

INSPIRED

55+ lifestyle magazine

NOVEMBER 2022

PATRICIA JUNE
VICKERS

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ADVENTURES

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REMEMBRANCES

HOSTING UKRAINIAN
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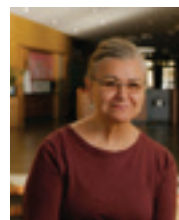
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Cover PATRICIA JUNE VICKERS

A psychotherapist, teacher, trainer and program developer for Indigenous communities by day; an artist, writer and tango dancer by night.

Photo: Nickoloz Kachibaia

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THRIVE BEYOND 55

by BARBARA RISTO, PUBLISHER



You may notice a higher-than-usual number of non-profits promoting their causes in this issue. Twice a year we encourage charities to reach out to our audience with their messages.

November has always been a time when our thoughts turn to how we can give back to our communities. November 11th reminds us of those who gave their lives in service to their country – to defend the freedom and liberties of others around the world.

Within our local communities, we are also the recipients of the service of many whose efforts go unsung – those who work or volunteer at charitable organizations to bring a higher quality of life to segments of our population that need a little extra help to make it to the other side of a crisis.

Whether it is a human being, an animal, or our environment – we owe our charities a debt of gratitude for the effort they put into ensuring no one gets left behind and that we steward our planet and its inhabitants with care and diligence.

We already know our readership is among the most generous. Most of us have experienced first-hand what it means to get a helping hand when we didn't know where to turn next. Please consider donating money or your time to one or more of these worthy causes.

This issue, we present the story of how our communities have reached out to support Ukrainians fleeing the invasion of their country.

My column usually focuses on ways to uplift the human spirit, but there comes a time when what we hold to be true in our hearts needs to flow out into the world in a way that impacts it, not just in lip service, but in action.

Conflicts and humanitarian crisis exist in many parts of the world. It is my belief that those who have been spared these actions of brutality and injustice have an obligation to take a stand against oppressive regimes.

Therefore, in this issue, I am using my platform to express my support for Ukraine. This country has been thrust into the unenviable position of having to defend against an intruder who, if given a pass, would invade other countries.

As we commemorate Remembrance Day, we must contemplate how quickly a genocidal ideology can unfold into a cancerous extreme that envelopes nations.

My first real education came when I visited the Documentation Centre in Nuremberg, Germany, where the involvement of the Nazi war is plainly laid out. I've also visited what remains of the Auschwitz concentration camp and the holocaust information centres in Paris and Jerusalem. Combined, they are a sobering reminder of how fragile our world is, and how vigilant we need to be to protect our freedoms.

I recently discovered a community on Twitter where, any time of the day or night, you can tune in to find thoughtful and factual discourse on every topic imaginable related to the Ukraine conflict. This space unapologetically supports the Ukraine people in their efforts to defend their homes and country. It is called the MriyaReport, founded by a Canadian and hosted by international volunteers. It has been operating in the Twitter space non-stop, 24/7 since shortly after the Ukraine invasion.

While I could have never imagined myself tuning into an unending conversation that parses all the various aspects of war, I have found it uncharacteristically encouraging and calming. I've received insights and education from its many experts on history, armaments, strategic battlefield planning, politics and war logistics. As a group, this community supports www.mriyaaid.org with 100% of donations going to purchase and deliver medical supplies, non-lethal military equipment and humanitarian aid to the frontlines.

Canada has taken a strong role in supporting Ukraine. Unknown to most of us, our Canadian military had already been training Ukraine troops in NATO combat doctrine well before the conflict began. I was impressed to learn that some of the trainers are Canadian women.

As we approach November 11, may it not be a single day of remembrance where we thank our military service people and veterans, but may it also be a reminder to support all those many other charitable organizations who serve us.

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"Coming of Age"
An original Patricia June Vickers painting.

PATRICIA JUNE VICKERS: FINDING GRACE AND MERCY

by SAM MARGOLIS

“To see the truth that destruction comes only from myself is not depressing; it is freeing. To see this truth, to finally see this, is to be awakened to freedom,” writes Patricia June Vickers in *Singing to the Darkness*, her 2019 book of monologues and meditations interspersed with a score of her mixed-media artworks.

At 67, Patricia is experiencing that freedom now more than ever, leading a vibrant, multifaceted life. She is a teacher, trainer, consultant, facilitator, program developer and psychotherapist for Indigenous communities along the coast of BC. Thanks to a boundless source of energy and curiosity, she is also an artist, writer, tango enthusiast and continuing learner – not to mention the mother of four adult children and grandmother to 10.

The journey, though, was not a smooth or enviable one. The daughter of an Indigenous father and British mother – victimized by abuse at home and pervasive anti-Indigenous prejudice in the broader community – she had to overcome tremendous obstacles early in life.

“I grew up with trauma from incest and cultural oppression,” says Patricia. “Coming from that hellhole, I was incredibly fearful for much of my life and with that fear came the belief that the world is a dangerous place and that people want something from you. That suspicion was about protecting oneself. Eventually our play and our curiosity are diminished because we are looking for the violence.”

Nonetheless, her zest for life and curiosity can be attributed, in part, she says, to redeveloping the aspect of childhood that is not only playful and joyful in the present moment but free of judgment. “When we are children, we are not completely aware of the darkness that is in our home or at the door of our home.”

Although the darkness accompanied her through much of her adulthood, Patricia was able to complete her post-graduate education and get established in her field.

In April 2017, she experienced a “nervous system crash.” It was then that colleagues introduced her to low-energy neuro-feedback system or LENS, which she credits with leading her towards the feelings of inner peace she has now. The neuro-feedback was essential in healing what is defined in psychotherapy as dissociative amnesia, an involuntary response to trauma.

“At one point, I could not separate myself from incest,” she remembers.

Yet in time, through the healing process, she was able to find the grace and mercy that, she vows, kept her sane. “It is a blessing to come to a place where I am curious and not have judgments, even more so when I am playful.”

In September 2017, she returned to work and that December she developed her first trauma training program.

Patricia has found art beneficial to her healing as well. Her youth was spent with art all around her. Two of her siblings, Roy Henry Vickers and Arthur Vickers, are well-known and established artists in their own right.

Roy Henry was nominated for a Grammy Award in 2019 for his design work on a 19-box disc box set of recordings by the Grateful Dead. He owns and operates an art gallery in Tofino. Arthur, an Order of British Columbia recipient, is known for his gold leaf works and is versatile in many media, including drawing, painting, carving and printmaking.

The family’s patrilineal roots are comprised of Ts’msyen, Haida and Heiltsuk ancestry, Indigenous peoples who live in the coastal communities of BC.

In 2019, Patricia had an exhibition at Christ Church Cathe-

Snapshot

with Patricia June Vickers

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

"You will find healing and understanding for all that you went through as a child. All that you can remember and all that you can't remember right now. You're perfect in who you are, and you will find your true self."

