

# INSPIRED

55+ lifestyle magazine

DECEMBER 2020

A portrait of an older man with white, wavy hair, wearing a blue denim shirt. He is looking slightly to the left of the camera with a gentle expression. The background is a soft-focus green and yellow foliage.

CARTOONIST  
GRAHAM HARROP

NAVIGATING TOWARDS  
A LIFE WITH PURPOSE

THE REWARDS  
OF PAYING  
ATTENTION

SENSATIONAL  
SYDNEY & BEYOND:  
THE JOY OF  
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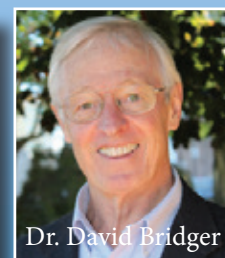
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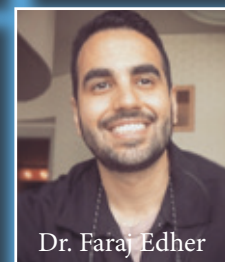
Dr. Bobby Birdi



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Dr. Faraj Edher

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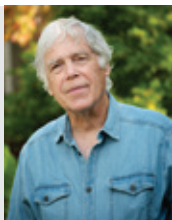


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He may have gotten what he considers a late start in life, but this award-winning cartoonist will not shuffle off this mortal coil with anything left undone.

Photo: Tom Gould



## INSPIRED

55+ lifestyle magazine

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## resources

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## THRIVE BEYOND 55

by BARBARA RISTO, PUBLISHER



It's mid-November as I "pen" this column and already the street where I live has turned into a Christmas Wonderland. Three families spent the weekend adorning their homes and lawns with festive lights and decorations, breaking the age-old rule of waiting until the first of December.

I witnessed the progress of their efforts with amusement and some reflection on 2020.

As we turn the page on one of the most tumultuous years in our history, I'm curious to see how we will apply the many lessons we have learned in the year ahead.

For me, this year has been about learning how to set aside fear in order to embrace change. It has been about abandoning judgment to embrace compassion. It has been about turning down or tuning out the noise of opportunistic, radical news and social media in order to hear the profound peace inside my own soul.

Most of us will likely agree that the world will never be the same. Some of us have lost loved ones, others have lost businesses or livelihoods. We have all been forced to stretch our capacity to endure, absorb and modify. We have had to dig deep to discover the bedrock foundation, where no amount of surface turmoil can shake us.

The question as we get ready to leave 2020 and enter another year is – how do we choose now?

Do we stay stuck in the past, casting longing glances over our shoulder at what was, or do we turn the page and step forward to embrace the next chapter of our evolution as humans upon this earth?

We have an opportunity, if we choose to take it, to dismantle some of our sacred cows – systems that have not served us well for a long time – and build new platforms and structures to better serve humanity world wide.

It doesn't require taking down borders, it simply means reaching across the divisions to shake the hands of our neighbours around the world. People who, like most of us, want to be happy, and want the chance to be the best version of themselves.

My prayer as we move into 2021 is that we embrace our best ideas and most loving natures and leave our worst impulses behind... that we take courage from the gentle angelic reminder, "Fear not!" and make an authentic, spirited effort to spread goodwill, love and joy.

There may be steep hills and deep valleys still to come, but as I watch my festive neighbours string another strand of lights, I'm betting on a brighter future and a better world.

Blessings to all.


~ Barbara

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Cartoonist  
Graham Harrop having a  
laugh in North Vancouver.  
*Photo: Tom Gould*



# GRAHAM HARROP:

## A FEW STROKES OF A PEN AND THEN A FUNNY LINE

by JOHN THOMSON

“Are you a late bloomer?” I ask.

“Definitely, yes, absolutely,” says 76-year-old Graham Harrop from his home studio in North Vancouver, where he works three days a week drawing editorial cartoons for the *Vancouver Sun*.

“Tonight, I’ll be watching the six o’clock news trying to see what’s in there that could make someone laugh. That’s the routine,” he says.

And if the evening news doesn’t inspire him, there’s always nighttime.

“It’s really hard to go to sleep some nights,” he continues. “I have a brain that’s quite active. I’m always thinking. I have a piece of paper by my bed and I often wake up at three or four in the morning to write something down. Usually it’s a thumbnail sketch or just an idea, and I elaborate on it the next day.”

Graham draws the cartoon by pencil slightly larger than what appears in the *Sun* and then finishes it off by going over the pencil lines with ink.

“After that it goes onto the computer where the cartoon gets coloured and then it’s sent to the paper.”

Successful, yes, but fame and fortune came later in life; the result of a journey disrupted by circumstance and missed opportunities.

“I would have made different choices, but you do what you do with the knowledge you have at that particular point. Why didn’t you do that? You could have done that. There were life lessons in regard to looking back,” he admits. But despite the setbacks, the cartoonist never took his eye off the prize.

Graham was born in Liverpool in 1944. Dad was a bricklayer, his mum a wife and mother to Graham and his siblings, a brother and a sister. When he was seven, the family moved to Egmont, BC and then to Saltery Bay, southeast of Powell River thanks, in part, to glowing recommendations from their relatives.

“My auntie Irene was a war bride, and she would write back home and tell us about Canada and how wonderful it was,” says Graham. “One of the letters she wrote back said her son, Keith, had his own pet deer. ‘Wow,’ I said to myself, ‘I gotta get over there and get a raccoon or something.’”

Graham doesn’t remember befriending a raccoon – “the closest I came was being bitten by a skunk,” he says – but he does remember creating a little newspaper called *The Saltery Bay News* with his cousin, Richard, at age 14.

“We drew it all by hand. We only had one copy and we would walk around the neighbourhood, stand at the door until [people] had read it and then move on to the next door. Rich and I would do the cartoons and write about things that happened in Saltery Bay.”

Drawing for a living was always in the cards.

“I was 10 when I knew I wanted to be a cartoonist,” he says. “I don’t know how but I just knew. I always loved drawing, even in school, you know sketching on the margins of my books and on the covers. It was always there.”

At 16, Graham left Saltery Bay for Vancouver and a job as a copy runner at the *Vancouver Sun*. In those pre-computer days, the copy runner literally ran copy from the reporter’s desk to the news editor. It was a menial job, but it introduced him to the newsroom and the *Sun*’s editorial cartoonist, Len Norris.

“I was never his assistant, but I got to meet him, and he gave me some pointers about cartooning,” says Graham. Norris encouraged him to take a correspondence course in commercial art. Graham complied and assumed some Norris-isms. Like his hero’s, Graham’s pieces are gentle not caustic.

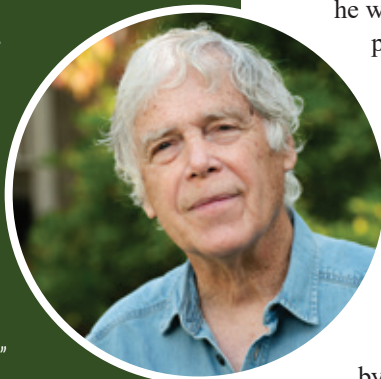
“I like to make [readers] laugh, if I can, or chuckle within the context of what’s happening that day,” he says. “I’m really not trying to get a point across; I’m trying to find the whimsy in the situation. One might suggest [Norris’s] cartoons were also quite gentle, but he had a definite point of view. He expressed it in such a way that there were really no hard edges,

# Snapshot

## with Graham Harrop

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

*"When an opportunity comes along, take it. Flat out. Someone said if you don't do it, it will stay with you the rest of your life and that's true."*



Who or what has influenced you the most and why?

*"There was a teacher in Grade 5, and I'll never forget her. Miss Brown. She understood where I was coming from and really cared enough to encourage me to put my work up in the schoolroom. She was absolutely terrific, and my dad could draw horses' heads, so my Dad, too."*

What are you most grateful for?

