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55+ lifestyle magazine

MARCH 2021

**MEDIA MAVEN
DENISE
DONLON**

**MANAGING THE
“NEW NORMAL”**

**ARTIST MARK
DAVID HEINE**

**HOT AIR
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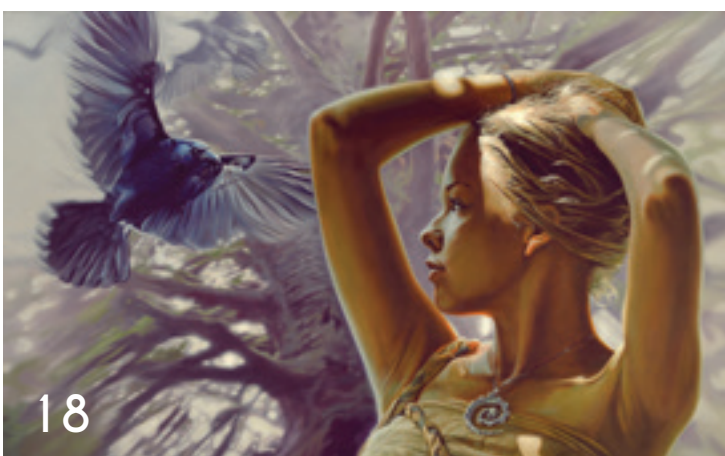
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Cover DENISE DONLON

Denise Donlon rose to the pinnacle of her career by following her curiosity; she believes in the power of reinventing oneself.

Photo: Don Dixon

INSPIRED

55+ lifestyle magazine

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THRIVE BEYOND 55

by BOBBIE JO REID, EDITOR



When the pandemic first took hold on a global scale in March 2020, an amazing thing happened: the entire world was thrust into a shared focus by a common threat we could rally against. Suddenly, boundaries disappeared. We were finally one community. One race of humans.

As frightening as the past year has been, I often felt uplifted by the resilience of the human spirit. When I saw people unify like never before, it churned raw emotions in me. What I witnessed through newscasts and social media was moving. Even humbling.

Today, the tone has shifted. People are tired of fighting this battle. Fed up. And I get it! But while we may feel restricted and powerless, nothing could be further from the truth. Each day, we can choose to wrap ourselves in fear, sadness, and frustration – or we can choose something better. For me, the choice has become a lot easier since I stopped watching the news.

Here's a news flash: I have no control over COVID-19's debilitating impacts on the world at large. I cannot help those who are suffering with their health, grieving the loss of loved ones or feeling the pinch of the economic downturn. It is not my weight to bear. I do my part by following protocols to keep myself and others safe. Fretting and causing others to fret around me simply isn't helpful.

Instead, I focus on things that bring joy into my life. Painting. Dancing in the kitchen. Going for walks in the woods with my dog. By raising my good vibrations, I raise the good vibrations of those around me. Now, when I make my weekly call to my mom, we laugh about life instead of worrying about government policies and how

many people died last week. "Challenging times" may have connected us last spring, but now it's time to move past this negative phrase. The bleak emotions it invokes creates a collective consciousness that weighs us down. We need to be *uplifted*. We have lives to live, and I will not spend any more of mine wallowing in self-pity because my options have been altered or, in some cases, lost.

Loss is part of life, as hard-wired into the human condition as continual change. In February, we lost our dear columnist Pat Nichol. When I heard the news, I cried. And I thought a lot about her in the days that followed. But I know Pat would not want anyone who knew her to simmer in sadness for very long. There are adventures to be had, experiences to embrace!

Consider how incredibly fortunate we are to have virtual connections to our friends, family, and work colleagues. Thirty or more years ago, this pandemic would have affected our daily lives in much darker and dramatic ways. Our losses, both real and perceived, would have been incalculable. In a way, we are so very lucky!

Perhaps life on this planet is forcing humanity to make changes because we *need* to make changes. Rearranging priorities has been paramount during the last 12 months. Have you noticed? Perhaps we're living in the midst of a teachable moment. What remains to be learned is still unfolding, but I have every confidence that we'll hoist it in. And when we do, we'll come out more resilient than we ever thought possible. |



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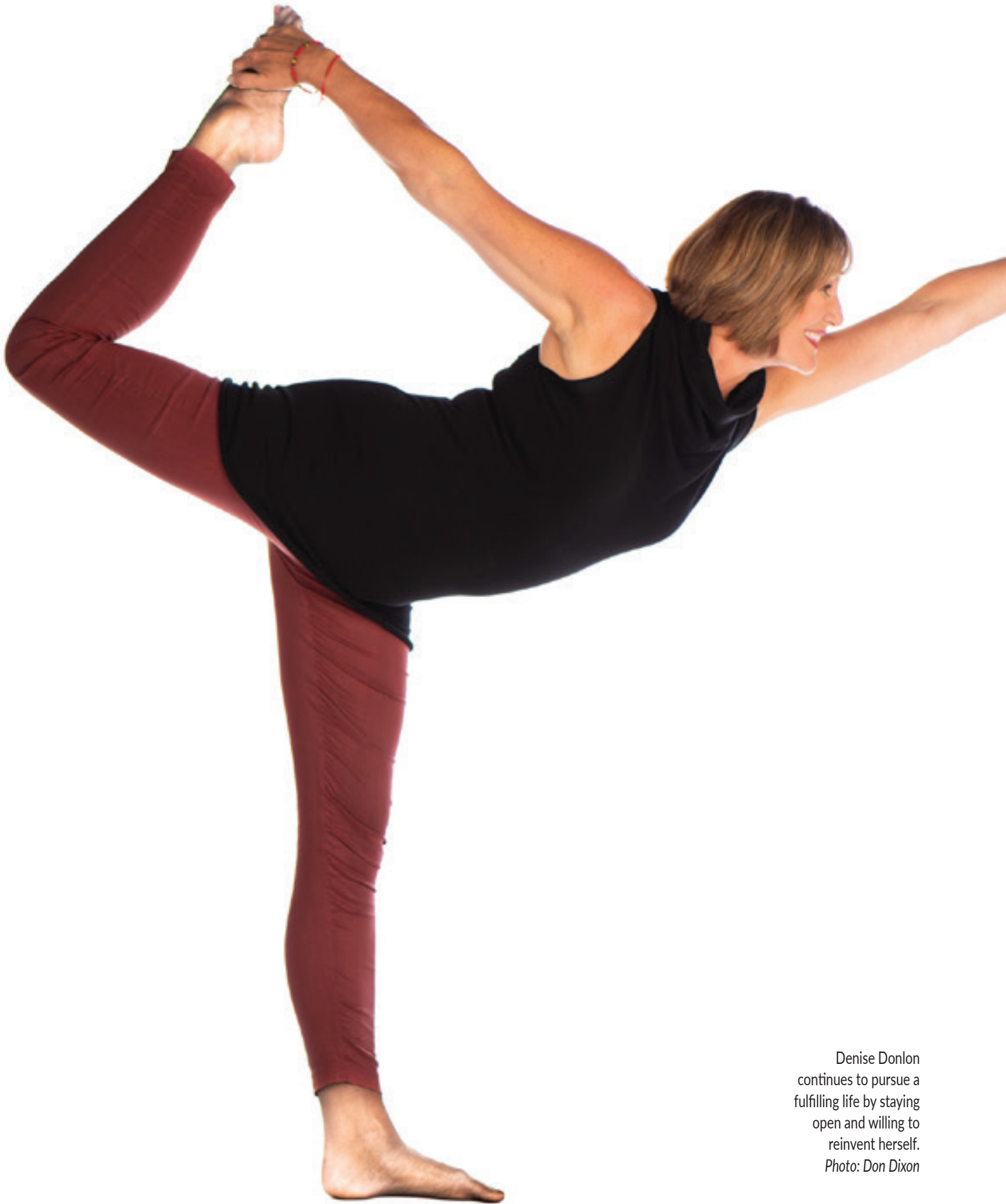
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Denise Donlon continues to pursue a fulfilling life by staying open and willing to reinvent herself.
Photo: Don Dixon



DENISE DONLON: CURIOSITY & COMPASSION

by JOHN THOMSON

“I was a horrible, colicky baby and no amount nursing, gripe water or walking around the block would calm me down.”

