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JANUARY 2021

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JACK WHYTE

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Cover JACK WHYTE

Best-selling novelist and poet launches his new work on a new platform as he continues to write and grow as an author.

Photo: John Lehmann

INSPIRED

55+ lifestyle magazine

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THRIVE BEYOND 55

by BARBARA RISTO, PUBLISHER



When I ask people how they feel about 2021, two words pop up more than any others: “uncertain” and “hopeful.”

Many of us are living in a kind of limbo-land – between uncertain and hopeful – desiring a positive outcome but unsure it will happen. We often feel pulled in opposing directions by our desires and our reality.

Consider that these two words – uncertain and hopeful – are paradoxical in nature. And that within each of these words lies yet another paradox.

Take the word uncertain: some define it as lack of clarity or tentativeness. Yet, paradoxically, uncertainty is often the doorway to the world of possibility... creating a blank canvas of opportunity upon which you can create, and manifest a wonderful and delightful future.

Hope can also go in two directions, depending on your definition. Hope for some could mean a reliance on something intangible. In that context, hope can feel like grasping water – even as it leaks through our fingers.

Yet hope can be the flame that refuses to be extinguished, burning eternally, and serving as a lighthouse, beckoning us to safer harbours and greater exploration.

It's up to each of us to choose our definitions. It's the meaning we give words that breathes life or death into them, making them something we want to run to, or run from.

The year 2021 is sure to have ups and downs. The question is, what words will we choose and what meaning will we give them? Will they soothe our over-taxed, raw emotions? Will they result in actions that bring neighbours together? Or will they tear us further apart?

Will we use our words and actions to uplift and strengthen the core of our

communities, weaving together colourful fibres of diversity into whole cloth?

I hope that is what *INSPIRED Magazine* does. I am uplifted every month by those whose stories grace the pages of this magazine. And I'm deeply grateful for the people who support me in achieving this – my staff, suppliers, writers, distributors and the businesses whose advertising provides the financial means by which *INSPIRED Magazine* can continue to publish.

In December, I was thrilled when several readers reached out to tell me how they were sharing *INSPIRED Magazine* with others. One lady in Vancouver says she picks up armfuls of our magazine to take to her apartment building. She regularly monitors our distribution rack, removing any debris or other magazines that get stacked on top.

Many readers told me they send their copies to friends or relatives in other provinces.

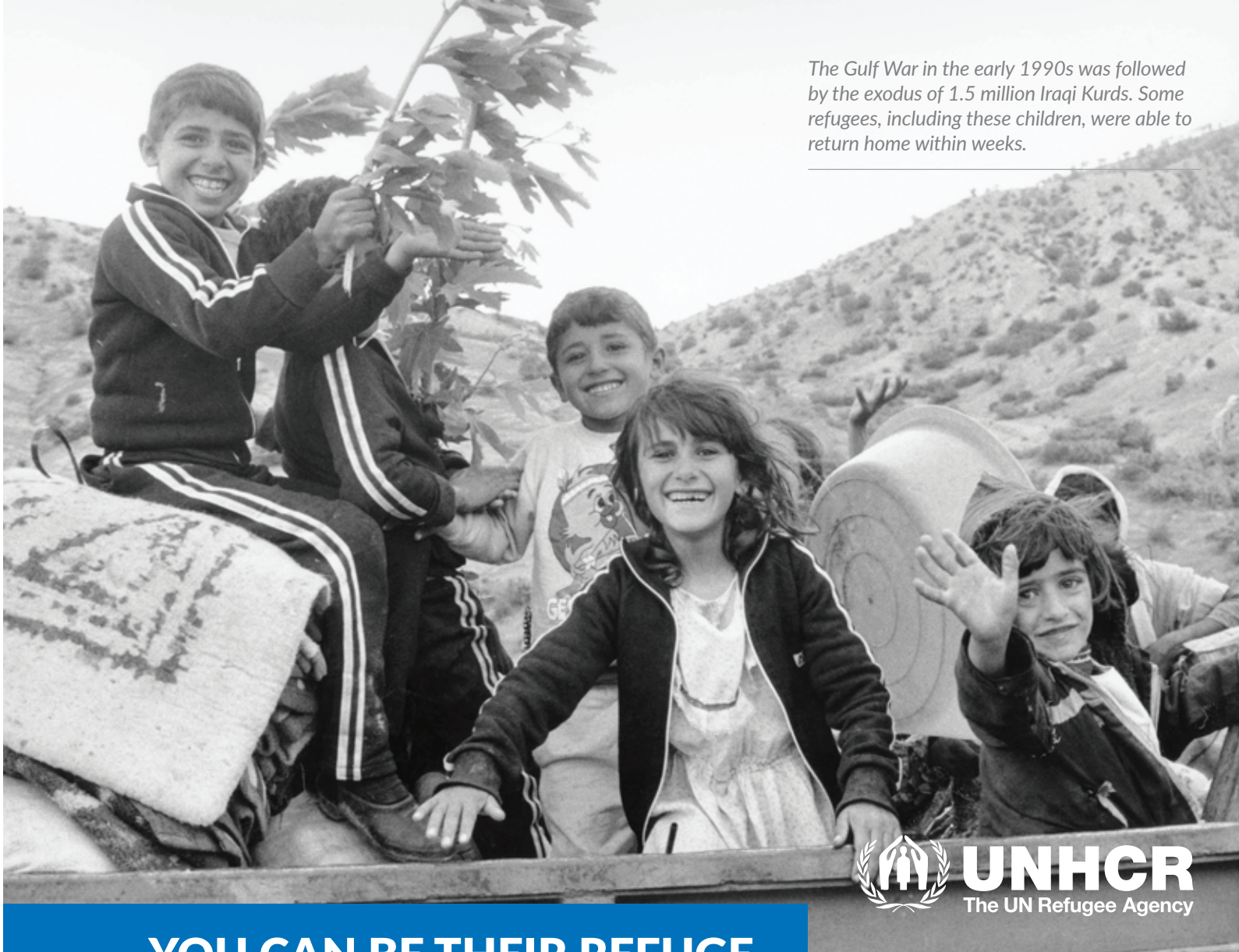
One gentleman, about to undergo surgery, asked me to send him a year of back issues, so he would have something to read during his convalescence. Another asked me to send back issues to a senior residence in lockdown, so friends she cannot visit would have some inspiring content to read.

These notes, calls, and emails reminded me afresh about the reasons why I started the magazine and what keeps me going through the tough times.

As we head into 2021, let us be mindful of the words we use and the meaning we give them. Use the uncertainty during these times as an opportunity to try new things. And hold fast to the hope that light and love will prevail.

Let us liberally spread graciousness and kindness around when we can. And may 2021 bring blessings to you. |

The Gulf War in the early 1990s was followed by the exodus of 1.5 million Iraqi Kurds. Some refugees, including these children, were able to return home within weeks.



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Best-selling author Jack Whyte is currently working on four book projects, for which he's learning about publishing in the digital era.
Photo: Wayne Duchart (retired)

JACK WHYTE:

HISTORY, BROGUE AND TALENT

by HANS TAMMEMAGI

The Canadian National Exhibition field in Toronto is crowded with 1,100 musicians as world-renowned regimental bands and a huge array of pipe bands enthrall 33,000 spectators at the Military Tattoo of the World Scottish Festival in the early 1980s. Suddenly the field empties, and the spotlight illuminates one solitary kilt-wearing man. He stands tall, and proceeds to recite in a thick brogue, *Toast to Canada, Our Adopted Homeland*. Presenting the ode he wrote before the immense congregation was an enormous honour, and only one of many highlights in the long and illustrious career of Jack Whyte.