*"Family, opportunity. Still being alive. I'm in good health and that's something to be grateful for, too."*

What does success mean to you?

*"Taking advantage of an opportunity that's presented and running with it, even if you fall flat on your face. At the very least, you will know, at the end of the day, you did try."*

nothing that was biting. He was almost kind on what the issue of the day was."

Being in the presence of a legend was fortuitous, but at 18, young Graham had not yet carved out a name for himself. He returned to the Sunshine Coast where

he worked in a local mill's steam plant attending to and cleaning out the boilers. Three years later, he went back to Vancouver, determined to make a living by selling his cartoons to the city's two dailies, the *Vancouver Sun* and *The Province*. But freelance gigs were spotty, and he augmented his income by selling hand-drawn greeting cards.

"I'm pretty sure I went to every office building in Vancouver," he says. "I'd go up and down to different offices with my greeting cards, sell them for a dollar each. I was booted out of one or two offices in downtown Vancouver and took them out to the airport and got thrown out of the airport, too."

And when that didn't work, he sold original cartoons to tourists in Stanley Park.

"Nineteen dollars was my best day in Stanley Park. That meant I could get a room for the night."

It was a situation that would depress most people or at least prompt a re-think. But not Graham.

"There was something in me that refused to give up, that it was going to work out."

Persistent, yes. And courageous, too, but while tenacity kept him going, it also blinded him to other ways of achieving

the same result.

"There were opportunities that were presented to me and, for whatever reason, I shied away from them. Was I ready emotionally? I really don't know. That has certainly occurred to me."

Things came to a head in 1977.

I was offered a job at *The Province* before the strike," he continues. A steady job would have furthered his career and guaranteed a regular paycheck, but a dispute between management and the union over staffing resulted in an eight-month strike. When the smoke cleared, Graham elected not to pursue the offer.

"I didn't go back to *The Province*. I continued trying to sell my work with the idea of children's books or comic strips. So, there was an opportunity there. I had a chance, and I didn't do it and I could have. It was a life lesson for me."

When another opportunity presented itself, he didn't shy away.

"I had submitted a cartoon strip to *The Globe and Mail* and they wrote back and said do you have any other samples? And, of course, over the years I had so many that hadn't been published. I knew enough by that time that when *The Globe* was interested in my comic strip, you take it. You grab it and see where it goes. So, I sent them off to *The Globe* and they hired me to do a comic strip six days a week. It was a breakthrough. It was amazing. I was given great freedom. It was my first full-time gig as a cartoonist."

The strip was called *Back Bench* and it was a series of single and multi-panel jokes satirizing Canadian politics. Poking the bear came easily to Graham.

## Carys

I'm not supposed to hug my grandad right now, but I think he's all stocked up from the last time I saw him.



To learn more, visit Graham Harrop's website:  
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Being raised in a Liverpoolian family steeped in the British tradition of taking the mickey out of the pompous and the pretentious will do that to a person.

“That’s just how it was in my family, the quip and the quick retort. I just love that.”

*Back Bench* ran for 25 years in *The Globe*’s funny pages.

Today, Graham augments his *Vancouver Sun* job with a host of products, greeting cards, T-shirts and books. He dismisses his entrepreneurial spirit as an anomaly – “I’ve never been a great marketer. It’s just not in me,” he professes, but his website [www.grahamharrop.com](http://www.grahamharrop.com) is a substantial enterprise.

Many of his books are theme specific, such as a nod to Canada’s sesquicentennial and *The Little Thank You Book* that honours Canada’s frontline COVID-19 workers.

His best seller is *There’s a Spouse in the House*, a whimsical look at retirement, not that Graham himself knows anything about retirement. Age? “I don’t feel it. I just don’t,” he says. *Spouse* was suggested by his brother, and Graham insists he’s recounting other people’s experiences, not his.

And then there’s *Ten Cats*, an online comic strip for which he won a National Cartoonists Award in 2013. Ten abandoned cats live in an old warehouse, where they’re looked after by a young girl called Annie. Graham likes cheeky cats. Chesney, the impertinent one, is a trouble-maker. Graham doesn’t own a cat. His partner Annie has a few, and it’s her cats that inspired the series. The felines may be fictional, but the content is pure Harrop – cheeky, ironic and gently sarcastic.

Graham says his product line is not about the money but about fulfilling one’s potential. He quotes motivational speaker Dr. Wayne Dyer.

“Wayne Dyer said, ‘don’t die with your music still in you,’ so if I do a book and I put it up and it sells two copies, for me, at least I did it. It’s the idea of doing it and putting it up while I still can.”

As for future endeavours, Graham intends to keep drawing for the *Sun* for as long as they’ll have him. “That’s up to the *Vancouver Sun*,” he says, “but yeah, I’ll just keep going along.”

And if he has his way, he’d like to get his online comic strip, called *UFO*, syndicated in as many newspapers as possible. *UFO* takes place on a distant planet where well-known celebrities and politicians are “beamed up” to an alien hotel.

“I don’t know why that is. There’s a part of me that almost needs it to be in a newspaper. I guess I’m old-world to that extent, but the chances of that are sadly diminishing. It’s just not the same,” he says of the struggling newspaper industry. Times change. He knows that.

“There’s a lot of stuff in me that I have to get out,” he says. “I’m 76 and how much time do I really have?” Perhaps the memory of missed opportunities looms large. Perhaps it’s the edict from Dr. Dyer about fulfilling your potential.

“I don’t want to be whatever age, 85 or 90, and think I had a chance, and I didn’t do it. If these cartoons give people a laugh, then the better. A few strokes of the pen and then a funny line. It’s good for me to go to bed and think I did something.” |



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# THE REWARDS OF PAYING ATTENTION

by J. KATHLEEN THOMPSON

I think we can all recall that moment back in our school days when we weren't our perfect selves and were admonished by the teacher to "pay attention!" Conversation with our neighbour would momentarily cease, and... seconds later, another student would receive the same reprimand. Unfortunately, the frequency at which the advice was dispensed dulled its effectiveness and our understanding of how vital attention was to our learning.

Indeed, if you start poking around at almost anything to do with personal or spiritual development, paying attention proves to be foundational to the attainment of any knowledge or wisdom. From its Latin root, *\*attentionem\**, someone rapt with attention is singularly devoting themselves to what lies before them, be it a piece of music, an exotic Asian lily, a sleeping child, a 500-piece puzzle or a 1,000-page tome.

But in a world that is being increasingly reduced to the size of tweets, blogs, Google headlines, Facebook posts, sound bytes and 16-second advertisements, our attention tends to "leak," distracting us from the harder task of single-minded concentration.

Vancouver-based writer, Michael Harris, suggests in his book *End of Absence: Reclaiming What We've Lost in a World of Constant Connection* that instead of seeking substance, we are conditioned to seek frisson, or brief

moments of emotional excitement. Those times we find we cannot scroll past a video on our Facebook feed until we find out whether Whiskers trapped in a cardboard box escapes, confirms our frisson-seeking natures.

Moreover, the multitasking feat of watching cute-cat videos while cooking a meal, talking on the phone, and appraising our grandchild's finished science project, remains a poor substitute for single-minded concentration. As our brains are only capable of focusing on one thing at a time, says Harris, what we call multitasking is actually multi-switching (i.e., quickly diverting attention from one thing to the next).

This ability was essential to our homo sapiens brain when we needed to reflexively orient ourselves in a potentially dangerous environment. And, as so many studies have shown, a switching, scanning, skimming brain (which can only process rote information) is seldom a productive, inventive brain. And yet this is precisely the brain that is called into action in the flashing, flickering playland of distractions competing for our attention today.

An excess of stimulation and our compulsion for constant connection has precipitated what Harris calls "the end of absence" – that uncluttered time to truly ponder something. And sustained attention, which requires a complete relinquishment of self – or at least, one's habitually distracted self – ultimately means the absence of others as well.