Who or what has most influenced you and why?

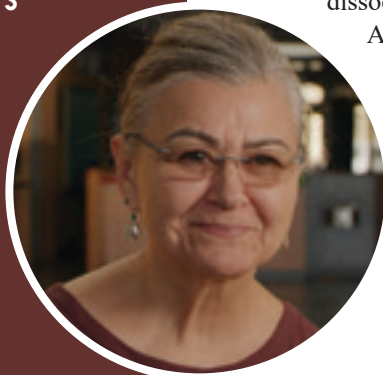
"The life of Helen Keller when I was a child because she not only overcame alienation through learning to communicate but she also became a teacher."

What keeps you grounded?

"Daily spiritual practice and beauty."

What are you most grateful for?

"Life. I'm grateful for light and truth and the ability to appreciate beauty that can be seen daily in many different shapes and forms." |



dral in Victoria, where she presented 30 mixed-media works using acrylic, watercolour and collage to create layers, which were then combined with written contemplations on the process of healing from dissociative amnesia through art.

At that time, she reflected on those artworks and the multilayered nature of life.

"Truth can sometimes be underneath all these layers. The artworks came out of a need to express what I couldn't say in words."

In summer 2021, Patricia's work was featured at the Bill Reid Gallery's Hands of Knowledge exhibition in Vancouver. This spring, she travelled to Toronto to present her 24" x 18" acrylic painting, *Betrayal*, at Crossings, an outdoor exhibition set at locations throughout the city.

As she describes it, painting is a means of bringing about the healing process through one's emotions. "While I am painting, I am feeling things that have not even been stated yet. It's relationship. I pray with a brush and paint. It's like a conversation. Things are being revealed to me as I am in conversation. And then when I am finished, I say, 'oh, so that's what is happening.'"

In her own words, Patricia says she grew up "with suffering and beauty woven together."

"There is, I believe, the desire within the human soul to transform suffering into peace and beauty. I started at age 12, working with my hands to transform my own suffering, which had to do with giving up my authenticity, trading it for acceptance in a family and society that was out of balance. I had been conditioned to believe that beads were the definition of my ethnicity, so I used that as my first medium, creating functional art with beads of all colours, shapes, and sizes, making jewellery, guitar straps, moccasins and bags."

Inspiration, she asserts, was all around her during those formative years; symbolism, beauty and grace were parts of her upbringing. To be sure, there were some

positive memories of traditional storytelling, gatherings during which her paternal grandparents sang traditional songs in their language and the artistic passions of her older brothers.

Her father's father, Henry Vickers, Patricia recalls, brought a lightness and gentleness that countered the shame. Further, a carved mountain-goat feast-hall spoon and a small argillite pole were two particularly symbolic items in her parents' home, which provided a deep understanding and connection with her heritage.

At a time when intergenerational suffering befell her daughters, art has filled a need "to express in a more direct way a prayer for transformation. Having young children, it was easiest to find inspiration under different artists rather than in art school, learning techniques and methods for watercolour, acrylic, oil, encaustic wax, and cold wax."

Regarding the trauma that gets passed on through the generations, Patricia observes that since she started working on healing the brain in 2017, her thoughts and perceptions have shifted, sometimes in a rapid way.

"I can look back and say, 'I did the best I could with what I had.' And now I know how to live in a place of respect."

Nowadays, Patricia, through brushes and paint, depicts "a lived experience through texture, hue and composition to express the spiritual and supernatural, living under the shadow of the wing of Creator."

"My intention with each painting is to create a harmonious union of suffering and beauty as healing medicine, and to portray aspects of the actual coupled with mystery."

In all the introspective study Patricia has conducted in the past five years, the hardest part, she admits, was the eventual realization that there was not the support from the source one would expect.

"The last thing I faced in my childhood experiences, and could not accept, was that my mother was not there for me. A mother goes through all the pain to give birth and then nurture us. She was not there to see what I was going through. Accepting this as an adult, instead of being in that place of dark alienation, was not as frightening



as what I went through as a child.”

Patricia is planning another book, *My Soul is Escaped: Healing from the Confines of Incest*, which both explores her personal experiences and blends her artworks with her writing.

“Each neurofeedback session brought me closer to the energy that is uncluttered truth and solely and fully for the good. It took some time to see the presence of the Supernatural that had kept and protected me from insanity. As I follow a chronological expression of collage studies that document the healing sessions, I can now clearly see the growing presence of the Supernatural as it gained clarity in my life,” she notes.

As a counsellor, Patricia has a curriculum vitae that begins with an interdisciplinary PhD dissertation from the University of Victoria, entitled, “Ayaawx (Ts’msyen ancestral law): The power of transformation,” and extends to numerous scholarly works delving into First Nations teachings and efforts to transform the suffering of Indigenous communities.

Focusing primarily as a trauma specialist, she has, among other positions, been director of mental health and wellness clinical services for the First Nations Health Authority, a conference minister for the United Church of Canada, and Aboriginal psychologist for Vancouver Coastal Health.

Meanwhile, along with Indigenous school survivors and an Indigenous family therapist, she conducts trauma trainings. To date, she has helped deliver these trainings – which focus on Indigenous perspectives on post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) – to over 200 health and administrative participants who are Indigenous or work in Indigenous communities in BC, most recently this summer at Esk’etemc First Nation (Alkali Lake), in the central interior of the province.

Ultimately, Patricia would like to settle in a community to

train the next generation of First Nations on the use of neurofeedback to connect them with brain re-orienting. The “real meat,” according to Patricia, is what is being learned in neuroscience through means that are grounded in the wisdom of cultural teachings.

“I am hoping that something like that works so that in another 10 years, there will be a group of people who know how to treat people with PTSD. What we need to be doing as Indigenous people is to be understood before others gather information on our community.”

After having spent much of the past two years on Haida Gwaii, Patricia is now based in North Vancouver where she continues to write, paint and take photos that she regularly posts on her Instagram account. What’s more, she plans to learn piano and the Ts’msyen language of Sm’algyax, which was spoken by her paternal ancestors.

These days, to hear or speak with Patricia is to engage with someone who brings with her an immeasurable, youthful inquisitiveness and who holds a profound belief in the interconnectedness of all things and experiences.

Though she lives alone, hers, she assures, is not a life of solitude. She does not yearn for anything aside from being a loving, compassionate and wise person.

“I don’t have a life of rigidity,” she says. “I value and appreciate dialogue whether it be with my four-year-old granddaughter or an academic. I value another perspective. It challenges my delusions and my old rigid pattern of thinking. To me that means there is a greater knowing than yours or mine. We are all working to find that greater knowing.”

