

# INSPIRED

55+ lifestyle magazine

NOVEMBER 2021

WHALE BIOLOGIST  
ALEXANDRA MORTON

PHILANTHROPY ISSUE:  
GIVING BACK

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OF AGING

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### Cover ALEXANDRA MORTON

Considered Canada's Jane Goodall, this BC whale biologist has dedicated her life to research, community, and campaigning to protect the ecosystem in which we live.

*Photo: Courtesy of the Sea Shepherd Society*

## INSPIRED

55+ lifestyle magazine

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Subscriptions (12 issues): \$36.75 includes GST, S&H. Canadian delivery only.

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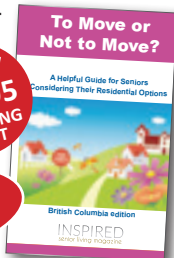
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## THRIVE BEYOND 55

by BARBARA RISTO, PUBLISHER



In 1987, I found myself in a centuries-old stone-and-timber farmhouse in Bayeux in northwestern France. It was a rainy day, and I needed some overnight shelter as I awaited my crossing of the Channel to England the next day. Having backpacked several kilometres to the farm, I was drenched to the core.

A French-only speaking elderly couple welcomed me in. They hospitably hung my wet clothes to dry near a fire in a hearth so gigantic you could stand upright inside it.

Huddled around a scarred wooden table in the warmth of their rustic kitchen, they learned I was from Canada and mentioned the next day would be the anniversary of D-Day. They animatedly began telling me about their respect for the Canadian soldiers who were part of the liberation forces in 1944.

They enthusiastically described with words and pantomime the story of recovering the body of a downed Canadian airman.

The Bayeux villagers' respect for the Canadians was so great, they determined to bury this soldier within their own cemetery. As word got out, the occupying German forces warned of severe repercussions if the villagers took this action. In defiance, the villagers filed into the cemetery early the following morning, carrying the body and placing it to rest among their own, as German soldiers stood on the surrounding walls with guns pointed at them.

As the villagers, one by one, paid their respects and courageously filed out again through a gauntlet of armed Nazi soldiers, not a single shot was fired.

As I read the article "In the Middle of Nowhere," I was reminded of the Canadian airman who was treated with such respect and dignity by the

villagers of Bayeux.

To our surviving veterans, to those who currently serve in peacekeeping or active missions, and to those whose lives were lost so we can live the bountiful and free lives we enjoy today – we owe you a debt that cannot be repaid. But we can remember.



This issue we shine the spotlight on another group of heroes – the charities that make the world a better place for all.

We often fail to recognize that without these supports, our lives would be much more difficult to manage. These organizations provide information, advice and advocacy. They serve many types of clients, from people to animals and the environment. Often, they perform their services on a shoestring budget, fueled only by the efforts of volunteers.

I can count numerous times in my life when a non-profit organization has offered some service that proved to be immensely helpful.

Charities have such impact. They are there in those moments when crisis strikes, when you don't know where else to turn for help. They give so much and ask for so little.

Please consider supporting the organizations featured in this issue of *INSPIRED Magazine* with a donation and leaving a bequest in your Will as a legacy for the future.



This is a good month to remember all the many people who serve – some to preserve our freedoms, others to improve our day-to-day lives.

Both deserve our respect and gratitude. |





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# ALEXANDRA MORTON: TO SERVE AND PROTECT

by JOHN THOMSON

“I was eight when I knew I wanted to be a scientist,” renowned marine biologist Alexandra Morton tells me from her home on Vancouver Island. “I knew that’s what I wanted to do but I didn’t have a picture of it. I didn’t know it was possible. I had parents who were worried about my intense interest in reptiles and amphibians rather than boys. So when [Jane Goodall] appeared on the cover of the *National Geographic*, she just opened the door. This was normal. This was socially acceptable.”

Alexandra got the message. It was okay to be a girl and a scientist so when she grew up, she devoted her life to following Goodall’s example – to observe, to understand the creatures that inhabit her immediate environment and to preserve their habitat. To serve and protect. For the past 40 years, her research has taken her up and down the British Columbia coast into areas most of us would consider inhospitable, but that’s the way she likes it.

“I loved it. I still love it. I’m off grid. I’m so far down the road that the electrical poles don’t get here,” she says. “I still cut all my own firewood. It just makes me feel alive. I love the act of homesteading. I don’t like things being done for me.”

She’s been called “Canada’s Jane Goodall,” a label she’s proud to wear, but Alexandra was actually born in Connecticut and left New England for California as soon as she could drive. Following a boyfriend, she says. Armed with a Bachelor of Science degree and intent on studying language in large-brained animals, she asked Marineland of the Pacific, just outside Los Angeles, if she could use their facilities. Marineland allowed her to drop a hydrophone into their tank to record dolphin sounds but she was quickly drawn to two nearby captured orcas, Orky and Corky.

“They were so beautiful,” she says. “Unlike the dolphin sounds, these calls completely captured my attention, hitting a frequency that resonated throughout my entire being. I knew



instantly that orcas were the animals I wanted to spend the rest of my life with.”

When she learned the female, Corky, was captured in Canadian waters, Alexandra headed north.

“I wanted to find her family, and her family led me into a place that I could survive in.”

She arrived in BC in 1979, first to Alert Bay and then east to Echo Bay in the Broughton Archipelago. It was an austere existence, far away from the conveniences of modern life. By the early '80s Alexandra, her filmmaker husband, Robin Morton, and her three-year-old son were living aboard their 20-metre boat, *Blue Fjord*. It was both their home and a research station. The day would begin by motoring to a distant location where Alexandra would drop a hydrophone into the water to record orca sounds while Robin filmed the mammals underwater.

“We had a large Zodiac that I had customized so my son had a protected area under a cover in the bow,” she says. “Every day we would get in the boat looking for whales. I would try to figure out which direction they were going and then drop the hydrophone well ahead of them and record them as they passed. That meant running with them and camping at night. Back on the ship, I was correlating what they were saying with what they were doing. Clicks, whistles, calls. I wanted to figure out what they were saying.”

One day while filming, Robin didn't surface, a victim of faulty scuba gear.

“Something wasn't right,” she says. “Robin had told me many times not to ruin his shot by bringing the boat in too soon. I waited for some long moments, then I tied myself to the boat, dove in and got him. But it was too late. Emotional loss changes your chemistry,” she continues. “When the emotional floor collapsed under me, a whole other layer was revealed, a kind of sadness that was never part of me before. I likely appeared to be the same, but I was different. I guess I better understood the terms of my existence.”

Now a single mother with a child to support, she took a job as a deckhand on a troller. She sold *Blue Fjord* and moved into an Echo Bay floathome, a one-storey cabin on logs and tethered to the shoreline with ropes.

“I was very aware that I was now the only parent of my child. I had to learn how to run a chainsaw to keep us in firewood, but I would only run the chainsaw when the weather was good enough for me to fly to a hospital if I needed to be medivac-ed. I was very careful not to orphan my child.”

She continued her orca research. She discovered that in the winter months, orcas didn't behave as they were supposed to. The so-called transient pods (now known as Bigg's pods) weren't so transient after all and stayed where they were while resident pods broke down into smaller, divisible units. She discovered that the transient and resident pods don't make the same sounds, nor do they associate with each other. Her research added to our understanding of orca families, their movements and their feeding patterns.

She was still immersed in whale behaviour when, in 1989, local fishers complained of smaller salmon catches and a parasite, later identified as sea lice.

Salmon are an integral part of BC's history, especially among the province's First Nations who depend on it for food and ceremony. First Nations culture is built around salmon, and they have traditionally seen themselves as stewards of this precious resource. Disrupting the continuum was no minor matter. Thus, the community was spurred into action, driven by a suspicion wild salmon were being exposed to pathogens from the nearby open-pen fish farms. And, of course, any disruption in salmon stocks affected the orca.

Alexandra contributed by measuring ocean currents, performing autopsies on diseased fish and publishing the results in numerous scientific journals. As with her orca research, she immersed herself in salmon lore, attacking the issue with fervour and compassion. She familiarized herself with marine legislation and hosted dinner parties to solicit ideas. She conditioned her body to walk 20 kilometres a day as part of a walk-a-thon and built up her paddling muscles in preparation of a 150-kilometre flotilla down the Fraser River, all part of the campaign to bring the plight of BC's wild salmon to the public's attention.

She became the de facto face of the campaign. It ate up all her time and took her away from orca research, but it also drew her closer to her indigenous neighbours and an appreciation for their point of view.

“I didn't realize I was in somebody else's territory,” she says. “When I first arrived here, I didn't understand the land or the people, especially the First Nations. Because I had not built a relationship with them, there was no way for us to connect.”

She reached out. She did connect. And as the campaign intensified, more and more indigenous communities got involved.

“We got an incredibly powerful send-off from the Musgamagw Dzawada'enuxw’,” she says of the 2016 flotilla down the Fraser River. And then other Nations picked it up. Realizing it was not her place to tell her First Nations allies what to do, she stepped back.