One doesn't learn the intricacies of jazz chords, flight theory, marine laws or create one's masterpiece when one is anxiously attending to one's social calendar. Tending to one's inner life and integrating oneself with the world (what psychoanalyst Carl Jung termed "the process of individuation") requires a detachment from daily concerns.

That attention may also bring one closer to a cosmological understanding of the universe is not lost upon generations of philosophers, healers and artists. Ojibway writer, poet and seer Richard Wagamese, in *Embers*, the last book published before his untimely death in 2017, powerfully reminds us of the gifts that await those who have the patience to pay attention.

Looking up after clearing ice and snow from his car windows outside his home near Kamloops, he notices "the ballet of cat tracks in the snow, the bare trees like arterial networks in the dimness, the house slumped like a great sleeping bear under the white rug of winter." He concludes that "the secret of fully being here, walking the skin of this planet, is to learn to see things as though I were looking at them for the first time, or the last. Nothing is too small, too mundane, too usual. Everything is wonder."

Everything is wonder. Perhaps if we "stimulus junkies" all settle into those unexplored spaces that have opened in our pandemic-restricted world, and dig a little deeper beneath the layers of frisson and data of this wired world, each of our child selves will reclaim that wonder, not the teacher's pardon or praise, that is the reward for paying attention. |

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Information written and compiled by INSPIRED Magazine publisher, Barbara Risto

*"So helpful for our family. We didn't know where to start. I bought copies for all my siblings so we could all be on the same page to help our mom and dad."*

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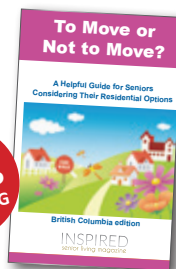
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# NAVIGATING TOWARDS A LIFE WITH PURPOSE

by STEFA KATAMAY

When the opportunity to go sailing came along soon after retirement, I grabbed it. Preparing myself and the boat for wandering the seas would give me something to work towards. I had found the feelings that arose before and during retirement stunningly confusing. On the one hand, excitement reigned, while on the other, disquiet seeped in and eventually an empty feeling enveloped me.

My husband, Jürgen, and I bought *Mazu*, a Tayana 37 sailboat. We approached operating *Mazu* as equal partners, developing our cruising skills in parallel, alternating religiously being at the helm, dropping or weighing the anchor, navigating, and much more. Yet the journeys made on the boat were nothing compared to the journey within. While unacknowledged skills and strengths were revealed, I discovered that living a life with purpose is so much more than having something to do.

Neuroscientist Daniel Levitin claims that learning a new skill, especially one that scares you, helps your brain age well. If that is true, then learning to operate *Mazu* has done wonders for my future self. Fear and anxiety have no bounds when it comes to learning to sail big boats. I imagined my fingers being ripped off and flying into the air when I dropped our 25kg anchor into the water. Being an equal partner required pushing through my anxiety and learning to do things I never thought I could. That anchor? I practiced dropping it in two metres of water, in the marina, until confident that neither I nor the boat would be damaged. Nope, anxiety is not comfortable; however, when I confronted my anxiety, learning happened. No wonder it's good for our brains!

Beyond boat skills, I was learning about myself. Riding five-metre swells offshore was disconcerting, to be sure, yet it brought out a calmness and clarity of thinking I did not expect. Being on watch every three hours and sleeping little over two hours at a time drew out previously untapped resilience. Still, despite all the learning and discovery, at times I was lonely, bored, and missing my family. The emptiness I thought sailing would fill remained. After four years living aboard *Mazu*, we moved on from the sailing adventure.

Once established on land, I asked myself, "What is important to me?" Turns out learning and growing are high on my values list. I thrived during the intense learning phase of



boat ownership. Contributing to something beyond myself is also up there in my values, and I was not able to live that value moving from anchorage to marina to anchorage.

Psychologist Sara Yogev points out that in retirement we can be challenged to find the "balance between the pressure to conform to values of one's community and one's authenticity."

I had done everything to embrace all that was required to become a competent cruiser, however, the values required to sail away were not consistent with an authentic me. Not living in alignment with my values contributed to my empty feeling.

Maybe if I was dialled into my values earlier, I could have done what *Designing Your Life* authors Bill Burnett and Dave Evans recommend:

"If you can see the connections between who you are, what you believe, and what you are doing, you will know when you are on course, when there is tension, when there might need to be some careful compromises, and when you are in need of a major course correction."

Was the sailing adventure the wrong course? I don't think so. Previously unacknowledged skills and strengths became apparent while aboard. Although writing had been a big part of my professional life, it was on the boat that the nature of my writing changed course. I wrote about the journey within, which resonated for me and readers.

The singular focus of boat life intensified some of the challenges experienced in retirement – too much togetherness and a lack of diverse activities to engage the mind or meet social needs. Back on land, I capitalized on my curiosity about those challenges and changed course from executive to retirement

ABOVE & TOC | The author at the helm of *Mazu*. Photo: Jürgen Harding



coaching. My excitement about what I learned during certification was palpable, and I was encouraged to not limit myself to blog posts, and to get out in front of people.

Like writing, speaking before an audience had been a component of my professional work. Now I set up speaking engagements to assess whether this was a skill to further build into my future. Indeed, an audience that provides real-time reactions gives life to my writing and grows my thinking.

How did this self-discovery address that empty feeling?

By surfacing and repurposing some of my skills and strengths, I looked at what I've been given, what was in my hand. Rick Warren, the author of *The Purpose-Driven Life*, suggests, "You're wired to do certain things... These things shape you. And if you want to know what you ought to be doing with your life, you need to look at your shape... look at what's in your hand... and say, 'It's not about me. It's about making the world a better place.'"

Knowing my shape means I have a better sense of what I can and want to contribute to this world. Psychologist James Hollis reminds us that when we are doing what is right for us, we will feel a sense of purpose, meaning, and satisfaction. And those feelings have replaced the emptiness within me.

From figuratively lost at sea to creating a life with purpose, what a journey! Trying out a life path – our sailing adventure – was a valuable way to gather information about myself and discover a new starting point for what will be, I am sure, a constantly evolving life course. Indeed, "not all who wander are lost." |

**Stefa Katamay** lives in Victoria, BC with her husband Jürgen Harding. Her two daughters live on the Mainland. Stefa is an active member of the Victoria Grandmothers for Africa's cycling community.

"Cycling with other women over the age of 55 while raising money for the Stephen Lewis Foundation Grandmothers to Grandmothers Campaign is a way of cycling with purpose."

Mazu is docked in Victoria, where it now provides a retreat from city living.

To learn more about Stefa's transition and retirement consulting practice visit [nextinlife.ca](http://nextinlife.ca) where you can also sign up for her free subscription newsletter, which explores life in retirement.

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# GUIDED BY ANGELS

by JANE CASSIE

“You’ve been waiting a few lifetimes to go through this experience. You are surrounded by so many loving angels and they are wanting you to embrace every step of this journey.”

Linda’s voice was all-knowing, confident and calm. And though I didn’t have a clue what she looked like and couldn’t imagine why I would ever want to have this life experience; I trusted every word she was telling me during our telephone conversation.

