

# INSPIRED

55+ lifestyle magazine

MARCH 2023



JAZZ  
SINGER  
TONI  
BLODGETT

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LIVING YOUR  
BEST LIFE

PURSUE YOUR  
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### Cover TONI BLODGETT

She has travelled the world playing the music she loves, and this year she will be celebrated as one of a handful of Legends of Jazz at Hermann's Jazz Club in Victoria.

Photo: Darren Stone

## INSPIRED

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## THRIVE BEYOND 55

by BARBARA RISTO, PUBLISHER



As I write this month's column, I'm busy sorting out hundreds of details for our upcoming 55+ Lifestyle Show on March 21st in Victoria. My amazing staff and I have organized over 20 of these events. Many details are actions or processes we repeat from show to show, but there's always new things that pop up, requiring a decision and some extra effort.

Life is like that. Anyone expecting to reach their later years and just coast... is in for a big surprise. You see, we just aren't built to do nothing. When a space or vacuum shows up, our reaction is to fill it.

This means we are always creating more work or projects for ourselves. If it's not something new, it's an improvement. Something in our psyche wants to be better, do more, jump higher, increase and expand. That drive may mellow a little with age, but it never goes away. We just find other and possibly more creative ways to express it. It may come in the form of improving our relationships with family or friends. Or maybe we leave a career and enter the volunteer sector. Or we turn to travel. Take a course. Some even start a new business or a new relationship.

Whatever your secret sauce is to fill the void, there's plenty of room in this world for more creativity, better ideas and trying new things.

Speaking of trying new things, if you haven't been to our 55+ Lifestyle Show, I invite you to join us this year.

We have a wide range of businesses and organizations eager to show off their 55+ products and services. You're almost guaranteed to discover a bunch of ideas to use as a springboard for your next adventure, whether it is choosing your next travel destination or making a lifestyle change like renovating your home or yard or moving to a new home.

You'll find plenty of inspiration and information at our 55+ Lifestyle Show.

We have several hours of entertainment, including a fashion show by Blue Sky Clothing that will be held both in the morning and in the afternoon (See our promotion on this issue's back cover for more details).

Blue Sky Clothing is owned by BC fashion designer Marilyn Cobban, who creates garments with all body types and sizes in mind, and in particular, the 55+ woman.

In addition to getting a leg up on what's in season for fabrics, colours and styling in clothes, you'll be able to witness the makeover of three *INSPIRED Magazine* readers.

These adventurous women will be outfitted by Blue Sky, and have their hair and makeup updated and refreshed by our creative stylists who will work their magic before the show and all day at the event. The final reveal will be on stage at 2pm.

Many of our visitors come early and stay for the day. Free bags and prizes to the first 100 visitors.

Don't forget to put your name in for some exceptional door prizes: tickets to Butchart Gardens, Victoria Butterfly Gardens, the Malahat Skywalk, the Royal BC Museum and IMAX.

Some small refreshment items are available for purchase at our café, and Tillicum Mall's food court is just steps away, if you need to take a break for nourishment during the event.

So, if you are looking for something new to sink your teeth into or you're ready to make a change in lifestyle, maybe we'll have something at our show to scratch that itch. Come and see for yourself.

I'm looking forward to meeting you. |

*PS. Our emcee at the stage will be Laurie Mueller, our fun-loving "Living On Purpose" columnist.*

# Benefits of Walk-in Tubs

As we age and begin to lose our mobility and sense of balance, bathing can not only become difficult but also a cause of additional stress and anxiety.

Fear of falling and a fear of not being able to get out of the tub are two of the most common occurrences with many of our seniors today. Walk-in tubs have become extremely popular in the last decade and estimates show that people who go ahead and install a walk-in tub in their homes today, will be able to live independently for an additional five years.

Walk-in tubs are exactly what the name implies, tubs that have large doors that open, and you simply walk in and sit down on a 17-inch-high seat. You close and lock the door and the tub fills rapidly while you are sitting comfortably and safely inside. All the taps and controls are easily accessible at your fingertips. Once you are done your bath, turn the dial and the tub quickly drains and you simply open the door and walk out of the tub. The various models all have numerous grab bars and non-slip surfaces making getting in and out worry free. Walk-in tubs are designed for an aging population who desire to remain independent for many years to come.