“It switched around. It became me contributing to them. I just withdrew and became a paddler and a facilitator, and the Nations took it over. It was incredible to be able to fall in line with something much bigger and more powerful than I could ever be. I thought I had been listening to these leaders but, in fact, I was filling in too many details from my own head. I had been the face of the issue for a long time, but it was essential that no one mistake who was leading the fight now.”

She was no longer out in front but part of the support team, there to witness and to communicate. Thirty years of campaigning had taken its toll. Facing exhaustion, she sought out rest and rejuvenation.

“I had to take a break to recharge. I did not want to be awake. I only wanted to sleep.”

If someone mentioned salmon, she crashed. She Googled the word “depression.”

“I thought I was immune to depression, but I got there,” she recalls.

Google told her to break the cycle and do something new. She went for long walks and disengaged from the frenzy of campaigning.

“When I was a younger woman, anger was a big motivator.

# Snapshot

with Alexandra Morton



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

*"Build your allies. Don't think you can do it by yourself. That was my fatal flaw. I should have made the rounds to First Nations, to environmentalists, to the local fishermen and brought them along on this adventure with me."*

Who or what inspired you the most and why?

*"When I saw Jane Goodall on the cover of the National Geographic, I thought, 'oh my gosh. I didn't know a person could be an adult and still study animals.' I knew that's what I wanted but I didn't think it was possible. She just opened the door."*

What are you grateful for?

*"I'm grateful public support has kept me in the fight, and I didn't have to drop my work because I couldn't feed my family or myself."*

What does success mean to you?

*"My definition of success is to see these salmon runs come back. Their return is going to be an indicator, to me, of whether we caught it in time." |*

At some point, I realized it was very bad for my children and bad for my own health and I was going to burn out."

Today, Alexandra says she's rested and healthy, making time for herself and visiting her two adult children and grandchildren when possible.

"I've allowed my lifestyle to be a little bit overtaxing and I'm trying to remedy that and take care of myself," she says. "I'd like to see my grandchildren grow and get engaged in the issue of climate change. Now I'm very careful about what I take on. I weigh it out."

"There's something wonderful that happens when you get older," she continues. "I call it the grandmother effect. You have this kind of authority that can be completely immovable. When you're in your sixties they know you've been around the block, and it has given me a sense of authority, so I can just speak the unvarnished truth. I don't have to think about my career."

Still concerned about the ecosystem,

Alexandra works with First Nations in an advisory role, sometimes as a hired contractor, sometimes as a volunteer. Money has never been that important to her, she says. She's always lived on the edge, happy in her marginal existence and financing her work through lectures and donations.

"I always manage to get by. The work is the important thing."

Above all, interacting with her indigenous neighbours has taught her a lesson, a lesson she says applies to today's discussion on reconciliation.

"I learned that when it comes to First Nations, the only way is to simply say I'm here for you if you need me. I have the skills and I can bring them to the fight if you need me, not to assume that I know better or I know what they should do. I am so comfortable now in a relationship where they ask me what do the fish need? That's all I need to answer to the best of my ability, and they make the changes."

And the changes are forthcoming. A 2018 federal decision gave First Nations dominion over the Broughton Archipela-



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go, paving the way for an orderly transition plan to remove the 17 open-pen fish farms from the water and possibly move them inland.

“In the Broughton, there is nothing that is going to happen with salmon ever again without the approval of the Nations,” she says.

That makes it safe for her cherished orcas.

“In 1995, the whales I was researching, the northern residents and, in particular, the A5 pod left the Archipelago. In January of this year, one of the orcas I researched 26 years ago came back into the Broughton bringing her family with her. This is them coming back. That is the ultimate seal of approval for what I’ve done. The place has been made safe for them again. It just makes me feel really good.”

Jane Goodall would be proud.

“I am encouraged for sure. I want the earth to stay alive. I’m working to keep orcas alive, and the bears, and the salmon. I want to keep the ecosystem that I live in alive.” |



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# IN THE MIDDLE OF NOWHERE

by BARBARA BARRY

I am pretty sure the term “Bucket List” is a creation of the Baby Boomer Generation. I know my parents never mentioned a Bucket List in their retirement. They were happy to be paying the bills and going south for the winter. But among my Baby Boomers peers, the phrase “That’s on my Bucket List” is heard often in our conversations. And so, in the summer of 2019, my husband and I decided to tick a few items off our lists.

His choice was fairly easy. Being an avid golfer, he had always wanted to attend a British Open Golf Tournament and that summer it was held at Royal Portrush in Northern Ireland – his birthplace. Apart from having to purchase the tickets a year in advance, we were able to put the trip together easily.

The item on my list, however, was years coming to fruition. It started with listening to stories of my family history and included attending Remembrance Day ceremonies which always moved me to tears, especially seeing the Silver Cross Mothers.

Finally, with the advent of the internet, more detailed information and government documents became readily available. I was determined to lay flowers on the grave of my uncle, James Frank Steer, my father’s eldest sibling, killed in 1916 at the Battle of the Somme, age 20, and buried somewhere in the middle of France. No one in the family had ever visited.

After our time in Northern Ireland, we arrived in Paris at the height of the tourist season and with temperatures hovering around 40 degrees. We studied maps and investigated train routes trying to zero in on the small Regina Trench Cemetery, which was not on the regular war monument tours. We discovered it was in the area of three small villages north of Paris and Amiens – Courcellette, Grandcourt and Miraumont, 1.5 kilometres off the main road, up a single-track lane not accessible by car. One would need to get a taxi to the sight.

Early one beautiful, very hot morning we took the one-hour train trip North from Paris to the town of Amiens. From there, we took another train to the village of Miraumont. We arrived at midday and got off the train where there was no station and just a small dirt path down to a street.

There was an eerie quiet in the village and no people in sight. I stopped a solitary villager and asked for a taxi in my lapsed and not understood French. He seemed confused so we wandered the streets and eventually came across a pharmacy that was open. We explained to a customer why we were there, and she said, “There are no taxis here, this is the middle of nowhere.”

Inside the pharmacy, my stress and disappointment must



*They will not grow old, as we that are left grow old.  
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.  
At the going down of the sun, and in the morning  
We will remember them.*

have been visible because immediately a staff member started going through some phone directories to see if there might be taxis available in neighbouring villages, with no luck. At the same time, another one was checking Google Maps and found the Cemetery but said it would be a few hours away on foot. We were speechless, imagining a walk in the heat of the day both there and back.

That is when the “angel” appeared in the disguise of a young man picking up a prescription. With a glance at the map, he said he knew the cemetery because it was near his village, and he offered to drive us. He was in his 20s, neatly dressed and well-groomed, and must have taken pity on this old couple who was obviously frantic. We did not hesitate and nonchalantly hopped in his car.

It was a pleasant drive, and we were enjoying the scenery when he made a sudden stop and pointed to some trees in a field in the distance. We were thrilled and offered him compensation, which he declined. But we eventually made a deal, even with our language problems, that he would accept payment and return later to drive us back to the station. With our Euros in pocket, he drove off and we realized we were in the middle of nowhere and we might never see him again.

As I started my walk up the rugged dirt path to the farmer’s field, I realized that in the chaos and stress I had forgotten flowers. But there were some bright orange wild poppies at the side of the track, and I began to pick them.

The Regina Trench Cemetery is small, compact and beautiful, an oasis in an empty landscape that was once riddled with violence, despair and death. The grass is a verdant green and neatly mowed, and perennials, trees and bushes grow among the graves. I entered the gate to a monument with the inscription “Their Names Liveth For Evermore,” and started my search for Plot #1, Row G, Grave #2, with a simple map found online.

Suddenly, there it was! The stone with my family name



engraved on it, J. F. STEER, AGE 20, with a Maple Leaf on the heading and his Regiment Details and Date of Death. I broke down weeping and repeating the words “Thank You” over and over again. My husband joined in as well. I placed my wilted poppies on the plants already there, sat, touched his name and was overcome with grief. I thought about what his final days must have included. Maybe there was a letter home. I wondered if he had made friends with other soldiers and maybe did not die alone. I hope some of them were buried here beside him in the middle of nowhere in France. I spent some time with him, this man I had never known and began to feel some peace after the anxieties of the day. But there were also thoughts of the futility of war, so many lives lost, so many Silver Cross Mothers.

Eventually, we knew we should leave thinking of the trip ahead of us. We discovered a guest book at the Entrance Gate that I signed, and I was surprised that there were two entries for that week, someone from Stockholm and another from Oregon. I wondered what their stories might be.

Then, scanning the distance, we could see that our “angel” had returned. Not only did he return us to the train station, but he had also checked online the time of the next train to Amiens. As I sat waiting for the train, reflecting on the events of the day, an elderly gentleman arrived who said in French that he was going to the next village and asked who we were. So again, using my somewhat bungled French, I attempted to explain why we were there. He was fascinated and explained in his broken English that one of his friends volunteered as a gardener at the cemetery. I was astounded to think that someone, in the middle of nowhere, with no connection to those buried there, would give so unselfishly of his time. There must be more “angels” in the world. He asked for the name on the grave so maybe my Uncle Frank will have another visitor some day.

