesn't seem to have the same connecting capabilities as our outdoor inferno. Will we ever go back to our rendezvous around the fire ring, or has this blazing sidekick become as obsolete as family car camping? And will I ever sing another chorus of "Kumbaya" again?

After months of isolation, due to COVID-19, our lake place has been a safe haven, and we've enjoyed lots of family time, while remaining in our bubble. I think about how fortunate we are as I watch our offspring and their significant others head out for an afternoon stroll. The autumn days have become a little cooler and mornings have even had frost, so there will be good reason to warm up afterwards, even if it is indoors.

Who'd want to huddle around a nippy outdoor fire pit when there's a smokin' hot chimney to cuddle up in front of? Pull up an easy chair, grab a good book and a cup of hot cocoa – does it get any better?

The crackle of burning pitch and smell of sweet pine seeps into the kitchen where I prepare dinner. I naturally assume it's coming from our great room, where my husband is stoking

ABOVE | The author (4th from left) enjoying pre-pandemic family fun and connections around the campfire. Photo: Brent Cassie

the fire. “It’ll be a toasty welcome when the crew comes in from the cold,” I say to myself, more as affirmation than any other reason. “Who needs a campfire when you have all the comforts of home?”

A quick glance out the kitchen window gives me my answer. Instead of retreating to the heated family room, huddled on the hillside and bundled in their autumn duds are five of our crew. They’ve formed that familiar ring and all eyes are riveted on the one primary focal point – those licking flames. The fiery blaze cuts into the fresh timber, crackles and pops, then lashes about in the blustery fall breeze. Yet, despite the chill factor, it has their undivided attention. And after watching, I realize nothing will ever take the place of this communal hot spot.

Campfire connections – it’s a place where tales are told, games are played and a round of “Sittin’ on the Dock of the Bay” will be revived again! |



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BEATRIX POTTER COUNTRY

by CHRIS & RICK MILLIKAN

England's beautiful northwest has long attracted eminent poets, artists... and travellers like us! There, two daytrips reveal the Lake District's renowned landscapes and the extraordinary life of Beatrix Potter, celebrated children's writer-illustrator.

From our Windermere guesthouse, a gentle downhill stroll takes us to Bowness Pier. Purchasing round-trip ferry tickets, we board *Muriel II*. "Decades ago, fishermen founded this company to link our many lakeside communities," intones Captain Stan. "England's busiest waterway, Lake Windermere's 16kms long... and designated public highway!" The little wooden foot-ferry crosses to the forested western shore, docking at Ferry House.

Minibus #525 whisks us to Near Sawrey, the sleepy hamlet where Beatrix Potter once lived. Awaiting scheduled entry into her two-story farmhouse, the kitchen garden enchants us. Amid hollyhocks, rhubarb and sprouting leeks, an easel with drawing paper stands ready for budding artists. A beehive snuggles into the niche in the slate wall. This delightful mixed "plot" exemplifies "allotments" mentioned in Potter's books.

Stepping inside 17th century Hill Top, fresh yellow flowers brighten the dimly lit parlour. Sticks of firewood

crackle in the cast iron grate. A steaming teakettle on the hob suggests Beatrix herself might pop in for a cup of tea. Considering her eclectic collection of knickknacks, framed art and needlework, a chat would be fascinating!

Docent Margaret recounts Beatrix Potter's story. "Adjusting to her fiancé's sudden death, Beatrix bought Hill Top using royalties from *The Tale of Peter Rabbit*, her debut bestseller. For 30 years, she lived in these rooms, looking now much as they did then."

Pointing out a handsome lion doorknocker and lustrous brasses decorating the fireplace, she observes, "An ardent antique collector, Beatrix bought items that pleased her. She adored her old oak desk, but most often wrote and sketched in nooks and crannies around the property."

Potter's storybooks lie open to depictions of her whimsical characters with household backgrounds. One shows Tom

ABOVE | Lake Windermere located in Lake District National Park.

PAGE 16 | (Top to Bottom): The parlour in Potter's Hill Top home. A letter the author/illustrator wrote referencing Peter Rabbit. The exterior of Hill Top farmhouse and gardens where Potter spent time dreaming up her tales. Photos: Chris & Rick Millikan

Kitten's family at her hearth, another the bay window. Samuel Whiskers poses at her mahogany sideboard. Jemima Puddle-duck waddles beside the garden gate. "Beatrix used her cats, resident mice and neighbourhood critters as models," Margaret reminds us. "Country-dressed, they playfully portrayed Lake District folks and traditions."

Upstairs, a glass case displays the original handwritten "picture" letter sent to her favourite governess' ailing son. The illustrated story gave him an amusing account of a rabbit named Peter. Years later, Beatrix borrowed it and developed a full-length manuscript featuring more black-and-white drawings. Turned down by London's publishers, she self-published 250 copies for friends and family. Finally, in 1902, *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* was commercially published, highlighted by watercolours. Reprinted six times, it was translated into 35 languages. Over the next 28 years, 22 "little white story-books" followed.

Story-based objects fill a large cabinet opposite. Familiar Potter characters embellish games, puzzles, china dishes, wallpaper and pillows. Others appear as porcelain figurines and in colouring books. On top sits a stuffed Peter Rabbit "dolly," the first merchandise sold.