It’s true. Denise Donlon was a restless baby. Okay, maybe even raucous, but things eventually worked out. In the ’80s and ’90s she was the voice and the face of MuchMusic (The Nation’s Music Station), ran a business as President of Sony Music Canada and eventually oversaw programming as Director of CBC Radio (English). Her awards include two Geminis (Canada’s equivalent of the Oscars), the Peter Gzowski Literacy Award of Merit, the Canadian Women in Communications Woman of the Year Award and, in 2004, she received the Order of Canada. Denise Donlon is a powerhouse in the Canadian media scene driven by a need to inform and excel.

“I think it came from my mom,” she says. “She was denied opportunities, so she always said to me ‘the world is your oyster, my dear,’ and so I felt a driving responsibility to take advantage of opportunities that she never had.”

She also says she was lucky.

“I was never a person who charts a list of goals and ambitions and then doggedly pursues them. It was all about exploring and learning. Doors would open and, for me, it was just a question of whether I should walk through them or kick them down a little bit and yeah, one thing led to another.”

Take, for instance, her decision to drop out of university in her third year to take a low-paying job booking bands and speakers for her alma mater, The University of Water-

loo, without knowing a thing about the booking business. “I just opened the yellow pages and thought, ‘okay, let’s go,’” she says.

Or when that booking experience led to a job with the Sam Feldman Agency in Vancouver, handling publicity for his roster of singers. In 1984, she accompanied Feldman’s clients, The Headpins, on a European tour where they opened for heavy metal UK rockers Whitesnake.

“I was definitely living a rock-’n’-roll lifestyle,” she recalls. “I was smoking and drinking and perming my hair, teasing it as high as it would go.”

Or when upstart Toronto television station CHUM/City TV hired her in 1985, teased hair and all, to host and produce a music video show called MuchMusic.

“They were looking for people who were living the life to come in and talk about it,” she says. “Basically, I got thrown on the air and learned it by doing it.”

She learned quickly and as MuchMusic’s assignment editor, as well as host, she made sure the playlist also included some social issue programming. As a student at Waterloo, she ran the local Pollution Probe office and sold buttons and posters to fund anti-nuke campaigns.

“We produced HIV/AIDS awareness ads. We ran PSAs for Kids Help Phone. We invited kids in through the windows to debate on shows like Too Much For Much. We encouraged them to vote by covering federal elections. I was pumped about media literacy. I wanted the audience to *think* about what they were watching and why. I know it’s weird to think of a music channel as being a beacon of journalistic balance

Snapshot

with Denise Donlon



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

"I would give her the same advice my mother gave to me when I was two: just stand up straight. Do your best and stand up straight."

Who or what has influenced you the most and why?

"I think it's my mom. She told me 'the world's your oyster, my dear.' I carry that with me still today and I try to make sure I'm not wasting a day, that I'm still accomplishing something, that I'm still making a contribution. Life is precious and life is short, and the more time we spend living it the better off we'll be."

What are you grateful for?

"I'm grateful for Canada. I've travelled so much in the world and looking where we are now, coping with the pandemic and the rise of populism around the world, climate change etc., I'm just so grateful to be here in Canada."

What does success mean to you?

"Someone once said the three things we need in life are somewhere to live, something to do and someone to love. If you have those things, then I think that's being successful. If you can be kind and compassionate and use your powers for good, then that's success." |

while playing all that devil music. But I hope the young people watching THEN are using their media literacy skills TODAY, now that all hell's broken loose in this age of 'fake news and alternative facts' because unless we think critically about the media we're consuming, we can be duped."

She got to hang out with Stevie Wonder, Joni Mitchell and other icons of the era but she was also pushing substantive issues. In

2000, she accompanied Dr. Samantha Nutt, Eric Hoskins and their fledgling organization

War Child Canada to Sierra Leona to oversee a series of stories on repatriating child soldiers. It led to more MuchMusic stories on War Child initiatives in other countries.

"If you have a platform, what are you going to do with that opportunity? How would you make a contribution?" she asks. "Use your powers for good."

Power is a conundrum for Denise.

"I often felt conflicted about power. I admired it but I was also distrustful of it," she admits. "I enjoy leadership positions but what I find motivating is being able to work on a team. I'm willing to put down the reins and say to everybody 'Okay people, let's see what we can accomplish together' rather than my way or the highway. I never really felt I was above anyone else."

Power can be an instrument of positivity or one can be a victim of it.

In 2000, after 14 years at MuchMusic rising from on-air reporter and host to General Manager contributing to the program's expansion into other countries, she became President of Sony Music Canada. It seemed like a natural fit; Denise knew the agents, the promoters and the musicians. Her job involved overseeing production, signing up new talent and moving product. But the product wasn't moving. Illegal downloading propagated by Napster and others was eroding Sony's business model. As sales continued to decline, Sony merged with Bertelsmann Music Group (BGM).

Denise met with her bosses and argued that selling off the Canadian facility, which included studios and manufacturing, could well generate extra cash for the merger but it would ultimately increase costs at the Canadian end. The response? Her position was cut.

"I knew I'd played a hand in deciding my future, but I believe you must choose principles over personal power, even if it results in being thrown under the bus," she says.

It wouldn't be the last time her principles conflicted with job security.

In 2008, she became Executive Director of CBC Radio (English) in the middle of a \$107 million radio and TV budget cut.

"CBC Radio was what people were marching in the streets for. They cared for it deeply," she remembers. "My job was to somehow find a way through the cuts and still support local and still support the journalists."

The solution was to freeze new hires, eliminate certain programmes, and yes, cut staff so that communities could still have a voice, albeit under reduced circumstances.

"We didn't lose a single local station and I'm proud of that," she says.

Denise survived that round of cuts and more and, under her tenure, CBC Radio grew in stature and ratings. A firm believer in distinctive Canadian programming, she argued for regional autonomy at executive meetings, fearing that "streamlining" was diminishing radio's contribution.

In 2010, she was asked to consider applying for the position of CBC Executive Vice-President of English Services for TV and radio. Denise declined, preferring to stick to overseeing the strides she made in radio rather than take on television as well. It was a misstep.

"If you are ever considered for advancement, you should always engage," she says. "In the corporate world, ambition rules."

Six months later, she was "restructured."

"I went to my office, shut down my computer, collected my purse and took

a Charlie Pachter print off the wall. I'd hung it as a comment on what happens to the CBC when funding is continually cut. It's a painting of a skeletal moose. The caption reads 'So I guess that's it then.'

It was indeed.

Fiesty. Opinionated. Fearless. She's not afraid to stick to her guns and put up a fight, so it may come as a surprise to learn that Denise suffered from a condition that plagued her for years: Imposter Syndrome.

"I refer to it as a little demon I carry around in my fanny pack," she says. "He's a tenacious little thing whispering in your ear saying they're going to find out you're really a fraud and you don't deserve this. It's an insecurity, a pervasive insecurity complex, so no matter what your achievements might be, you're unworthy of them."

"In my private moments, it was really tough sledding," she admits "but in my public moments, it was about leadership and inspiration. I had to be there for my artists. I never thought I was faking it. I put in all the work and all the hours. The only faking part was trying to telegraph a sense of confidence when there wasn't one."

The solution, she says, was to dive into work.

"For me, the only way to suffocate that little demon was to work harder, run faster, jump higher and bury him with busyness. I was always over-prepared for anything I thought might pull the rug from underneath me."

Today, she says she's got that imposter syndrome in check. Homebound because of COVID-19, Denise has been keeping busy with charities and hosting duties.

"I'm on five non-profit boards and I just finished hosting five Kitchen Parties coast to coast raising money for B2Ten, Music Counts and Community Food Centre Canada."

Kitchen Parties are regional galas featuring celebrity chefs and recording stars with monies going to support young athletes, young musicians and, in the case of Community Food Centre Canada, creating the infrastructure for neighbourhoods to gather and create nutritious meals for themselves. The pandemic forced a change of format: Denise has been participating electronically from her home office.

"Staying awake to start the show at 10:30 p.m. was fun," she says. "Given the late hour, I remember a mispronunciation or two."

Denise has lost work because of the pandemic. Her husband, singer/songwriter Murray McLauchlan, has also lost work, his tour was cancelled – it's since been rescheduled –

and the Donlon/McLauchlan household has become a communal refuge. Adult son, Duncan, a certified aircraft maintenance engineer unable to find regular work because of COVID, is back at home. Denise's brother also stayed in the house for nine months while she nursed him back to health – his cancer is now in remission. And although her 93-year-old mother is living in a nursing home rather than with the family, Denise is constantly

in touch with her through Skype.