When hearing my story some have said to me that I never knew James Frank Steer. True. But I knew his parents, my grandparents who lost their eldest son. I knew his five siblings, all now deceased, none of whom had the privilege of visiting his final resting place. I am the youngest of the four remaining nieces and nephews. There may be no more visitors. And I have slowly learned of the horrors of a war, which I never had to live through. My visit was the least I could do for him, for my family, and for those buried alongside him.

My “bucket” is empty now. I hope to continue to travel but this will be the most important trip I have ever taken. After receiving my email of the events of the long day, my daughter was appalled that I would get in a car with a total stranger in France. I never considered him anything but an “angel.” I will continue to weep on Remembrance Day but now shake hands with those in uniform and say, “Thank You.” And I will always remember a quiet visit, with someone I wish I had known, on a beautiful, peaceful day in the middle of nowhere in France. It was a privilege to have visited the final resting place of those who fought so bravely and gave us their most precious gift – their lives. |



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# CELEBRATING 70 YEARS OF SERVICE IN BC

by MELANIE DORCHESTER



The world has changed significantly since 1920 when Hal Rogers launched the first Canadian Kinsmen club in Hamilton, Ontario. Polio was a dire threat in the world at that time, and Kinsmen volunteers were motivated to help through fellowship and service to the community. The organization spread across Canada, and the Kinsmen Foundation of British Columbia was established in 1952.

Although their original focus was to find a cure for polio and help British Columbians who had been affected by the disease, their mandate changed in 1955 to support those who had survived and required rehabilitation.

Over seven decades, the foundation has accomplished a great deal, and stayed true to their mission to “raise funds to support many worthwhile organizations and individuals facing the daily challenges of living with a severe physical disability to improve their quality of life and independence.”

Ean Price knows all about how small things can make a big difference. As a former board member for the Kinsmen Foundation and now an Innovation Strategist with the Technology for Independent Living Program (TIL), his personal and professional knowledge of these differences is profound.

Ean lives with a degenerative disease, and his needs continue to change. He requires a ventilator and lives on his own with 24-hour support. While voice activation allows him more independence and adds to his sense of well-being, Ean says that non-verbal TIL members may prefer to push a button or switch, or use a straw to blow, puff or sip until a preferred ‘task’ button is chosen. For some people, an eye-tracking software tablet can connect to existing hardware. Motion sensors can automate routines of everyday life. Remarkably, hundreds of commands can be programmed into the remote. Ean explains that where able-bodied people easily open/close or unlock/lock the door to their home, turn on the TV, computer or lights, and open/close blinds, he and others rely on a wide range of technologies to make it happen.

There is no question Ean deeply appreciates the dedication and ongoing support of the Kinsmen.

“Without it, there is no way that we could have the same level of independence.” Quite simply, he says, “I feel like a fish out of water when I’m not in my wheelchair.”

Ean believes he speaks for many others about the benefits that funding from Kinsmen provides. The Door Opener Program, for instance, leads to “more independence, safety from fires, floods or other dangers, overall well-being, fresh air and less isolation.” He believes the Kinsmen’s level of commitment has helped to raise public awareness of the needs of people who are living with a disability.



**FUNDING SOURCES** In the early years, funding came from sources such as the Kin/Win Lottery and Mother's Marches. Fun fact: Former Cabinet Minister Grace McCarthy was the first Honorary Mother. The first highly successful march was held for one hour on February 28, 1953; the idea was that if you left your porch light on, it showed a willingness to help, and a 'Marching Mother' would come to collect your donation. Years later, as lottery and fundraising became more competitive, the organization focused on local events to raise funds. The annual golf tournament (temporarily on hold due to the pandemic), membership dues, donations, and legacy gifts now support a self-sustaining Endowment Fund.

**WHO ARE KINSMEN?** Jim Watson appreciates the expression, "Hats off to the past, coats off to the future, now let's get to work." As a member since 1962, Jim has been involved at the local level in various provinces and at the national level. He has observed many changes over the years, and is proud of the organization's numerous accomplishments, some of which are listed below.

Jim deeply believes that his own and other volunteers' lives have been enriched by the experience of focusing on the greater good of the community. He noted that his own son is also a Kinsmen, and that intergenerational membership is common. There has been a decrease in the overall number of Kinsmen clubs and members, but thanks to the dedication of its members and the Endowment Fund, the Kinsmen Founda-

tion of BC will continue to make a difference throughout the province in the future. The Kinsmen Foundation of BC website provides a detailed account of their past and present work.

#### ACCOMPLISHMENTS INCLUDE MAJOR FUNDING FOR:

- Noble House, an accessible residence that provides independent living for persons with severe physical disabilities.
- The yellow room at Canuck Place, where children and families facing a life-threatening illness can stay when they need a home away from home.
- Kinsmen Neurological Tower at the University of British Columbia, a world-famous research facility at UBC.
- The land for G.F. Strong Rehabilitation Centre, as well as subsequent significant funding.
- Kids On The Block, a province-wide education and awareness school puppetry program to help educate young people about disabilities.

For seven decades, the Kinsmen Foundation of BC has helped British Columbians who live with a disability seek out the best possible life. And there is still much work to be done. As the population ages, the need for education, awareness and consultation, as well as assistive devices, accessibility, equipment, and specialized therapies will continue to grow.

Congratulations and a heartfelt thanks to all Kin, Kinettes and Kinsmen for a job well done! |

To learn more, visit [www.kinsmenfoundationofbc.ca](http://www.kinsmenfoundationofbc.ca)

*Happy 70<sup>th</sup>  
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*"It (the door opener) is a beautiful gift, the simplicity of opening and closing the door...Literally life changing and a lovely step towards independence. I am VERY GRATEFUL." - V Splay*

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# LUCKY NO. 13

by JESMINA BISEROVIC

It was in Kennel #13 of the Comox Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA) where five-year-old shiatzu-cross, Charlie, lived in 2007. The adorable, curly haired pup spent his earlier years with a family in the valley until they found themselves having to move out of the province and, sadly, away from Charlie.

The Comox SPCA is one of 44 locations across the province. Founded over 125 years ago under the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, the BC SPCA's mission is to "protect and enhance the quality of life for domestic, farm and wild animals in BC." Last year alone, the BC SPCA was fortunate to have 4,077 volunteers giving 152,882 hours of their time to help rescue injured, homeless, and abused animals and to reunite lost pets with their families.

Despite the loving care he received at the SPCA, Charlie faced further devastation when he was adopted twice that spring only to be returned both times. When his next turn to be visited by potential adopters came up the following summer, Charlie was less than welcoming. In fact, it was difficult for Campbell River native, Richard Parquette, to get Charlie's attention or to make eye contact with the distracted pup.

Having been a pet father in the past to his cat, Blackie, who lived to age 20, and his dog, Sam, who lived to age 13, Richard was not one to give up easily on Charlie. He put his name forward along with six other applicants who wanted to take Charlie home. As luck and a love for animals would have it, Richard aced his interview and came back to retrieve his new furry friend.

Since it was hard to get Charlie to warm up to him, Richard knew he had to gain the scared pup's trust and make him feel safe. Soon after bringing Charlie home, Richard and his wife, Dianne, enjoyed taking Charlie on short walks around the neighbourhood. Not long after, this grew to one- to two-hour walks that Charlie enjoyed, rain or shine, especially to Campbell River's Tyee Spit. The "spit" is a wonderful oceanside park with bucolic trails, cozy campsites, and spacious picnic areas.

In no time, Charlie became Richard's exploration buddy and somewhat of a celebrity when making the rounds to local parks and businesses. A teller at Richard's bank had special treats at the ready when her "little man Charlie" came in wagging his tail and looking for kisses. This is a special memory for Richard who also recalls Charlie's very non-canine behaviour when he came across other dogs, squirrels, and even horses.



Richard and Charlie cuddle.

Photo: Courtesy of  
Richard Parquette

The first time Charlie saw a squirrel in the family's backyard, Richard was feeding it peanuts. While this was going on, Charlie seemed confused that the squirrel was getting food before the squirrel tossed an empty peanut shell at Richard, showing he was ready for more. Once satisfied, the squirrel took off racing up and down the trees as Charlie watched, mesmerized. He didn't bark or attempt to chase the critter, which Richard witnessed often.

It wasn't just small animals that caught Charlie's attention; he was attracted to cows and horses, too, despite their larger sizes. When Charlie was about 14, he was at the river where he loved swimming with Richard, when three women on horseback rode close by. As Richard recalls, before the horses got too far, "Charlie walked in front of one of the 2,000-pound mammals who lowered his face to Charlie's face as Charlie sat up on his hind legs and put his paws on the horse's head, above its nose. He 'kissed' the horse on the mouth before the horse gently tapped Charlie's belly with his head."