Other rooms reflect family life. In an alcove, mini-furnishings, people and childhood curiosities fill her Victorian-style dollhouse. Brother Bertram's enormous landscapes and a small painting by her mother hang in another.

Leaving Beatrix' beloved home and gardens, we investi-

gate Near Sawrey. Next door at Buckle Yeat guesthouse, a hay-stuffed, life-sized figure beckons. We commiserate with Mister McGregor on the rustic bench out front. Several Potter tales feature this bewhiskered gardener's struggles to keep pesky rabbits out of his vegetable patch.

A map helps locate spots used in other classics. A sculptured Jemima Puddle-Duck guards the Tower Banks Arms entryway. Ginger and Pickles shop remains on the corner opposite Peter Rabbit's red post box. It's a short walk from Anvil Cottage in *The Tale of Samuel Whiskers* to the Old Post Office pictured in *The Tale of the Pie and the Patty-Pan*. There, we sight Castle Cottage. At age 47, Beatrix married the local solicitor and moved to his house, just across the road from Hill Top.

Back aboard the minibus, the driver runs us into neighbouring Hawkshead. Beatrix Potter Gallery is located in a 17th century stone building. Here, her husband's former law offices showcase Beatrix' original artwork and personal correspondence. Our favourite letter reflects her support of a tenant farm family... by loaning them a washtub! Another describes how she initiated a district nurse service.

One write-up reports Hill Top as "only the first" of Potter's 15 farms. By 1930, she owned more than 1,600 hectares of farmland, chosen to preserve the rural lifestyle that inspired her. Though mainly managing them, endearing photos depict her in woollen suits, clogs and straw hat, "mucking in" with her workers. As a sheep farmer, she prospered raising heritage



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Herdwicks, thereby saving this dying local breed. Upon her death in 1943, Beatrix bequeathed all her properties to the National Trust.

Outside, cobblestone lanes lead us past clusters of white-washed cottages and quirky shops. Regional specialties stack the shelves inside Hawkshead Relish Company. Spicy, hand-cut vegetable Piccalilli chutney becomes a perfect souvenir. Crossing to the cozy pub at Kings Arms Hotel, battered haddock, chips and mushy peas conclude our outing.

The next morning at Bowness Pier, roundtrip “walkers” tickets on a bigger ferry take us to Wray Castle on Windermere Lake’s northwestern shore. From a stone jetty, a wooded pathway winds us to a gothic revival castle, complete with turrets and towers. Inside grand oak doors, a volunteer explains that the elaborate Victorian “country house” was built in the 1840s. Now open to the public year-round, it offers family-friendly events inside and out.

Beatrix and her family holidayed here for three months. Themed rooms reflect her summer stay. Beatrix’ Laboratory provides hands-on experiments for youngsters. Peter Rabbit’s Adventure promotes dress-up and role-play. Beatrix Potter’s Picnic evokes her 16th birthday party. Placemats introduce family members and Hardwicke Rawnsley, then vicar at Low Wray Church. A lifelong family friend, his conservationist views fired her enthusiasm for preserving Lake District lands. Rawnsley later became a founder of the National Trust, castle owner since 1929.

An upstairs room contains Beatrix’s diary. Cracking her secret code in 1958, 15 years of detailed entries disclose her fascination with art and biology. Among her discoveries in surrounding woodlands, one treasured sighting may have motivated her first mushroom watercolour. Another displays her exquisite mushroom paintings.

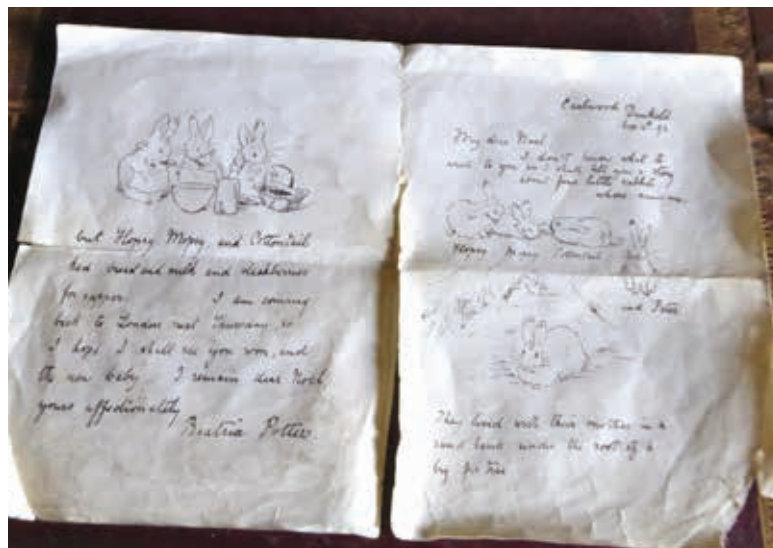
An eminent botanist, Beatrix’ Uncle Roscoe helped her develop a fungi expertise. He also persuaded fellow scientists at prestigious Kew Botanical Gardens to present her experimental research on spore germination. Including detailed drawings of microscopic fungi, her meticulous work was ultimately dismissed, abruptly ending her scientific pursuits.