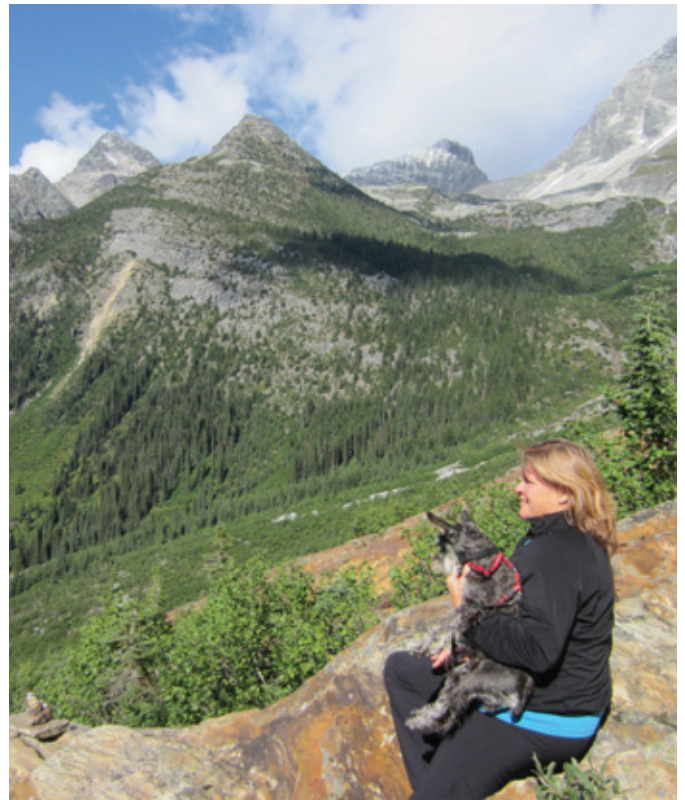
I’ve always believed that people come into our lives for a reason, and often when we need them the most. So, a few years ago, when I had heard about this woman who had a gift for channelling into the spirit realm, I intuitively knew she could alleviate some of my despair.

“I really miss my mom,” I said, hoping Linda could shed a little light on a woman I had loved so much. It was kind of odd. Even though Mom had passed away nearly 10 years previously, and had suffered with Alzheimer’s disease for 10 years prior to that, the frequent memories I had of her (and still do) were the happier years, well before the onset of her illness.

The phonline was silent, and I wondered if we’d been disconnected. “Did your mom like to dance?” Linda finally piped up with a chuckle. Her question surprised me. Although it wasn’t the comment I was expecting, it immediately conjured up visions of Mom prancing around the living room when I was young. There was no doubt.

Back in those days, Mom had had great rhythm. She’d play her favourite LPs on the HiFi and, as she had called it back then, was great at “cutting a rug.” I remembered her declaring that she could have been a professional dancer if she had pursued it. I assumed then, that her family was more important. And, despite never getting to show off her talents, her chosen direction was one she lovingly embraced.

“Although I don’t actually see her physical form,” Linda explained, “I detect her spiritual essence.” Seconds later, she laughed again. “Your mom is showing me her red shoes.



And she wants you to know that she’s finally dancing. She also says that she has, and always will be, here for you. Don’t worry. You are very much loved.”

My tears instantly welled up, knowing this connection was real. There was absolutely no way anyone could know this information. It was just too obscure to be coincidental.

“I’m also picking up on another spirit who loves you very much,” Linda continued. “He has a quiet essence, is very hard-working by nature and is totally connected to your mom. He’s also very happy to see that he can support and help you through this experience.”

Even though my father had been gone from this earthly existence for 40 years, I knew in my heart it was him. He was always such a strong supporter of our family and a forever soulmate to my mom.

Despite trying to get my mom to re-marry over the years, she always claimed there was no other man that would equal my dad. I smiled, realizing they were together now – and forever would be. And I was certain they were both there with me as I went through that challenging time in my life.

Eight months prior, on my birthday, I had been diagnosed with breast cancer. A month later, on my husband’s birthday, I had had a mastectomy. A month after that, on my grandson’s birthday, I had started chemotherapy. And on my dad’s birthday, I had begun my first of 29 radiation treatments.

It was a whirlwind year of life-altering changes and swaying emotions. Yet, like many life challenges, there were so

ABOVE | The author sits in quiet gratitude with her pup. Photo: Brent Cassie



many positives. Over that 12 months, I experienced enormous spiritual growth.

Every day began (and still does) with a meditation session, followed by prayer and some inspirational reading. After being introduced to Eckhart Tolle's bestseller, *A New Earth*, I learned how to live in the present while awakening my consciousness.

A highlighter went to work on the book *A Spiritual Solution to Every Problem*, Wayne Dyer's compelling testimony on the power of love. And I was riveted by *Ask and It is Given*, Esther Hick's powerful and practical concepts from the original teachings of Abraham. *The Seven Spiritual Laws of Success* by Deepak Chopra, *The Secret* by Rhonda Byrne, and *The Alchemist* by Paulo Coelho were also dogeared that year.

My world of spiritual exploration totally exploded, and I felt so grateful for all the good in my life. To this day, six years later, I still do.

And I also know that I'll be forever guided by my loving angels throughout this earth-bound journey. |



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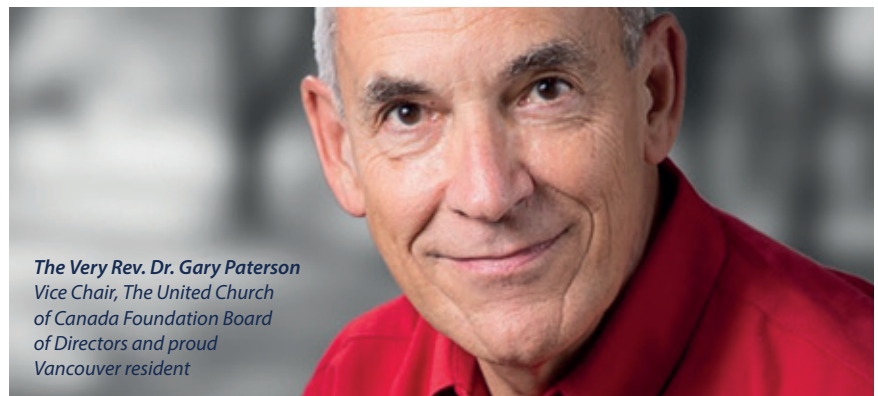
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# A CARIBBEAN WELLNESS RETREAT

by KATE ROBERTSON

Ever since my first family vacation to Hawaii when I was 12, I've loved beach holidays in the tropics. Really, what's not to love about white sand beaches, palm trees blowing in a balmy breeze, and sparkling turquoise waters?

Something I discovered on a visit to the Caribbean island of Grenada that I didn't realize when I was 12, however, is that the tropics also easily make for a great wellness vacation. Like most of the Caribbean islands, as a coveted land for sugar and spice plantations, this tiny (34 by 19 kilometres) mountainous island, located just 160 kilometres north of Venezuela, was colonized by the French and then the British, and only achieved its independent commonwealth status in 1974.

But unlike some of the other islands, Grenada has managed to remain mostly non-commercialized, and the slow pace makes it the perfect island retreat destination. Here's how to indulge in some self-care and wellness, Grenada-style:

## EAT NATURALLY

Without even thinking about it, it's easy to eat a light, wholesome diet on the island. Lunches and dinners offer unlimited options for a healthy mix of fresh, local veggies and just-caught fish and seafood.

As the saying goes, breakfast is the most important meal of the day, so each morning of my stay at Spice Island Beach Resort, I skip the à la carte menu with its heavier French toast and omelette offerings, and stick to the buffet filled with fresh island fruits – some familiar, like watermelon, guava, passion fruit and pineapple; but others not, like soursop. Each day, there are also two freshly squeezed juice options, and I discover a new favourite: the refreshing sweet-and-sour Caribbean golden apple, said to be an antioxidant and high in vitamins and minerals, exactly what I need for my day.

Good ambiance, of course, helps digestion, so you've got to check out Street Food Wednesday at the True Blue Bay Boutique Resort, a weekly festival where you can sample typical Grenada street foods. Be sure to try the national dish, oil down, a one-pot stew made from salted meats and fish, dumplings, coconut milk, turmeric, veggies and breadfruit, and the stewed lambie (conch). For dessert, indulge in the nutmeg ice cream, because you can burn those calories dancing the night away to live entertainment – calypso music, steel-drum bands or Grenada's distinctive jab jab soca.