"Confidence, I have heard, arrives magically for women at age fifty," Denise surmises. "I remember walking into the bathroom and looking in the mirror and saying 'Okay, now I'm 50. Where's my swagger?' I guess my timing was a little off."

"What you do learn is not to sweat the small stuff. At the end of the day, the things that are really valuable to you may not be the pursuit of power or the pursuit of fame. These things are hollow. The things that are really valuable are listening to yourself, your true self, the one that speaks to you when you're

walking in nature or caring for someone else. You're being compassionate or dedicated to a cause or to other people that need it."

"When I look back it's never been a straight line in terms of the career choices I've made. It was always about reinvention," she says. "We never stop reinventing ourselves. That's where the fun is. I think curiosity is the most motivating attribute that a person can have. Remaining open and curious and compassionate are the ways to a fulfilling life, no matter what age you're at." |

It was all about exploring and learning. Doors would open and, for me, it was just a question of whether I should walk through them or kick them down a little bit and yeah, one thing led to another."



Denise with Stevie Wonder



WHEN ADVENTURE BECKONS

by LINDA BLAIR

The shrill sound of the alarm pierces the darkness, and my peaceful slumber abruptly ends. I clear the cobwebs from my mind while fighting my way out of the mosquito netting that encircles the bed. Propelled by the realization that I am on the brink of an amazing day of discovery and adventure, a slight shiver comes over me. A loud rap on the door at 4 a.m. sharp signals it's time to leave the warmth and comfort of my bungalow and climb into the waiting Jeep.

While rumbling down the dusty dirt road with high beams slicing through the black night, a hippo suddenly trots across the road directly in front of the Jeep. A sharp crank to the left avoids a near collision. Moments later, a giraffe appears out of nowhere and gallops alongside us. Just as quickly as it appeared, it veers to the right and fades into the vast inky pool of darkness. "Am I dreaming?" I ask myself. The constant bouncing and careening of the vehicle along with the tautness of the seat belt cutting and pulling into my shoulder, tell me I am not.

Upon arrival at the lift-off site, preparations are underway to fill the hot air balloon. Cheers! A champagne toast

traditionally jump-starts the flight. Nervous, yet filled with wondrous anticipation, I climb aboard the balloon and buckle into the harness as instructed. While the balloon rises, streaks of lilac and magenta can be seen across the early morning sky as dawn slowly but passionately kisses the horizon. The explosion of colour that follows exposes a vast and stark landscape with sweeping views of the golden-coloured Serengeti, unchanged for centuries. Drinking in the beauty and seren-

ABOVE | Hot air balloon floats above the Serengeti. RIGHT | A giraffe enjoying a meal in the thorny Acacia tree.

PAGE 10 | (top to bottom) A pod of hippos cool themselves in a muddy pond. Seemingly harmonious animals of every stripe gather at the watering hole. Lions, hyenas and other predators follow herds, waiting for their opportunity to strike. *Photos: Linda Blair*

ity of the commanding vastness leaves me speechless. Aloft in a hot air balloon undoubtedly offers a unique perspective of the African vista with its endless horizon.

Silently drifting across the clear African sky, the silence is broken only by the sound of a pod of hippos beneath us. The pilot brings the balloon lower to get a closer look. A pod of about 20 hippos is snorting and jostling for space in a churning muddy pond. These hippos will spend the day in the cool water to protect their thin, hairless skin from the burning rays of the sun, and will graze only under the cover of night. Capable of snapping a crocodile in half, one dominant hippo stretches his powerful jaw, which causes others to make way. An assault on the senses, the odour these ponds produce can be overwhelming. Upward we go once more.

A troop of baboons can be seen trekking across the savannah floor in search of the next watering hole, while graceful giraffes rustle the leaves of Acacia trees. Giraffes cope well during the dry season, as they feed from the top branches of the thorny trees. The dark blue colour of their 18-inch-long tongue acts as a sun protector, and their antiseptic saliva coats any thorns they may swallow. A small herd of Thompson's Gazelles can be seen in the shadow of the balloon beneath us, as they follow their leader along the path to water.

Wildebeest are seen interspersed with thousands of other animals and appear to be leaders of the herds. All wildebeest cows give birth over a two-to-three-week period in January and February. Evidence of the strength and resilience of this animal lies in the fact that they find their legs in two to three minutes after birth and become capable of running with the herd within 10 minutes. Many losses incur during this time due to the lions and hyenas that follow the herds, however, fatalities would be far greater if birthing transpired over a longer period.

Animals are capable of hearing thunderous storms from as far as 48 km away and wildebeest are known to travel only to where the best grasses grow. Within weeks, grasslands turn brown after the rains, yet the herds continue to follow the wildebeest. Eventually, they complete the circuit back to the short grass plains, as far as 1,600 km away. Stealthily trailing behind the herds, you will see prides of lions lurking and patiently waiting for their chance to claim a meal. Hyenas, known as notorious scavengers, follow the lions.

As the sun rises in the sky, our highly skilled Canadian pilot (from Ottawa) slowly and gently begins our descent back to earth's floor. With a



smooth landing and very little drag, the balloon settles once again on the ground. A hearty breakfast will soon be served under the shade of Acacia trees, complete with champagne and lavish *Out of Africa* style service. However, the day is young and after breakfast there's time for a game drive before returning to camp.

Famed Serengeti National Park in Tanzania covers more than 9,100 square kms and supports an estimated annual migration of 1.5 million wildebeest, 250,000 zebras, along with a healthy stock of resident wildlife. This park boasts the largest concentration of animals and claims to be the best place to search for the "Big Five."

Within Serengeti sits Ngorongoro Crater. The world-famous crater, believed to have formed two to three million years ago, claims top spot as Tanzania's major drawing card for wildlife viewing. A UNESCO World Heritage Site, 20 kms wide covering 260 square kms all within the towering walls, makes this the largest volcanic crater in the world. The crater floor consists mainly of open grass and bushland, with Ngoito-



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kitok Spring being the major water source. However, with smaller but equally important sources of water throughout this crater, you will surely witness some spectacular events.

More than 25,000 animals call this volcanic crater basin home. Regrettably, the black rhino succumbed to dwindling numbers due to rampant poaching. Nevertheless, you may be lucky enough to spot that elusive rhino roaming this crater floor. Here, wildlife drama unfurls daily while endless herds of wildebeest and zebra graze alongside elephants, giraffes, and gazelles. Predictably, lions, leopards and other predators vigilantly follow behind. Dense bush and tall grasses make it ideal for the large number of tree-climbing cats that reside here.

While sitting well back of a water hole observing the animals as they approach, my guide, Wakara, silently passes the binoculars and points to the moving grasses near one end of the pond. We sit, watch, and wait.

All appears calm around the water hole, as a menagerie of wildlife gathers. Giraffes with long legs bent at the knees, constantly look this way and that. Fat warthogs with deadly tusks cautiously seek a way in, and zebras cavort in the water once their thirst has been satisfied.

Abruptly, chaos erupts with agitated shrieking, and sudden flight of birds from surrounding trees. Animals madly run in every direction. Like a bolt of lightning, a zebra on the outer fringe makes a desperate run for it but finds herself out-matched by three lionesses who effectively drive her into their snare, and down she goes. The lions' feast begins. A gut-wrenching enactment for sure, yet deeply moving, and an extraordinary spectacle to witness.

With the temperature beginning to soar, we turn toward camp for some well-deserved relief from the heat and excitement of the day. Once, I could only dream of getting close enough to see, smell, and observe these animals.

Throughout Tanzania, I was fortunate to be accompanied by an extremely knowledgeable and most capable team whose great sense of timing, charm and humour made my lifelong dream come true. During my stay in various locations, accommodations ranged from tented camps to ecologically constructed lodges camouflaged in cascading vines, to traditional rondavels that appeared to be clinging to the ragged edge of the crater. Camp and hotel staff, as well as trackers and drivers, were all so helpful and eager to please. It made this a most memorable trip.

I saw the Big Five and so much more. The strength and magnificence of the animals I saw and learned about, as well as my amazing guide who taught me to spot and name many of the animals I photographed, made this a deeper, richer and most extraordinary experience; one I will cherish and remember for a lifetime. |

For IF YOU GO information, visit www.seniorlivingmag.com/articles/hot-air-balloon-africa

Linda A. Blair is a travel writer and photographer.