What’s helped her stay grounded in the present, she declares, is to become educated with her emotions. “If I get into an argument with someone, most of what got me into the conflict has to do with the past,” she says. “If I pay attention to being hurt, if I notice that I am hurt, then I see that the hurt brings up all the hurt from childhood. However, if I pull the emergency brake early, then I can make a choice. And the choice is not to bring up the past, not to attach myself to the past, and to see how small the hurt is in this moment. And I am then present in the moment.”

“It is not because I no longer wish to criticize or judge. But without going in that direction, then there is space for curiosity and to wonder about all kinds of interesting things. To wonder how, to wonder why,” Patricia clarifies.

“Childhood is gone. I am a grandmother now. When I look back at the horrors of childhood, I no longer have this dark sense fall over me. Instead, I find grace and mercy. It is a circle in the sense that I am blessed to come to this place,” she muses, enjoying each day as she does. |



SKOKI LODGE HIKING ADVENTURES

by JOSEPH BLAKE

Every summer for the last two decades, my wife and I have hiked for a week in the Rockies. It took me quite a while to get into hiking, as I didn't get much out of it at first. It seemed like I'd spend hours staring at the ground, and I tripped over tree roots and rocks every time I looked up to enjoy the view. But eventually we discovered hikes with better trails and better destinations. My favourite destination is Skoki Lodge.

Skoki is one of a series of venerable lodges built to bring skiers into the Rocky Mountains. The birthplace of Canadian skiing, Skoki is a back-country lodge built in 1931 by the Ski Club of the Canadian Rockies. In the pre-ski-lift days of wooden skis and snowshoes, a group of Banff residents created Skoki, the Rocky's first commercial ski operation at 2,164 metres in Banff National Park's high alpine.

Much of the Lodge's original charm remains intact at the end of a beautiful, moderately challenging, 11km hike over two mountain passes. The view during the three-to-four-hour hike is breathtaking, as are the climbs past Ptarmigan Lake and over Deception Pass. At 76, my heart pounds a little heavier with each summer's visit.

At the end of the trail from the Lake Louise ski area in one of several nearby alpine valleys is Skoki's cozy, two-story log lodge and three cabins. It's a Canadian National Historic Site with alpine water source, oil lamps and candles, wood stoves and fireplace, and rustic outhouses.

The Duke and Duchess of Cambridge spent part of their extended honeymoon in 2011 in the aptly named Honeymoon Cabin with its king-sized bed.

The other rooms offer a multiple range from one single, two single beds, two single beds and a bunk bed, three single

beds, and a queen-sized bed.

Royal protocol required Will and Kate have their own outhouse, and our hosts told a funny story about the helicopter pilot dropping the "royal throne" at the Lodge, and the couple's massive security detail from Scotland Yard and RCMP scurrying to put it back together before the royal couple's visit.

Hiking to Skoki in the afternoon, visitors are greeted with a luxurious tea service offering fresh baked treats, fine cheeses, fruit and assorted meats.

At night, Skoki's expert kitchen staff produce hearty, gourmet meals of fresh fish, pork and beef tenderloin, lots of vegetarian options, house-made soups and salads, and an array of sweet desserts. You can treat yourself from the Lodge's offerings of beer, wine and cocktails, too.

There is no cell or wifi coverage, but the living room with its cozy fireplace has an excellent library, a selection of board games, and great company telling tales of hiking adventures to Merlin Lake and beyond. Comfortable beds with down duvets ensure a good night's sleep.

In the morning, a pitcher of hot water is delivered to each room for washing up before coffee, tea and a breakfast buffet of bacon, eggs, pancakes and toast. Another table is set up for hikers

ABOVE | Visiting Ptarmigan Lake on the hike into Skoki.

TOC | The author's granddaughters, Kayla and Zoe, on the trail into Skoki Lodge. Photos: Joseph Blake

to make sack lunches after breakfast.

We've only visited Skoki Lodge during summer months, but it's also open December-April for skiers of all abilities to enjoy ski touring the alpine slopes. In summer, there is great trout fishing in the nearby lakes and fabulous shows of alpine flowers including columbine, arnica, anemone, Indian paintbrush and mountain daisies. There are lots of marmots and ground squirrels and alpine birds like ptarmigan, nutcrackers and jays. We've seen grizzly bears at a distance and beavers, too.

My other favourite summer hiking adventures include helicopter rides into the alpine surrounding Assiniboine Lodge and Durrance Glacier Chalet. Those memorable trips were spectacular adventures, but this summer we're returning to Skoki Lodge's cozy charms. Skoki has a very special place in my heart. |

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POIGNANT REMEMBRANCES

by J. KATHLEEN THOMPSON

Maybe it was because France doesn't have a Basel or Zurich (where autobahns are devoured then regurgitated up into endless strands of tunnels, overpasses and bypasses) or because it was familiar or the last stepping-stone before going home or maybe it was because the countryside began to overwhelm the view once again. Whatever it was, my partner and I wanted to kiss the ground within metres of crossing into France from Switzerland.

We waited until Commercy, or to be more exact, Varnéville (a village 10 kms deeper into rural/real France), to get out of the car to do it. At a four-cornered village with a dominating church and a 200-year-old chateau (our abode for the night) with sweeping lawn and gardens and large pink floral rooms that overlooked the carriage house and fields stretching to a green and forested horizon.

If this wasn't enough to convince us that we had found paradise, the Michelin-rated restaurant and meal in a nearby village that night, the non-juried opportunity to speak French with the proprietor, and the discovery of the history that the area had overcome, did.

A hilltop alit with what looked like a Roman temple first alerted us to what may have been the reality of these green fields over a hundred years ago; a World War I battle site. A trip to the Doric temple the next morning confirmed this.

Known as the Montsec American Monument (La Butte de Montsec), it had been erected by the US government to honour those American infantry divisions that had fought to liberate France and undo Germany's hold of the eastern frontier of France in the last months of the First World War. How humbling to realize we were in the heart of the Verdun area and some of the most intense fighting of 'The Great War.'

A four-hour drive north of Verdun brought us to The Somme, the other major battle arena of the First World War. Here, the largest monument in the area – on Vimy Ridge – honours

ABOVE | "Mother Canada", Vimy Ridge Memorial, France.

RIGHT | Montsec American Monument, Meuse, France. *Photos: J. Kathleen Thompson*

the Canadians killed or wounded helping to liberate France in the Battle of Arras. Spacious, spare, the site is now a green haven for sheep, silence, and clusters of admirers; joggers, veterans, historians, patriots and somber groups of visiting European schoolchildren. An oasis in the middle of a busy corner in France, visitors to the site travel kilometres through quiet forests and tree-lined avenues before reaching the commemorative sites in Vimy; the memorial, the gravesites, the visitor's centre, the trenches and the tunnels.