Manufacturers have optional tub designs accommodating every shape and size of person and bathroom. There is a tub size that will fit in the space where your existing tub or shower is. Walk-in tubs can be as basic as a soaker tub to as deluxe as your own personal spa. Offering numerous options such as heated back, multispeed warm air jets, water jets, ozone, light therapy, aromatherapy, and more.

The benefits of a walk-in tub are numerous. Many people crave being able to confidently have a bath again and find relief by just soaking in a warm tub. Owners say they believe they sleep better after a soothing bath. The warm air or water jets give a deep massage and help to stimulate circulation, thus carrying additional healing oxygen throughout the body to the hands and feet. This has shown positive results increasing mobility and helping to relieve the pain and symptoms of such conditions as arthritis, chronic back

pain, fibromyalgia, diabetic and peripheral neuropathy, as well as various other acute and chronic conditions.

The Canadian Government website states that 1 in 4 seniors fall every year, and 25% of these falls are serious, leaving the victims permanently disabled and bedridden. A large percentage of these falls take place in the bathroom.



Aside from all the pain and suffering it also ends up costing the Canadian medical system two billion dollars annually. Therefore, the British Columbia and Federal Governments are helping many people who decide to purchase a walk-in tub now. The help comes in the forms of a tax credit, a Provincial Sales Tax waiver, and in certain qualifying cases a \$7,500.00 Government Grant.

As we all age and the years fly by, many seniors are faced with the reality that taking proactive steps today and deciding to retrofit their homes with a walk-in tub is one of the best investments they can make to help them age in place, comfortably and independently in the home they love.

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Toni Blodgett performing.  
Photo: Toni Blodgett Collection

Inset: Toni with the band.  
Photo: Nicolas Lempereur

# TONI BLODGETT: KEEPING JAZZ ALIVE

by JOSEPH BLAKE

Jazz has been America's cultural gift to the world for a little over 100 years. The improvisational art captured on record for a century is Victoria-based traditional jazz pianist Toni Blodgett's inspiration and passion. She has travelled the world playing the music she loves, and this year she will be celebrated as one of a handful of Legends of Jazz at Victoria's Hermann's Jazz Club for her long tenure at the venerable venue.

Toni grew up on a wheat farm in tiny Elrose, Saskatchewan. It took her a long time to figure out what she wanted to do with her life, but the seeds for what is now over 50 years of playing piano in traditional jazz bands may have been planted while listening to the family radio and neighbours' player pianos.

"As a girl I completed Grade 10 level with the Toronto Conservatory of Music and heard Louis Armstrong singing and playing New Orleans jazz on our radio," Toni remembers. "Years later, the first time I visited New Orleans, it was like I'd been there before in another life. I just wept with joy!"

When Toni left Saskatchewan, she only knew that she "didn't want to get married and stuck there with some farmer."

She earned a teaching degree at the University of Saskatchewan and taught high school before moving to San Francisco in 1960, where she lived and worked until 1969, eventually marrying an American.

"On holiday in 1972, we visited my extended family in Parksville, and my then-husband saw Victoria and wanted to move here. He had three kids from a previous marriage back in California and, in 1977, when our marriage ended, he went back to California, leaving me in Victoria. I tried going back to Saskatchewan and taught music to Grades 3-8 in Regina for a year, then quit and went to Europe before returning to Victoria."

"I'd started studying piano again before my marriage broke up," she says. "It had been 16 years since I worked at

the piano, but I needed to get back to something that I really loved. I certainly struggled getting my technique back, but I loved playing again."

In Victoria, Toni heard a guy playing piano onstage at Cherry Bank Rib House and thought, "I could do that." She got work there and soon heard Greg Sumner playing banjo and singing Jelly Roll Morton jazz tunes at Bartholomew's Pub down the street from her gig at the Cherry Bank.

"I told Greg whatever you're doing, I want to do it."

Sumner put a group together called The Ragtime Rascals that played four nights a week at the Sidney Hotel for a couple of years. Then Toni co-lead The Ragtimers, a quartet that entertained aboard the *Princess Marguerite* on the Victoria-Seattle steamships daily sailing during the 1982-1983 tourist season.

Toni played solo gigs in the Tack Room at La Posada Hotel in Laredo, Texas and on the cruise ship *Queen of the North* for a month at Vancouver's Expo '86, and a stint with John Noris' New Orleans Jazz Band at the Hyatt Regency's Trapper Lounge in Waikiki. She played 10 years in the Dining Room at Butchart Gardens and a regular stint with Al Pease at Chantecler Restaurant. She played for years at Spinnakers Pub, too.