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THRIVING IN OUR NEW NORMAL: WHAT WOULD A STOIC DO?

by J. KATHLEEN THOMPSON

Living through a pandemic – now into its second year – has called upon reserves of patience, fortitude and flexibility like never before. Alternating between complete compliance with new health regulations and raging against the loss of everything we love – from time with the family to a night out at the opera – we are left, at times, wondering if we will ever find the equanimity of mind to endure these times. Searching for some sage advice, we suspect, given the name, that we will find it with the ancient Stoics. I'll let you be the judge, after reading this, if our hunch was right.

Stoicism is a life philosophy that was founded by Zeno of Citium in ancient Greece. While Zeno addressed the usual areas of philosophical inquiry – logic, physics, and ethics – it was his view on ethics, or how we should conduct ourselves, that became the cornerstone of Stoic thought. Central to his beliefs was that the highest purpose of life – goodness – was achieved by the cultivation of virtue, or, if you like, the “best version of ourselves.” The best version of ourselves to a Stoic would be someone who is selfless, courageous, self-disciplined, tolerant, honest, patient, just, prudent, and aware of how their actions affect others and the natural order of the universe.

A later philosopher (and former slave), Epictetus, expands Zeno's ideas in his book *How to Be Free*, demonstrating how the cultivation of virtue leads to a mind freed from the “dramatics” of daily living. By focusing on the development of our better selves, and what's up to us (our motivations, desires, judgments, reactions) and accommodating those that are not (other people, natural events, our wealth, health, reputation), we are on the path to achieving that peace of mind that is impervious to misfortune and the thoughts and actions of others.



Photo: Tom Barrett

Stoicism's most famous exponent – Roman emperor Marcus Aurelius – likewise found strength in beliefs that stressed one's ability to prevail, no matter what happens. When not on the battlefield or dealing with the consequences of the Antonine Plague (which caused the death of five million people in the Roman Empire), Aurelius was able to lay out in his book *Meditations* the clear guide Stoicism gives us about what lies within our responsibility, and what doesn't.



Characteristic of Aurelius's stoic stance was to not only accept what one cannot change but treat it as an opportunity to grow: “Welcome wholeheartedly what comes and trust that all is for the best.” That unblinking mental distance, he cautioned, would require “a strength not to be overwhelmed by anything that happens,” to be “the rock that the waves keep crashing over.”

As if customized for people in tough places, Epictetus's *How to Be Free* and Aurelius's *Meditations* became playbooks for the warriors, saints, and martyrs that succeeded them. Nelson Mandela, while incarcerated for 27 years for his opposition to the apartheid regime in South Africa, took inspiration from the Stoics and managed to overcome potentially soul-destroying situations. He not only accepted but capitalized on what he could do in captivity (studying for a law degree and writing his own meditations; the books *A Long Walk to Freedom* and *Conversations with Myself*). Like Epictetus, he refused to allow his mind to be imprisoned and rose above

debilitating bitterness and rancour to construct a positive way forward for himself and his country.

It's not just world leaders that have noticed Stoicism's powerful ability to transform our thinking. Psychologists in the 1950s, recognizing the difficulty people had in accepting circumstances beyond their control, developed a therapeutic approach that became known as cognitive behavioural therapy. Pivoting from a central tenet of Epictetus – “people are disturbed not by the things which happen, but by their opinions about things” – cognitive behavioural therapy gives patients the emotional management strategies to mitigate the type of self-induced stress that arises when one can't control an essentially uncontrollable situation.

Patients are encouraged to shift their belief from “everything must go their way” – i.e., that they must be successful, others must treat them well, and conditions in which they live must be agreeable – to “it would be preferable if things went their way,” just as the Stoics encouraged the practice of indifference to those things one cannot fully control.


There is no law of nature that states all must go according to our wishes, hence to cling to obsessive drives and desires is simply unproductive and doomed to disappoint. Rather, concentrating on developing the resources that can serve you at any time and under any circumstance, such as one's rationality and resiliency, is a far more fruitful avenue to explore.

With this knowledge and these tools in our pocket, we can deduce what a Stoic would do in our current world-rearranging situation. At the outset, they would have realized that, as a natural phenomenon, we have no power to change a pandemic. We may be able to manage it and treat it, but the chances of science eradicating viruses anytime soon would be, to a Stoic's reasoning, pretty slim. Hence, a Stoic would be prepared to hunker down for the long haul, as, according to most experts on the subject, viruses of this scale tend to hang around much longer than we'd like.

And to guard against going completely bonkers in their “bubbles,” Stoics would consider all those things that can safely be done within the “new order” of social distancing. Perhaps it was time to get the bike tuned, the garden seeded, the baby quilt knitted, or those online Spanish lessons renewed?

A Stoic would also realize that “taking the high road” would mean responding to a crisis with a consciousness of others and would attempt to carve a path through our new landscape that not only honours their better selves, but benefits others, and, ultimately, reaps the joy of flourishing together. Perhaps that would mean helping to set up a communication system that allows care home residents easy online accessibility to family and friends, or perhaps contributing to the fundraising efforts of their local church, or assisting in regional bird counts?


I'm sure a Stoic would come up with an infinite number of ways that we can continue to thrive in what is, undoubtedly, the “new normal” for a while. Indeed, given the chance, we could all, like Nelson Mandela, eventually emerge from our extended lockdown stronger than ever! |



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THE WRITER

by MYLES SHANE

Ever since Genevieve Graham was a little girl, she dreamt of playing the oboe in a professional orchestra. Never in her wildest dreams did she imagine becoming a world-renowned author. Music is in her blood. Her grandmother played the piano, providing soundtracks to silent movies starring Keaton, Chaplin, Mabel, Pickford and other movie stars of yesteryear. Her maternal grandfather played the double bass. Her dad was a master of the oboe. Genevieve was even selected to attend Juilliard. The world was her oyster. This kid's destiny was to headline an orchestra at Lincoln Centre and play the oboe for the world to see and hear.

Sometimes, however, destinies don't pan out and people's dreams intersect with harsh reality. By 30, Genevieve had been diagnosed with an autoimmune disease called "Sjögrens Syndrome."

SJÖGREN'S SYNDROME

"Sjögren's Syndrome struck just before I turned 30," she says. "My first symptom was 'chipmunk cheeks.' When I was hungry or even thirsty for water, my salivary glands jammed up and that resulted in extremely painful swelling in my cheeks – so painful that when one doctor glibly suggested I 'take an ibuprofen,' and I replied that I couldn't open my mouth when it happened. Then it affected my eyes and when my body couldn't produce tears anymore, my eyes burned so terribly that I wore three pairs of sunglasses inside the house."



MARRIAGE, KIDS & RHEUMATOID ARTHRITIS

In March 1992, Genevieve flew to Calgary to meet a friend. They had planned to go skiing. As serendipity would have it, her friend wasn't able to keep their date, and Genevieve ended up meeting her future husband at the chairlift. The couple were married within 10 months of that encounter.

Years later, after working at many different radio stations, ad agencies, a humane society and even a western wear retailer, Genevieve was diagnosed with another autoimmune disease.

"In 1998, I was diagnosed with rheumatoid arthritis," she says. "My doctor warned my husband to consider building wheelchair ramps for our house as soon as possible. Then, in 1999, I got very, very sick and spent two months in hospital, where my symptoms were observed by some wonderful specialists who put me on specific medications that completely erased my symptoms."

Four years later, Genevieve started her family. "I had kids when I was 33 and 36." While battling her autoimmune diseases, Genevieve was doing everything possible to raise her children. "I was a stay-at-home mom and spent all my time either with them or teaching piano to neighbourhood kids."

ABOVE | Canadian author Genevieve Graham writes historical fiction and is releasing her latest novel, *Letters Across the Sea*, in April this year. Photo: Courtesy of the author

Her schedule was beyond full and she wasn't relaxing or taking care of herself properly. By this point, looking after children combined with her autoimmune diseases left Genevieve feeling exhausted. She was out of gas. Emily and Piper were eight and six when Genevieve's mother handed her a book. It was the first time she'd read for pleasure in years and it was the best medicine she could have ever asked for.

"After that, it was like I needed to catch up – I read everything I could get my hands on, but my genre of preference was always historical fiction. With stories thundering through my brain, I decided to sit down and try to write one of my own and that's when this whole incredible world of writing opened up to me."