Now an octogenarian, Jack continues writing from his home in Kelowna, BC. His historical fiction novels and poetry have achieved international success with more than a million books sold in Canada and millions more worldwide, with translations into more than 20 languages. He has authored more than a dozen international bestsellers. As might be expected at his age, however, the last decade has also seen a few hurdles. Blessed with drive and determination, Jack has overcome these obstacles and continues to thrive.

A true patriot Canadian, Jack came to Canada in 1967 and has lived near Kelowna since 1996 – but his roots are firmly embedded in his birthplace of Scotland. Born into a

working-class family in 1940, Jack was unusual from his early days, and was clearly destined to become a writer.

“Syntax was my overriding passion as a preteen boy,” he says. “For fun, I’d open books at random and parse a paragraph or an entire page, identifying and defining the parts of speech in every phrase and sentence.”

Before coming to Canada, Jack lived and was educated in England for eight years and in France for three years. In Canada, he started as a teacher in Athabasca, Alberta, before moving to BC. After a year of teaching, he was lured by his other talents and became a singer, musician, actor and entertainer – a career he followed for the next 30-odd years.

He has a good memory, “but only for things that interest me,” he says, adding “I have no facility for numbers, but I love words and idioms.” These talents led him to start writing, and over the next decades he became one of the top historical novelists in the world.

He is best known for his original series of nine novels, *A Dream of Eagles*, that retell the story of King Arthur against the backdrop of post-Roman Britain. Amazingly, he wrote the first four of these books in secrecy, and 15 years passed before he showed anyone his work. Once he did, however, the novels were bought by Penguin Canada, and Jack’s career was launched.

Snapshot

with Jack Whyte

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

"Looking back over the 60 years since I was 20, I'm surprised to realize that my advice to my 20-year-old self would be pretty much the same as it might have been then: 'Trust yourself and your upbringing, and never, ever be afraid to change your mind and try to reach out for something new that will challenge you to be different and make you better.'"

Who, or what has influenced you the most? And why?

"My life has been influenced hugely by my father's handling of his own misfortunes on and after D-Day [overcoming blindness and extensive wounds from a landmine]. That early influence affected the man I became."

"Regarding my writing career, my father had a friend, Tony, who gave me my first glimpse into the kind of mysteries that obscure the central truths hidden in our legends. Because of him, I became a de-constructor of legends, looking for the essentially human, unadorned truth that lies at the heart of every great legend. That's what I do in my novels, and it embodies the most powerful influence I've known in my life."

What are you most grateful for?

"I am most grateful for the opportunity I have enjoyed in being able to take my favourite pastime and build a successful living from it. I'm a writer, and I've enjoyed success in my chosen métier, and that is a privilege."

What does success mean to you?

"Success has given me the kind of freedom that I never would have dreamed I might enjoy. That freedom encompasses artistic freedom, but it's a long way from being limited or delineated by that." |



Since then, Jack has written the Knights Templar trilogy, the Guardians of Scotland trilogy, numerous poems and TV programs. Jack's Arthurian books quickly became huge favourites in Italy, where his name has achieved brand recognition.

But there's much more, I discovered. A consummate actor, he wrote and staged a one-man show, *Rantin Rovin Robin*, about Robbie Burns that toured across the country in the 1970s and was written expressly to show non-Scots Canadians why Burns is still honoured worldwide, after more than 200 years.

The success of this show, which opened many doors for him, was based on his love of words and narrative poetry. Jack emulates the light-hearted but deeply moving style of Rudyard Kipling, Robert Service and Australia's Banjo Paterson. His poetry skills and sharp sense of humour garnered him the position of Regimental Bard of the Calgary Highlanders, a position he held for more than 30 years, and one of which I'm particularly envious. He has been invited to, and participated in, so many Robbie Burns nights that he wryly notes "I've got third-degree Burns."

I was particularly touched to see Jack's green side, which is well demonstrated in this excerpt from his poem *The Faceless Ones* that describes the sinking of the Exxon Valdez.

There's blood in the ooze from the tanker's screws.

There's blood in the chain saw's teeth.

There's dread in the thread of the steel cat's tread.

The torn earth screams beneath.

Fast forward to today. At an age when his contemporaries – at least those still around – are settling into

easy-chairs, Jack is as vigorous as ever. He has four book projects on the go and is embarked on a totally different way of publishing his work. Particularly inspiring is that he has faced some life-threatening difficulties in recent years, namely two bouts of cancer. He fought his way through these obstacles, survived, and marches forward undeterred.

Eight years ago, he was diagnosed with lung cancer. He immediately quit smoking – not an easy task since he had been consuming two packs a day. After surgery to remove the cancer, he recovered fully, even to enjoying golf again (he lives in a golf community). And, of course, he continued to write.

In 2016, cancer struck again, this time more seriously, attacking his liver with several tumours. Although many thought he would not survive, after nine months of struggling with chemotherapy – when he lost considerable weight and all his hair – Jack has now recovered and is almost back to normal. The support of his wife, Beverley, was a huge help; they recently celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary.

Jack's grit came from his father, who demonstrated ferocious tenacity and determination in overcoming blindness from a war wound to lead a successful life and career.

In response to the strain on his health, Jack has turned to shorter forms of fiction – short stories and novellas – that place fewer demands and stress on him. He is following the advice given by a respected friend and elder long ago, who said, "Never be afraid to change horses in midstream."

Rather than dealing with a traditional publishing company, he is using online publishing through print-on-demand books, ebooks and audiobooks. Through this method, Jack invests in his work upfront by paying for editing and book production but receives considerably larger royalties than following the traditional route.

The first foray into online publishing came in October 2020, with the launch of *Yesterday's Battles*, a

collection of short stories each rooted, one way or another, in his boyhood memories of Scotland.

"It's a new departure for me; the first book I've ever published directly to ebook and print-on-demand platforms," he says. "It's a big step to take at my age." It is still too early to gauge the success of the new venture, but it looks promising.

Jack has three other works in progress now. One is a novella, *The Horse Warrior*, about a minor character who taught Sir Lancelot how to ride and fight. Another is a collection of short stories called *Green Bananas*. The third is *Sadie's Say So*, which is about his mother and father.

"I have to live at least a few more years to get these works out," he says, "and I have several other ideas percolating, as well." A long road lies ahead.

When asked what fictional character he wished he could be, Jack responds, "Don Quixote de la Mancha. I'm getting to the age where it's not such a stretch of the imagination, and I have always admired the old geezer. Besides, in a day wherein principles, of any persuasion, appear to be disappearing like spit from a hot griddle, I believe it wouldn't be a bad thing to be remembered for having the courage of one's convictions, outmoded and risible as some might find them."

It's inspiring to see such great talent with imagery and words, and even more so to see that Jack's drive is undiminished, and he continues to have the courage of his convictions. |

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THE ART OF PRODUCING COMTÉ CHEESE

by MARILYN JONES

I often tell people, “I don’t do kitchen.” When I was caring for my young family, sure, I cooked and baked, but now I am on my own and I pretty much live on yogurt, sandwiches and take-out.

That’s why my friends were shocked when I said I was travelling to the Jura Massif region of eastern France to enjoy the medieval villages, relaxing scenery and to learn how Comté cheese is made.

My new-found interest in cheese making came from a brief article I read about the region that is smaller than the state of Rhode Island. It is the only place this specific cheese is made. I also found it fascinating that the process is more than 1,000 years old.

My visit was divided into three kinds of stops along the Comté Cheese Trail: dairy farms, *fruitières* where the cheese is made, and a massive storage facility where the cheese is aged.

Brothers Anael and Quentin Michaud own one of the farms I toured. They showed me around the barn and introduced me to a few of the new calves. “We name all our calves,” says Quentin. “This year, all the names will start with a P; the next calf will be Pokémon.”