For more island flavours, make your way to the bustling St. George's street market, located in the heart of the island's capital city amidst a jumble of brightly Caribbean-coloured, red-roofed buildings. First off, grab a fresh coconut water served in its green shell, then browse the rickety tables brimming with vibrant fruits, veggies and island crafts.

Grenada isn't called the Spice Island for nothing, and my favourite souvenir is a spice necklace, a pretty string of spices like nutmeg, mace, cinnamon and turmeric. Grenadians hang these in their kitchens, not just for the scent or to pinch off pieces for cooking, but also to treat health ailments, like nutmeg for back pain and arthritis and turmeric to reduce inflammation.

The island is famous for its chocolate, as well (there's even an annual chocolate festival), and as any chocolate lover knows, chocolate is filled with health benefits. On a tour at Belmont Estate, a cocoa plantation that dates back to the 17th century, you will

ABOVE | (Left) The rooftops of St. George's. Photo: Kate Robertson  
(Right) Underwater Sculpture Park Ring of Children. Photo: Orlando K. Romain  
TOC | View of Grand Anse Beach Photo: Grenada Tourism Authority



see the chocolate factory where the magic happens, and finish with the best part – samples of their world-class chocolate.

### MOVE NATURALLY

Of course, when you stay at a hotel like Spice Island Beach Resort, you don't need to go far to get your daily exercise. Start your day with a yoga class in the beach-front open-air pavilion, then get your 10,000 steps walking the three-kilometre long Grand Anse Beach (recently voted one of the best beaches in the world by *Condé Nast*).

For ocean lovers like me, the resort offers snorkelling equipment, paddle boards and kayaks. But a must-do is a snorkelling tour to the nearby Underwater Sculpture Park, the world's first (*National Geographic* calls it one of the top wonders of the world), a vibrant artificial reef composed of over 100 pieces of art draped with coral to support marine life, built to help the ocean ecosystem regenerate after being damaged by Hurricane Ivan in 2004.

To get out into the rainforest, book a tour to visit one of the island's 15 waterfalls, like Concord Falls, where a short hike will take you down to the shaded coolness. Chances are good you'll see a cliff jumper climb up and make the jump into the pool below (have some cash handy, this is how they make their living). And keep your eyes peeled for the cute little mono monkeys that inhabit the island.

### RELAX NATURALLY

For me, no wellness retreat is complete without a pampering

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spa treatment, so I head to Janissa's, Spice Island Beach Resort's onsite spa, where a practitioner uses local herbs, Grenadian chocolate and spices to help my body totally relax and restore.

Then, on my final day in Grenada, there's a wellness tour with Funtastic Island Adventures/Hidden Treasures, where a breezy drive in an open-air vehicle along narrow backroads, through fishing villages and past mountain farms brings us to the River Saltee Sulphur Spring. While perched on a rock in the warm mineral pool that is said to have direct veins to a nearby active volcano, a massage therapist exfoliates my arms and back with a chocolate scrub mix (it smelled good enough to eat) followed by a back massage.

The locals say this sulphur spring is a fountain of youth and with the way I feel after, I believe it! But, really, with all its healthy food and lifestyle, and slowed-down vibe, the entire island of Grenada is a fountain of youth. |

For IF YOU GO information, visit [www.seniorlivingmag.com/articles/grenada-wellness-retreat](http://www.seniorlivingmag.com/articles/grenada-wellness-retreat)

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# CREATING A VISIBLE LIFE

by Toni O'Keeffe

To be seen, to be heard, and to be happy are basic human desires. As we put busy careers behind us and our families no longer depend on us the way they once did, many retirees are left struggling to find purpose, connections and relevance. It's easy to feel invisible or no longer valued.

Victoria-based, multi-medium artist Gail White encourages seniors to engage in activities that give them joy and allow them to be seen as the real masterpieces they are. Which is exactly how Gail lives her life.

Born and raised in the US, Gail's interest in the arts began when she started drawing portraits of her friends in high school. She says she felt visible and happy when she could see the joy her portraits brought to others.

"Creating is in my DNA," says Gail. Her father, mother and two brothers all possessed a range of creative talent. Gail's maternal grandfather, an American Indian from Oklahoma, also inspired a series of her paintings presenting a portrayal of the US Southwest.

"I always had the desire to create, but did not always have the time," she says. Following her marriage at a young age and the subsequent births of her two children, life got busy. Gail was focused on family, not the pursuit of her creative passions. "I could often be found knitting and feeding one of my babies at the same time to fill my artistic craving."

When Gail was 25, her mother died, at the age of 47. Prior to her death, she revealed she had not been happy and encouraged her daughter to seek a life different than hers. Her mom's early death had a huge impact on Gail, and she vowed to passionately pursue the things that made her happy and brought her joy. Heeding her mother's advice, at 30, with children aged seven and five, she left her unhappy marriage to build a new life that allowed her to exercise her creative talent and make a visible mark on the world.

Gail moved to Canada in 1970 and says she found happiness, purpose and visibility through the pursuit of her artistic passions.

She began by acquiring art supplies and joining art groups. Creating art allowed her to be her authentic self. Although she was busy with her career and young family, she was able to slowly evolve her skill in art.

Upon retirement in 2006 from a career in communications and corporate social responsibility, Gail delved fully into pursuing a broad range of creative talents, including painting, drawing, jewellery making, fabric art, gardening, knitting, macramé and cooking as an expression of art.

To maintain her motivation as she transitioned from career



professional to artist, she says she needed to establish a routine. So, she set the alarm, got up early each morning, went to the gym and committed to creating something every day.

She revisited oil painting in 2011 after a 30-plus-year hiatus from it. In about 2015, she created a painting of two ewes. The painting was exhibited in a local art show and sold. This positive reaction to her work inspired her to paint another seven in her "Ewe" series and all have sold.

Her most unique creation is a collection of stunning button necklaces. While travelling in the US, Gail visited an art display and saw a beautiful button necklace. Images of her own button box came to mind and she knew she wanted to create necklaces. Upon returning home, she poured her buttons – and the memories they held – into a large aluminum pan. Sifting through the buttons from her mother's favourite red coat, her father's navy jacket, vintage buttons and buttons from her childhood, a new talent was born.

She taught herself how to string the buttons and, after some trial and error, she made two necklaces that sold quickly. Gail has gone on to create over 30 unique pieces, many of which were commissioned by people wanting something special from their own button memories. Her button necklaces sell for between \$250 and \$350.

Where does she draw inspiration from to create the necklaces? "People's stories." One piece was created from clothing worn by a friend's mother who had passed away. Another was inspired by a trip to Spain.



ABOVE | Artist Gail White wears one of her button necklaces, and a whimsical painting of a cigar woman. Photos: Tracy Merkley



Fabric art, including hand-painted tablecloths and aprons, is another unique and extraordinary creative outlet for Gail. One of the tablecloths she created was inspired by what you might find on her dining table. The hand-painted piece depicts plates, cutlery, napkins and food items she is likely to serve up.

Gail says she is grateful to be surrounded by people that support her. She and second husband, Dan, have been together for over 40 years. "He is my No. 1 fan. He makes me feel visible." Together, the couple has four children and six grandchildren, which are another source of joy in her life.

Gail was further blessed to have the support of her mentor, Salt Spring Island artist Dennice Stambuck, who has generously shared her time, knowledge and talent. Gail is paying this kindness forward and has since become a mentor to several aspiring artists.

What advice would she give to other retirees seeking joy and purpose? "Stop saying you can't and focus on what you can do. If something interests you, ask yourself if it's something you can learn." She adds, "Develop a schedule and a routine. Open up to people. Get to know one another, be curious about life and each other. Most important, choose to be visible and happy."