The memorial is strikingly large. Two columns represent allied France and Canada and nestled within them are several statues, including the luminous 'Mother Canada.' A spirit of sobriety and reflectiveness pervades all the sites, from the beautifully maintained cemetery with its rows of white crosses in furrows of flowers, to the



Visitor's Information Centre and steps beyond, to the remnants of each forces' trenches – metres and craters apart – and the warren of underground tunnels that had served them. Descending into these tunnels, one can feel the tensions, the deprivations, and ultimately, the esprit du corps that had underlain life on Vimy Ridge.

Each November, when I recollect this poignant road trip through France, I renew my gratitude for those who had sacrificed for a country striving, then and now, to be 'strong and free.' Thank you, my fellow compatriots. |




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HOSTING UKRANIAN REFUGEES IN VICTORIA

by JESMINA BISEROVIC

From January 1 to October 2, 2022, approximately 98,600 Ukrainian refugees fled to Canada due to the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Of that number, approximately 550 refugees arrived on Vancouver Island as of October 6th.

In Victoria, a few organizations are set up to help refugees find financial, medical and housing assistance. We spoke with Karmen McNamara, General Manager with Help Ukraine Vancouver Island, and with Anne who, with her husband, Marino, recently hosted a young couple with a seven-year-old daughter.

Help Ukraine Vancouver Island is a volunteer-led organization supporting displaced Ukrainians.

“It was a response to a call from the Ukrainian community to have one unified organization with a website and method of distributing information,” says McNamara. “While there are a number of Ukrainian agencies on the Island, most of them are dance troops or churches or very small cultural centres with maybe one part-time employee,”

Ukrainians come to Canada under what is called a CU-AET, or Canadian Ukrainian Authorization for Emergency Travel, an expedited work visa where the government can accept people very quickly compared to the much slower refugee process.

“Even so, the Canadian government requires refugees to get a medical within 90 days of arriving,” says McNamara. “That’s about \$400, and the refugees pay for it out of pocket. However, since Monday, October 3rd, the BC government announced they are going to cover those costs in the province.”



In McNamara’s experience, hosts see that Ukrainians want to contribute and, ultimately, be self-sufficient. A similar message stems from the experience a Victoria couple had with their Ukrainian guests.

As first-time refugee hosts, Anne and Marino have accommodated international students, with varying language skills, through the University of Victoria and the Greater Victoria School Board. They felt confident their experience put them in a good place to help Ukrainian refugees.

After seeing many news stories that were “pretty devastating,” Anne says Marino said, “we’ve got to do something.” That’s when the couple investigated and ultimately made a post on the website Ukraine Take Shelter, a platform helping to connect Ukrainian refugees with potential hosts.

As a result, Anne received a request to host a young couple with a child. They hosted the family from about mid-May to the beginning of July.

“We could not be happier with the outcome,” says Anne. “Prior to the family’s arrival, I did some background work on finding jobs for the couple, then contacted some employers that had job postings to see if they might be willing to meet the couple upon their arrival in Victoria. One company called back

ABOVE | Ukrainian refugee mom, Tanya, with her newborn baby in Victoria.

Photo: Help Ukraine Vancouver Island

with a job offer immediately and they set up an interview for the husband.”

Doing additional prep, Anne also posted ads for furnishings and household goods, so the young family could be ready to start a home of their own.

“We were very happy by the support we received from friends and the community. Our posts resulted in increased donations of furnishings and even a car,” says Anne. “We were blown away by the number of people who stepped up to help this young Ukrainian family resettle. The family was very surprised that the Canadian community is so supportive.”

Recently, the Ukrainian family made the difficult decision to relocate to Alberta, due to the province’s lower cost of living and the large Ukrainian Community. Anne and Marino were sad to see them go but continue to stay in touch by Zoom calls and emails. |

For more information, visit Help Ukraine Vancouver Island’s website: ukrainehelp-vi.ca and <https://www.ukrainetakeshelter.com/>



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THE 9-10 CLUB

by MELANIE DORCHESTER



It's known by many names: The Soup Kitchen, Victoria Soup Kitchen, or the 9-10 Club Serving Soup to the Hungry, and this volunteer-run, free-food resource provided daily meals to 30,000 guests in 2021.


After seeing two men search for food in a dumpster 40 years ago, Murray and Edna Black were determined to do something about it. They founded a non-profit, non-denominational charity on November 12, 1982. Clearly, it is still serving a need in the community. Could they have imagined, at that time, that their mission to "Feed Those in Need" would still exist in 2022, or that hunger of this magnitude would not abate over time?

The reality is that it takes a lot of people, good-will and funding to make a soup kitchen run smoothly. If your boss asked if you would like to do volunteer work there, what

would you say? I suspect many people would hesitate, or at the very least ask a lot of questions before they made a commitment.


Sheila Connelly is one person who said yes and started volunteering in September 2008. Her then-80-year-old boss was a founding member of the 9-10 Club. Sheila had often passed people on the sidewalk in front of Our Place Society, another community resource whose website describes the organization as serving "Greater Victoria's most vulnerable," and strives to "tackle homelessness, mental health challenges, substance use issues, and more." Sheila says that volunteering at The Soup Kitchen became a way to "do something useful and take part in the greater community."


Still actively involved 14 years later, Sheila describes her time there as a truly "enriching experience... making meaningful connections... and gaining valuable insights about perceptions



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that can cause prejudice and fear.” For example, before COVID restrictions, she was grateful for diners who expressed condolences following the loss of her father or were excited for her when she went on holidays.

Located in the basement of St. Andrew’s Cathedral at 740 View Street in Victoria, The Soup Kitchen is open Monday to Friday, including all holidays. It receives sponsorship from individual donors, volunteers and donations from St. Andrews Cathedral, COBS Bread, the Dutch Bakery and Thrifty Foods.

“We do receive from Save-on-Foods once a week,” says Sheila. “And the Sovereign Order of St. John of Jerusalem has been a great help to us over the last two years, as have the Victoria Foundation and others.”

Additionally, Rotary Victoria Harbourside provided a grant to purchase personal care items, socks and underwear for guests. Diners may be housed or unhoused, living with addictions or not. They come from all age groups, though mainly over the age of 20, including pensioners and employed, low-income people.

Sheila has observed the physical transformation that comes when a previously unhoused diner is finally able to stabilize their life with appropriate housing.

The pre-COVID, restaurant-style meal service brought “... people into a warm, safe environment to be served a nourishing hot breakfast to give them the best possible start to their day.”

“It’s also a space for our diners to meet one another in a congenial, relaxed way for a couple of hours.” There is a wide range of discussion amongst the diners.

During the pandemic, there were several changes to the program to accommodate public health policies. What did NOT change, however, was the culture of inclusiveness, respect and celebration of diversity towards guests, volunteers and business or community partners.