I grew up on a small farm, but it has been years since I was in a barn with its pungent smells and scent of sweet hay mingled together. In addition to an exact region, the cheese is made from the milk of specific cows: 95 per cent Montbéliarde and five per cent French Simmental cows. The cows are milked twice a day and the milk is transported to a nearby *fruitière*.

Next, I was taken to the summer pasture a few miles away. Quentin explains that they herd the cows right through town in the spring and back again in the fall to the cows’ winter quarters at their farm.

The cows graze in lush green pastures during warmer weather and eat the same grass harvested into hay during

the winter. Any fermented feed such as silage is prohibited because it adversely affects the quality of the milk, which is used raw. Comté has also refused GMOs (genetically modified organisms).

It’s afternoon milking time when we arrive. The two young men and their two dogs head off to herd the cows back to the barn. It is amazing to watch as the cattle enter a corral and move into the barn, taking turns to be milked; their bells clanging in a cacophony of sound. The first milk is extracted by hand before the milking machine is attached.

More than 3,000 family farms produce raw milk for the manufacture of Comté cheese in 50 small villages throughout the region. Each farm has about 40 cows plus calves and heifers. The average annual production of each farm amounts to about 270,000 litres.

MAKING COMTÉ

I arrive at *fruitière* de La Brune in Lievreumont la Brune early in the morning for an opportunity to see the milk transformed into Comté. There are 153 *fruitières* in the region. Often located in the heart of the village, each *fruitière* receives milk from dairy farms located within an eight-mile radius to guarantee its absolute freshness.

The cheese maker explains through an interpreter that after arriving at the *fruitière*, the raw milk is filtered and poured into large copper vats where it is heated, and rennet is added.

ABOVE | The beautiful Jura Massif region of eastern France.

RIGHT | (Top) Ninety-five percent of the milk used in Comté cheese is from Montbéliarde cows. (Middle) The milk is heated in large copper vats.

(Bottom) Cheese made at *Fruitière de Bonnetage* in Bonnetage is stored for four months before being taken to a storage facility where it is kept four to 18 months or longer. Photos: Marilyn Jones

Rennet helps the milk coagulate and form a firm curd. After the curd forms, it is poured into large wheel-shaped molds and pressed for an entire day to squeeze out any excess whey.

It is then placed in a refrigerated area. The wheels, each weighing 36 kilograms, are turned every day, and a coarse salt solution is rubbed onto the rind.

The freshly made wheels are then pre-ripened for a few weeks before being moved to one of the 16 maturing cellars in the region.

MATURING THE CHEESE

In 1966, Marcel Petite discovered a military fort built in 1880 that was used to protect the Swiss border. Fort

Saint Antoine's structure of cut and vaulted stone, covered with a thick layer of soil, provides ideal conditions for slow maturing. The cave-like atmosphere of the fort is about 7°C and 95 per cent humidity, which is excellent for the cheese.

Here, the affineurs look after the cheese for four to 18 months or longer; regularly turning, salting, and rubbing each wheel with a brine solution.

A young man explains that the cheese is not only stored here but graded as well. After four months, each round is tested and marked on its taste and shape. Flavours range from sweet, nutty and creamy to fruity and toasty.

Cheese wheels scoring more than 14 points are given the green band, representing excellent quality. Rounds rated between 12-14 points are given a brown band. And rounds scoring less than 12 are excluded from carrying the official label.

Comté production follows a lengthy set of strict rules and requirements, which guarantees the specificity of the cheese and remain the same from farm to fromagerie to storage facility.

Cheese manufacturing is the result of farmers in the Middle Ages looking for a way to preserve food for winter. By producing the cheese, they could keep some of the milk produced in the summer. That's how the fromagerie was created.

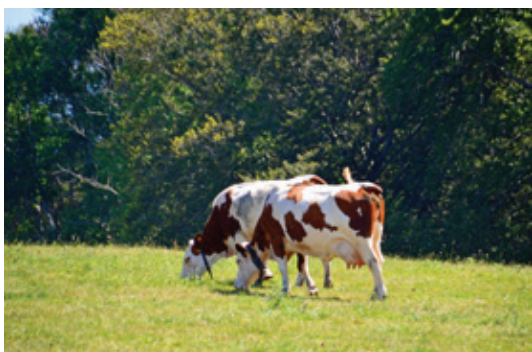
Today, more than 63,000 tonnes of Comté are produced here every year.

In between learning about the cheese, I visit medieval villages and enjoy the beautiful mountainous landscape.

I leave France to continue my European adventures with a whole new attitude and understanding about what goes into this time-honoured process. I am impressed with the men and women who keep this tradition alive. The residents are proud of their heritage and are very welcoming to anyone interested in learning about their famous cheese.

I still don't do kitchen, but I am sure open to taking more food-related tours. It was a fascinating adventure! |

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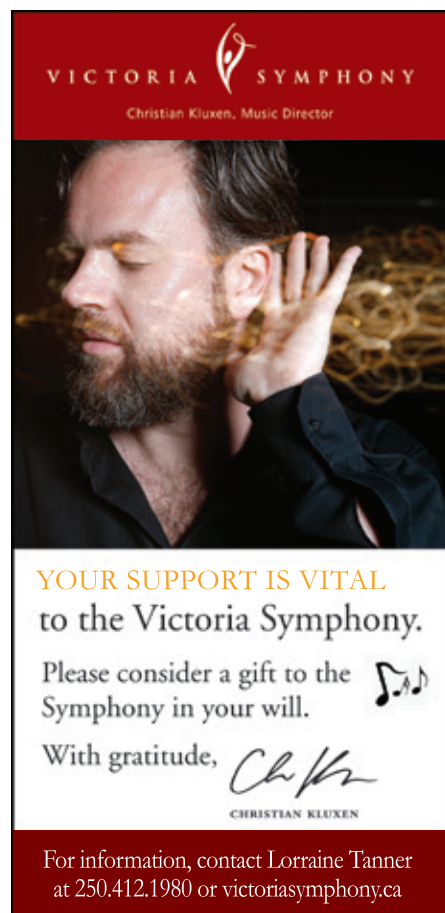
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CREATIVITY DOES NOT RETIRE

by JOAN BOXALL

Imre Szekely is a Hungarian-born graphic artist who came to Canada in 1988. He has worked as an art teacher and graphic artist in Hungary, France, Holland and Austria.

“Creativity and sources of inspiration are as alive and as fresh now as when I was in my 20s,” says Imre, who now lives in Victoria.

Imre combines two genres in his linocut/monotype style of printmaking.

“In linocut,” he says, “the bold engraving of thin, fine lines into linoleum, and the variability it offers is what inspires my creativity. Besides monochrome (black and white, or one colour with all its tones), I can perform layering to give my art more diversity and latitude to capture the viewer’s imagination.”

Linocut printmaking came to the fore in the twentieth century as a variant of woodcut, without the directional grain of wood. A design is cut into the lino surface with a tool such as a knife, chisel or gouge. The uncarved areas, when inked with a roller, show a reverse, or mirror image. British-Australian artists popularized the style between World War I and II. Pablo Picasso and Henri Matisse adopted and adapted the method.

The second genre Imre celebrates is monotype in which a unique print is produced with an effect not unlike painting.

“I love the process of making the monotype... using a roller to cover a sheet of glass with colour printing ink, then placing a sheet of offset paper over it and drawing the patterns with a pencil. The offset paper then picks up the ink from the glass only where the pencil draws the line.”

“I came to this method in primary school, where my art teacher, Imre Krausz, taught both linocut and monotype printmaking, but as separate techniques. Combining the two into a single mode of artistic expression was my idea, my invention,” says Imre.



*“The meaning of life is to find your gift.
The purpose of life is to give it away.” –Pablo Picasso*

“Some years ago, I put on a solo exhibition in Hungary organized by the European Capital of Culture in Pecs. To support the Art Foundation there, I donated 31 works from my collection. I also donated a piece I created, entitled ‘Homage to Pecs,’” says Imre.