These public displays of affection were second only to what Charlie brought to the Parquette family.

"Our dog, Charlie, is our best friend," says Richard. "He's good at everything and listens so well. It's clear to us that he's very smart and understands that he is so loved. He has one mean tooth and loves to show it off! I know that my love for Charlie will be eternal."

In fact, Richard and Charlie shared a special futon where they could comfortably watch TV together. At 9 p.m. sharp, Charlie would jump down and stare at Richard from his position on the floor... it was time to open the cookie jar for his special doggy bacon strips.

Because Charlie came from the SPCA, Richard is aware of the magnitude of the Society's contribution to the community. He feels blessed to have found Charlie when he did and is forever grateful.



“Even when I’m gone, if my savings can help an animal, whether a dog, cat, or other animal, I truly believe that they need it more than anyone else. Pets want to be treated the way we want to be treated. That is why I became a Forever Guardian by leaving a gift to the BC SPCA in my will.”

In the winter of 2020, Richard noticed Charlie slowing down and on his next visit to the vet he knew something was not right. After the vet examined Charlie, he sent for x-rays and blood tests. Not long after the vet confirmed that Charlie had a tumour on his heart. He was sick for a while before passing away at 19-and-a-half years old. Devastated, Richard was inconsolable but knew he had a lot of great adventures and loving memories with Charlie.

Shortly after Charlie passed, Richard woke up to his puppy sitting on the edge of the bed, calmly looking at him in the dark. Not scared but relieved, Richard smiled and thought he was getting a special visit as he drifted off to sleep. The special visits happened two more times, which for Richard is proof that Charlie is in a good place.

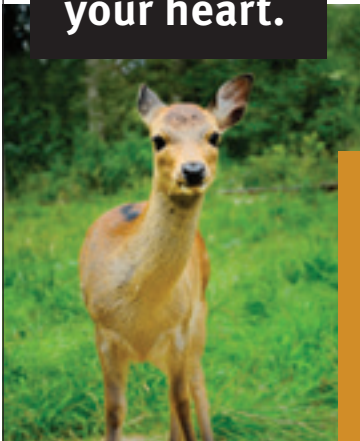
While he plans to one day adopt another animal from the SPCA, Richard is currently pleased with his plush toy dog who fits Charlie’s favourite #13 jacket perfectly. |

*If you or a loved one are interested in becoming a BC SPCA Forever Guardian, contact Caitlin Fysh at [cfysh@spca.bc.ca](mailto:cfysh@spca.bc.ca) or 778-786-2630 (toll-free outside of the Lower Mainland at 1-855-622-7722 ext. 6059). You can also visit [foreverguardian.ca](http://foreverguardian.ca) for more information.*

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## Why Would You Need an Estate Lawyer?

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*Wills are very personal, and extremely important — they can be complex and difficult to talk about, especially when a loved one has passed. Krista Simon, an estate lawyer with more than 18 years of litigation experience, outlines some of the situations where you may need an Estate Litigation lawyer.*

### **If a Will is changed at the last minute:**

You may decide to challenge a Will based on undue influence or lack of mental capacity. For example, if a child convinces their parent to change their Will on their deathbed to provide them with a higher percentage of the assets, the Will may be found to be invalid.

### **If a parent leaves everything to one child and nothing to another**

Typically, individuals are obligated to provide for their spouse and children. A child who receives nothing in their parent’s Will may bring a Court action to have the assets redistributed. Talk to a lawyer about the prospect for success and possible outcomes.

### **If an adopted child or stepchild is left out of the Will:**

Generally, children (including adopted children) are to be provided for in a Will; however, the law doesn’t require that an individual provide for their stepchildren or grandchildren in the same way.

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# LIFELONG LEARNING LEADS TO KNOWLEDGE

A large vegetable garden at their home in Revelstoke, BC helped Yoshi Hashimoto's family survive the difficult years of WWII, though they thankfully avoided being interned. Despite the hardships of their largely rural upbringing, his parents made sure Yoshi and his siblings got an education. He took their enthusiasm for learning to heart, deciding to become a teacher after being inspired by the excellence of some of his own teachers. His teaching career began with elementary school in Revelstoke, and later took him to Prince George, where he taught Grade 5 and then high school art and counselling for many years.

Now residing in Abbotsford, Yoshi discovered BC's public broadcaster, Knowledge Network, after retiring some 25 years ago.

"I found, through the wide range of Knowledge programs, that I could expand my horizons and continue to be educated and entertained," he says.

Along with the weekend dramas, Yoshi appreciates the historical programming on Knowledge, which he finds fills a vacuum that prevails on some of the other television channels. Not only do the shows delve into the stories of historical figures and events, in some cases they've enlightened Yoshi on what happened in his own past, particularly the wartime years and the Japanese experience in BC – something he wishes more people knew about and understood.

To that end, Yoshi has volunteered at the Nikkei National Museum & Cultural Centre in Burnaby as Chairman of the Auxiliary Committee since it formed in 2002. The Auxiliary and its army of volunteers help the Centre put on many educational programs and events related to Japanese history and culture, and while those opportunities have been limited lately due to COVID restrictions, Yoshi and his fellow volunteers are looking forward to the day when they can all get together and resume their activities.

Along with volunteering, Yoshi has kept up with several hobbies and interests over the years. He continues to garden, mostly flowers and a bit of bonsai, and is an avid curler, a sport he picked up as a teacher in Prince George. It was a principal in high school who fostered Yoshi's interest in art, and his sketchbooks are filled with delicate black-and-white drawings and watercolours of nature and scenic landscapes, many of them created on his travels.

"The old saying 'if you don't use it, you'll lose it' is so true," Yoshi says. "Not only that, but it also makes life interesting if you are constantly learning and open to new ideas. And keeping your mind active will help keep you younger and living longer."

Yoshi appreciates the fact that he can watch Knowledge



programs on his television or his computer, which is a handy way for the busy senior to catch up on any episodes he's missed.

"The joy of that is I can scan all of the programs and pick and choose at any time, any day, any hour. I'm just glad that Knowledge is there for all of us so we can access that kind of information any time we want. It's right there at our fingertips."

Being a regular viewer, it wasn't a hard decision for Yoshi to take the next step and become a Knowledge Partner. "Knowledge is a channel that you can get for free, but I pay for it because I think it's very important to maintain the type of commercial-free programming that raises your television watching to another level. I support Knowledge semi-annually and I'm very happy to do that because what I get out of it is worth so much more," he says.

Lifelong learning is important to Yoshi and so is giving back, whether that's by donating to something he values or imparting his knowledge and skills to help improve other people's lives.

"I feel that I didn't get here all by myself. A lot of people helped me along the way. I think that's my role in life, to turn around and pay all of that forward." |

ABOVE | Donor Yoshi Hashimoto relies on Knowledge Network programming to fulfill his love of lifelong learning.





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BRITISH COLUMBIA'S Knowledge Network:

# ELDERDOG CANADA HELPS KEEP LOVE IN THE HOME

by SHARON SPEEVAK

Seniors' lives are often built around what they can no longer do. If they forget to turn off the stove, their children unplug it and buy them a microwave instead. If they forget to take their medication or leave spoiled food in the fridge, they are moved to residential care. If they can no longer take their dog for a walk or need to go into the hospital for a few days, they are told that it's time to give up the dog.

The loving bond between dogs and their human families is particularly strong as both enter their senior years. The dog may be the only loving, non-judgmental companion a senior has and taking care of the dog may give the owner's life purpose and meaning. It is a great reason to get out of bed in the morning!

So, what if there was a way to keep love in the home despite an aging owner's inability to take half-hour walks, drive to the vet or be at home for a few days following needed surgery? What if, rather than unplugging that relationship, the community recognized the essential bond and supported it?

Dr. Ardra Cole, a university professor with a background in educational psychology and research methodologies, was committed to providing an answer to these questions when she founded ElderDog Canada Inc., a national, community-based non-profit organization, whose goal is to provide free assistance to older adults in the care and well-being of their canine companions. The organization also provides education and funds research about the human-animal bond and the significant role of companion animals in the health and well-being of seniors.

Since its inception in 2009, ElderDog has grown to have multiple branches, called "Pawds," in eight provinces. In BC, there are Pawds in Vancouver, Thompson Okanagan, Sunshine Coast, Victoria, Nanaimo and Courtenay/Comox. ElderDog Pawds provide trained and screened volunteers who help people, age 55+, with daily pet care activities, such as dog walking, transportation to veterinary appointments and food delivery.

If the owner is unable to temporarily care for the dog, such as during a period of hospitalization, ElderDog provides foster care in a pre-approved home. In the unfortunate



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Volunteer Mindy,  
Rusty, and owner  
Jane.

event that a dog requires permanent rehoming, ElderDog is there to assist and specializes in the placement of senior dogs with loving people.