Volunteers typically work once a week between 7:00 and 10:30 am from Monday to Friday. Their tasks include picking up food donations, preparing vegetables for soup, making soup or sandwiches, serving meals and washing dishes. There are different Soup Kitchen cooks every day.

They arrive between 4:30 and 5:00 a.m. to prep in the morning, and they focus on including protein in the soups with ham and split pea, chicken or hamburger along with vegetables. The bag-to-go has two good meals, including such items as roast beef, turkey or ham sandwiches, a hardboiled egg, yogurt, peanut butter, tea or coffee and something sweet.

“When COVID forced us to shut down our inside operation, our diners were surprised and unbelievably grateful that we remained open even as a takeout service,” says Sheila. “I cannot overstate the fear I saw in their faces and in their comments in those early days. It has left an indelible impression on me about just how precarious their situation is in our society. Unfortunately, COVID has meant that we are still serving a takeout bagged meal... enough for at least two meals each day. We do look forward to the day we will reopen [the sit-down service].” |

To learn more, check out the website, links to articles and a video at <http://www.thesoupkitchen.ca/>

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PARTING WITH COLLECTIBLES & OTHER STUFF

By NANCY J. SCHAAF

Baby Boomers spent years accumulating various objects. Perhaps over time, these objects developed into collections. Almost everyone has a small collection of memorabilia with familial and emotional meaning. Some people collected numerous things like dolls, sports cards, comic books, teddy bears, cookie jars, salt and pepper shakers and depression glass.

As Boomers grow older, we are faced with the question, “What do we do with our beloved collections?”

We ask our children if they want the treasured salt and pepper shakers collection and receive a glassy-eyed look and a verbal response, “Oh, heck no!” My cousin asked her children if they wanted memorabilia from her high school years, including her 50-year-old gym romper. They looked at her as if she was crazy!

We discover that the younger generation is not interested in our “treasures.” They live digitally as they store their memories on a computer or a cloud and do not need to hoard boxes of heirlooms or treasured collectibles. Most do not even want their own school memorabilia that we carefully boxed and saved for them.

Our families don’t want the treasures. Not only do we need to decide the fate of the special collections that brought us so much joy, but there is also all that “other stuff” hiding in the basement, attic and closets that needs a place to go.

What is to become of our stuff? It seems prudent to dispose of unwanted and unneeded items, so our loved ones are not one day burdened with that responsibility.

Decluttering is complex and can be emotionally draining, anxiety-inducing and painful. Clutter and our emotions are entangled. Research indicates that guilt and fear play a role in our difficulty in letting go of possessions. We feel guilt, especially when trying to discard items we spent significant money on or were gifts, even if we do not use



the thing. We fear we might need the item in the future, so we keep it. Or we fear that we will lose the memories of the person or event linked to the object.

The good news is we can overcome these emotional hurdles and let go of our belongings. We start by evaluating why we are having so much difficulty parting with possessions.

Decluttering is about getting rid of what we no longer need, use or love: letting go of the past and making room for the present. Are our possessions adding value to our life or simply creating more work and chaos? Letting items go creates more space for something that better suits our habits and lifestyle in the third act of our lives.

When we take the time to think through the options and decide the fate of our collections, it becomes easier to let go and make room for the things that truly matter.

Our choices include keeping, donating, selling, or trashing the item. Here are some suggestions:

Select a few treasured pieces that bring joy to your life and find new ways to display them.

Is it possible to upcycle some objects? Perhaps a shadow box of a few treasured items will suffice. We can find a new use for anything. Have an old toy truck? Make a planter. If not emotionally attached to old jewellery, take it apart and use the beads and gems in craft projects. Or, as my friend did when her mother passed away, she gave her siblings a favourite photo of their mom in picture frames that she glued with her mom’s old vintage jewellery pieces.

Discuss with your family. There may still be family members who want specific heirlooms and collectibles. Discuss the disposal of any items of value with the family to determine if there is an interest.

Donate to an educational facility or museum. Perhaps the sword and dagger collection will find a home in the local museum. There are various museums for collections, such as salt and pepper shakers, matchbooks, dolls, watches and

vintage toys. There are even museums for the strange and weird such as jars of mustard and SPAM. Search the internet for a home for your treasured collection. Some high schools have a display case for memorabilia. (That might be the best spot for that gym romper!)

Donate items to the church, school or charity organizations' fundraisers. Charities and nonprofits seek free stuff. Find a cause to support, call the corresponding nonprofit, and see what they could use. Many need items for their offices, or they may know how to give the items away. List items on freecycle.org and give them to others for no charge. Donate items to resell stores like Goodwill, Habitat for Humanity, and the Salvation Army. Some of these services will also pick up bulkier items.

Sell items through garage sales, auctions, antique shops, eBay. When selling some items, be aware that heirlooms and collectibles might sell at a much lower price than what we think they are worth. Garage sales are still popular; the only thing to lose is time, and you could make some side cash. Items like antique collectibles could potentially be worth something. There is a wide array of ways to sell items. There are auctions, online retailers like eBay or Facebook Marketplace, antique stores or private sales through a broker.

Trash. Some items just demand to be trashed. For example, worn-out shoes, socks without matches, craft supply scraps, old Christmas cards, small pieces of wrapping paper and manuals for appliances we no longer own.

A feeling of freedom comes from unburdening ourselves and knowing that we will not saddle our children with this task. We will find that there is much to gain as we learn to let go. We have less to care for, less to worry about, less searching for items, and more time to spend on what is important when we finally let go.

Our stuff is our stuff, and our emotions are tied to it, whether we like it or not. We need to grant ourselves the time to start the decluttering process that will bring more joy into our present and future. |



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SIMPLE PRACTICES FOR A JOYFUL RETIREMENT

by **DANNY BATEMAN**

Have you noticed that the ages of “older people” keep getting older. When I was 17, I thought anyone over 30 was “old.” When I was 30, anyone over 50 was “old.” Now, you must be over 80 for me to think you’re “old.” Will I ever think I’m “old”? I may be getting close.

When I was about age 45, I did some calculating and decided to retire at 56. Now that I’m six years into retirement, I wish I had considered a lot more than money.

Goals, for example. My only goal was to retire and have a lot of fun. I actually thought goals would be counterproductive to the fun I anticipated. There are many things I wish I had known before I retired. Through some research, and trial and error, I discovered some simple principles and practices that have brought joy and happiness in retirement.

If you’re not yet retired, my advice is to retire sooner, rather than later. I found I didn’t need as much money as I thought. After getting out of debt, creating some savings, contributing towards a pension, and reducing my living expenses, I took the dive into retirement.

Suddenly, I had more disposable income than ever before. With investments, pension, and reduced taxes, I began to believe what the bank was telling me, “You’re richer than you think.” Some enjoyable part-time work (two half days a week) I took on gave me more “fun money.”