“Canada Past, Present and Future” (*pictured above*) represents Imre’s appreciation for the reception of Hungarian refugees after the Hungarian Revolution of 1956.

“Though I came to Canada much later, I was still welcomed along with my family,” he says.

Imre’s latest gift went to the Director-General of the World Health Organization (WHO). In “Satan Sneers” (*the artist is pictured holding the work above*), he sympathizes with the plight of the global community amid the struggle with COVID-19.

Imre has presented his works to present and past Prime Ministers Justin Trudeau (*pictured right*) and Jean Chretien,

and to Pope John Paul II.

"Gifting Justin Trudeau with one of my art pieces was a highlight in my life... this kind of event was impossible in my home country under communist rule. I have also given away works of art to low-income families," he adds.

Imre's works have found homes in book illustrations, (notably Truman Capote's *Music for Chameleons*), limited-edition prints, and on Christmas cards. His works are in the Vatican, in churches, in Canadian and Hungarian parliament buildings, embassies and consulates.

"The creative urge will invariably lead one sooner or later to discover the mode that best suits one's artistic expression," says Imre.

"Don't wait for inspiration. It comes while one is working."

—Henri Matisse

Imre is a deeply spiritual and religious man for whom peace is paramount.

"Most humans desire it," he says. "We artists believe in that, too. And it is through my artwork that I seek to support deserving people and worthy causes. This gives me a more profound satisfaction than all the money in the world."

Coming from a Communist country where freedom of expression was suppressed makes Imre appreciate a free country like Canada.

"Here, my mind, heart and soul found a new life, nurtured by love, respect and peaceful coexistence with people of diverse backgrounds. It gave me, and later five of my family members, a new start and a whole new life."

Imre's work of exploring form and line in the two techniques has brought him to a new style for his motifs: hyper-surrealism, providing him more depth and interpretive freedom. Hyper-surrealism arose from the 1920s surrealist movement of Andre Breton to a "hyper" or exaggerated level in the 1970s. As a poet and writer, Breton felt that freeing one's mind from the past to arrive at

truth through dreams or the unconscious could apply to other art forms.

"The process takes me into a more profound expression of my inner mental, emotional and spiritual world," says Imre. "This art genre challenges me to go beyond mere technical skill to a deeper level of imagination and a higher vision."

Hyper-surrealism in art applies to detailed photo editing or painting which fits well with the monotype method. New York City, Iranian-American artist Leila Zafar coined the term. Colour, texture, and pattern inform her (and Imre's) emotional sensibilities and artistic creativity.



Photos: Kor Gable

"It takes a long time to become young."

—Pablo Picasso

What life advice does Imre offer? Take care of one's health and preserve one's creative juices.

"You may not believe it," he says, "but playing the world-famous Rubik's Cube in fast-paced competition is conducive to creativity, focused attention, and fun."

Imre is a linocut/monotype of guy who encourages through example, a life of artful expression. |

For more about Imre Szekely, visit www.szekelygallery.com

Joan Boxall is a regular contributor to *INSPIRED Magazine* and author of *DrawBridge: Drawing Alongside My Brother's Schizophrenia*, Caitlin Press, 2019.



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THE POWER OF YOUR MIND

by NANCY J. SCHAAF

Great news! You can improve your golf swing or putting skills while sitting in a comfy chair in your living room by simply imagining the perfect putt or swing. Seems impossible, but evidence shows that merely visualizing what we want can help make it a reality.

“Psychologists have known for decades that the images you create in your mind can have a potent effect on your body; now researchers are proving it,” says Traci Stein, PhD, a clinical psychologist.

Visualization, using imagery to change our mind, thoughts, or emotions, impacts the brain’s cognitive processes: motor control, attention, perception, planning, and memory. During visualization, we can train our brain for actual performance.

Many athletes employ this technique. Experienced athletes, like golfer Tiger Woods, use vivid, highly detailed internal images of the entire performance, engaging their senses in their mental rehearsal. World Champion Golfer Jack Nicklaus said: “I never hit a shot, not even in practice, without having a very sharp in-focus picture of it in my head.”

This process works in other areas of our lives besides improving athletic skills. Mental practice is a powerful tool as seeing things in our minds can help us achieve what we want in our life. Research results emphasize the strength of the mind-body connection, the link between thoughts and behaviours.

Could this powerful tool promote healing? During human drug trials, pharmaceutical companies divide their test subjects into two groups. One group receives the drug

while the other gets a placebo, usually sugar pills or saline solution. Both groups follow a protocol, and then the results are evaluated.

Surprisingly, people who receive the placebo showed improvements in their condition. This result occurs in various diseases, from the common cold to cancers. The placebo effect is significant proof that the subconscious mind controls the processes of the body.

Visualization is a technique anyone can use to help foster healing. Positive mental images physically affect the body. Numerous studies have supported the benefits of visualization, usually in conjunction with other therapies, for treating a variety of conditions like asthma, anxiety, and fibromyalgia.

This practice is useful for relaxation and healing for many physical and mental health issues. “Visualization activates the same neural networks that actual task performance does, which can strengthen the connection between brain and body,” explains neuroscientist Stephen Kosslyn, PhD, author of *Top Brain, Bottom Brain*.

Repetitive use of positive visualization encourages the mind and body to work together to foster the body’s healing process. Positive attitude and visualization connect with better sleep, less inflammation, and lower blood pressure and stress levels.

Visualization treats physical health issues, including a cerebral hemorrhage commonly referred to as a stroke. A blood clot in a brain artery that provides oxygen and nutrients becomes blocked, and the tissue dies, often resulting in weakness or even paralysis of the affected arm or leg.

However, visualizing moving the affected limb causes

blood to flow to the distressed area. Even if paralysis occurred, creating that mental image increases blood flow enough to diminish tissue death, which is an obvious display of this powerful technique.

A study published in the *Journal of Oncology* states that using visualization during cancer treatment achieves relaxation, relieves symptoms, and stimulates healing responses in the body. Visualization helps patients tolerate procedures and treatments. Cancer patients are better able to cope with nausea and vomiting caused by chemotherapy. Visualization lowers anxiety before radiation therapy and significantly reduced patients' pain levels.

Additionally, research proves that visualization reduces stress, blood pressure, cholesterol, and A1C levels in the blood. It strengthens immune cell activity and speeds up healing from fractures and burns. Visualizing improves medical procedures like ventilator weaning, biopsy, and dialysis.

Validations consistently promote visualization's effectiveness, demonstrating its positive impact on health, wellness, attitude, behavioral change, and peak performance. Visualization improves many facets of life, from athletic ability to cognitive performance, self-esteem, and goal achievement.

Mental practice boosts confidence, enhances mood, and positively affects the performance of cognitive and physical tasks. Treatment of anxiety, depression, and other emotional issues and quitting bad habits, such as smoking, can immensely impact self-esteem and personal relationships.

The mind is powerful; use it to paint wonderful mental pictures that could be the key to living a healthier and happier life. Advocates suggest creating a detailed plan of what one desires and then repetitively visualizing that plan, utilizing the senses of seeing, hearing, feeling, and smelling.

Remember: where the mind goes, the body follows. |

Nancy J. Schaaf is a retired Registered Nurse and health writer.

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STEP CLASSES IN SPLIT

by JANE CASSIE

I'm not a fan of enclosed, claustrophobic spaces nor steep, ladder-like stairs that truly challenge my aging quads. But I've heard the view from the top of this 1,700-year-old bell tower boasts a pretty panorama of the UNESCO fortress and the shimmering Adriatic beyond. And it'll also help burn off the Eggs Benny and buttery croissant I devoured this morning on the Lido Deck.