All these services are provided at no cost to the owner because ElderDog truly understands that older owners can find it increasingly difficult to provide their dog with the exercise, stimulation and other care, and wants to preserve that bond.

Volunteers love to help seniors in their community! Mindy is a dog walker with the Nanaimo Pawd and was introduced to Rusty, a 12-year-old Papillion-Chihuahua in March 2021. Mindy has been walking Rusty two mornings a week since that time and is part of the four-member volunteer team dedicated to providing services to Rusty's owner, Jane.

Jane developed chronic pain in her knee and felt so desperate when she could no longer take Rusty for daily walks. She was frightened that her condition would mean that she had to give up her little boy and couldn't bear the thought of life without his companionship. She feels blessed to have found out about ElderDog's services.

"Rusty is brighter, happier, more content and healthier because he is getting exercise and meeting new people," says Jane.

Mindy is equally pleased, as Rusty is a pleasure to walk, and great company and she has a new bond with Jane. Mindy says, "Jane and I chuckled together as we both said in unison, 'I tell everybody about ElderDog.'"

ElderDog represents a coming together of two things: a recognition of the vital connection between older adults and their dogs and the importance of preserving that bond. |

*For more information about obtaining services, volunteering or donating, visit [www.seniorlivingmag.com/articles/elderdog](http://www.seniorlivingmag.com/articles/elderdog)*

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# ARE YOU STRONG ENOUGH TO ASK?

by ADRIENNE WHITE

When I closed my eyes, my body was intact. But a few hours later when I open my eyes, I had 90 cm of incisions. Barely conscious, I was afraid to move, and I was pretty sure I did not have what it would take to recover from such a major surgery. As it turns out, I did. But I didn't do it alone. Let me back up a bit...

When I was told I needed open heart surgery, I was in a state of disbelief. You see just two days earlier, I had a very typical female heart attack. In other words, I instantly felt like I had the flu. Nothing major. My arms were tired, I had waves of nausea, but in between those waves, I felt fine except for being fatigued.

The symptoms sounded like the type of inconsequential sensations that my mom had spoken of when she had a heart attack years earlier, so just in case, I had it checked out at the local community hospital. Turns out I got to the hospital in time to have the heart attack there. The whole event was very calm, and seemingly insignificant (so much so that, if I'd been home instead of out for lunch with my friend, I would have just had a nap. Given that I had a 100 per cent blockage, plus other arteries blocked at 80+ and 70+ per cent, I wonder if I would have woken up from that nap).

I was pre-paddled with a portable defibrillator, and a nurse accompanied me by ambulance to a hospital that specialized in heart issues. They immediately put in three stents, and the next day told me I should have open heart surgery. What?! If you found yourself in that situation, I suspect similar things might go through your mind. Of course, there is a wall of disbelief among the many other feelings, not the least of which is, "I don't have time for this sh\*%!"

I'm single with no children. A few years ago, my mom moved in with me. And as her COPD gets worse, my job as caregiver increases. I have no siblings, no aunts to come and help. I'm self-employed and work from home and did not have the financial wherewithal to spend weeks or months healing from open heart surgery.

That said, I've never been one to dwell endlessly on the disadvantages, so I made a decision. I decided to put off my open heart surgery, accept the job that I had just been offered, save up enough money and then have the surgery. It was a rational, logical, albeit ill-advised decision.

One of my oldest and dearest friends showed up at the hospital a day or two later. She said, "I hear you've decided



to wait to have the surgery." So, I explained my rational thinking to her. In a very measured way, she calmly said, "Yes... or... you could ask for what you need and have the surgery as the doctors recommended it." I said, "I don't think you understand how much I need." She said, "Yes, I do."

Ask for what you need... ask for what you need? That sounded more impossible than everything the doctors had just proposed to me, and yet, I knew in my gut it was the right answer.

But how could I possibly do it?

I was sent home from the hospital to recover from the heart attack and stents and a surgery date was booked a few weeks hence. I had a work contract to keep me busy and when I sat down to work on a chunk of leadership coaching content, instead what emerged was a letter to some of my closest friends explaining the situation.

As I read through it, I was careful to make sure there was nothing that could provoke potential guilt or manipulation through dramatic language, and I gave everyone an 'out' with the acknowledgement of the fact that we all have our own stuff going on in life. Nonetheless, I mentioned some of the things that I would need to heal, from prayers, to rides to the blood lab, to money.

I took a deep breath and held my finger over the 'send' button. A wave of fear came over me. What if they think I'm pathetic? What if they think I'm weak? What if they think I'm incompetent or stupid or greedy? What if they don't have time to help? Or worse, what if they don't want to help? I was practically stopped by the dense field of shame around the fact that I needed so much support.



Now, I have to interrupt my story and ask you a question: If one of your good friends was in a similar situation, do you think she should feel deep shame around needing help? My guess is the answer is no. Yet most people hate asking for help, so they don't. And I found out later that many women who have heart attacks feel so much shame, they don't even tell people it happened. I wonder if we can change that. I digress.

So, with fear and trepidation I swallowed my pride and hit the 'send' button on the email to my friends. What happened next shocked me.

Offers of help poured in. Two friends in the US created a Go Fund Me page. A friend who didn't even live in the same city said she would take me to the hospital and stay with my mom for the entire time I was away. The support was unfathomable, and I felt overwhelmed and overjoyed... and yet still so much shame. I'll be honest. People who I never thought would help (care, for sure, but not help), were among my biggest supporters. Even strangers reached out. Friends I hadn't been in touch with for 30 years came out of the woodwork. People told me they admired how strong I was, but the truth is, I had never felt so weak. Reading through the comments that rolled in, I remember sitting in front of my laptop with tears of gratitude rolling down my cheeks, and also a new strange sensation that I'd never felt before. For the first time in my life, I felt an obligation to live.

That drive and obligation to live was so profound that I promised myself to do everything to recover from the surgery and be able to give back to the community in whatever form I could.

I'm a few years out of surgery now. My volunteer efforts are almost all heart based. Through the Pacific Open Heart Association, I talk to patients (and their families) who are just about to have, or have just had, open heart surgery. Like other volunteers with POHA, I share tips for healing, what to expect next, and listen deeply when they share their fears. Also, when I learned that the early heart attack signs are missed in most women, I embarked on a mission to change it by creating a 90-minute talk that is offered

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free of charge and shared some of the key points on podcasts from Canada, the US, Australia, and South Africa.

Globally, the high mortality rate from heart attacks unites us. I don't feel qualified or capable of reducing that rate, but I can absolutely ensure that fewer women die unnecessarily, and instead live through their heart attacks.

The other aspect I want to influence is the high level of shame that so often accompanies our experience as women. Lovingly asking for help is nothing to be ashamed of. I suspect I'm not the only one with incredibly giving friends, who NEVER ask for help. That's not a sign of strength. Instead, pride and shame prevent people who love us from experiencing the opportunity to be supported.

I'll admit it. Yes, there is risk involved. Through my own heart adventure, I had a family member express his extreme disappointment that there was a public request for financial support via the Go Fund Me page started by my friends. He hasn't talked to me since before the heart surgery. It's sad that he chose not to see the incredible beauty, transformational power, and support that came through an extraordinary community of people, and I miss him. Even so, I wouldn't change the choices I made.

Back home after 13 days in the hospital in recovery from the surgery, I remember lying in bed one afternoon. I felt the support of the bed, the pillows and the soft sheets. And then I felt a swell of joy in my whole being when I realized that all these people, through prayer, positivity, and support made it all possible. I had never felt so supported by the world. I felt as though life itself supported me. What an incredible gift, all because I decided to ask. |

*Building on her years of corporate and nonprofit work in senior leadership positions, Adrienne White started Leaders Landing, a place where tomorrow's leaders can invest and learn about their most important asset: Themselves. Through coaching and training, she is driven to bring out the best in people while helping them find their inner brilliance. Contact: [Adrienne@LeadersLanding.com](mailto:Adrienne@LeadersLanding.com)*

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Blackberry Lemonade Chews

# DELECTABLE EDIBLES

by JANE CASSIE

Blueberry Yogurt, Sour Peach, Sticky Toffee Pudding. If you think I'm referring to ice cream flavours or decadent desserts, guess again. You certainly won't find them in a candy store for kids, but adults are drawn to the legalized outlets where these tasty morsels await.

When going through my cancer experience and on chemotherapy eight years ago, I tried medicinal marijuana in an effort to control the nausea. I had to plug my nose and take a big girl gulp of the stinky oil. It wasn't pleasant, and it was nothing like the occasional joint-sharing experience I had recalled from my teens. But it did the trick. And it helped get me through those wretched post-treatment days.

I never thought I'd dabble with dope again, but after the legalization of this wonderful weed, it has once again snuck onto my grocery list.

Although I'm no longer a fan of the psychogenic effects that good ol' Mary Jane had back in the day, by going with straight CBD, I have the best of both worlds: a clear head, reduced anxiety, wonderful sleeps. And all without the mid-night munchies!