That same year, Genevieve was gifted a laptop, "I remember Mother's Day 2007 fondly because that was the day my husband bought me my first laptop." Before she knew it, she'd written several bestselling novels.

"I write in my office, a small room at the front of my house with windows all around. It's a perfect place for me. My favourite setup is in my office, candle burning, tea steaming, all by myself with no interruptions."

WORLD RENOWNED WRITER

Despite not fulfilling her dreams of professionally playing oboe in an orchestra, at age 42 she discovered she had another talent – writing novels. When she completed her first book, it was rejected by over 200 agents. Finally, with dogged determination, she hit the jackpot – she found an agent who sold her first book to Penguin Publishing. Today, at 56, she has become one of Canada's top-selling and most prolific writers. She writes historical fiction and can usually be found on the *Globe & Mail's* Top 20 list. On April 27, 2021, Genevieve's latest book, *Letters Across the Sea*, published by Simon & Shuster, will hit bookstores – on and offline.

NOVA SCOTIA

Many of Genevieve's novels are set in and around Nova Scotia. "We live in a small community on the eastern shore of Nova Scotia, about 45 minutes east of Halifax. From the moment we arrived here, I was captivated by the wealth of history in this province."

Genevieve explored the Halifax explosion and the Acadian Expulsion

of 1755, which led to her writing both, *Tides of Honour* and *Promises to Keep*. She continues investigating Nova Scotia.

Genevieve has been influenced by many authors during her career.

"My greatest influence is Diana Gabaldon and her entire *Outlander* series," she says.

"I've read it seven times and I hear something different every time, whether it's the historical facts, the characterization, or something about 'the craft' of writing."

INSPIRATION

Life hasn't always gone as planned for Genevieve, but thanks to her well of talent, it has allowed her to push through her challenges and reinvent herself, from an amazing oboe player to a world-class writer. When old

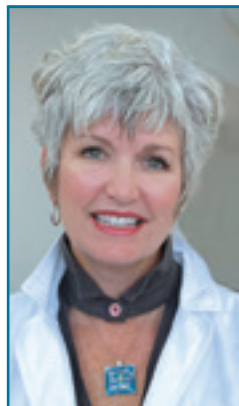
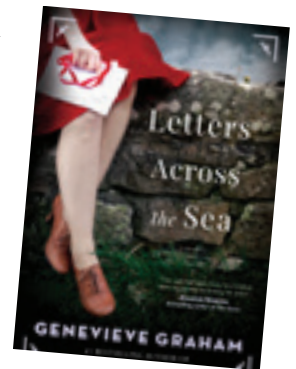
dreams die, new ones emerge with inspiration from the most unexpected places. |

"With stories thundering through my brain, I decided to sit down and try to write one of my own and that's when this whole incredible world of writing opened up to me."

LETTERS ACROSS THE SEA

Genevieve reveals the plot of her latest tale: "Eighteen years old, Molly Ryan dreams of becoming a journalist, but instead she spends her days working any job she can to help her family through the Depression crippling her city. The one bright spot in her life is watching baseball with her best friend, Hannah Dreyfus, and sneaking glances at Hannah's handsome older brother, Max."

To learn more about Genevieve and the novels she's written, visit <https://genevievegraham.com>



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CYCLING WITHOUT AGE: WIND IN THE HAIR, AND ALL THAT

by JOAN BOXALL

A trishaw is an electrically-assisted cargo bike. With two front-facing passenger seats, the pilot sits behind and slightly above the passengers. Conversation flows, as free-flowing as the gentle wind. Breezily, its reverse-rickshaw generates a ‘wind-in-the-hair’ feeling.

“Let your hair blow in the wind, and all that. It’s OK. All you have to do is look neat when you have to look neat.”
~Actress, Hedi Lamarr

Copenhagen engineer and social innovator, Ole Kassow, initiated the Cycling-Without-Age (CWA) movement in 2012 to empower those with lost mobility to recapture that windblown feeling.

In a TedxCopenhagenTalk, he says:

“When we grow older, our eyes, our legs may prevent us from cycling (and we) miss the... freedom, and the joy... (Returning to cycling) gave a whole new mobility, and (being a pilot) gave me an insight into my city that I’d never experienced.”

In less than a decade, CWA has rolled out in 50 countries: 2,200 chapters, 3,000 trishaws, 33,000 trained riders or pilots, and 1.5 million people served. In Canada, there are 33 chapters. One third of them are in BC. Victoria was the first adopter in 2017 with other chapters following suit.

Carson Sage was a University of Victoria Kinesiology Masters’ student when he developed a Cycling-Without-

Age manual like an “everything-you-need-to-know” to start your own CWA chapter (Canada edition).

“The trishaw bicycle is a tool for social change as it will reduce social isolation and depression in the aging population... CWA is more than just about bicycles,” says Carson in a Victoria Chapter Vimeo. “It provides seniors with the opportunity to remain an active part of society and reconnect with their neighbours. Intergenerational relationships are nurtured between the passengers and volunteer riders.”

North-Shore-Chapter Chairman Ian Rose-Innes does a safety check before we seatbelt-strap into cushioned seats. We’re test-riding the classic Ami trishaw’s (French for ‘friend,’ pronounced ‘ah-mee’) wood-grained bucket for a test ride.

With Ian at the helm, we tour the West Vancouver waterfront and arrive at Ambleside Pier via the Spirit Trail. Crabbers are washing their catch. Onlookers wave and watch. Ian maintains

ABOVE LEFT | Buckling up with Pilot, Ian Rose-Innes, Chairman of CWA (North Shore) and Allie Lacasse, Active Living Manager at Summerhill Parc: Passengers, Mary Reichelt and Reuben Marks.

ABOVE RIGHT | All hands on deck! Mary Reichelt and Reuben Marks help Pilot Ian Rose-Innes with hand signals. Photos: Joan Boxall

a steady pace, no faster than 15 kilometres per hour. We jostle happily, as if on a bus, bumping along. Birdsong and the burbling Capilano River are close companions.

"I love the feeling of the fresh air on my face and the wind blowing through my hair." ~Stuntman, Evel Knievel

We share that Evel-Knievel feeling without 75 ramp-to-ramp motorcycle jumps in hair-ruffling versus hair-raising style.

Active Aging Week is an international initiative in early fall that showcases the capabilities of older adults. It models change in the way we age. CWA jumps aboard with Maintenance Manager and volunteer, Mark MacAulay. He sanitizes the Ami for riders from Summerhill Parc Independent Living Residence.

"It's a very powerful motor," says Mark. "Its big advantage is its regenerative braking. When I go downhill, it's recovering the battery, but it's also braking a lot electrically without using the brake pads."

Our first rider is Jeannine McDonell. Pre-ride, she says, "I'll just tell you I love it... just the fact that there's an ease of going. Gosh... to tootle off like that... it's like I'm floating."

Jeannine's enthusiasm may be contained behind her mask, but it spills over in her sparkling eyes.

"It's kind of like a sleigh ride," says Betty McIlroy, snug under her blanket.

"We're fit seniors," says Fiona Walsh, Volunteer Coordinator with the North Shore Chapter of CWA. "We want to help (mobility-challenged) seniors get out... open them up to the surroundings."

A care home volunteer, bicycle advocate, and retired teacher, Fiona maintains that three training sessions are a minimum requirement. Volunteers first learn about the trishaw (the machine and the whole setup). They then try one passenger in the bucket before carrying a two-passenger load.

"I started the North Shore Chapter two-and-a-half years ago, and you are my first passengers," Ian Rose-Innes tells Mary Reichelt and Reuben Marks as they belt up for a ride.

"It's kind of exciting," says Mary. "That's what we like!"

They loop around the Spirit Trail and pier.

"The pier... just the feeling of the air," says Lena Beebe, next on deck. "And we had such a good driver!"

"This is a great day for me," says Ian. "I learned a lot today about what people enjoy, just by doing it."

Ian explains how COVID-19 gave CWA-North Shore an opportunity for a slow start.

"This is all about safety," he says. "I want a trishaw that will not exceed the limit I set it to under any circumstances."

The team at the North Shore Chapter of CWA upgraded the Ami over the winter and decided what other equipment to buy. Priorities included a base and a storage trailer. Groups of people will arrive by bus or by car to West Vancouver's Ambleside Park, The Shipyards in North Vancouver, or to the Lower Seymour Conservation Reserve (LSCR) trailhead. Rides will happen for up to four passengers at a time (on two trishaws), while the rest of the group socializes.