Although we're safely staying put this pandemic year, I'm reminiscing about our 12-day Mediterranean cruise and Split, one of our nine ports of call.

Croatia's second largest city, Split is home to 200,000 residents, but it oozes small hamlet charm. Located at the hub is Old Town and The Diocletian's Palace, originally the retirement digs of a Roman Emperor. And at the core of this thick-walled citadel is the Cathedral of Saint Domnius where our morning step class is happening.

After ascending to the top of the bell tower and recovering from my drum-rolling heart rate, I soak in the sights. Red-roofed homes terrace the hillsides and unite with a bustling promenade of shops and restaurants. They all snuggle up to the sapphire sea where millionaire yachts, tour boats and ferries join our floating hotel.

We exit our aerobic venue into the central Peristil Square and join the hordes of other wanderers who wind their way through the labyrinth of streets. Museums and attractions speckle our routes; Emanuel Vidovic Gallery showcases a unique collection of Vidovic's artwork, the City Museum, sprawling over three floors, shares city stories and local relics

from the past, and the Temple Of Jupiter, that was once an ancient Roman temple and dedicated to the King of Gods still flaunts its original barrel-vaulted ceiling.

At the north entrance of Old Town, next to the Gallery of Art, is the towering Gregory of Nin Statue, where we make a wish.

"Just rub his gold toe," my husband, Brent, encourages as we stare skyward at this monument. "And your wish will come true." Clearly this superstition has been a popular one, based by the polished brass on this fellow's foot. I have my hand wipes at the ready after giving it some of my best elbow grease.

We continue meandering through the old town maze and check out many of the shops and restaurants that spill onto the narrow alleys. Tucked into one of the quiet courtyards is the Korta Café, offering a delicious taste of Croatia: lamb with peas, black risotto, grilled fish. I order their authentic Croatian stew, a tasty mix of shrimp, mussels and gnocchi all married together in a yummy broth. Although we've been privileged to an endless supply of scrumptious cruise cuisine over the past week, I manage to polish off every last morsel of this local delight.

ABOVE | View of the harbour from above.

RIGHT | (Top) Making a wish at Gregory of Nin Statue. (Middle) Central Peristil Square. (Bottom) Split is Croatia's second largest city. Photos: Brent and Jane Cassie



A line-up of restaurants and coffee bars also hug up along the nearby Riva, Split's shorefront promenade. Feeling re-fuelled, we exit the old city to saunter this trendy strip where locals and tourists socialize in the shade of billowy palms. Because the city nestles into a peninsula, there are also several beaches that lure sunbathers.

"Want to try out the sandy Bačvice Beach?" I suggest to Brent, thinking it would be nice for some chill time. "Or there are dozens of pebble shores to choose from. Kašuni and Obojena are two options under Marjan Hill that is nearby."

"Let's get a little more exercise," he suggests. "And take the steps up to the summit of this hilly mound." Is he a glutton for punishment, or what? Okay, I've had a few too many desserts on this holiday, but surely this morning's workout was enough calorie burning for one day.

There are certainly more relaxing choices available while visiting this Croatian gem. We could take a scenic taxi drive to Sibenik, a nearby city that's bursting with history or do a tour to the famous Krka Waterfalls that cascade over 17 tiers. Croatia's UNESCO World Heritage Site National parks have been given rave reviews. And culture abounds at the Mestrovic Gallery that hosts some of Croatia's finest sculptures. But, oh no! Not for my active guy!

I follow his lead and upward we go. Our centuries-old stones weave through a pine grove of clacking cicadas and fragrant bougainvilleas. En route is Cafe Bar Vidilica, a quaint Mediterranean eatery topped off with a splendid view. While patrons relax and chill out with a beer, we keep going. Peek-a-boo sea vistas are offered along the way and, at step number 300 or so, we reach Prva Vidilica where a welcoming bar overlooks the city and serves the thirsty.

In the nearby forest is a Jewish Cemetery, many of whom perished in the Holocaust and Tito's Liberation Army. And beyond the gravestones, is a path leading to the Romanesque church of St. Nikolas, dating back to the 13th century.

We take a breather at the nearby terrace to pose for a pic and gaze at the stunning island and mountain views. Driving is an optional route to this highpoint, so there's no need to break into a sweat to get here (like we've just done!). While this lofty landmark satisfies the majority, we keep going onward and upward – more trails and yet another 100-plus steps.

Oddly, closer to the summit, there's a small zoo. I wonder how they transported the animals here, not to mention all the feral cats.

"We could continue climbing to Telegrin," Brent suggests, when looking at the map. "Then we'd be at the top of Marjan at the 175-metre mark."

I'm not sure where my guy gets his energy, but I can relate to why this highpoint has been coined "lungs of the city." And as I look over the sweeping views from this final heady stance, I can pinpoint the tiny boats on the Adriatic, one being our cruising home away from home, where all the luxurious comforts await, along with a few more delectable meals! |

For IF YOU GO information, visit www.seniorlivingmag.com/articles/step-classes-in-split

SHEILA NORGATE: ARTIST, FEMINIST, NOSTALGIST

by JOHN HARRIS

My first encounter with Sheila Norgate was in the hall of St. Andrews United Church in Nanaimo. She was relaxing after yet another witty, wise performance as one of the characters she invented for the latest manifestation of her creative career. And she was explaining her very short criminal career.

Canada legalized homosexuality in May 1969, months after she had come out as a lesbian. That was years before she transitioned from a credit union employee who wrote banking manuals to the intrepid artist she is today. But Sheila's path to her epiphany was laid in childhood during the 1950s.

"My parents were crazy about each other when they first got together," she says. "He was a Canadian soldier wooing an English girl. And they had all that war lust and drama going on. But, overall, he treated my mother horribly and even in his old age was threatening. To give you an idea – there are five of us children and none of us went to his funeral. That's how bad it was."

I first discovered Sheila as a painter and asked her if she knew when she had become an artist.

"I know exactly when it was," she says. "When I was 33, I ended up in the hospital with a fever. They didn't know what I had and eventually took me to the operating room for a biopsy. I had Crohn's disease. Twelve hours after the operation, my intestine ruptured, and I was back in surgery. I nearly died. During my near-death experience on the operating table, I was given a chance to come back, to continue living. When I took it, everything changed."

While recovering from her surgery, Sheila painted with watercolours. They were a gateway to a life after banking. She became a painter and a writer and her current artform: performance. Her home includes a studio on 'the Isle of the Arts', Gabriola Island – five miles from the church hall where I first saw Sheila perform.

While the artforms have evolved, the message remains the same: the battle for women, even on quiet Gabriola Island.

"I was on the board of a group called 'People For A Healthy Community.' They run the food bank and deal with poverty. We tried to have a drop-in for women. Nobody came. We learned you can't get women to come out



Photo: Sean Sherstone

because they have to live here. So, it is a problem here – the police know there's a problem, but it's under-reported everywhere. There's a gap between what we know and what's being reported."

That hard reality helps drive Sheila's sharp, witty performances. Wearing a succession of styles from the 1940s and bad wigs, she reappears as S.M. Norgate, esteemed pseudoscientist from the Ladies Institute for Endless Rectification; Mrs. Frank Hokum and her talk on 'Better Living Through Improved Hostessing'; and even H.R.M. Queen Elizabeth II, among others.

As for the person who is Sheila Norgate, she finds comfort in the sweet memories of her dog, Rosie, who she credits for healing her heart and guiding her to a plant-based lifestyle. And her god is Santa. Santa Claus? That demanded an explanation.

"It all started with *Miracle on 34th Street*. Edmund Gwenn, who played Santa in that film, was a miracle of benevolence; something I'd never had with the men in my life, especially my father. So, I chose my God, and it's Santa. I call myself a 'Santafile.'"