Outside, in the castle’s old courtyard, the original kitchen is refurbished as Kitchen Court Café. Hearty soup, chicken casserole and crusty bread fuel our seven-km trek to Ferry House.

Much of the pathway passes through Beatrix’ former holdings. Native oak, hawthorns, alders and maples shade most of our way. Striding through the lofty pine forest, along Lake Windermere’s winding flowered shoreline and onto a grassy spit, we catch the last ferry back to Bowness. The Flying Pig’s mouthwatering steak and ale potpies reward today’s efforts.

During our glorious sun-drenched week, ferryboats, buses and sturdy shoes help us explore England’s wondrous Lake District. Day tripping into Beatrix Potter’s extraordinary life remains our walking holiday highlight. |

For IF YOU GO information, visit www.seniorlivingmag.com/articles/beatrix-potter-country



SEE THE WORLD CLEARLY

by CHRISTINE BLANCHETTE

As we age, it becomes more challenging to read the fine print, along with blurred vision, and the possible risk of eye disease. Naturally, our eyes age as we do. However, with proper eye care, exercise and diet, our eye health can improve.

In an interview, Dr. Jessica Chang serves up eye care tips, and how exercise and diet can maintain good vision.

“We all associate the eye with vision, an organ that helps you see your world clearly,” begins Dr. Chang. “When our vision gets blurry, our first thought is that we need eyeglasses to see again. Often, the solution isn’t that simple, and an eye disease could be the cause of our blurry vision. Our eyes are complicated organs with many different parts and tissues. Maintaining good eye health ensures every part of the eye is in good working order so that we can see well for years to come. When you go for your routine eye exam, your eye doctor assesses your vision as well as eye health. A ‘healthy eye’ means everything from the cornea at the front of the eye to the retina at the back of the eye is functioning optimally without any signs of disease.”

For an overall eye care routine, Dr. Chang’s first tip is to get a regular eye exam. Regardless of any vision changes, eye exams are recommended every one to two years as we age to detect eye diseases as early as possible. At early stages of many diseases, your vision could still be very clear, and you may be unaware of any underlying issues.

Her second tip is to use UV protection. “Wear sunglasses and a wide-brimmed hat that deters UV rays from entering your eye and the sensitive skin around your eyes,” says Dr. Chang. “Harmful UV rays are strong enough to penetrate into the eye and contribute to the formation of cataracts and age-related macular degeneration.”

Tip No. 3 is to eat healthy. “The health of our eyes depends on key nutrients. A diet rich in antioxidants (eg. vitamin A and C), lutein/zeaxanthin, and omega-3 is recommended. Foods such as wild salmon and nuts are a great source of omega 3. Leafy and colourful vegetables, eggs, and citrus fruits are a great way to get your daily intake of antioxidants and lutein,” she says.

When it comes to exercising, it helps to maintain our overall fitness, which helps our eye health and vision. Common diseases, such as diabetes and hypertension, can cause an eye disease called retinopathy.

Eye technology is evolving from correcting your vision to a contact lens that can change colour.



ABOVE | Dr. Jessica Chang examines a patient. Photo: Vindaloo Creative

“Most people are surprised to learn that there are contact lenses that can correct both distance and near vision all-in-one,” says Dr. Chang. “More recently, there is a contact lens available that can change colour and darken with UV exposure outdoors and lighten to become clear when indoors. I’m most passionate about the exciting new drugs and treatments for dry eye disease. Most cases of dry eye disease stem from issues with the oil glands along our eyelid called the meibomian glands. There are new in-office treatments that target these glands to keep your eyes comfortable and your vision more stable.”

She cautions that eye damage is possible from exposure to an excessive amount of blue light from our devices, such as computers, tablets and mobile phones.

“Blue light is a stronger wavelength emitted from our devices, LED lights, sunlight, and many other sources,” says Dr. Chang. “It’s strong enough to penetrate into the eye and reach the retina; therefore, researchers believe it increases our risk of age-related macular degeneration.”

“Blue light also suppresses the release of melatonin affecting our sleep cycle, if we use our screens just before going to sleep. There are anti-reflective coatings available that block blue light entering through our glasses. It’s also wise to avoid mobile phones and other screens two hours before bed.”

As we age, our risk for certain eye diseases increases. The most common ones include age-related macular degeneration, glaucoma, and cataracts. About 65 per cent of all people who are visually impaired are aged 50 and older, while this age group comprises only 20 per cent of the world’s population.

“Monitoring your eye health regularly with your eye doctor is very important,” says Dr. Chang, “because the earlier an eye disease is detected and treated, the better the prognosis and visual outcome.” |

KEEP ON KEEPING ON!

by MARTIN DONNER

When Robertson Tait speaks, we should listen. Born 73 years ago on the banks of Loch Ness, Robertson, a proud Highlander, spent 25 years living and working in Victoria and Vancouver, and currently resides just north of Bordeaux, France with his wife, Barbara, and their two frisky felines.

His real name is Gordon Black, but he uses a nom de plume for book and song writing. “I chose Robertson Tait – being my brother’s middle name and my mother’s last name. So, if it’s books or music, I’m Robertson Tait.”