A booking system is in place for potential passengers. Care homes can contact CWA to book group excursions and rides. Those who live in their own homes can contact a booking agent at a telephone number displayed on the website.

Silver Harbour Seniors' Activity Centre in North Vancouver owns the North Shore Chapter with support from West Vancouver Seniors' Activity Centre. The program works (the accounting and the insurance) under the guidance of Silver Harbour Executive Director, Annwen Loverin.

"That relationship took a year to find," says Ian. "The way to do it on the North Shore is to have one organization who oversees everybody."

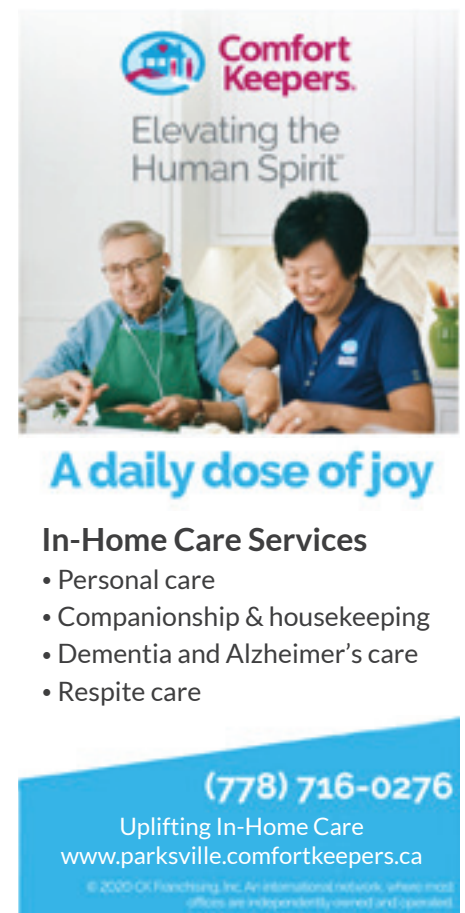
Freedom feels like hair swept free. A free trishaw ride delivers that feeling to those who've been cooped up, and that feels like generosity and kindness. |

For more information, visit www.senior-livingmag.com/article/trishaw-cwa

Joan Boxall is author of *DrawBridge: Drawing Alongside My Brother's Schizophrenia*, Caitlin Press



The image shows a promotional graphic for the North Shore Art Crawl. At the top, there is a logo consisting of four colored squares: red with 'N', yellow with 'S', green with 'A', and blue with 'C'. Below the squares, it says 'NORTH SHORE ART CRAWL'. To the right of the logo is a red circular badge with the word 'ONLINE' in white. Below the logo is a photograph of two women in an art studio; one is painting on a canvas while the other looks on. The background of the graphic is a collage of art-related images. At the bottom, there is a teal banner with white text: 'ONLINE TOUR OF NORTH SHORE ART, DESIGN & CRAFT' and 'MARCH 12 - APRIL 12, 2021'. Below this, it says 'For more details on this year's online crawl, go to northvanarts.ca'. To the right of this text is a small white box with 'NORTH VAN ARTS' inside. At the very bottom, there are social media icons for Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, followed by '@northvanarts' and the phone number '604-988-6844'.



The image is an advertisement for Comfort Keepers. At the top, there is the Comfort Keepers logo, which includes a stylized house icon and the text 'Comfort Keepers'. Below the logo is the tagline 'Elevating the Human Spirit'. The main part of the advertisement is a photograph of two people, an older man and a woman, sitting at a table and working on a craft project together. Below the photograph is the text 'A daily dose of joy' in a blue, rounded font. Underneath that is the heading 'In-Home Care Services' followed by a bulleted list: 'Personal care', 'Companionship & housekeeping', 'Dementia and Alzheimer's care', and 'Respite care'. At the bottom of the advertisement, there is a blue banner with the phone number '(778) 716-0276' in white, followed by the text 'Uplifting In-Home Care' and the website 'www.parkville.comfortkeepers.ca'. At the very bottom, in small white text, it says '© 2020 OK Franchising, Inc. An international network, where most offices are independently owned and operated.'



A LIFE OF ART

by KATE ROBERTSON

You could say that Mark Heine has art in his blood. His father, Harry Heine, was an acclaimed Canadian marine artist who exhibited his work worldwide. Towards the end of his time in the commercial arts, Harry was a partner in a business called Designs of Canada, a massive warehouse studio that housed 10 to 15 artists of varying skills from around the world.

“I wandered around ‘the shop’ and took it all in,” says Mark. “I can’t imagine where you would go these days to find a collection of artisans who could do the crazy, creative stuff they dreamed up. It was awe-inspiring stuff for a child, and I knew then what I wanted to be when I grew up.”

Even family vacations were spent crawling through the galleries and museums of Europe and sketching in the countryside. In Mark’s Grade 12 year in 1979, he won the

Attorney General’s Art Scholarship, which paid for his art school after that.

Like his father, Mark started in the commercial art field, rounding out his income with the odd creative challenge to pay the rent, and which helped him build a portfolio of samples that would allow him to get where he wanted to be – a professional artist.

ABOVE | Mark Heine’s “The Pollinators” 24x30 oil on canvas.

RIGHT | Mark at work in his studio.

PAGE 20 | (top to bottom) “Siren Song.” Mark’s wife, Lisa Leighton, with costumes she made for the Sirens series. Mark, who has spent much of his life on the water, feels strongly about the importance of environmental stewardship. TOC | Mark’s “Envoy” painting from the Sirens series. Photos: Mark Heine

“I taught airbrush illustration in night school. I painted murals all over Western Canada, often with my father and sister, Caren. I sculpted waterpark rides, built models, illustrated textbooks, did architectural rendering, and graphic design,” says Mark. He eventually wound up specializing as an airbrush illustrator, working for clients like Disney and Nintendo.

Then, in his 40s, Mark decided it was time to try his hand at fine art. He saw that the illustration business was changing, with the popularity of digital computer rendering. Mark was raised with brush in hand and didn’t want to spend his life in front of a screen.

“Perhaps it was all preordained anyway,” he says. “Each week, my father and his artist buddies would meet for coffee. The conversation often centered on ‘what’s Mark going to paint when he finally takes up fine art?’ Like a Renaissance apprentice, I learned a great deal from those masters.”

As a Vancouver Islander, it’s no surprise that Mark began his fine art career painting his children enjoying the West Coast lifestyle.



Mark’s current work “Sirens,” a book and painting series, has proved to be his most popular. The book (he’s working on the sequel to the original) is a work of magical-realism fiction, about the unexplored, mysterious world full of amazing creatures below the surface of our oceans, where all life began. He also interweaves the mythology of the Coast Salish First Nations into the stories.

“The Coast Salish have a long, rich legacy of mythology and legend,” says Mark. “My intent is not just to respect their legacy in a story that is set on their ancient ancestral lands, but also to embrace Salish mythology to explore the similarities between ancient Eastern and Western beliefs. So, we have two very different cultures coming from opposite directions and colliding, but with some surprising similarities. Perhaps we are not so different after all.”

Most of the paintings are visualizations of key moments in the books, contemporary interpretations of the femme fatale temptresses of ancient Greek mythology, made famous in Homer’s *Odyssey*.

“Paintings of figures in water generate a lot of emotion,

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and reactions vary, depending on people’s comfort levels and phobias. Reactions are frequently visceral, which can make them provocative and memorable,” says Mark.

But there’s also a deeper meaning behind Mark’s work.

“I’ve spent a good part of my life on the water,” he says. “I’m a partner on a sailboat, and we often sail on the remote west side of Vancouver Island to parts of the outer western and Inside Passage coasts, where few people are able to experience the unspoiled, incredible natural beauty of this region. Unfortunately, that beauty is under increasing threat, as pipelines are proposed to vastly increase shipments of raw diluted bitumen from the Alberta tar sands to seagoing tankers.”

For Mark, it feels important that if he’s going to exploit the natural beauty of the West Coast, he should do his part to protect it for his children and future generations.

“There is no shortage of scientists quoting statistics about climate change and global warming – and those statistics are important, but our non-scientific brains can be overwhelmed. As a storyteller, I approach it differently, through the heart. I hope to engage young people and inspire them to embrace sustainable thinking and environmental stewardship.”

The Sirens works are a family affair. Mark’s wife, Lisa Leighton, designs and creates the costuming. She also helps the models when they’re underwater and being photographed.