Santafile, artist, writer, performer – all these roles are wrapped up in Sheila as a feminist. What continues to impress me as a straight, married male is how all her experiences – from her fraught family, her unhappy career in banking, her successful painting life and, lately, her sardonic performances – are informed by compassion and humour. What makes Sheila brilliant is her ability to bring that to life for all people while making them laugh. Her stories relate to the human condition, no matter your gender or life experiences. That rare quality is why I was happy to join the women and the men standing in ovation in that church hall – loudly cheering for the fun, the wisdom and audacity of Sheila's performance.

While COVID-19 persists, we are unable to enjoy live performances for now. But Sheila has morphed yet again – into an excellent producer, writer, and actor for her online videos.

See for yourself on YouTube or at www.sheilanorgate.com |



JUNE & ODETTE

The word “organizing” in an ad posted on a telephone pole in Vancouver a decade ago stopped June in her tracks.

“I knew immediately that it was calling me,” she says. At the time, June was a semi-retired jazz singer. “I really needed help organizing my paperwork and photos and files.”

That’s how she met the highly skilled Odette, who, after being recently widowed from a lifelong marriage, had decided to start a small neighbourhood initiative.

“I was feeling very lost at the time,” admits Odette. “I can’t sit still for long, and I had a lot of organizational skills to put to good use.”

Her ability to think laterally and vertically, and the many years of working alongside her musician husband, made the new connection with June a good fit.

“Odette and I have a mutual admiration, and apart from our symbiotic work relationship, we quickly discovered that we also had many interests, social connections and a love of words in common,” says June.

Almost 10 years on, the two are still working together a few days a week. They both say it’s their combined sharp wit, sense of humour and ongoing understanding and empathy for each other that has bonded their connection into a heartfelt friendship through changing times and tasks.

“We know each other so well now,” says June, fondly recalling which coffee shop she was leaving when she spotted Odette’s posting. |

Contact Verena Foxx at verena.foxx@gmail.com if you have a special story of “how we met” to share.



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CHOIR EMBOLDENS ALL SINGERS

by MYLES SHANE

The Gettin' Higher Choir (GHC) is a large, exuberant, and inclusive “come-as-you-are” choir that embodies the idea that singing is our birthright. The choir was founded by Siobhan Robinsong in 1996 and co-directed for many years by Denis Donnelly. Its current directors are husband-and-wife team, Cathy Baker and Dick Jackson.

“The GHC was formed by Siobhan Robinsong when she realized upon moving to Victoria that there were no public choirs that people could join without having to pass an audition, which is an intimidating thing for a lot of people,” says Dick. “Even the shyest voice can discover the joy of singing. So, by word of mouth, she got 40 people together on the first night and it grew from there.”

A LOVE STORY

Dick and Cathy have a romance that began with song. “Our story started when we were introduced to each other by a mutual friend who was in the GHC. There was a bit of matchmaking there, and we have been together ever since.” Cathy’s life was in pieces after her first marriage went south. “Once my marriage broke up, I was with friends on the Colorado River singing three-part harmony under a starry sky when I burst into tears. It became crystal clear that music is too important to me to ignore and that a musical partnership had to be part of my future life.”

Cathy found her musical partner in Dick and they have been collaborating since they met. Dick always believed Cathy would be a great leader. “Cathy thought it would be good to take the Community Choir Leadership Training course,” he says. “At the same time, the door was opening for new leadership at the GHC, and we walked through that door together.”

Denis and Siobhan supported and groomed Dick and Cathy and gave them opportunities to co-lead. Training, practice, and natural leading abilities paved the way for the couple to step into the co-directorship they now hold with GHC.

“Dick and Cathy bring a depth of soul to this choir that transcends the music. They both have amazing musical talent and they are extremely knowledgeable about the history of the songs – often citing the musicians, lyricists and the cultural or social context in which the song was written,” says *INSPIRED* publisher, Barbara Risto, who has joined the choir on Zoom. “The songs they pick are so uplifting and nourishing to the spirit..it’s a tremendous gift during this stressful time.”

ABOVE | Husband-and-wife team Dick Jackson and Cathy Baker are co-directors of The Gettin' Higher Choir in Victoria. Photo: Bill Weaver

RIGHT | Zoom sessions, though not ideal, help keep singers, who might otherwise be isolated, connected to the GHC choir.

COVID-19

With COVID-19, the world has been flipped on its side. However, even amid the pandemic Cathy and Dick haven't given up.

"The quality of the connection is strong and even now with Zoom that quality and intimacy can come through if you are open to it," says Cathy. Dick agrees, "We have been trying to keep the experience intimate as much as we can during this time. We keep on going with a smile on our faces and a song in our hearts. It feels like we need to give more of ourselves through Zoom than we need to in person."

One of the reasons the couple switched the choir from in-person to Zoom was that they wanted to help people who are in isolation.

"We had thought about what kind of choir there could be for people who are shut-in or far away, and now we know we can do it on Zoom," says Cathy.

Dick explains how his team tries to create a special experience for all members: "Right now, we have about 70 singers who join in on Tuesday or Thursday evening, which is about half the number who were with us before the pandemic hit," says Dick. "We are really happy to have attracted a few new singers from elsewhere in Canada and the US! We are very fussy about our song choices: our songs need to be uplifting ones that feed the soul and that we can sing many times and not get tired of the music or the message."

CHARITY

Charity is an integral part of the GHC choir, and they have been involved in a plethora of causes since their inception.

"The GHC has been doing fundraising concerts twice a year, for local and international causes, for over 20 years," says Dick. "Early on, Siobhan became friends with someone who had come to Canada as a war refugee, from the village of Kapasseni in Mozambique. The Caia Connection is a Canadian charity that supports development projects in that region."

THE KAPASSENI PROJECT

"Through our shared love of African songs, the lives of the GHC and of our little village, Kapasseni, have become magically interwoven. It has meant so much to the people of Kapasseni to know there are people on the other side of the world who care so deeply," says Perpetua Alfazema, Founder and Coordinator of the Kapasseni Project.

This Project is committed to aiding in the rebirth of Mozambique by helping children and their families with educational opportunities, medical assistance, community development and spiritual support.

The GHC has performed concerts for Kapasseni since 1999. With their assistance, the Kapasseni people have been able to build a five-room school-house, provide a breakfast program for children, build, equip and staff a health centre, plant orchards and manage gardens.



CONCERTS

On January 30, 2021, the GHC is planning an online fundraising concert. Admission will be free with viewers encouraged to provide donations to GHC's charity partners: Big Brothers/Big Sisters Victoria and Area, and Habitat Acquisition Trust.

If you're interested in joining the Getting' Higher Choir, visit the link below to get more information. You'll be singing online and in front of crowds in no time! Remember, the quality of your voice is not important. What's important is that you're singing! |

More information: www.seniorlivingmag.com/articles/gettin-higher-choir



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POLAR CRUISING IN NORWAY'S ARCTIC ARCHIPELAGO

by JETT BRITNELL & KATHRYN BRITNELL

If you're the kind of person who is lured by adventure and actively seeks to avoid the kitsch and crowds of overhyped tourist areas, we encourage you to consider venturing off the beaten path to visit one of the most isolated places on Earth.

Stark and scenically beautiful, Norway's Arctic Archipelago of Svalbard encompasses an untamed wilderness shrouded with majestic glaciers, spectacular ice-carved fjords, alpine trees, wind-swept tundra blooming with boreal and arctic wildflowers and jagged snow-crowned mountains. Toss into this mix a rich assortment of arctic wildlife, along with remnants of ancient whaling stations and abandoned mining towns, and here you will discover a place that has been fascinating intrepid travellers for a long time. By far, the best way to explore these pristine environs is by polar expedition cruise ship.