In addition to authoring novels and songs, Robertson is also a competitive swimmer and has been since age five. And his passions don’t stop there. Frankly, he is passionate about life, and living it to its fullest.

His novels are both humorous and romantic; after all, he calls himself “an unapologetic romantic.” Most of his novels are based on his extensive travels as a young international swimmer and his equestrian adventures, which, in addition to being an equestrian coach, include riding unruly former racehorses in show jumping and eventing, where rider and horse compete across the disciplines of dressage, cross-country racing and show jumping.

This multi-talented go-getter is also a singer and an actor, who now does voice-over work. Ex-pats may recognize Robertson from his appearances in several British television series and commercials.

He is not hesitant about sharing where his vitality comes from. Taking a short break from writing romantic fiction, last year, he penned *What I Eat to Reach #1 in French Masters Swimming... and other thoughts on Ageing Fitness* (available on amazon.ca and at Barnes & Noble). Making it clear he is not a doctor, dietician or even “a health guru,” Robertson shares several secrets of his exuberance in his book.



“I wrote this for anyone having doubts about their ability,” he says. “I was coming back to competitive swimming after not competing for four or five years. I wanted my book to be like I was sitting across a table having a coffee with the reader, just chatting, and giving some ‘must dos’ and exploding some myths. My purpose was to instil confidence in anyone questioning their ability or their place in competition.”

Robertson adds, “I’m hoping it is a book that a person can read in an hour or two and come away with the impetus and encouragement for their own plan of action on the nutrition front.” For Robertson, it’s all about balance. “You can offset what you may occasionally indulge in with the requisite amount of exercise to counter it.”

ABOVE | Former BCer, author and French Masters swimming competitor Robertson Tait credits moderate exercise and a “fairly” clean diet for his vitality and zest for life. Photo: Courtesy of Robertson Tait

“Rather than being a book for aspiring competitors, it is more a ‘how to keep on keeping on’ treatise,” he says. “I compete to ward off the aging threat. Through my diet and exercises, I have made a point of aging well.”

For Robertson, there are four main components to great health and a robust zest for life: water, sleep, exercise, and diet. He says, “sleep is a huge component in feeling good, being fit, and being ready to compete with the best.” The exercises of which he speaks need not be hours and hours in the gym or in the pool. “Moderate or mild exercise is perfectly fine and is actually to be preferred. It is the consistency of exercise that really matters.”

He makes a point of avoiding fast food and sugar whenever possible. But that doesn’t mean he has stopped eating dark chocolate and ice cream, two of his favourite treats. “I turn a blind eye to the sugar in those,” he says. “Having some treats is fine, even if it means an extra few minutes on your exercise bike or an extra mile added to your daily walk.” Robertson does not believe in counting calories.

“Exercising only has value if it is done regularly, and moderate exercise, particularly for seniors, is best,” he says. “Do a bit, and you’ve done more than if you had done nothing. More is not always better. You need to listen to your body and take the hint and not force yourself when it tells you not to.”

Robertson loves nature and the beauty of it in all its forms. “I am a big fan of nature – all the birds, animals and, of course, the bees.” In people, “I love to see kindness, caring and courtesy.”

His appreciation of the beauty of nature motivates him to do what he can to help reverse the damage humans have done to our environment. He is particularly interested in ridding the oceans of tons and tons of plastic. “Right now, I’m trying to only buy clothing, even swimsuits, made from plastic recycled from the ocean.”

As for aging, he says, “We really don’t have an option, do we? But as a wise man (my father) said to me many times, ‘don’t look back – something may be gaining on you.’”

Robertson knows only one direction – forward. He never looks back. |



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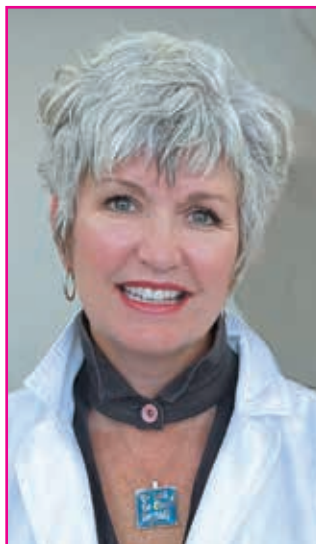
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THE HISTORY OF HALLOWE'EN

by JOHN HARRIS

It all began long ago with fire – and it's happening again, if COVID-19 doesn't interfere. But chances are, we'll still be able to get out the black fabric, stack some firewood and make a pumpkin pie. Oh, and fill a bowl with candies.

It goes back into the mists of time where it all began with fires lit against the dark nights, to bar the prowling shadows of the dead and to cook the crops brought in for winter. Around the world people have festivals to mark the harvest, to honour the dead and all combine masks, costumes, food and fire. In Canada, our festival is on October 31st and we call it Hallowe'en.

Customs of these ancient festivals have been passed from one society to the next, including us in the twenty-first century. In Canada, most of our families originated somewhere else, so the borrowing and mixing of traditions is natural. And it occurred even in the oldest places. The parades and harvest celebrations of the ancient Egyptians used ideas passed to them from the Babylonians. The Babylonians borrowed theirs from the Sumerians, who flourished 5,000 years ago. And, so it goes, back to times before there was a written history.