“I’m an artist who likes to write, and she’s an editor/writer who creates costumes,” says Mark. “We both have photography backgrounds. The combination of our skill sets is a boon for the Sirens project – or perhaps the Sirens project exists because of that unique combination. I think it’s both.” One of Mark’s daughters is also a Sirens model.

Mark’s lifetime of art has paid off, and his work is now recognized worldwide. Five years ago, he was given the designation “Associate Living Master,” by the Art Renewal Center, a group dedicated to the renaissance of realistic and traditional painting techniques.

He’s also been a finalist in the Center’s annual competition for five consecutive years, the largest judged event of realistic art in the world, called the ARC Salon, resulting in prestigious exhibitions at the European Museum of Modern Art in Barcelona, Sotheby’s in New York and Haynes Galleries near Nashville.

“The Haynes Galleries represent many of the biggest names in art, so it was thrilling for me to be hanging on the walls with the likes of Andrew Wyeth,” says Mark.

Recently, Mark learned that his two entries to the ARC Salon this year were both chosen as semi-finalists, from among 5,000 entries from 83 countries. He’s keeping his fingers crossed they will be winners.

Really, Mark is only just reaching the top of his game.

“The thing about being an artist,” he says, “is that you peak in your experience and skill level at the end of your days. I don’t imagine retiring. I don’t have a driving interest to travel. We have done a lot of that. Perhaps some more writing, sailing and fishing, and keeping an eye out for new opportunities.” Such is a life of art. |

For more info, visit Mark Heine’s website: www.mheine.com



by VERENA FOXX

OLIVIA & LUKE

Living successfully on their own, almost 600 km apart, Luke and Olivia, both 70, decided, with the nudging of his family and her friends, to reach out for a possible romantic connection. While they had a mutual long-time-ago family friend in common, they had never met in person.

In November 2020, they were cautiously tiptoeing towards each other, first with introductory online correspondences, followed by hours of engaged telephone conversations. By January 2021, they decided, after fluctuating between wondering if they were crazy to pursue this acquaintanceship or not, that it was time to meet “in the flesh” and experience whether this relationship was worth carrying forward.

So far, they had shared a few photos and substantial dialogue. What was it that would clinch their connection? “I loved his voice from the first time I heard it,” says Olivia, “but I needed to know if we felt physically comfortable with each other.”

Luke was keen for romantic companionship that also stimulated his intellectual curiosity. “There is enough overlap for this to work,” he said.

The two agreed it would be the non-verbal cues, expressions, and gestures, that would make or break their future together. Much else, including “being together but not living together” had been discussed and sorted.

But then, BC travel restrictions outside designated health zones were implemented. So, they decided they would meet in person when it was possible to travel around BC again, but to carry on, in the meantime, with what was already turning out to be a dynamic experience.

Being in the Third Act of life, it seems, made it all the more compelling. |

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MARVELLOUS MELBOURNE

by JOHN THOMSON

You really can't fault Melburnians for feeling a bit smug about their city. After all, The Economist Intelligence Unit, the research and analysis arm of *The Economist* magazine, once called Melbourne the world's most livable city for seven years in a row. Vienna grabbed the top spot in 2018 and 2019 but No. 2's not too shabby either. Sorry Vancouver. You're in there somewhere, No. 6, I believe.

Like Vancouver, Melbourne is a port city, it wraps itself, horseshoe style, around Port Phillip Bay. With a population of around five million, it's twice the size of Vancouver. The city is known for its manufacturing, banking, pharmaceuticals, and coffee.

"The best coffee in the WORLD," our taxi driver exclaimed as he drove us from the airport to our daughter's apartment on the edge of the CBD or Central Business District. We landed in December 2019 just before the pandemic and, after exchanging hugs and kisses, I asked for a cup of that infamous coffee (espresso machines are as common as toasters in well-appointed Aussie kitchens).

"How do you like Melbourne?" I asked my well-travelled daughter.

"It's pronounced Melb'in, Dad. Australians drop their Rs. Only tourists call it Melbourne."

Ouch.

Now properly informed and humbled, we followed our daughter to her favourite haunts to get a feel for the city through a resident's eyes. We still did the tourist thing, though, including visiting the Melbourne Museum with its extensive collection of aboriginal canoes; Melbourne Gaol, a step back into the city's Victorian past; and strolled Southbank Prom, a swanky strip of eateries, shops, and office towers that hug the Yarra River. We even saw Captain Cook's Cottage transported from Yorkshire in 1934 and reassembled in Fitzroy Park, although the guide sheepishly admitted it's doubtful the Captain ever lived in it for long; the house belonged to his parents.

And not to forget downtown's charming laneways originally constructed to service the nearby shops and pubs and barely

ABOVE | Alley cafés in the Central Business District of Melbourne.

RIGHT | Carlton Gardens.

PAGE 24 | (top to bottom) Alley art has become a tourist attraction. An example of the lace wrought iron. Southbank Promenade. Photos: John Thomson



wide enough for a horse and wagon. Little Bourke Street runs behind Bourke Street. Little Lonsdale Street runs parallel to Lonsdale Street. You get the idea. Many of them have been converted into trendy outdoor cafés while others have been set aside for street artists. Melbourne's city fathers decided a long time ago the best way to fight graffiti was to control it by giving budding Rembrandts a venue. It worked. Laneway art in the CBD has become a tourist attraction. Hosier Lane is a favourite. There are even escorted tours.

It's while lunching at one of those laneway cafés that it struck me: Melbourne is a curious mix of American showmanship and quaint English mannerisms. Step into one of the city's many Victorian shopping arcades and you could be in London. Kids go to school in uniforms, people queue up for public transportation, and cricket's the biggest game in town.

Traditional cricket games can go on for days, and often do, but the Aussies have also created Big Bash Cricket, a snappier version of the game with American mannerisms – colourful team uniforms, fireworks, and cheerleaders. Cheerleaders? Sitting in the stands at the 100,000-seat Melbourne Cricket Ground, the largest cricket stadium in the world, no one batted an eye when fireworks went off heralding a run for the home team Melbourne Stars. Fireworks and cricket? Oh Australia, what have you done?

But back to the trip; I'm an architecture buff and I was blown away by the stately brick and stone Victorian buildings standing next to modern steel and glass towers in the CBD. I liked the Queen Victoria Market, a huge seven-hectare, open-air

market selling food and goods since 1878. Traditional Aussie bungalows with large verandahs to shade the sun caught my eye and Iron Lace, another name for wrought iron, cast into delicate shapes and a mainstay in Melbourne's older homes blew me away.

Rightly or wrongly, I've often thought of Australia as a predominantly white country and I was surprised to find Melbourne so cosmopolitan, a result of its five universities and seven satellite

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campuses drawing students from China, the Philippines, and elsewhere in the Pacific Rim. Oddly, it's in Chinatown that I found the best schnitzel I've ever had in a German eatery complete with dirndl wearing servers and an oompah band. The large Greek and Italian population also give the city a decidedly international flavour.

I knew Melbourne had this livable city reputation before we left Canada and I went there with the attitude, "Okay, show me." I wasn't disappointed. Melbourne shows how it can be done. The integrated public transportation system consisting of trams, buses and rail is superb. The outlying neighbourhoods, which now make up greater Melbourne, such as Fitzroy and St. Kilda have retained their original character, so there's a diversity in streetscape and lifestyle.

Melbourne pulls it all together. There's a balance of big city stimulation and areas of quiet repose, such as the extensive Royal Botanic Gardens in the middle of the city. Or Federation Square, a large downtown civic square, which really does pull people together. It was Christmas time, and the obligatory Christmas tree was assembled in one part of the Square while people were sitting in deck chairs and licking ice cream in the other. And Melbourne's location. A one-hour drive south to the Mornington Peninsula takes Melburians to beach and wine country.

I felt comfortable in Melbourne. It's a big city with a laid-back vibe steeped in the "no worries, mate" Aussie mantra. Melbourne, oops, I mean Melb'in is a great place to visit and, if I lived there, I'd feel pretty smug, too. |

For IF YOU GO information, visit www.seniorlivingmag.com/article/marvellous-melbourne



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FOREVER FIT

by EVE LEES



SHOULD YOU TRY INTERMITTENT FASTING?

If you've tried various weight loss diets, you've probably heard of the current popular one: Intermittent Fasting. But is it effective and safe to follow?