The range and depth of Gail's work is impressive. Her creations portray a contemplative, engaged, happy and visible life. Which is something she hopes we are all blessed to live. |

*To see Gail White's work, visit the Saanich Peninsula Arts & Crafts show, Mary Winspear Centre, Sidney, in April 2021.*

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# SUPER SENIORS CYCLING: FOUR PILLARS FOR LONGEVITY

by LAURIE WILSON

As I age, I find it fascinating to study people who are 20 years older than me. It still feels like the distant future and like there is time to figure out how to do it well if one ponders enough. The two oldest participants in this year's Victoria Grandmothers for Africa (VG4A) Cycle Tour were born in 1934 and 1935. A Sagittarius/Capricorn cusp baby and a Libra, Carol and Janet were 85 and 84 when they were cycling this summer.

At first glance, I thought their stories seemed quite different. Janet has ridden a bike for many years, stopping only briefly when she was forced to by a broken hip. She completed 644kms in the four weeks of the tour, the furthest of the 11 people on her team, "The Glammas"! Carol, on the other hand, came back to biking this past August, after 25 years away from it, to see if she still could.

"As my balance is still good and I still have strength in my legs," she says, "I thought that I would give it a try. I used my 15-year-old granddaughter's bike on a fairly flat road in front of my daughter's [house], with my daughter keeping careful watch and I did it!"

Carol rode most of her kilometres for the tour (102) on that road in front of her daughter's place on Galiano Island, back and forth three-and-a-half times a day to get 5K. Then, the last week of the tour, she took the morning ferry to Swartz Bay with her bike and rode 12K to Sidney and back as a final challenge.

After meeting and chatting with both Janet and Carol, I discovered that their similarities far outweigh their differences. Both are positive, thoughtful, high-energy people who embrace life and take calculated risks as necessary in order to do that. (Carol said if she fell off her bike, she would just consider it a bone density test!) Both learned early on that being active and fit made them feel better. That is what gets both Janet and Carol out the door regularly: not improved health, not calorie-burning, but that *feeling* they get from being out-side and being active.

The life histories of these two remarkable octogenarians, with recognition that this is a very small sample, lead me to count down my Top Four "must-have" Factors. This should allow you, along with some self-awareness, to determine how likely it is you will still be riding your bike in your mid-80s. It would be wonderful to hear from others who might help flesh out this list.

## No. 4 - GOOD GENES / ACTIVE LIVES (Nature and Nurture)

Though neither of these women were parented by athletes, it is clear their muscles, bones, joints and organs must all be in better-than-average condition not to have broken down in



Janet Russell  
Photo: Linda Breault



Carol Guin  
Photo: Deblekha Guin

some way. Janet danced and played tennis from a young age, and hiked and cycled a lot since retirement, living in Metchosin and now Sidney.

Carol played baseball and volleyball in high school and was on the volleyball and swim teams at McGill University. She used a bicycle as her main means of transport for seven years of her adult life when she had no car. Now she walks the trails on Galiano and does Iyengar yoga.

## No. 3 - LUCK

Again, although we have no proof of luck interfering in their lives in one way or another, it is true that neither of them has been brought up short by injury or accident of any kind. Carol learned to ride a motorcycle at the age of 60 and rode a Honda 250 from Ottawa to Galiano Island without a hitch. Janet did break her hip recently... That's where No. 2 comes in.



## No. 2 – PLUCK

And this seems to be a characteristic that has been present since these two women were very young. Janet moved to Uganda in her 20s for her husband Brom's job, "way out in the bush" with a toddler and an infant. Brom died when Janet was just 70, and she managed to embrace a full life as a senior without him.

Carol worked at the YWCA in Calcutta, India for seven years. Not long after arriving, she was asked to take a group of young women trekking in the Himalayas. She knew very little about trekking or camping and nothing at all about the Himalayas but said yes and managed it. They started their trek out of Darjeeling and saw some beautiful parts of the Himalayas on the Indian side. One morning, the clouds cleared, and they could see Mt. Everest. "Three of us went a little farther to where we could see the view," she says. There was quite possibly some LUCK involved in this one, too. It appears that the four factors must all be present, and that they interact in some useful ways.

And the most important factor for leading an active physical life well into your 80s:

## No. 1 – ENDORPHINS

Especially if a person learns early on in their long life that vigorous activity is a great way to stay mentally and emotionally well, and physically fit, this addiction will persist and

thrive. By the time you are 80, you know very well how much better you will feel after a walk or a bike ride or a good swim, and that knowledge is enough to keep you doing it, over and over and over, forever if possible!

Bonus: No. 5, still under investigation, is STRICTLY HEALTHY EATING HABITS. Janet has these – she wouldn't let a chocolate bar or a bag of chips anywhere near her. But Carol doesn't, although she did own a health food store in Huntsville, Ontario for a while in the late 1980s. More data is needed.

What did I learn from these two cyclists? I could eat a little healthier, drink more water, and try things I'm afraid of more often. But the strongest message echoes something my track coach told me in my teens: "don't ever quit"; and a quote from Confucius that I love to share with my 94-year-old Scorpio mother: "It does not matter how slowly you go as long as you do not stop." |

Laurie Wilson is a retired educator and lifelong learner. She cycles regularly with her bubble of four, part of a much larger group of strong, inspiring women who cycle and fundraise for the Stephen Lewis Foundation through Victoria Grandmothers for Africa. This year, their traditional tour pivoted because of COVID-19 to become an individualized four-week collection of 28,000 km by 67 women devoted to the cause of helping African grandmothers raising their AIDS-orphaned grandchildren. They raised a record-breaking \$143,000 and counting at the time of publication.



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# SENSATIONAL SYDNEY & BEYOND: THE JOY OF ANTICIPATION

by IAN CARTER



*"Anticipation is a gift. Perhaps there is none greater. Anticipation is born of hope. Indeed it is hope's finest expression."*

-Steven L. Peck

I have been blessed to spend the past 10 winters with my family in Australia: that all changed on March 15, 2020. I was more than a little dismayed to receive notice that all Canadians abroad – like me – should plan to return to Canada at the earliest possible opportunity, and with no time to waste. COVID-19 had potential to become a global catastrophe. Linger in Sydney at my peril as medical and travel insurance would terminate within days and return flights could be impossible to book. So, no time for tears, just a few final, brief, anxious hugs before a return flight to Vancouver and home again.

And now here we are, nine months later, in the middle of what seems to be an endless lockdown, and returning this winter is looking less likely every day. I am deeply saddened, occasionally angry, and filled with regrets but, to my surprise, I have come to appreciate COVID in ways I did not expect. Solitude makes my memories more vivid. I am sustained by an abundance of gratitude for joyful reunions with family and friends, the excitement of unimaginable sites, and the anticipation of future adventures both old and new. Travel is the ultimate inspiration.

*"Sydney Harbour... one of the finest, Most beautiful, vast, and safe bays The sun ever shone upon."*

-Joseph Conrad, *The Mirror of the Sea* (1906)



ABOVE | (Top) Circular Quay is the vibrant and active gateway to sensational Sydney. (Middle) Watson's Bay is an easy ferry ride from Circular Quay with views of Sydney Harbour, gorgeous beaches, and famous fish and chips.

Photos: Ian Carter

(Bottom) Sydney is a family affair for the author and his grandchildren, Luke and Lexi Carter-Benjamin, tour guides extraordinaire! Photo: Lisa Carter

Sydney is the perfect blend of old and new, a city that begs superlatives. My annual winter adventure has been nothing short of life changing with all the excitement and surprises that come with travel in the Southern Hemisphere. Each visit includes countless moments of utter astonishment, not unlike the experience of European explorers when they arrived on this continent for the first time. These first adventurers took home hundreds of pounds of alien plant and animal specimens. My takeaway has been an equivalent suitcase filled with photos, surprises and tips for travellers like me, looking for things to do on this largest, most beautiful harbour in the world.