As a teacher for 30 years, I enjoyed challenging, but meaningful work. In retirement that work was replaced with a lot of fun and pleasure. Most of the first year of my retirement was spent travelling. Each trip provided the fun I was looking for, however, there was an emptiness afterward. The happiness didn’t last, and I found myself struggling to figure out what was next. Why I wasn’t happier? How can happiness be longer lasting?

Positive psychology provides some simple answers. The

research tells us that lasting happiness, or fulfillment and joy, comes from purpose and meaning. Retired life was indeed fun but there wasn’t much that was meaningful. The following practices helped me create meaning and the lasting happiness I was looking for.

PRACTICE No. 1 – Care for yourself.

This may seem obvious, but when we focus on relaxation and recreation, nutrition and exercise often go out the window. Walking every day really helped my physical and emotional wellness.

Positive psychology suggests that to feel happy we need to consider all aspects of wellness, including physical, social, emotional, intellectual and spiritual. Think of practices that will help you in each of these areas. For example, reading, journalling, praying, meditating, spending time in nature or thinking of what you’re grateful for.

PRACTICE No. 2 – Consciously connect with significant others.

What is meaningful in your life? Studies show that most people think of relationships when asked this. Consider spending more time and energy on important relationships and you’ll probably get a lot back.

My wife and I decided that we would go out and do something fun at least once a week, usually on Friday night. We also set a goal of spending time with a grandchild each week. After their school day, we would take them out on an activity of their choice and usually get something to eat.

I made a conscious effort to connect more with friends. Usually, we would go for lunch. My core group of childhood friends and I, along with our partners, meet for an evening periodically. Retirement gave me the time to make meaningful connections with those who are significant in my life.

PRACTICE No. 3 – Continue to improve and grow.

Consider the knowledge, skills and talents you would like to further develop. Personal development and self-determination create lasting happiness.

My research on happiness was self-fulfilling. It was ironic that I was learning and writing about what makes us happier and got happier as I did it! The research tells us that we're happier when we're productive and improving ourselves.

To improve and grow can be working on skills and talents that fit with our hobbies and interests. Reading non-fiction, playing a sport (my friends love pickleball and I still love to ski), making crafts and working on home repairs are a few of the endless opportunities. In the first year of my retirement, I was not focused on being productive or improving myself. Now I know I need to improve and grow to be happy!

PRACTICE No. 4 – Give to others.

Consider serving others, volunteering and being generous without expecting anything in return. Evidence shows that helping others can increase feelings of happiness and satisfaction. Do good, be good and feel good.

I decided to volunteer one afternoon a week with struggling students. It felt so rewarding to give back. My volunteer work reminded me of the meaning and fulfillment I'd valued during my teaching career. I also got more involved with serving in my church and I made myself available to assist a few people in need. Volunteering has become a real source of joy in my life.



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PRACTICE No. 5 – Create some retirement goals.

Consider what makes you happy. Do you want to travel, pursue recreation, work, spend time with family, develop interests and hobbies, downsize, move or do volunteer work? These will more likely happen when you make a conscious choice to do them.

To be happy in retirement I realized I needed more concrete goals than travel and fun. I found that the practices I've listed above didn't happen without intentional goals in each area. You will find lasting happiness if you set goals in each area and review them regularly. Positive psychology and my own anecdotal experience teach us that adopting these simple practices will help to create a joyful retirement. |

Danny Bateman is an instructor at Concordia University of Edmonton in the Faculty of Education. He is a dynamic, engaging and entertaining presenter. Danny's expertise comes from 34 years as an inclusive education teacher and consultant.

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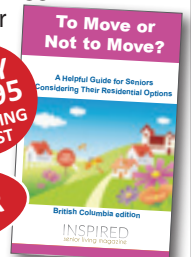
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WEST IS WEST: CYCLING LISBON TO FARO



by JOAN BOXALL

We are West Coasters. Coastal pathways attract us – the people, the culture and the chance to explore. We’ve explored the West Coast of BC. Now it’s Iberia – along Portugal’s 20 per cent of the peninsula. Portugal shares a rectangular shape with our province, even if it is 10 times smaller. It is reminiscent of home with something new to offer.

As a prelude to our trip (and to overcome jetlag), we spend a week in London at an Air-BnB base near Tower Bridge. It is a refuge from tromping along London’s cobblestones and underground transit system.

We take in two musicals, Tate Britain, the Victoria and Albert Museum and the Guildhall. Marvelous guides walk us around the ‘pay-what-you-can’ WWII tour of London’s Blitz where Nazi bombardment devastated the area surrounding St. Paul’s Cathedral on Sept. 29, 1940. The shrapnel marks are still visible.

That history comes full circle in Aldwych Theatre as we await the start of a West-End show: *TINA* the ‘Queen of Rock ‘n’ Roll.’ A sombre announcement tells of THE Queen (Elizabeth II’s) passing. We observe a two-minute-silence, listen to ‘God Save (what is now) The King’ and watch the tributes unfold in the weeks that follow.

Two days after *TINA*, we are in Lisbon on the top deck of a yellow bus, taking in views of the Tagus River (Rio Tejo), which is the largest of three estuaries we will cross. We will also cross the Sado and the Mira.

Tile buildings and mosaic pavements (influences from a 500-year Moorish reign), a Roman aqueduct (influences from Rome’s 700-year rule over Latin Lusitania aka Portugal) and the ‘new’ buildings post-1755 earthquake-and-tsunami, are all on display. In a commercial square (Praça do Comércio) is the former site of Palace Square with its archway (Arco da Rua Augusta) to commemorate the new city as does its Lisboa Story Centre.

We meet up with our bicycle group of 16 through the company Explore!, and our patient and competent guide, Mike. This launches a week of camaraderie and seafood extravaganzas – tonight’s is seabream and dorada (swordfish) over a glass of vinho verde – a young, spritzy-white from Portugal’s largest appellation.

A morning walk to a hilltop cathedral catches us all in the tail end of tropical storm Danielle – a downpour demands we seek safe haven in custard tarts or pastel de nata, pastel de Belem, as the southern Portuguese prefer to call them, or doces conventuais from the nuns who concocted the egg-yolk-and-sugar treat. We queue for Tram 28 Lisbon line and chat for the hour’s wait with fellow tourists before rumbling round Lisbon’s seven hills.

Our first flavour of Fado is a musical ‘blues’ dinner-time performance that expresses longing or saudade (love poems accompanied by Portuguese guitar and 12-string guitar). It is a fitting backdrop for a trip about to unfold. Musical passion and devotion blend like soft fruit in our sangria, made with a traditional Ruby Port for optimal sweetness.

After fine-tuning bicycles, we are off. Our group includes 11 Brits, one American, one Swede, and three Canadians including us. Our demographic spans a half century, yet when we disembark on a ferry near Belem Tower (short for Bethlehem), we are fellow discoverers as depicted in the ‘Monument to the Discoveries.’