There are many versions of Intermittent Fasting. Basically, this diet restricts when or how much you eat, and some versions restrict both. In one version, you eat only during a certain window of time. For example, if you are required to eat within eight hours in a day, you would only eat between the hours of 9 a.m. and 5 p.m.

There are also alternate-day and whole-day versions of Intermittent Fasting, where you fast or severely limit calories on two or more days in the week. The other days you eat what you normally eat. One of the more popular versions is the 5:2 diet, where you eat as you normally do for five days, then restrict your calories on two non-consecutive days.

Although some sources give it rave reviews, the jury is still out on the efficacy of Intermittent Fasting. There isn't much evidence about how well this diet works over the long term, although it's generally regarded as safe as long as you are in good health. However, it's highly recommended to check with your doctor first, if you are on any medications or have a health condition like diabetes. Fasting for any length of time may affect insulin response, or create imbalances in sodium, potassium or other vital minerals, which can be a concern for those with existing heart conditions.

Short-term studies show most people find Intermittent Fasting easier to manage and stick with, as opposed to diets that severely limit or exclude certain foods or food groups. Discouraging news is that weight loss occurs at a slow rate, if at all. However, a slow and steady weight loss (1/2 to one

pound weekly) is more successful and permanent than losing it too quickly. On the plus side, some short-term studies find Intermittent Fasting may reduce the risk factors linked to heart disease, diabetes, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, and inflammation.

Dietary choices while Intermittent Fasting may be confusing for many because these diets usually do not specify what to eat. Eating poor-quality foods on the diet may not be a good choice. Even if you do lose weight, your good health may be at risk. Healthy eating is essential while Intermittent Fasting because you must provide the many nutrients your body needs to survive when you finally do eat.

If you choose to follow Intermittent Fasting, be sensible about it. The diet should not be followed as an excuse to later gorge on junk food. Choose a wide variety of healthful, whole foods and minimize foods that are highly refined and processed. |

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

HEALING POST-CAREGIVING GRIEF

By WENDY JOHNSTONE

“All the art of living lies in a fine mingling of letting go and holding on.” ~Havelock Ellis

What does life look like for a caregiver when they are no longer a caregiver?

Michael’s wife, Shelley, died after three years with cancer that spread to her liver and spine, causing pain that required intensive medication and being bedridden for the last year of her life. When she died, Michael was both relieved and devastated. After the initial shock and grief, he found himself wondering what his life was going to look like now that he was no longer a husband or caregiver.

Of course, there is no single answer to this question. How a caregiver heals depends on emotional temperament, the relationship between the caregiver and the person they cared for, the circumstances around the death of the loved one and the time and energy spent as a caregiver, among other factors.

In Michael’s case, he found himself initially forgetful; standing in the grocery store without knowing what he needed. He experienced waves of emotional energy and difficulty sleeping. He grieved his wife’s death with self-compassion and gave himself permission to experience the feelings of relief (even if it was often followed by feelings of guilt). He booked an extended vacation for the first time in three years to a place they talked about in Shelley’s final days.

Another caregiver, Laura, in her mid-60s, cared for her life partner who was 10 years her senior. After he experienced a stroke, the care he required was physically and emotionally exhausting. Laura recalls that he couldn’t speak due to aphasia,

and he required daily assistance with his personal care. When he died three years later of a second stroke, she found herself feeling a range of emotions: relief, anger, and guilt.

Laura initially felt lonely as she had lost touch with her social circle and leisure connections while caring for her husband. Her sense of purpose vanished. She also found big shifts in her emotions. Even though her husband had died, she still felt moments of intense anger towards him, quickly followed by guilt. She took the opportunity to seek a counsellor for support. Slowly, she rebuilt her community of friends through regular social gatherings and returning to her fitness regime. Volunteering for the local brain injury society mentoring other caregivers now gives her joy and purpose.

These two caregivers relayed a few common messages of their experiences:

- The caregiving experience and grieving takes time. Don’t compare your experience to others.
- Be patient with yourself and show self-compassion daily.
- Finding support during the caring experience and, more importantly, afterwards, was pivotal in finding a new normal post-caregiving.

One certainty they shared: after living with a loved one with illness and disease, neither take their own lives and abilities for granted. They are both committed to living life with intention and purpose, riding the waves and finding ways to feel joy again.

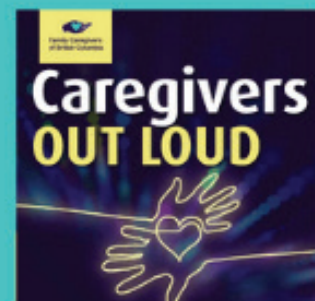
Wendy Johnstone is a Gerontologist & a consultant with Family Caregivers of British Columbia in Victoria, BC



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A TRIBUTE TO A FRIEND



COURAGEOUS
&
OUTRAGEOUS

by PAT NICHOL

by LAURIE MUELLER,
GUEST CONTRIBUTOR

Pat called. I hadn't seen her much during the pandemic. Sometimes, like this day, she would pull into my driveway, phone my cell, and say, "Are you home? Can we meet on the deck?" and we'd sit on my back deck surrounded by the flowers, the hummingbirds, the sunshine and the ominous threat of an unseen virus.

Pat's housesitting jobs had dried up with the onset of the travel ban and she was staying with a friend we had met on one of our latest adventures. Dorothy had a spare room where her grandchildren usually slept when they visited from the Mainland. They wouldn't be visiting until the pandemic was over. Pat was having fun at Dorothy's, despite the conditions that were happening all around the world and the threat they would happen in our beautiful city. That's what Pat did. She found the upside of the world.

I remember a day in 1999, when I had returned to my hometown after being away for 30 years. A mutual friend had suggested I talk to Pat Nichol, who knew everyone, in my job search. I sent this unknown woman my resume, said that Maureen suggested she might be able help me find a job and could we meet to discuss. Pat had a part-time job at Bolen Books, so we met on her break in the food court. It wasn't too long before she started popping in for a chat. I did find a job and my office was in my home. I needed volunteers for the project I was working on, and Pat volunteered and was popular with the groups.

And that was how our 22-year friendship began. She'd phone me up and say, I'm doing some work with... why don't you come with me. We did that with the Tall Ships Festival, a political campaign, the Breakfast Group, housesitting and other assorted events and groups. She got my husband involved in things, too, including the Jazz Festival and Blues Bash.

When she was sitting on my back deck one afternoon, I asked her to talk to the women's group at my church. "We are going to do it over this program we have just discovered called Zoom. You can be in your living room talking to the group." For Pat, this was a new adventure, and we muddled through Zoom, and the 30 women who attended our first Zoom meeting thought it was great. No, everything didn't go as planned but that was part of the fun of it.

Pat called me not too long ago, too cold to sit on the deck, we had resorted to phone conversations only. "I have something to tell you," she said, and that was when I heard the words "cancer" and "Pat" in the same sentence. At first, they

thought it was just an infection. "I was helping Dorothy decorate the Christmas tree and I felt these pains in my stomach. I thought, I won't be around next Christmas to do this," she said.

It all evolved into the kind of news none of us want to hear. "I wrote about it in my column." Of course, she did. *INSPIRED Magazine* readers are one of her most beloved groups.

When I visited her yesterday, she was struggling to focus, but she held my hand, smiled a bit, and as I looked at her with that bright streak of purple in her hair, I knew I had been fortunate to have had her in my life for 22 years.

I knew then she wouldn't be here for much longer. Pat didn't fear death. She told me she was blessed to be given time to say good-bye to her family and friends. Oh, I am going to miss you, Pat. |

Editor's Note: Pat Nichol passed away on Monday, February 8. While our hearts are heavy, we feel comforted by Pat's words and wisdom in all the columns she shared with us over the years. Gone in the physical sense, but with us in spirit, where she remains forever Courageous & Outrageous. Our heartfelt condolences go to her loving family and friends.

~Bobbie Jo Reid

Marketing Head's Note: I will always remember how, whenever I would see Pat, she always started our conversations with a sincere compliment that came from her heart. It was just one of the many things that made spending time with her a joy.

~Kathie Wagner

Publisher's Note: Pat departed our lives at *INSPIRED* the same way she entered - with dignity, calm, and a desire to be of service. Her monthly columns were like footprints in the sand, each one challenging us to take a step toward a better and bigger life. Her life and words touched so many. We were privileged to have Pat as part of the magazine. Her spirit will remain with us always.

~Barbara Risto

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