Wanting a little more info, I do a Google search and quickly find an abundant supply of edibles at my fingertips. The cannabis plant produces between 80 and 100 cannabinoids. The two main cannabinoids are delta-9-tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) and cannabidiol (CBD). The more commonly known, THC, is the chemical that's responsible for getting you 'high', whereas CBD is thought to have an anti-psychoactive effect.

But how is CBD extracted from the hemp plant? And how are the scrumptious flavours infused into each sweet tiny square? To appease my curiosity even more, I decide to go directly to the creators and promoters of my favourite yummy gummies, Kyrsten Dewinetz and David Lluncor.

With a background in microbiology, much of Dewinetz's career has been spent working with both prominent and independent food and beverage brands and designing new products. Lluncor's expertise has been getting natural health products into mainstream grocery outlets, and more recently, helping promote cannabis in the Canadian market. Together,

with their combined 40 years of experience in food and beverage manufacturing, they have founded White Rabbit OG and have created a natural, vegan edible that stimulates the senses and inspires the taste buds.

"The CBD we use is an isolate, the purest form of cannabidiol," Dewinetz explains with pride. "It's refined to remove additional cannabinoids, terpenes, and other hemp components until the final product is about 99.9% cannabidiol and completely THC free."

I discover that the CBD is extracted by using supercritical CO<sub>2</sub>. In short, this means there is no chance of having residual solvents in the end product, so it is clean and healthy. And the very little cannabinoid taste that remains is eliminated by EAT ME Technology, White Rabbit's all-natural, plant-based, quick onset emulsion.

"Our goal is to create an effective and consistent wellness product where taste is not sacrificed," Lluncor says. "The flavour and textures are meant to be enjoyed on their own as a culinary treat and satisfy even the most sophisticated palate."

I can certainly attest to that. Unlike other gelatin-tough gummies that I've sampled, each White Rabbit morsel is not only pleasingly palatable but soft and easy to swallow. My good friend, Ron Cross, would certainly agree. For the past few months, while fighting a courageous battle with ALS, these supple sweets have been the only things that he can safely swallow. And as well as lessening his discomfort, they have helped decrease his anxiety and control some muscle spasms.

In general, gummies containing cannabinoids have been credited for helping people deal with several medical conditions. Epilepsy, Parkinson's, Crohn's and Multiple Sclerosis are just a few – not to mention the typical aging challenges that many of us face, such as insomnia, bone health, joint pain and anxiety. In many cases, cannabis has even helped reduce the use of prescription drugs.

White Rabbit OG products are available for sale in recreational cannabis stores in BC, Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Ontario. Their products are also available for medical cannabis customers at Medical Cannabis by Shoppers Drug Mart. |



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## THE PRIVILEGE OF AGING

by J. KATHLEEN THOMPSON

*He is a wise man who does not grieve  
for the things which he has not,  
but rejoices for those which he has. –Epictetus*

The efforts to hang on to our younger selves, and the appearance and fitness and know-how that keep us 'in the game' imbue us with a youthfulness we can trumpet, but is there a point when 'forever young' feels more like 'forever-in-denial' rather than affirmation of our true selves?

Buying into the messages of the massive anti-aging industry (which has seen a boon due to demographics alone – the global population of people aged 60 years or over has almost tripled in 40 years, now numbering 962 million people) may prevent us from enjoying what has been called 'the privilege of aging.' That is, the privilege of recognizing 'we made it this far, so let's take time to slow down, unplug and smell the roses a little.' So, give your fit-bits and diets a day off, don't worry about the best deals for ski passes this year and the bike computer you're having problems programming – it's time to enjoy the fruits of your labour.

Several people have weighed in on the issue of whether extending our middle-age values and preoccupations may be missing the point. Psychologists such as Carl Jung and Erik Erikson, encourage us to embrace the passages of life and the unique experience each phase holds. A growing sense of our individuality (what Jung refers to as 'individuation') and philosophical sense of oneself (what Erikson calls 'ego integrity') allow us to carve autonomous paths to fulfillment.

Following curiosity, inquiring into important ideas, designing one's own personal maps and manuals for living are all luxuries we can enjoy as we gradually free ourselves from goals and standards that no longer serve us. Mining the riches

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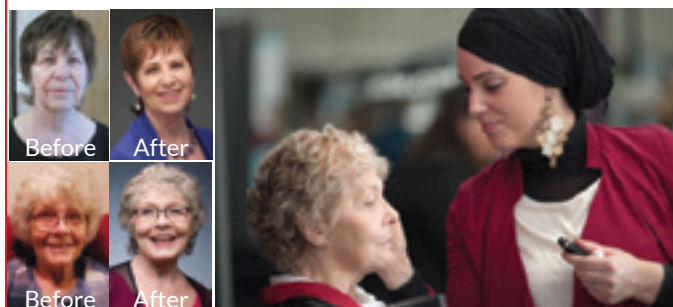
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of our accumulated experiences for what they have to teach is what Zalmon Schachter-Shalomi, in *From Aging to Sage-ing*, reminds us is the gift and privilege of aging:

“For the benefit of who we are and what we may become, it’s good to take this time to harvest our lives, to bless all that we have lived through – the triumphs and the tragedies, the realized dreams and the bitter disappointments, the acts of love and the shock of betrayal – and to convert this rich experience into wisdom.”

While harvesting one’s life for the wisdom it can reveal may be one way to maximize this season of our lives, writer and septuagenarian Daniel Klein, in *Travels with Epicurus – A Journey to a Greek Island in Search of a Fulfilled Life*, chooses to explore other paths to meaning.



Concurring with ancient Greek philosopher Epicurus that the best possible life one can live is one filled with simple, quiescent pleasures, Klein realizes that it is the elemental things in life – the companionship of old friends, the sound of children playing, the silence of a walk to a hilltop monastery, the colour of cascading bougainvillea on stone walls, a convivial game of petanque, the bonds of tenderness and empathy that develop between people across cultures – that can remind us of the sheer power of mindfulness and gratitude. What had once seemed ordinary is now rich with meaning and poetry and the privilege of being.

Old age, he concludes, is the pinnacle of life; you have docked in the harbour and are tending to your true happiness, something which can be as simple as “a glass of wine, a roasted chestnut, the sound of the sea.” (Nikos Kazantzakis)

With a shifting towards the ‘radical’ realizing of who we are, and what riches we have been afforded by living, our new map ideally will include opportunities to share our gratitude and insight with our families, our communities, our nation, and our planet. One can think of no greater privilege of aging than to know the fruits you have harvested can nurture another. And I don’t think your grandson would mind reciprocating by programming your bike computer! |

Photos: J. Kathleen Thompson

# Make ending poverty part of your life story

Photo credit: Mitchell Raphael



David has worked for close to 20 years as part of Oxfam’s International Programs team



It’s important to me to continue to support the work I believe in, even once I’m gone. I’ve seen first-hand how Oxfam makes a difference with people and partners in developing countries, through rights-based programs and policy change. I’m making a difference today, and with my legacy gift.”

If you share Oxfam and David’s values and vision of a just world without poverty, contact [giftplanning@oxfam.ca](mailto:giftplanning@oxfam.ca) or phone 613-627-8634

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Photo: Celia Simpao

by SANDRA WASERMAN

It amazes me that the body always wants to heal, given the right opportunity.

When it comes to health and wellness, we are all ultimately responsible for ourselves. This becomes more relevant as we age and go through changes and challenges. With the help of Participation Studies, we can join others in this journey and see the positive results while improving our health and quality of life.

When I retired, I got involved with a series of Participation Studies that focused on health and wellness, as well as research for UBC, VGH and the YMCA – all geared

towards seniors. After speaking with many of my cohorts, I discovered their main concern was their physical and cognitive health.

I have always been active and walk the seawall daily. After my knee replacement and leg straightening surgery, it felt like I had to learn to walk all over again.

My husband was incredibly supportive and helpful getting me out for a walk around the block, but my goal was to get back on the seawall. Again, I started my search for studies that would be appropriate for me since my surgery.

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rigorous exercise and how that would affect cognitive health. I was excited but needed to know if I was a suitable candidate. They were looking for those aged 65 to 85, which I was. When I called, I found out they do an interview first to see if I would benefit from their study.

After a detailed interview, I was accepted and told they would be calling me back to set up a three-hour physical, and a four-hour cognitive assessment. I would need to devote four days per week for one hour each day for 26 weeks. After my assessment, it was decided that I would require two days of balance and two days of physical exercise. They were looking for 300 candidates to complete the study. I was number 91.

When I took the three-hour physical test, I felt as though I had gone to the Mayo Clinic. I had the usual blood tests, height and weight, heart rate and leg and arm strength. This was followed up with a six-minute scan of my body to measure my bone density. My walking speed and gait pattern were also recorded. Then it was time to see about my balance with several tests regarding overall body mobility, toning and balance.

My first class was a pleasant surprise: I expected the class to be all women but was impressed with the number of men that turned out.