The monument includes 33 giant-sized artists and travellers, scientists and sailors, whose expeditions were led by the likes of Henry the Navigator (Madeira, the Azores and West Africa), Vasco Da Gama (India trade route), Pedro Cabral (Brazil) and Ferdinand Magellan (circumnavigation). It was an historic departure point, and it is ours.

As the ferry approaches the Tagus’s southern shore, we see the towering, outstretched arms of the Sanctuary of Christ the King, which was erected in 1959 (inspired by Rio de Janeiro’s Christ the Redeemer statue).

The monument gives thanks to God (in this Catholic country) for sparing the Portuguese people the destruction of WWII. Portugal remained neutral. The two monuments face one another as if to wish us well on our first day’s ride down the Caparica Coast to Albufeira Lagoon and on to the Cape Espichel Lighthouse.

ABOVE | The author (front and centre) waves, along with fellow bicyclist-explorers on Portugal’s west coast.

TOC | The author and her husband, at the southwesternmost point of mainland Europe at Cape (or Cabo) of St. Vincent in Portugal’s Algarve. Photos: Joan Boxall

Sail boarders and surfers romp, as do we, in the refreshing waters before arriving in the former fishing town of Sesimbra.

We are ready to roll a 50-kilometre-per-day average alongside pastel beach resorts and pale beige sand dunes. The further south we go, crowds diminish along gently sloping hills where the scent of pine trees mingle with eucalyptus. We become aware of another tree, the cork oak.

Cork trees can be stripped of their bark up to 15 times within nine-year intervals. Portugal is the world's leading manufacturer of corks, and they bottle wines to go with them. Their 250 grape varieties are native and more prolific than anywhere else in the world.

We have timely picnics complete with locally sourced bread, salad, tomatoes, cheese, sardines, tuna, olives, chorizo sausage, oranges, lemonade and cookies. Water bottles at the ready, we are kept hydrated not without a dash of wine or sour cherry liqueur (ginjinha or ginja to the cherry pit-spitters) for fortification on the uphill, sandy or unpaved sections. Did I mention that we have the only two electric-bikes in our group? Pity!

We bypass industrial and congested areas in privately arranged bus and cab rides from Sines to Vila Nova de Milfontes (a thousand fountains) and Sagres. White-washed fishing villages punctuate the coastline and complement the crashing surf. We are now 'beyond the Tagus' in the province of Alentejo as we enter Cape St. Vincent Nature Park. There are 30 protected areas in the country – nature parks, reserves, landscapes and natural monuments with one national park in the north.

We're ending our bicycle week in the European mainland's most south-westerly spot, Cape St. Vincent, which is also its largest coastal nature park. Each boardwalk provides stunning outlooks. The ancients considered it a magical place where the sun hissed over the edge of a flat world.

We've rumbled through two of Portugal's provinces: the Alentejo and the Algarve, meaning 'The west' in Arabic (along with 500 other Arabic words that have become part of the Portuguese language).

If the world were a flat map, we'd be westerners, but thanks in part to the Portuguese adventurers of long ago, we share a globe. We salute their spirit with the most popular spirit in Portugal, Beirao. Its seeds and herbs come from around the world, just like us.

As Rudyard Kipling said in his poem, *The Ballad of East and West*, "...But there is neither East nor West, Border, nor Breed, nor Birth, | When two strong men stand face to face, tho' they come from the ends of the earth!"

We have come from one end of BC to what is sometimes called Sportugal. 'The twain shall (not) meet' and yet...

We've basked along warm beaches and rugged cliffs. We bid new places and friends a fond bom dia (good day) and a heartfelt obrigada/o (thanks). |

For IF YOU GO information, visit www.seniorlivingmag.com/articles/west-is-west-portugal



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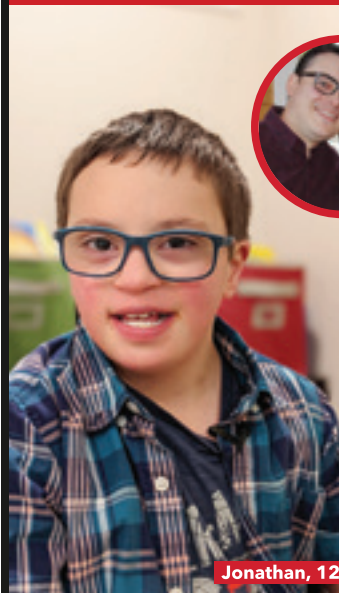


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HOW WE MET

by VERENA FOXX

JANICE & JOHNNY

When Janice dropped her glasses case in the waiting room at Life-Labs one morning, while in line for a blood test and after fasting the requisite 12 hours, she barely managed a “Thank you” to Johnny, who was sitting beside her and had picked it up and handed it to her.

Earlier, they had been waiting in a line-up outside the Medical Building before it opened at 7:30 am. He was a few people behind her and had initiated an insignificant early morning conversation, with those around him chirping in.

“It’s not a long line this morning.”

“The best time to come is December 24 when there’s hardly anyone in line.”

“They open the doors exactly on the dot.”

And on went the banter. Janice added her two bits to pass the time. “I think it will go quickly today; there aren’t too many people ahead of us.”

But neither of them had factored in those who had secured their place in the queue either through an online appointment, or by using the “Save My Spot” app, all of which made their wait time longer than anticipated.

When Johnny handed her the case, Janice put away her glasses, closed the book she was reading, and carried on chatting with him.

Turned out they were both heading out of town that long weekend, to the same Gulf Island that their adult kids had rented cottages on. Turned out that they had both been doing this for several years, since they lost their spouses. Turned out that they had much in common in the city as well. Then, just as her blood test time was coming up, Johnny took a chance and passed his cell number on to Janice, inviting her to get in touch.

That was three years ago, and they have been enjoying their overlapping lives together ever since. The children and grandchildren tease them about even going for their regular blood tests together, a ritual that they have upheld since that first meeting.

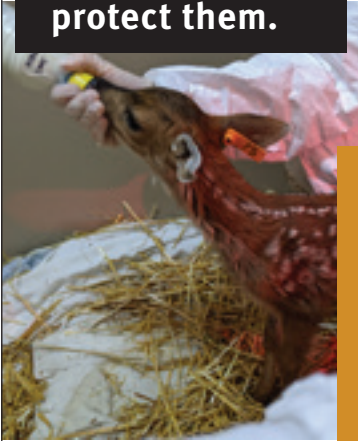
“You never know when you will find something that you may not even know you are looking for at the time,” says Johnny. “Or where,” adds Janice, smiling from ear to ear. |

If you have a “How We Met” story to share, contact verena.foxx@gmail.com

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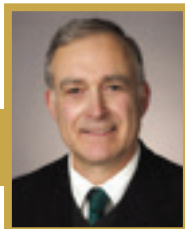


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FOREVER FIT

by EVE LEES



PREPARE FOR WINTER EXERCISE

Don't let cold temperatures stop you from exercising outside. There are many ways to remain fit, motivated and warm!