Our own Hallowe'en melting pot includes the bones and skulls of Mexico's Day of the Dead, bonfires of the Celts and the Druids, firecrackers of the Chinese and the harvest

food of the Iroquois and Mohawk nations.

Most of our Hallowe'en customs came to North America with Scottish and Irish immigrants. Their ancestors were the Celts. Even after the Roman conquest of the British Isles in 60AD, the Celts were partying up a storm to celebrate their form of Hallowe'en. It was almost 700 years after the Romans left Britain before Pope Gregory decided to make the local holiday into a day honouring saints of the church. The festival day of the Celts became All Saints Day and the evening before, October 31, became Hallowed Evening, or Hallowe'en.

In Europe, parades have always been part of the harvest tradition. Churches everywhere were encouraged to organize their flock into processions, and important citizens would

ABOVE | Pumpkins, decorations, costumes, candy and other confectionaries contribute to the more than \$1 billion Canadians spend on Hallowe'en each October. Photo: Bekir Donme/Unsplash

RIGHT | Day of the Dead in Mexico is a three-day celebration that starts on All Hallow's Eve, October 31st, and ends on All Saints' Day, November 2nd. Photo: Salvador Altamirano/Unsplash

dress up as famous saints or well-known patrons of the church. Our tradition of dressing up as famous people began that way.

Handing out Hallowe'en treats (love those caramels!) in exchange for tricks is also a gift from the past. Among the Celts celebrating their festival 2,000 years ago, people believed the dead returned to earth on Samhain at the end of October. On that sacred night, people gathered to light bonfires, offer sacrifices and pay homage to the dead. People dressed in skins as ghosts, demons and other malevolent creatures, performing antics in exchange for food and drink. This custom, known as mumming, dates to the Middle Ages and is known today as trick or treating.



As for the trick part, that's another European custom, which is carried on here with the playing of pranks. Scamps ringing our doorbells until the middle of the night and begging for candy and treats are not signs of our declining civilization; they are traditional parts of harvest and "day of the dead" festivals. So, wash the soap off your windows, sweep up the eggshells and toilet paper and put it all down to tradition.

Fireworks at Hallowe'en are part of festivals from China to Mexico to England. Invented in China, they are used to

scare the dead and drive away evil spirits at the beginning of the dark season. In ancient times, the noise to scare the ghouls was a drum, a horn or a gong. In England, they used "poppers" in the fall festival. Even today, groups of men gather in an English field or yard next to a cemetery. Using two anvils, a handful of gunpowder and a long fuse they set off "poppers" loud enough to wake the dead!

Those explosions are also a reminder of more recent English history; the fifth of November 1605. That was the date on which traitor Guy Fawkes was to blow up the Houses of Parliament as King James I was visiting the Lords and Commons. Fawkes had been recruited by a small group of Catholic fanatics to be the man who would set off the gunpowder. The plot was betrayed, and Fawkes was arrested on November 4th. Hallowe'en parties in England and North America often include the burning of an effigy of Guy as part of the bonfire.

Hallowe'en today is also a commercial event increasingly important to retailers. We spend money on everything from costume rentals and party supplies to fireworks and candy. Money aside, it could also be that the interest and affection for Hallowe'en has less to do with advertising than with our ongoing enjoyment of having a place in the natural cycle of the year.

So, go ahead, pick up that space helmet or sword, don a cape or a leopard skin bikini. Be sure to make enough noise to scare the dead (while respecting physical distancing protocols), and use the old Babylonian phrase, "Party on!" |

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WALKING A CAMINO: A SCALLOP SHELL OF QUIET

by J. KATHLEEN THOMPSON

*Give me my scallop shell of quiet
My staff of faith to walk upon,
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My bottle of salvation
My gown of glory, hope's true gage
And thus I'll take my pilgrimage.*

—Sir Walter Raleigh (1604)

We look back at our travelling days now with a nostalgia that stings, but for me, it is memories of walking the *caminos* in quiet corners of Spain and France that evoke the most longing. Perhaps it was because I learned that through the pastoral rhythm of a walking pilgrimage, we find a deeper connection to the earth, one that nurtures and renews one's perspective on the world. A place of mind that steadies when the ground beneath your feet is shifting.

That steadying, quieting force, for me, was the popular pilgrimage to the cathedral of Santiago de Compostela in Galicia, Spain, purportedly the site where the bones of the Apostle, Saint James (*Santiago*), were placed in the field of stars (*Compostela*). An important destination for Christian pilgrims during the Middle Ages (paying homage to the relics of this saint upped one's credentials as a believer and

won penitence for one's sins), a network of routes developed throughout Western Europe to ensure all could undertake this act of devotion. Today, each of these routes is steadily being revived and welcoming more and more pilgrims and seekers each year.

I have been fortunate enough to walk three of the pilgrim routes to Santiago: the 800km Camino Frances; the 1000km Camino Mozarabe; and the 750km Chemin du Puy. All have their singular beauty and reward and, with a sturdy pair of broken-in boots, backpack of essentials, and willingness to leave 'normal' for a while, offer all of us at any age unique portals into the timelessness and restorative power of a walking pilgrimage.