### TAKE A WALK:

An essential orientation walk should start at Hyde Park and end at Circular Quay: take in The Barracks for their convict stories, museums, The Domain, The Opera House, and views galore!

Then take a walk to the Tourist Information Centre in the Rocks, where you can pick up self-guided brochures and maps covering a dozen city walks. My favourite is the Coastal Beach Walk in the Eastern Suburbs: without a doubt this is the most beautiful coastal beach walk in the city, perhaps the world. Take the train/bus to Coogi Beach as your starting point and then take the coastal path north through Gordon's Bay, Clovelly Beach, Waverley Cemetery, a golden boomerang of sand on Bronte Beach, tony Tamarama Beach, and finish your walk with a pub dinner on Bondi Beach before taking a train/bus home.

### VISIT RBC:

Your orientation walk could take you through the Royal Botanical Gardens on the foreshore, but take some time on another occasion for a proper tour. There's a free, escorted tour that leaves the gift shop at 10:30am, daily, or explore on your own.

Finish a perfect day with a stroll across the harbourfront to The Rocks for the charming historical pubs, convict relics, a colourful weekend market, and the Sydney Harbour Bridge

### EXPLORE THE HARBOUR:

Head back to Circular Quay next to the Opera House, where dozens of passenger ferries sail off in all directions. These little guys are the best way to see the largest harbour in the world since they are, in fact, really cheap cruises!

Check out ferries to:

- Manly: for the beach, the historic quarantine station and surfer pubs.
- Watson's Bay: for the walk around South Head, fish and chips at Doyle's on the Beach, and a beer on the patio at Watson's Bay Hotel.
- Taronga Zoo: find a picnic spot with harbour views amongst the locals who share some of the most expensive real estate in the world.

### GO TO THE BEACH:

Although Manly and Bondi beaches are well known to tourists and the surfing crowd, Sydney-siders keep several secret beaches to themselves. Few tourists have heard of Cronulla, the only beach accessible by train in just 45 minutes from city centre: this was our winter home for the first few years. Another rather quiet stretch of sand is Camp Cove Beach, perfect for picnics while visiting Watson's Bay.

### ORGANIZE A FOOD SAFARI:

Sydney reminds me that this is no longer a country of

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### Jessie MANTLE

Following an incredible 30 year career in geriatric and psychological nursing; Jessie returned to the island in 1981 to accept a unique position as professor of nursing at the University of Victoria and clinical nurse specialist at the Juan de Fuca Hospitals. This role allowed her to establish new courses in geriatric nursing at UVic and at the same time, to develop a wide-ranging set of clinical programs and committees to improve resident care.

When she retired in 1995, Jessie continued to develop perish nursing projects, co-ordinated a night shelter for street youth and created documentation that seniors could use to record and maintain an ongoing story of their health and illness for health care professionals.

In that same spirit, she established the **Jessie Mantle Fellowship in Nursing** to support students enrolled in Nursing graduate programs at the University of Victoria - specifically those focused on improving the care and lives of the elderly.

### Erin DONALD

Erin Donald is already making a difference with that fellowship. As a doctoral student researching palliative care, she is grateful to be able to focus on her studies and "make a meaningful contribution to maintaining quality of life in the elderly population through research and education." Through her research, Erin ensures the work that Jessie began, continues to grow and develop.

**Jessie has also left a gift in her Will.** This gift will ensure that future UVic nursing students have the resources and opportunity they need to improve geriatric care for the next generation of seniors.



For information on how you can support UVic students through a Gift in your Will, visit [uvic.ca/legacygiving](http://uvic.ca/legacygiving) or contact Kristy Colpron, Manger Planned Giving at 250-721-8967 / [mgrlegacydev@uvic.ca](mailto:mgrlegacydev@uvic.ca)



vegemite and chips. Serious foodies, like me, love this city of small shops in multicultural communities that continue to value old traditions. Feed your food frenzies in neighbourhoods such as:

**Marrickville:** I am thankful to family members for introducing me to the sights and smells along Illawarra Road, where Asian butchers display fresh beef and pork in their front windows at amazingly cheap prices. This is the place to shop for great cakes, baklava and yummy spanakopita at Hellenic Bakery, fabulous fish at Faros Brothers Seafood, and a fresh pasta place across the street.

**Haberfield (Little Italy):** for the best bakeries and butchers, fresh nuts and olives, roasted coffees, cheeses, and wood-fired pizza.

**Chinatown:** generations of restaurant families have perfected what many argue is the best Asian food in the world.

Take a tram from Central Station to explore Darling Harbour, Paddy's Market, Chinatown, and the Sydney Fish Market (largest in the southern hemisphere).

And don't get me started on the ubiquitous pie shops and bakeries: where else could a lunch takeaway feature a hot, chunky beef pie in a paper bag?

### CONSIDER GOING BUSH:

You cannot come to know Australia unless you venture beyond that fruitful garden in the 300km wide strip of land along the eastern and southeastern coast of the continent. Beyond this fertile crescent lies more than just the unyielding, desolate, drought-ridden interior you have heard about. For me, "Going Bush" has included:

Get on track for The Ghan: a leisurely transcontinental train trip from Adelaide in the south, across the Outback to Alice Springs in the Red Centre, and north to tropical Darwin at the Top End. Alice's Desert Park, camel caravans, Uluru (Ayers Rock), Kata Tjuta (The Olgas), curious gorges, jumping crocs, and aboriginal stone art reckoned to be at least 65,000 years old, dreamtime relics of the oldest continuous civilization on the planet.

Great Barrier Reef: Port Douglas and Cairns offer daily cruises to the largest coral reef on the planet, where there are more fish, turtles, and other marine animals than almost any-

where in the world.

But you can also "go bush" without travelling great distances from Sydney. New South Wales deserves attention for the Blue Mountains, and the wineries of the Hunter Valley and Mudgee. And don't forget the fascinating ghost towns left behind after the gold rush: Hill End (with 29 pubs for thirsty miners), and Sofala (Australia's oldest surviving gold town with just two short streets) claiming to have more than 500 sly "grog shops" in the 1850s.

### HAVE FUN!

Remember to pack your sense of humour when you come to Australia and you will be certain to have a grand time. Blame the outrageous Aussie psyche for some way-out names for towns and other places: Egg and Bacon Bay, Nevertire, Lilli Pilli, Useless Loop, Tom Ugly's Bridge and Mt. Buggery, among others.

Although both our countries speak the Queen's English, there are enormous variations on the theme! For example, "fair dinkum" isn't the only slang term that means genuine, real or true. Other phrases that mean the same thing include dinky di, ridgy-didge and dead set.

My list of new-to-me words continues to get longer annually with this year's entry including larrikin, brumby, paddock, and fair tucker.

Everybody has a nifty nickname: the late opera diva Dame Joan Sutherland was known as La Stupenda. My mates at the weekly meeting of The Punters Club at Grandviews Bowling Club include Bongo, Rocky, Erik the Red, Big Pete and Round Pete.

This is a nation that began as a jail, settled by unwilling guests of the Crown. This is a country where the Labour Party is liberal and Liberals are conservative, a country where the trees don't shed their leaves, they shed their bark. And, of course, the Aussie sense of humour is driven by an old maxim: never let the truth get in the way of a good yarn!

This pandemic has taught me that tomorrow is promised to no one, so I will continue to do what I love. Travel – however it looks in our new normal – can be inspiring and motivating during a time when those things aren't always easy to muster. As we emerge from this pandemic and year from hell, we are going to be okay.

And Australia isn't going away.  
Oh, the anticipation.