Consider your current health. If you are taking medications or have certain conditions, like asthma and heart problems, talk with your physician before exercising in cold weather.

Check the weather forecast. An extreme wind chill forecast (wind combined with cold) makes outdoor exercise unsafe no matter how warm you dress. The risk of frostbite is low if the air temperature is above -15 C. However, the risk increases as the wind chill drops. At wind chill levels below -27 C, frostbite can occur in less than 30 minutes. You may have to consider exercising indoors.

You should also opt for indoor exercise if you don't have waterproof or appropriate gear for rain or snow. You'll be more vulnerable to the cold if you get soaked, making you less able to maintain adequate core body temperature.

Drink water before, during and after your workout. Dehydration happens when exercising in the cold, just as in warmer weather: water loss results from sweating, breathing, the drying power of the winter wind and the increased urine production common during cold temperatures.

Dress in layers but avoid overdressing. Being physically active will likely generate lots of heat. If you sweat too much under bundles of clothing, the evaporating sweat makes you lose body heat quickly, and you'll feel chilled.

Layering allows you to remove single clothing items when you start sweating, with the option of replacing that layer again when you begin to cool down. Ideally, make the first layer a synthetic material, such as polypropylene, which draws sweat away from the body (cotton stays wet next to the skin).

Make the second layer wool or fleece for insulation. The final layer should be waterproof (hopefully, breathable). This layering combination will vary depending on how intensely you exercise. Experiment with what works best for you.

Protect your head, hands, feet and ears. When cold, your blood flow concentrates in your body's core. This leaves your head, hands, and feet susceptible to frostbite. Wear thin gloves under heavier ones lined with wool or fleece. Remove the outer pair when your hands start to sweat.

Wear exercise shoes a half-size larger to accommodate an extra pair of socks or a pair of thick thermal socks. A warm hat and earmuffs will protect your head and ears. A scarf or ski mask are other choices, particularly if it's very cold. And don't overlook wearing your mask (now that we all own one):

it can warm and humidify the cold air you inhale (especially for those with exercise-induced asthma) and make you feel warmer until you do warm up.

Recognize frostbite and hypothermia symptoms. Frostbite (injury caused by freezing) most commonly affects exposed skin like cheeks, nose and ears, but it can also occur in the hands and feet even when they're covered. Early signs of frostbite are numbness or a stinging sensation. Get out of the cold as soon as possible, and slowly warm the affected area. Avoid rubbing the skin, as this can damage it. Medical attention is needed if the numbness or loss of feeling continues.

Hypothermia (abnormally low body temperature) occurs when cold temperatures make your body lose heat faster than it can produce it. The risk increases when exercising in cold, rainy weather. It is also a greater risk for older adults. Signs of hypothermia include intense shivering, slurred speech, fatigue, loss of coordination, shallow breathing and a weak pulse. Get emergency help immediately if these symptoms appear.

Gear up for safety, too. Wear reflective clothing at night. Check the traction on your footwear when it's icy or snowing. Chemical heat packs are an option for hands or feet. And of course, helmets are a good idea not just for skiing and snowboarding, but for sledding, too.

Other considerations: During the day, wear sunscreen, lip balm, and don't forget sunglasses for protection from snow and ice glare. Also, let someone know your route and when you expect to return, should something go wrong.

There are many ways to have a safe yet enjoyable workout during the colder months of the year. And if the weather is extreme, it won't hurt to shorten or skip your workout occasionally. However, skipping it doesn't have to be an option. There are many indoor activities to keep you moving, like mall walking, indoor golf, tennis or rock climbing, visiting the gym, dancing, skipping rope and other activities at home.

Let the cold stimulate your creativity! |

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

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THE WONDERFUL WORLD OF PODCASTS



by LAURIE MUELLER

"Anyone who stops learning is old, whether at twenty or eighty. Anyone who keeps learning stays young. The greatest thing in life is to keep your mind young." –Henry Ford

When we live with purpose, we may or may not live longer but we will live better. To keep our minds active and growing, we need to be open to new thoughts, new ideas and new information. Turns out podcasts are a good way to glean this information.

My friend, Sandy, suggested some podcasts on topics we were researching. At first, I thought, I don't know how to find a podcast. Do I need an app? Do I Google it? Is there a secret code? And then I noticed on my iPad a little round circle with the word 'Podcast.' I clicked it, and a new world opened!

John Lee Dumas says, "there are millions and millions of people that listen and love podcasts that didn't in 2012." I'm now one of them.

Sandy listens to podcasts often, whether she is gardening, cleaning the house, sewing or going for a walk. And now that I have found the podcast world, I am an avid listener, too!

I listen with earbuds or on my Echo Dot when I tell Alexa to play my desired podcast, or even just have it playing on my iPad while I play a game at the same time. Many people listen on their smart phones, others on their computers, or through the speakers in their cars. While I am listening to podcasts about writing or psychology, my husband is listening to podcasts about money and world travel. My

research tells me the most popular topic for podcasts is comedy.

I used to listen to CBC radio programs. Now they are on podcasts, too. Podcasts are a refinement and an expansion of what I used to listen to on the radio. I can choose any topic, any time. I can listen to all of it, part of it, rewind it and listen again, or I can turn it off and go on to something different.

Some podcasts are amazing, interesting and inspirational. Others ramble and drone and never seem to get to the point. Unlike a television or radio show, many people produce their own podcast, so the range of talent is great.

I've listened to podcasts about being in a Louisiana hurricane, finding more joy in life, spiritual matters, the place of comedy in a country's politics, and bringing up children. You name the topic, there is a podcast.

One podcast I stumbled upon, Dear Daughter, from the BBC World Service was particularly poignant. A Zulu woman and a Xhosa man met at university and fell in love. Although they were from neighbouring tribes that did not have much respect for each other, the two married, and have a four-year-old daughter. Nkule, the mother, describes what she is teaching her daughter: "Learn something bigger." Nkule wants her daughter to discover life beyond their hometown. Nkule's message is to meet new people, try new foods and see the world.

I am sending the link to my granddaughter who has a daughter the same age as Nkule's daughter.

Of course, my favourite podcasts are about writing and how to live a purposeful life. If you haven't tried listening to a podcast, I hope you explore this expansive world. And if you listen regularly, please share your favourites. Drop me a note and let me know.

Happy listening! |

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Laurie Mueller, M.Ed is retired and lives in Victoria with her husband, Helmuth. She recently published *The Ultimate Guide on What to Do When Someone You Love Dies* on Amazon. To reach Laurie: laurie@lauriemconsulting.com or www.lauriemconsulting.com or on Facebook.

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