ABOVE | Camino Frances Pyrenees in the morning.

RIGHT | The author on Camino Mozarabe.

PAGE 24 | (Top) Roman ruins on Camino Mozarabe. (Bottom) The author passing through a fairytale-like village on Chemin du Puy.

TOC | A morning shot on Chemin du Puy. Photos: J. Kathleen Thompson

CAMINO FRANCES

The Camino Frances (also known as the Camino de Santiago) takes the pilgrim over the Pyrenees into Spain, through rolling Basque country into the sweeping *meseta* plains and atop the mountains of Galicia to reach Santiago. Overwhelmingly the most patronized of the caminos, one's baptism into *camino* life begins in the lively little village of St. Jean Pied de Port in the French Pyrenees. Agreeing to join the venerable fraternity of Santiago pilgrims brings with it a script of rites and rituals: *credentials* (a pilgrim passport that entitles you to inexpensive lodging along the way); *compostelas* (your certificate of completion at the end); scallop shells (to align yourself with Apostle James who wore one as a sign that he was a fisher of men); yellow arrows and ancient stone pillars (which will be your route wayfinders); village fountains en route; a codex of songs and chants; and the proper salutation



to other pilgrims. Integral to your life as a pilgrim, as well, will be the camaraderie of other *pelegrinos* [pilgrims] that cluster around you, each as excited as you about the challenges that lie ahead.

The first day crossing The Pyrenees is perhaps the pilgrim's most memorable. It is a tough but glorious walk, pungent with history. At the summit, you pass a memorial to Charlemagne's fallen men in the Battle of Roncevaux Pass in 778 and, hours later, at your night's lodging, you are greeted by *hospitaleros*, a legacy of the medieval Knights of Hospitaller.

Having once administered to the Crusader's needs, today's *hospitaleros* supply whatever comfort and encouragement the pilgrim needs to sustain them on their sacred journey. Chivalry, generously dispensed in the form of Band-Aids, moleskins, water, showers and clean beds lives on, on the camino.

Connecting with quiet traditions a thousand years deep, one wide-eyed step at a time on the camino, is an enormously humbling experience. Like pilgrims before us, possessions and needs are distilled to their most essential. Happiness becomes a clean pair of socks, a frothy café con leche, a farmer's wave, a burst of blossoms, a fellow pilgrim's smile, a pillow, the sky above you, the road beneath your feet.

CAMINO MOZARABE

Completing the Camino Frances, collecting my *compostela*, and walking triumphantly another 200 km to the ends of the earth – Cape Finisterre – in sheets of sideways rain sealed my fate as a perennial perambulator (aka “camino junkie”). Choosing to walk the Camino Mozarabe next (named after the Christian Arabs who used it) was likely as much to do with the fact it was located in southern, sunnier Spain as it did with being a quieter, less trafficked route.

Beginning deep in Andalusia, the Camino Mozarabe travels westward, linking with the Via de La Plata in Seville that brings pilgrims north to Santiago. I began in Granada, the last stronghold of the Muslim leaders and today proud centre of Andalusian culture. Added to the thrill of seeing Alhambra from my pension windows was the serendipity of being there during its annual flamenco festival in early May, where every street vibrated with the rhythm and colours of flamenco music and dance.

The Camino Mozarabe, as promised, was as lean as the dry Andalusian plains – few pilgrims, few services – and a multitude of moments to listen, linger and lose oneself in the quiet reverie of walking through once feudal lands. Long spells in the countryside were broken by brief immersions in such storied cities as Granada, Cordoba and Merida, where the palimpsest of cultures woven into Andalusian life and architecture strikes you at every turn. Once past Salamanca,

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home of one of the oldest universities in Europe, the hills of Galicia emerge, and walks that “skim the edge of heaven” eventually merge with those moving westward on the Camino Frances.

CHEMIN DU PUY

The Chemin du Puy (also known as the Via Podiensis) is one of several routes through Western Europe that guide pilgrims to the Spanish border, and onwards to Santiago. Named after its point of departure – Le Puy-en-Velay, a small city situated about 100kms southwest of Lyon – the route was “christened” in 950 by Bishop Godescale, who was one of the first non-Hispanic pilgrims to go to Compostela.

The path, which doubles as the GR65 (a *grande Randonnée* trail), crosses the Massif Central and the extraordinarily beautiful regions of Allier, L’Aubrac, the Lot valley, the Tarn and Garonne Rivers, Gers, and Bearn before meeting two other pilgrim routes at the foot of the Pyrenees. To fulfil its secondary mandate as a recreational trail, the *chemin* takes you through the traditional byways of farming France,



scrupulously bypassing large cities, suburbs, highways and traffic.

Mountaintops and hedgerows of walnut trees and beech forests at the start of the Chemin du Puy give way to rolling lands of plenty. When not buried in cornfields, you are between vineyards and cow pastures, lentil fields and fallow plots, vegetable patches and fields of freshly harvested hay.

It is the not-Paris of France – the silent, unchanging, unheralded side of the country. Here be farmers’ fields that glisten with goodness, carts with clusters of grapes left for the pilgrim, astonishingly fairy-tale-like villages, 11th century bridges and châteaux, glimpses into life on a barge along the famous Canal du Midi, and laughter shared with pilgrim friends over communal meals prepared in the *gites*. As can be expected, food enjoys a special status on a pilgrim route through France; best to come with an appetite!