First mentioned in Icelandic literature as far back as the 12th century, the word "Svalbard" translates to "cold coast." Today, nearly two thirds of Svalbard's nine main islands are protected through designated national parks, nature reserves, and bird sanctuaries. Despite its high Arctic location, Svalbard's mild climate has been described as an "Arctic desert" due to its milder temperatures, low humidity, and its 20-30-centimetre annual snowfall and rain.

Svalbard's Western coastline is the world's northernmost ice-free area due to the comparative warmth of the Gulf

Stream flowing northward along the Norwegian coast and around Svalbard. Average summer temperature is 5.5°C. While there is little rainfall during the summer months, moist sea air can generate considerable variations of fog and light mist.

Summertime also signals the return of the "midnight sun," or 24 hours of daylight, which is the optimal season for Arctic wildlife viewing in Svalbard.

Lying approximately 930 kilometres north of Norway's mainland, and 1,313 kilometres south of the North Pole, Svalbard's largest island, Spitsbergen, is home to a former coal-mining frontier settlement called Longyearbyen. Apart from being the world's largest and northernmost year-round inhabited town with approximately 2,400 residents, Longyearbyen is also Svalbard's capital, cultural and commercial centre. This modern coastal community also serves an embarkation point for polar expedition cruise ships.

ABOVE | Shore excursions for hiking, photography and wildlife viewing are a primary draw of polar expedition cruises.

RIGHT | Bird photography from a Zodiac at Alkefjellet.

PAGE 22 | (Top) This polar bear stopped walking in order to have a good look at us and our Zodiac. (Bottom) Walrus approach closer from the water.

TOC | Out on the Arctic Ice flow. Photos: Kathryn Britnell and Jett Britnell

For our trip, we signed on with PolarQuest, a world-renown Swedish small ship expedition company that has been hosting passengers aboard three expedition ships since 1999. These comfortable vessels were purposefully built and designed for polar expedition cruising in remote, ice-choked, fjords.

What sets polar expedition cruises apart from large cruise ships is that rather than visiting curio shops or museums during shore visits, in the high Arctic, all activities are centered around exploring abandoned outposts, old mining towns and seeking out benign encounters with wildlife.

The planned itinerary is fluid and subject to abrupt change to adjust for weather changes, sea conditions and wildlife encounters. Sometimes you might be woken up in the middle of the bright night, if a polar bear has been spotted on the ice.

We spent 10 days aboard MV/S *Quest*, which at 43 metres long, can carry a maximum of 53 passengers roomed in 26 modern cabins, all with sea-views and private ensuite bathrooms. While onboard, the dress code is relaxed and informal.



The dining room menu offers delicious and varied gourmet meals. The service provided by *Quest's* international crew is exceptional. Truly, they go above and beyond to ensure guest comfort. Throughout the cruise we were entertained and educated about Svalbard's flora and fauna through short lectures from polar naturalist guides and subject matter experts in the ship's 300-degree panoramic lounge and bar.

Shore hikes, photography and wildlife viewing are the primary draws on polar expedition cruises. Guests were sorted into five groups before boarding Zodiacs that ferry everyone to shore for multiple daily shore excursions at different locations. During all onshore activities away from any settlements, safety is assured by experienced armed guides who carry radios and rifles to fire off a warning shot, if necessary.

Polar bears do not usually attack humans but can be aggressive when provoked, and an encounter with a determined bear in open terrain can be lethal. Hence, if while on land a polar bear is spotted, all guests are safely ushered back into the Zodiacs. If the ship while cruising came upon a whale at 3 a.m., the expedition leader's voice over the ship's intercom would

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lull us from sleep to quietly tell us a whale has been sighted by the bridge crew and to bring our cameras and binoculars up on deck. Hence, we went to bed every night with our cameras locked and loaded by our bedside, ready to rush out on deck for the next incredible wildlife photo op!

Nothing in our previous experience could have prepared us for our multiple awe-inspiring close encounters with Arctic wildlife. Small herds of Svalbard reindeer roam freely over the tundra and appear to have made a strong recovery from the brink of extinction after being ruthlessly hunted here for more than six decades. Other than humans, these reindeer have no natural predators as polar bears would overheat if they tried to chase them. Inquisitive, and seemingly unconcerned by our presence, Arctic fox foraged on birds as we walked Svalbard's shorelines.

Facing out towards Hinlopen Strait, the basalt cliffs at Alkefjellet, which roughly translates in English as "Bird Mountain," tower like organ pipes more than 91 metres into the sky. These monolithic, sheer vertical cliffs are home to an estimated 200,000 Brünnich's guillemots who breed in mixed colonies with black-legged kittiwakes wherever they can gain a foothold on narrow cliff ledges. More than 100 different bird species have been recorded here, along with the ever-present Glaucous gulls. Arctic foxes hunt along the boulders at the bottom of these cliffs for fallen eggs, chicks, and unaware adult birds.

Svalbard's Arctic seas are also home to 19 species of marine mammals that include 12 whale species, five species of seals and White-beaked dolphins. Just over 400 years ago, tens of thousands of Greenland right whales and thousands of walrus were slaughtered to near extinction in the Svalbard archipelago by English and Dutch whalers. Remains of whaler's graves and blubber ovens still dot the landscape in many places. Walrus haul out in groups on land and were noticeably alert when we approached from land. However, when they were in the water, they seem more emboldened. While known to be ferocious hunters, these carnivores prefer to dine on crabs, snails, sea cucumbers and shellfish using their whiskers to detect shellfish on the sea floor.

Polar bears are the most iconic Arctic species, and it is an exhilarating experience to observe them in their natural habitat. During the summer in Svalbard, polar bears forage for food on land, plundering birds' nests, or searching near glacier fronts for seals that may be hauled out upon small pieces of glacier ice.

As polar bears are a protected species in Norway, it is forbidden to actively search for the bears. Accordingly, there are no land-based polar bear safaris companies in Svalbard. Even more surprising, encounters with the "King of the Arctic" during winter months here are exceedingly rare. Hence, the most opportune time to observe polar bears in the wild here is during summer polar expedition cruises to Svalbard's more remote islands or out on the sea ice. It is here from the safe confines of a ship's deck, or from aboard a Zodiac, guests can observe and photograph polar bears in their natural habitat from a safe distance that does not stress the bear, nor endanger the safety of guests.

One of the most surreal moments of our Expedition Svalbard adventure occurred off the Northern tip of Spitsbergen. Our ship had sailed several miles offshore to the edge of the drifting sea ice. It was here that the Zodiacs were launched, and we navigated between the sheets of floating sea ice looking for a safe place to land. The Arctic sun burned bright against a cerulean blue sky and a biting wind chilled the air as the Zodiacs pushed their bows up onto the sea ice. Here, more than 800 km inside the Arctic Circle, everybody disembarked from the Zodiacs to stand upon the sea ice. It was then that several people laid themselves down on the sea ice to make snow angels in the light layering of snow.

The southern fringe of the frozen Arctic Ocean is a wonder. No kitsch, no crowds, just the infinite beyond. A place on this blue planet that is simply beyond belief. |

For IF YOU GO information, visit www.seniorlivingmag.com/articles/expedition-svalbard-polar-cruising

Jett Britnell and Kathryn Britnell are underwater, wildlife and expedition photographers, internationally published writers, explorers, scuba divers and public speakers. Both are Fellows of the Royal Canadian Geographical Society, The Explorers Club and the Royal Geographical Society. Jett is presently serving a two-year term as Regional Director BC/Yukon in The Explorers Club's Canadian Chapter.

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FOREVER FIT

by EVE LEES



EXERCISE NOT JUST FOR WEIGHT LOSS

A New Year's resolution to exercise isn't just for those seeking weight loss.