Another January in Sydney: surely the finest time and place on earth. |

*For IF YOU GO information, including travel tips, visit [www.seniorlivingmag.com/articles/sensational-sydney](http://www.seniorlivingmag.com/articles/sensational-sydney)*

Ian Carter is a retired educator and mental health professional, published author, freelance writer, photographer, and inveterate world traveller. He welcomes contact via email at: [heritagematters@bellaliant.net](mailto:heritagematters@bellaliant.net)

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# FOREVER FIT

by EVE LEES

## STAY ACTIVE TO REDUCE ARTHRITIC PAIN

Regular, moderate exercise can help reduce arthritic pain. Muscles act as shock absorbers. And stronger muscles absorb stress better as the feet strike the ground, minimizing joint impact. With less joint pain, exercise programs (like walking) can be enjoyed regularly.

Pain can make arthritis sufferers stop exercising. But exercise has been linked to reduced inflammation: the source of that pain. In addition, weight gain from not exercising often results, putting more pressure on the joints thus increasing the pain.

For every pound you weigh, each step you take puts up to three pounds of pressure on your knees and hips. And there are six pounds of pressure for every step you take downward – as in stepping off a curb. If you gain 10 extra pounds because you aren't exercising, that's 60 pounds of pressure on arthritic knees with each downward step.

Therapists recommend regular, gentle-to-moderate exercise, particularly weight training exercises and non-impact activities like walking, cycling and swimming. Try taking advantage of your "good days" to exercise when there's little or no pain. It is important to know your own limits. A little discomfort is expected, but when you feel real pain, stop that particular exercise.

Ask a fitness professional to show you the proper form for basic lower body exercises such as the lunge and the squat. You can do them at home without the use of weights or with improvised weights.

All exercisers should warm-up with light activity before physical exertion. A "passive" warm-up is also an option to help relax joints and muscles: massage your joints or apply a heating pad or a hot pack to the arthritic-prone area. A warm bath or a soak in a hot tub is another option. Then, do an "active" warm-up, such as walking around the room for a few minutes before you start exercising.

Experiment to see what time of day is best for you to exercise. Depending on the type of arthritis you have, you may have more energy or less pain and stiffness at certain times of day (morning versus afternoon).

To get any benefit from physical activity, it's best to exercise at least two to three times weekly, at first. As you become accustomed to exercise, you can do it most days of the week. Start with five- to 10-minute exercise sessions, gradually increasing to 30 minutes or more.

After exercise, stretch slowly and gently to help increase the joint's range of motion. Avoid "bouncing" as you stretch. Hold the stretch for at least 20 seconds. Do each stretch two to three times. In addition, after exercise, ice can be applied for up to 20 minutes on tender joints. |



**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](http://www.artnews-health-news.com)



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# BOUNCING BACK WITH RESILIENCY

By WENDY JOHNSTONE

*“Anita is caring for her 65-year-old mother, who is living in Assisted Living and has been diagnosed with early onset Alzheimer’s. Anita lives two hours away and is having trouble coming to terms with her mom’s dementia and struggles with the distance between them. She works full-time and has a nine-year-old daughter. She wants to be strong for herself and for her mom. Anita worries about her mom’s safety and struggles to find the energy to be a caregiver, a mom and a full-time employee. Everything that “goes wrong” seems to overwhelm her.*

Managing the many aspects of care and life can be challenging and take enormous energy. Questions we ask caregivers are “What gives you the strength to continue?” and “How can you improve your ability to ‘bounce back’?”

Resilience is the human ability to recover quickly from misfortune; being able to return to original form after being bent, compressed, or stretched out of shape. Finally, it is recovering from disruptive change without being overwhelmed or acting in dysfunctional ways.

Research shows the following strategies are helpful for building resilience or “caregiver heartiness”:

**Connections:** a primary factor in resiliency is having strong connections with family and friends who are supportive and caring.

**Curiosity:** be curious about your caregiving situation. Ask yourself, “Is there anything good about this experience for me? What can I learn from this?”

**Nurture your inner superhero:** seeing ourselves in a positive light, believing in our abilities and knowing our strengths helps

us bounce back from stress and challenging situations. Our self-confidence is saying: “These are my strengths.”

**Make friends with reality:** change is part of caregiving. Caregivers often reflect on the fact that being a caregiver wasn’t in their life plan and with that came a shift in perspective and expectations. Resilient caregivers often provide the advice, “accept circumstances that can’t be changed. Then turn your attention to what circumstances can be changed and focus on them.”

**Express your feelings:** acknowledge that life is imperfect and hold space and comfort for yourself in the face of difficult times. While it is important to allow for painful emotions, research suggests not staying too long with negative thoughts and working towards a long-term perspective of positivity. It’s a fine balance.

**Create meaning in your caregiving role:** finding positive meaning (even if it seems small) in your role adds to positive overall health. Having and holding a sense of purpose in caregiving is also associated with resiliency. For some, it’s knowing they are strengthening the relationship between themselves and the care recipient or giving back to a loved one. For others, their caregiving role can fulfill a sense of a greater purpose in life, taking pride in their skills or a desire for a better outcome for the person needing care.

Resilient people can be transformed by their experiences. When life hands you a challenge, such as caregiving, you will never be the same again. Strive to emerge strengthened and better from the experience.

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



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During this time we are not hosting our club events, but monthly newsletters are being sent out, providing information from our sponsoring travel agencies. Many have pivoted to hosting successful local excursions within BC that are several days in length. Safety protocols are in place and carefully monitored.

INSPIRED Magazine supports the efforts of these companies to provide a safe and valued service.



COURAGEOUS  
&  
OUTRAGEOUS

by PAT NICHOL

## SAFELY SHARE YOUR HOLIDAY HOBBIES

Once again, we are looking at a turn of the year. So many are hoping that when the calendar switches to 2021, all the challenges of 2020 will disappear. Let us all hold on to that hope!

Until then, what can we do to make this year end on a high note? With holiday celebrations on hold or scaled back, people are looking for other meaningful ways to spend the festive season.

Here are some suggestions:

1. Do you like to bake? How about committing to bake extra cookies or squares for places like your local soup kitchen?

Their clients always appreciate home-baked goodies. Soup kitchens provide nourishing meals for those who may not have other options.

2. Do you like to read? What about creating a neighbourhood library box for neighbours who share your love of reading? I recently suggested it to my housemate and, before I knew it, several friends got together and created a delightful library box. Now I get to paint it! Will let you know how it goes.

3. Do you knit or crochet? Many years ago, I took up crocheting when I wanted to occupy my hands and mind with something other than cigarettes and chocolate. There are people who would love a colourful, handmade toque or some warm mittens. Get together with a few friends in your bubble and yarn together.

4. I've been talking to friends who are having a great time with jigsaw puzzles. Recently, I saw some being sold (for a great price) at a local activity centre. Everything from 500 to several thousand pieces – depending on your desire to get excited or to get frustrated.

These are a few of my suggestions. How about sharing some of yours? Send me an email and I will share your ideas in my February column.

As we move through the dark part of the year and continue to stay safe by wearing a mask when we go out, washing our hands and staying at a safe distance from each other, I wish you a warm, cozy and festive holiday season filled with new adventures.

Think good thoughts about everyone inside – and outside – your bubble. |

Pat Nichol is a speaker and published author. You can reach her by email at [mpatnichol@gmail.com](mailto:mpatnichol@gmail.com)

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# *The Harrisons, Langley's Premier Retirement Living Communities*

*Independent & Assisted Living*

MESSAGE FROM THE OWNERS,  
Glenn Bell & Ralph Giuriato.

*"A huge Thank You to our fabulous staff, residents & families for supporting us during what has turned out to be a very unusual 2020! We look forward to a new and wonderful year ahead.*

***Our wish for you this holiday season is to have fun while staying safe! Like most of you, we are excited to turn the page on 2020...***

***We wish you all the very best for 2021!"***



Now more than ever,  
people don't just move into a  
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