As I reflect on my *camino* experiences, the image that lingers is a stop sign en route that was

turned into a walker’s mantra: “Don’t stop walking.” Deep wisdom lay in those words. It echoed the last thing the Buddha said to his followers: “Walk on.” The Christian theologian, St. Augustine, likewise maintained that things were solved by walking – “*solvitur ambulando*,” and German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche declared that “all truly great thoughts are conceived while walking.” Virginia Woolf revelled in the “space to spread my mind out in” on her walks through England’s downs, and William Woodsworth’s poetic muse was a lifetime of tramping up mountains, through forests and public roads (reputedly 15kms a day). We are in good company when we commit to a *camino*!

The less romantic sides of “tramping” may be escaping mention but, yes, there will be heat, rain, bugs, blisters, another hill to climb, another rocky path to navigate, and another snorer in a cramped *refugio* to bear. But with the right preparation, resilience and mindfulness, you will find that the “ponder-friendly” pace of a walking pilgrimage is a beautiful way to fill your scallop shell of quiet. |

For IF YOU GO information, visit www.seniorlivingmag.com/articles/walking-a-camino

MAKEOVER: BEFORE & AFTER

by *INSPIRED* STAFF

As a recent empty nester and retiree, Angela Marquardt is entering a new chapter in her life. What better time, she thought, than now to indulge in a makeover, a refresh!

A wife and mother to two daughters (both now in their 20s), Angela spent the bulk of her career as an Early Childhood Educator with Camosun College. These days, she and her husband are busy building a new home in Brentwood Bay. She also adores travelling and last year explored the Gulf Islands with family and friends.

"I would love to travel more," she says, "I walked across Spain on the Camino de Santiago with my daughter, sister and niece in 2018.

She serendipitously stumbled across a notice about *INSPIRED*'s Makeover Contest online.

"I thought 'What the heck, this fits the bill and then some!' I figured, what have I got to lose?"

Angela first visited Suzanne's & Jenny's clothing store, where she got suggestions and tips for selecting outfits to best flatter her body type.

"We discussed best colours, clothing styles to avoid and which to look for," she says. "It was fun to try new clothing styles outside my comfort zone."

At Shimmer Body and Nails, Angela was treated to a luxurious facial with a relaxing face massage. There, she learned about her skin's unique needs and recommendations for care.

Finally, Angela met Hana at Akai Hair Design.

"She took the time to listen to my lifestyle, and the ease of care I wanted in a hairstyle," she says. "I have been growing out my grey for last two years... but my non-existent hairstyle was making me feel lack lustre and like I needed a bit of a boost."

Angela's family was impressed with her "reveal" on show day. "They loved my hair, makeup and clothes. They were very proud of me!"

"Overall, I loved my makeover experience," says Angela. "I think the best part was being ultra-pampered and feeling worthy of being spoiled. I am very grateful to have had the opportunity and experience to get out there and strut my stuff and shine!"

WHAT THE STYLIST DID:

HAIR: Angela came into the salon with lovely, long, natural hair. Since she did not want a lot of upkeep, I went with a low-maintenance colour option. Her hair was whiter in the front and more salt and pepper in the back, so I wanted to even it out.

I added baby lights throughout the back and a few highlights around her face. I then added Redken Shades EQ gloss



in a champagne colour to her whole head. The gloss is very gentle and gives a great shine. It will fade out nicely and not leave a regrowth line, reducing the need to keep up the colour. Some of Angela's grey hair picked up a little of the champagne toner, as well.

For the cut, we decided to keep the length, but give it more shape. I added a lot of layers and texture to give her hair more movement. With long hair that hangs straight down, it can look weighted and can drag down your features. With texture and layers, the hair can move and appears bouncier.

MAKEUP: Though Angela has beautiful skin, I started her makeup application with a primer to smooth the surface of the skin. I then applied a BB cream foundation. For her eyes, I did a very slight smoky eye, adding the darker shadow around the corners of her eyes to open them up. A kiss of pink blush on the apples of her cheeks and pink-tinted gloss completed her look. |

SPECIAL THANKS to the Victoria businesses that contributed to the makeover and fashion show:

Akai Hair Salon - 101, 2559 Quadra Street, 250-383-3227.

Shimmer Body and Nail Spa - 4050 Santa Maria Ave., 250-881-3787.

Suzanne's & Jenny's - 777, 190 Royal Oak Drive, at Broadmead Village Shopping Centre, 250-658-3618.

Photographer: Regina Akhankina from Couture Photography. www.couture.photography 204-823-3870.

CARING FROM A DISTANCE

By WENDY JOHNSTONE

Many caregivers come face to face with the challenges of distance caregiving as they try to support their loved one's care and navigate the health care system. It can be quite a ride: feeling uncertain about what to do; guilt for not doing enough or for not physically being there; sadness about our loved one's changes; anxiety and stress of the inability to travel or the frequency and unpredictability of travel (especially now!); and fear of the unknown.