Humans are designed to move. Regular, moderate activity improves quality of life and reduces the risk for illness. Movement facilitates vital functions in our bodies, and many we can't voluntarily control.

These include:

- Stimulating the processes within bones that build stronger bones, thereby reducing risk of osteoporosis (more so than diet).
- Protecting joints and lubricating them to help avoid injuries, reducing chronic pain, and lessening the frequency and intensity of arthritic attacks.
- Assisting in maintaining and improving flexibility (the range of motion of your joints).
- Reducing risk of injury and if injury occurs, recuperation is faster. Stronger muscles of the mid-body (core) can reduce the likelihood or frequency of backaches.
- Helping internal organs function normally and facilitating the process of food moving through the intestines to prevent constipation.
- Improving muscular strength, power, and endurance. Maintaining muscle as we age also ensures a faster metabolism, which increases energy and efficiency at "burning" calories. Stronger muscles also help the heart pump blood more easily throughout the body, particularly in returning blood to the heart.
- Improving cardiovascular (heart and lung) strength and endurance, reduces hypertension, and lowers blood cholesterol and triglycerides.
- Strengthening blood vessel walls to help maintain normal blood pressure, and strengthen blood vessel valves, preventing varicose veins.
- Helping the body absorb nutrients and remove waste matter.
- Increasing energy level by enlarging mitochondria (energy-producers in every cell), speeding metabolism, and increasing oxygen circulation.
- Strengthening the immune system and lowering the risk of several types of cancer, particularly colon, breast, lung, and multiple myeloma cancers. Also lowers the risk of diabetes and heart disease.
- Helping with pain tolerance by increasing the level of endorphins, the body's natural pain killers, which can

help reduce pain.

- Promoting deeper sleep.
- Improving self-esteem and confidence. The discipline and dedication of being regularly active reflects positively on other aspects of life.
- Stimulating hormone release, assisting in maintaining hormone balance as we age.
- Effective for stress control. Stronger circulatory system lowers heart rate, so it rises slowly in response to anxiety situations.
- Improving mood, reducing depression and anxiety. Exercise has an "antidepressant effect," helping to relieve tension, fatigue, sadness, or anger. Studies show even a single 20- to 60-minute exercise session increases positive mood feelings.
- Enabling clearer thinking and reducing risk of dementia and Alzheimer's and improves cognitive abilities in general. Exercise delivers oxygen and other nutrients more efficiently to the brain, improving the ability to concentrate, retain information, and think rationally.
- Improving skin tone and elasticity, promoting a younger and healthier appearance. The more efficient blood circulation in a fit body improves the nutrients transported to skin cells and assists in removing waste.
- Preparing you to cope with whatever life unexpectedly throws at you (run for the bus, hurry upstairs, shovel snow, lift or carry heavy objects).

And finally, exercise can help prevent weight gain as we age by preventing the metabolism from slowing. But remember, exercise is not just for losing weight. In fact, diet is a bigger factor for successful weight loss.

In 2021 and beyond, make the time to exercise – or simply get up and move more. |

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



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Let's get ready to travel!

We are excited to share this preliminary schedule of tours for 2021. As you can see, most are in Canada and the overseas tours aren't until September when most of the world should be vaccinated for the Covid19 Virus. Make sure you are on our mailing list for the 2021 brochure coming in January.

TOUR	START DATE	# DAYS
WHISTLER & BARKERVILLE	TBA	4
NEWFOUNDLAND & LABRADOR	JUNE 26, 2021	12
CANADIAN ROCKIES	TBA	7
HAIDA GWAI	AUG 2, 2021	12
QUADRA ISLAND	TBA	3
OKANAGAN	TBA	3
ITALY	SEPT 18, 2021	13
CROATIA	SEPT 30, 2021	12
STORM WATCH	NOV 16, 2021	3
PUYALLUP CHRISTMAS	DEC 3, 2021	3
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BUILDING BETTER BOUNDARIES

By WENDY JOHNSTONE

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

Sometimes we reply to requests on autopilot. Other times, we feel emotionally tied to a situation. For some, guilt is a guiding force and before giving thought to what might be involved in agreeing, a Yes slips out.

Setting boundaries and being resilient go hand in hand for caregivers. It’s about recognizing the importance of one’s life, family, meaningful purpose, work - and striving towards caregiving within those limits. It doesn’t mean there isn’t a dedication to care. Rather, boundaries are a sign of self-respect and allow caregivers to continue caring with compassion and devotion and not feel lost or swallowed up by the caregiving role.

Healthy boundaries let caregivers maintain an emotional connection to the person they are caring for without the negative results of feeling they “need” to rescue, enable, fix, or control. Boundaries allow caregivers to love and care for someone while accepting personal responsibility for their own actions.

Tips for Setting Boundaries

- Whose issue is this? Is it yours? Your other family member? The person you are caring for? If you can figure out why you allow it or why you struggle to set a clear boundary, then you have the option to change it.
- Know how it feels when a boundary is crossed: For example, feeling discomfort and resentment are

warning signs we are out of sync with ourselves and our boundaries. If it feels you are being taken advantage of or not being appreciated, it may be a signal you are pushing yourself too much. Maybe the person we are caring for is imposing their expectations, views or values on us. When someone acts in a way that results in feelings of discomfort for you, they may be crossing a boundary.

- Caring within a boundary: Managing your role as a caregiver can start with determining what area of care only you can fulfill. It can also include listing your physical, emotional, and mental limits. Ask yourself if someone else can meet the care recipient or person’s needs? This is also a critical part of contingency planning. Discuss your limits with those in your caregiving circle and the person you are caring for (where possible) and try to find other options.
- Give yourself permission. Taking care of yourself and setting boundaries are usually in direct conflict with feelings of guilt, fear or self-doubt. Caregivers may feel they “should” be able to cope with a situation even when they feel their boundaries are being violated. Putting your oxygen mask on first gives you the energy and perspective to better handle your role as caregiver.

Above all else – be kind to yourself. It takes courage and practice to set boundaries and stay the course.

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.

HAPPY NEW YEAR!

Not long ago, my friend, Dorothy, and I were walking through Playfair Park in Saanich admiring the amazing trees and the bushes denuded of leaves and blossoms. Together, they made delightful shape-scapes against a magnificent sky.

Bushes adorned with brilliant Rhodos in summer were now the shape of ballerinas dancing, wearing leotards of wood brown tinged with evergreen. One could imagine them coming alive and dancing throughout the park.

That might have been enough beauty to love, but then our stroll took on another layer. A brown-and-white corgi trotted up and requested an ear scratch, please. I could feel the love flowing from the dog as I bent over to oblige. When it decided I had fulfilled my purpose, it moved on to Dorothy, who went one step further and petted it all along its back. Now the love was rolling off it. Parting ways, we wandered off on another path only to come upon three more small dogs that were delighted to share their enthusiasm of

being alive and being together.

I was reminded of my late friend, Pat, who with two dogs of her own, knew the names of every dog in her neighbourhood. She had no idea of the owner's names. If I took a survey of dog owners, I am sure I'd find the same is true for them.

We have come through a year that most of us do not wish to repeat. But we have learned a great deal. Maybe one of the things we learned – and could share with others – is the ability to find love in everyday things.

Notice that trees are as beautiful in winter as they are in summer. Or that animals can exude love just by being here. Or small children who fling love around like confetti or birdseed. An article I read this morning talked about a boy who carries confetti in his pocket in case something special happens. Dorothy suggested birdseed (feed two birds with one act of joy). Not a bad idea!

Finally, the most important of all, find love within yourself. You spend more time with the person inside your skin than anyone else. Each morning before you get out of bed, give thanks for waking, for the miracle that is you, and give yourself a loving hug.

Have a spectacular year! |



COURAGEOUS & OUTRAGEOUS

by PAT NICHOL



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