They put a heart rate monitor around my waist, and a watch-like device on my wrist that would measure my heart rate to see if the exercise was working. We started with a warm-up, then the circuit training, which comprised of step, a stationary bike, treadmill and even boxing (I loved that!). After each circuit, they checked to see how hard I was working and feeling by a Borg.

After three months, COVID-19 hit, and we went from in class to virtual. When I asked others in the class what they thought, they all said the social element and the motivation and encouragement from each other was what they really enjoyed and would miss.

After six months, we were tested again to see if the rigorous exercise had

worked to improve our cognitive abilities. It was another three-hour physical and four-hour cognitive test, followed by the results.

What I noticed during the study was that no one complained or made excuses, rather they felt as though they were contributing to research as well as increasing their own health and wellness.

I felt that the individual focus was a wonderful experience and I encourage anyone who wants to know how your body influences your mind and how they depend on each other, this is an opportunity not to miss for your physical and cognitive health and wellness. |

To learn more, visit [www.seniorliving-mag.com/articles/participation-study](http://www.seniorliving-mag.com/articles/participation-study)

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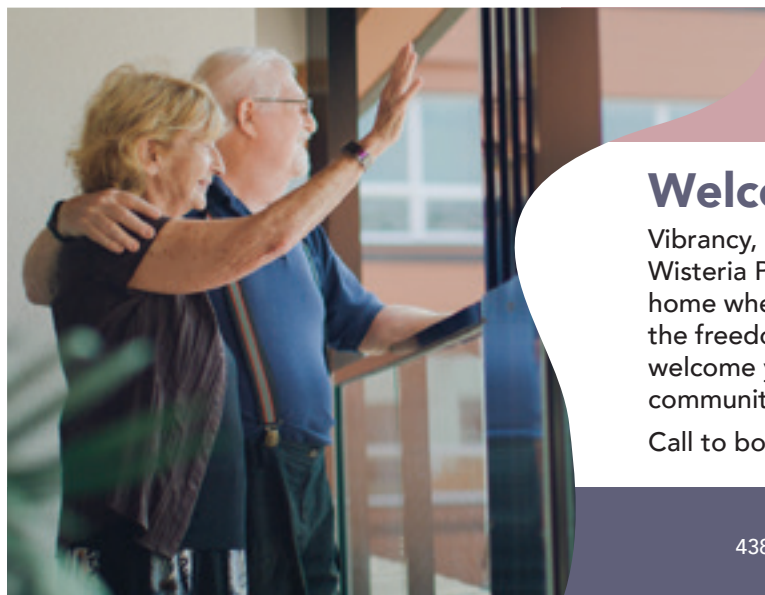


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## ALENA & ABE

When Abe and Alena met, they were both in their mid-50s. By that time in their lives, each of them was convinced that they would never meet a partner that suited them, so they were both surprised when they did!

She, a teacher and, he, a research scientist and professor, were set up by Alena's colleague and Abe's friend, Jane. After an initial meeting at a Sunday dinner with Jane's family, she invited them to join her for an upcoming opera performance, knowing they both loved music. On the day of the show when they picked up their tickets, however, they quickly realized there were only two tickets, not three, and they had been set up on a "date" orchestrated by Jane.

"It moved forward from there, albeit slowly," says Alena. "Abe was travelling a lot with his research projects, and I was working full time." The divorced mother of one liked the slow pace. "I had only just started to enjoy living on my own for the first time in my life," she says, "so I wasn't ready to rush into anything. But I was intrigued. We had the same cultural background, and he was interesting and curious."

Abe, through his lifelong scientific training was also taking his time. "I expect uncertainty," he says, "and then I collect data. That takes time."

The two soon found a workable solution – each in their own homes during the week, and together on the weekends. "I always trusted him," Alena adds, "so that arrangement worked really well." When she then retired, seven years ago, they decided to live together under one roof. Two cats and a dog completed the household. So did occasional visits from grandsons on the other side of the country, and other family and friends.

Almost 20 years after their original meeting, the two are still enjoying a dynamic life together and are happy that they took the time and the risk to get to know each other.

"It works because we are both independent and respect each other's interests and passions."

"And we have enough in common that we have fun together," they echo as they busily process everything they have harvested and grown in their yard this year. |



# FOREVER FIT

by EVE LEES



## QUESTION HEALTH INFORMATION TO AVOID MISINFORMATION

Thanks to the internet, we have tonnes of health and fitness news at our fingertips. Convenient, yes, but searcher beware: the information can be inaccurate, misleading, and confusing. Any fitness and health enthusiast can become a self-proclaimed health “expert” by opening a social media account or designing an impressive-looking website.

Even qualified “experts” do not always seek credible sources, check facts, and provide both sides of the issue. They may be biased in their own beliefs and personal opinions, failing to offer alternative ideas.

We all desire simple, quick solutions to our health concerns, and health information online may be accepted without question by a curious and often desperate public.

How do we avoid misinformation?

Always question what you hear and read. Misinformation circulates because we do not challenge it. It is also essential to check the source of information: What is the background and credentials of the writer? What is their ‘track record’ (have they been accused of spreading inaccurate information in the past?). Who or what is the source in their article? And how old is the data? Science is not static; it constantly changes as we learn more and debunk what we thought we knew in the past. Therefore, the old study or article you are reading may no longer apply.

Even if you believe the source is credible, you should still research the information. Maintain an open mind as you do this, putting aside your beliefs and biases. It’s the only way we’ll stop misinformation.

Be suspicious if a blog or website reports only the benefits of a particular supplement or diet. Avoid being coerced or tricked into believing someone else’s passion. Instead, look for unbiased reports that show both sides of the issue, especially if there can be any side effects or complications. This can help you make a safe and educated decision. A reputable site will mention if there are any complications or contraindications for a product.

Incidentally, it’s also wise to suspect the salesperson: Be cautious when the website or source also sells nutrition products; their articles or information might be biased to boost sales. And in any case, credible, knowledgeable

sources understand that no single pill or “superfood” can improve our health.

According to Media Bias Fact Check, credible sources that debunk health misinformation include HealthFeedback.org, ScienceBasedMedicine.org, HealthLine.com, quackwatch.org and HealthNewsReview.org (its focus is to dispel health news inaccurately covered by the news media).

There are many other credible health sources listed on Media Bias Fact Check. Go to their website, and type into the search line the website or publication you are curious about. You will learn its rating regarding bias and factual information, and if it has ever spread misinformation.

Media Bias Fact Check follows the International Fact-Checking Network (IFCN) Code of Principles (it verifies that a source is unbiased, provides accurate information and that their reports provide links to credible, verifiable sources).

The next time you hear ice cream is a great breakfast food or wonder about that new cancer treatment, check for it first on one of the sources above before telling your friends. And most importantly, don’t immediately believe what you hear – especially on social media.

Question it. Please. |

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



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# WHEN IN ROME... LET IT RAIN!

by JANE CASSIE

“You won’t need your rain jacket,” Brent suggests, while I attempt to close my overflowing suitcase. “Rome’s having a heat wave.” Although my travel-savvy hubby just has a carry-on, in hindsight, it might have been better to unpack my sunglasses instead.

Whatever the weather, the Eternal City doesn’t disappoint. Accompanied by friends, Don and Sue Fisher, we’re good at going with the flow.

With our 72-hour Roma Pass and one-day Omina Card, we save on museum admissions, skip the bulging line-ups and rest our damp feet while riding the buses. Come along with us on this two-day exploration and discover why this city is consistently ranked a top European destination, rain or shine!

## DAY 1

Our centralized boutique hotel, Albergo delle Regioni, is a quick kilometre away from Rome’s iconic Colosseum. As well as reduced rates, our pass offers free admission into any two museums. Because this is one of the more popular venues, it’s our first go-to. And by pre-reserving our entrance time, we bypass the masses.

With ear buds inserted and audio sets on, we get the full scoop of this architectural wonder, also once known as the Flavian Amphitheatre. The open arena, constructed between 70-80 AD, is comparable in height to a 12-storey building and could easily host a football game. At its peak, 80,000 attendees were entertained by gladiator battles, wild animal hunts, and executions.

“It was also filled with water for naval ship battles,” my husband explains as we prepare to exit the expansive

oval. With just the mention of water, the ominous clouds above open and precipitation begins. Up go umbrellas, on go raingear. I join the throngs who have left their treasured jackets at home and slip on my recently purchased blue plastic poncho.

But by the time we get to the adjacent Roman Forum, the rain has stopped. My new garment is gleefully stashed in my backpack.

This impressive labyrinth of ruins was once the heart of the city’s social, political, and religious life. We read placards on the lower level depicting the historical remains, take a staircase to flourishing gardens where a line-up of photo-worthy headless statues pose amongst blooms, and finally ascend Palatine Hill. From our panoramic perch, we’re utterly awestruck, envisioning what it would have been like in ancient times.