Here are some tips for long distance caregivers:

Stay connected: It doesn't matter what methods you use; dedicate a specific time each week or every day to reach out. This is even more important with COVID-19 where social isolation and limited ability to mobilize in the community are concerns for many.

Talk first, act later: Before jumping in and getting too involved with researching what help is available, start with an evaluation of the person you are caring for (or concerned about) and their situation. Find out what is being done by in-town family, neighbours, friends, and community health professional.

Broach (carefully!) the topic of future care needs, legal and financial decision-making, advanced care planning and housing options.

Learn everything you can about the person you are caring for and their disease or disability. This becomes the backbone of your information and a care plan. It also helps you as a caregiver better understand what the care recipient is going through.

Build a team that works: Find out who is in regular contact with the person being cared for and ask them to be part of the care team. This may need to be modified or adjusted in current times. Your team will include other family caregivers, close friends, or community care providers, to name a few. If you are taking the main role of coordinating the support, be clear in advance on what type of care and help is needed and be respectful of people's limits, skills, availability, and willingness.

Find a quarterback: Designate one person as a primary contact person – preferably a local family member who can take on this role. Coordinating who is doing what and when is critical as it can be overwhelming and confusing for the care recipient to juggle many visits and calls. Store information in one spot (virtually or in a hard copy format).

Get to know the locals: Make time to research programs and supports available in the community. Ask your local care team members to make inquiries and collect information. Often the key is having one or two people consistently reachable at critical times. Patience and persistence are a must to navigate a healthcare system from afar!

Build a safety net: By creating a plan of what would take place in worst-case scenarios, a “caregiver safety net” can be formed and risks can be managed. Pandemic or not, have a back-up plan in case you become ill or the local family caregiver cannot provide care.

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



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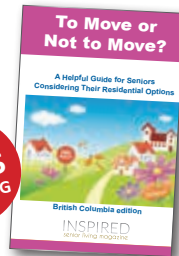
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ALL WE HAVE IS ALL WE NEED



COURAGEOUS & OUTRAGEOUS

by PAT NICHOL

I am aware that in this time of COVID-19, it may seem that there is not much to be grateful for. However, as we move through this month towards Thanksgiving, we need to pause for a short time and think about what we have. I am grateful that I live on the west coast of Canada, on an island where I am close to the sea and within easy distance of other islands when I want a change of scenery.

I have lived on Vancouver Island for 41 years and there are still parts of it I have yet to discover. Recently, I had the opportunity to spend a few days on a solo trip, visiting places that are within a couple of hours of my home – places I had never seen before.

I have driven up and down the island many times. I have been to Gold River and to Wass Camp, but never to Port Hardy. However, on this trip, I chose a closer visit. My base was a small hotel in Cedar, The Cranberry Arms. Not terribly striking from the outside, but appearances can be deceiving. The rooms are bright and sparkling clean, the beds are comfortable, and the staff friendly and welcoming.



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Some friends from Salt Spring Island had moved to Saltaire, so I had a good excuse to find it – and

them. I had a wonderful time with tea and good company. As a bonus, this charming community between Ladysmith and Chemainus has a delightful second-hand bookstore to explore.

I had driven by Lantzville many times, but this time I turned off the highway to admire the homes and vistas. Magnificent!

In Coombs, another friend served up a delicious lunch and everything came from her own garden. I did attempt to go to the Goats on the Roof farmers' market, but in this time of COVID-19 and crowds, I drove in, turned around and drove out. Too many people.

My final treat to myself was dinner at the Crow & Gate Pub in Cedar. Then, a lovely rest in a comfy bed and an easy drive home to Victoria rounded out my little getaway.

I was grateful for the opportunity to explore new communities and enjoy new experiences. And I was equally grateful to come home. I hope you also take the time to look around you and appreciate all that you have – no matter how grand or humble.

Happy Thanksgiving! |

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

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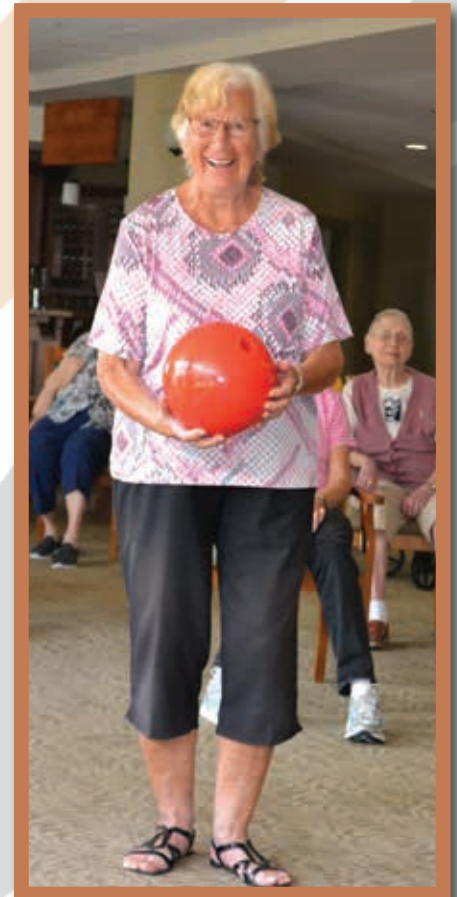
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