Threads of the past weave along the cobblestone streets and into the many squares of this amazing city. Statues, obelisks, and monuments commemorate heroes of long ago. Detailed churches and cathedrals offer a place for daily prayer. And snuggled in-between are gelato parlours, pizzerias, shops, and sidewalk cafés.

Soon after getting to our next attraction, my poncho’s back on.

ABOVE | The iconic Colosseum in Rome.

RIGHT | The view from Palatine Hill.

TOC | A bicycle built for four. Photos: Brent & Jane Cassie



Fortunately, the highlights are primarily indoors. The Pantheon's magnificent dome, constructed in 27 BC by Agrippa, was rebuilt in the second century AD, then again during the Renaissance. It was dedicated to the gods and is the tomb for Italian kings and renowned artist, Raphael.

"The only natural light comes through that small opening," says Brent, while pointing to the eight-metre-wide oculus in this beauty's crown. "And when it rains, the slanted floors drain any water away." Today, we see that there's truth to this fact! But rays of light also stream into these interiors. They wash over gleaming marble, intricate stone patterns and famous art works. I gaze around at this incredible dome, ranked one of the finest worldwide. Favoloso!

Although we clearly don't need to witness more water today, with over 2,000 fountains throughout this capital, it's impossible not to.

The popular Trevi Fountain, and final attraction today, was constructed in 1762, and honours the Roman god, Oceanus, who, while poised on his seahorse-powered chariot, is untied by two Tritons. We join the hordes in a good luck mission by throwing a coin over our shoulder into the frothy flow and making a wish. The weather gods immediately come to the call and out pops the sun. Magico!



## DAY 2

"Better take your poncho again," Fabio, our hotel host suggests, when serving breakfast. "We're expecting another deluge." I think about yesterday's coin toss and wonder why my wish was so short-lived. At least we'll stay dry during this morning's tour.

The Vatican is a small country within a country and operates as an ecclesiastical state, ruled by the Pope. The Sistine Chapel and Vatican Museum are located within its walls, as is St Peter's Basilica. With our Omina Card, admission is free, and we can, once again, bypass the massive line-ups.

This impressive 23,000 square-metre structure, completed in 1633, is the largest and probably most opulent church in the world. Designed by renowned architects, it features works of art by Michelangelo, Bramante, and Maderno.

We follow our flagged guide gazing wide-eyed as he provides the scoop on many of the masterpieces: a bronze canopy by Bernini, a stoic statue of St. Peter, the famous Michelangelo sculpture, Pietà, depicting the crucified body of Jesus on



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the lap of his mother, Mary. I'm moved by this art piece and surprised when I discover that Michelangelo was only 24 years old when he sculpted it – clearly an artistic genius!

The sun is miraculously shining after we exit St. Peter's Square and there is time for one final venue. "How about more artwork?" I ask the group. "It's a four-kilometre trek, but the Borghese Gallery gets rave reviews. And we save with our Roma Passes."

We could take a bus, but the 45-minute sunny stroll is unanimously pleasing. We refuel at a quaint, sidewalk eatery then detour for a photo moment on the famous Spanish Steps. The 135 risers, completed in 1726, bridge the gap from the hill-perched Church of the Trinità dei Monti to the Piazza di Spagna below. "No loitering," Brent informs. "Or we'll be fined!"

There's no time for dillydallying anyway. I'm on a mission, envisioning our next highlight: sculptures by Bernini, paintings by Titian, Rubens, Raphael and so many more. I just hope there's

enough time to soak it all in.

The gallery's located in Villa Borghese, one of the city's largest parks where there are bikes to rent and benches to relax. It's an inviting reprieve from the previous crowds. "Strange that it's not busier," I comment, when arriving at the mansion that houses the gallery. "There's not even a line-up." We soon discover why when reading the business hours. Closed Mondays! And guess what day it is?

"No worries," Brent says. "Let's check out this lovely landmass another way."

With a little pedal power, we're soon tootling along sunny trails that weave throughout these grounds on our bicycle built for four. It's a fun grand finale of our two-day stay in Rome. And one that doesn't require raingear. Before we leave, I give thanks to the weather gods and say farewell to my blue plastic poncho. |

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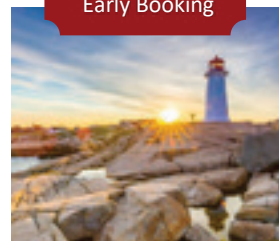


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A photograph of a young girl named Barbara in a white ballet tutu, standing with her arms raised in a dance pose.

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# GETTING A BREAK FROM CAREGIVING: RESPITE OPTIONS

By WENDY JOHNSTONE

Caregiving often gets squeezed into an already busy life, including the day-to-day responsibilities of family, work, and maintaining a home. Many caregivers take on this new role without letting go of anything else and, over time, can end up exhausted, feeling overwhelmed and in distress.

Gwyn cared for her husband with Parkinson's Disease for over 10 years. It took her a while to recognize her need for respite services and to permit herself to step out of her role temporarily. She remembers feeling embarrassed the first time she asked for respite.

"It felt like I wasn't capable or that I was failing my husband and family for not 'being able to do it all.' It wasn't until I came back from a week away that I truly realized how much I needed respite and how it helped my husband as well."

Respite is a period of rest and relief from the everyday challenges of providing care. It plays a role in helping caregivers maintain their own health, reduce stress levels, and provide relief. It can also be a positive experience for the person receiving care. Respite care can mean short hourly increments, days, or even longer periods of time. Respite is broken down into informal and formal use.

Informal respite care is provided by another unpaid person typically close to the family in need, including a family member, relative, friend, a support group or volunteer. Our approach at FCBC is to first support a caregiver to identify people that could be in their circle of care (including family, friends, neighbours, community members, etc.), and then guide the circle of care group to meet on a regular basis to help the caregiver maintain their wellness.

Formal respite care is accessed through a variety of avenues, including:

- In-home respite includes access to respite via Home and Community Care throughout health authorities in the province, private pay support, and/or live-in/live-out caregivers.
- Adult day centre respite care provides a day program typically in a licensed facility. It's a program where the person being cared for can engage in purposeful activity, socialize, and receive care.
- Facility respite care provides short-stay respite care at a licensed facility. Access and criteria may be different depending on who is providing the respite.
- Overnight Respite care – some health authorities or private agencies offer this type of programming. For example, Vancouver has a Family Respite Centre where their programs offer private rooms to seniors for 24-hour care when their caregivers require rest. In Fraser Health, caregivers attached to Home and Community can "BookABreak" using an online calendar for respite.

For Gwyn, respite was non-negotiable. "Trying to take care of my needs through work and travel helped me be a better caregiver and wife. Coming back after two weeks gave me new perspective and more energy to continuing caring."

*Family Caregivers of BC Column written by Wendy Johnstone, a Gerontologist & a consultant with Family Caregivers of British Columbia in Victoria, BC*



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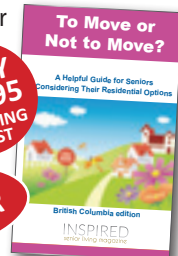
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## LIFE IS A GIFT



*Living*  
on purpose

by LAURIE MUELLER

Miracles happen daily. Not only is it that the sun comes up every morning, or that we wake up each day, get out of bed, move our legs, stretch our arms to the ceiling, take in life giving breath, but we also talk, think, plan, and create. Even when the time of year brings more darkness and generates less heat, we sit inside our cozy homes and read or watch TV, gathering new information about our world, our universe and ourselves.

Our children call, they tell us the stories of our grandchildren. We are amazed. The little baby, born from people we raised that were once children themselves – a miracle in itself – has taken first steps, learned to read, ride a bike, play hockey, passed exams for college. We shake our heads in wonderment.

It's November: a time of seasonal darkness, a year of continued restrictions, a time when there has been pain, and loss, and redirecting of our lives. Yet even in the midst of a global pandemic, we have experienced the miracles of every day.

Dorothy still goes out each week to make sandwiches and soup for the homeless; Nancy still contacts the young people of her church with activities and learning; Mary still welcomes her young grandchildren to her home each day while the parents go out to work; and Blythe still visits the elderly.

Janet is making another quilt; Sue is keeping details of events for a local organization's operations; Charlayne is walking the streets keeping in contact with the local merchants, taking their concerns to her meetings at city council when problems need to be solved; Gordy continues to have just one more building project; Margaret welcomes three others into her home every week for their weekly bridge game; and Bev makes plum cakes and delivers them to her friends.

Randy has discovered the joy of creating podcasts and has been inundated with fellow writers who want to be interviewed.

In other words, our world still revolves. Our lives, though different, still hold meaning, can still be interesting, and we can still weather the storm.

I hope you, too, are enjoying life's daily gifts. |

Laurie Mueller, M.Ed is retired and living in Victoria with her husband, Helmuth. She recently published *The Ultimate Guide on What to Do When Someone You Love Dies* on Amazon. More about Laurie can be found at [www.lauriemconsulting.com](http://www.lauriemconsulting.com) or on Facebook.



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