"I worked quite a few years at Spinnakers playing piano there in the bar area as you walk in," Toni recalls. "One night, a man walked up to me and handed me a list of four tunes to see if I would play those for him. I said, 'No problem' and did just that. So later, he came back to me to say 'I have travelled the world over. I have asked every piano player to play those for me, and you are the first one to ever be able to play all four of them.'"

"I do not remember what they were, but I do think I've had a little tape recorder playing in my brain since childhood," Toni continues. "Only recently have I had to admit that I can no longer count on my memory... Aging is not a fun sport!"

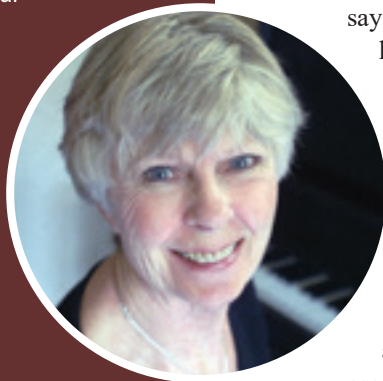
"But I did have a storehouse of tunes that I could pretty much play in any key," Toni adds. "So, one thing that my boyfriend Nic's Bluetooth Soundbar playing YouTube is doing

# Snapshot

## with Toni Blodgett

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

*"Keep following your instincts and go in the direction you are feeling is right for you. Whatever you name it, this is somehow attuned to your destiny."*



Who or what has influenced you the most and why?

*"I believe my parents trusting me and giving me both freedom and responsibility. I got a speeding ticket shortly after getting my driver's license. Without telling them, I went to court in the nearby larger town and scratched up the money to pay. Thirty or so years later, I learned that my father was drinking in that town's beer parlour with some RCMP guys who told him, 'Hey Sam, we caught your daughter speeding a couple of weeks ago.' He never let me know he knew."*

What are you most grateful for?

*"I am most grateful for the gift of music that came to me through both parents who could play by ear and encouraged me in appearances in music festivals and playing in our village at church, for tap dance groups, even for a community hall meeting where Tommy Douglas was about to speak. In those days, there was a community singsong prior to such meetings."*

What does success mean to you?

*"What I most wanted was that each year I was progressing to be a better piano player. Regarding success, I had wonderful advice from a fellow artist, Ken Bloomfield (wood-carver and clay artist), who told me that in art, your job is to put yourself at your instrument every day. The 'universe' will take care of everything else. So that lifted a lot of worry from my shoulders about where I was going with all this." |*

for me is reinforcing those melodies in my brain again."

In the early 1980s Toni heard Victoria's Dixieland Express and sat in with the band at Hermann's Jazz Club.

"It was pretty rough at first," she says. "The guys in the band had a real traditional sound with tuba and banjo.

They didn't have a piano player, and they didn't want one. But eventually, I worked my way in. There were no microphones and no monitors. I just thrashed away. There were many great challenges and experi-

ences during my 10 years with Dixieland Express. It was lots and lots of fun."

In 1991, Toni had a dream where she went to get a job at the railroad and was offered a broom.

"I woke up thinking, 'no, I want to drive the train.'" A student of Jungian philosophy, she took the dream seriously and started her own band. Called CanUS Jazz Band to celebrate the dual citizenship of its Canadian and American members, CanUS was an instant hit on the international traditional jazz festival circuit.

CanUS featured three-part vocal harmonies inspired by the Boswell Sisters, a legendary New Orleans group from the 1930s. Connie Boswell was one of jazz great Ella Fitzgerald's biggest influences, and Toni shared a Great Ladies of Jazz Award with Connie Boswell at the 2000 Sun Valley Idaho Jazz Jamboree.

Toni and CanUS were also favorites of US Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor, who arranged a concert at Washington DC's prestigious Kennedy Center in 2002 with the aid of Department of Foreign Affairs pitching in with airfares for the band. Justice O'Connor wrote Toni a thank you letter stating, "The Kennedy Center concert was just wonderful. Your audience loved it, and no one more than me. Hearty thanks to you and every member of your talented group."

That concert and all eight of CanUS Jazz Band's eight CDs can be viewed on YouTube. Toni has also produced two cassettes of solo ragtime piano that are collectors' items.

"Those ragtime tunes were all memorized, not played by ear, not using the side of my brain that is used in improvising," Toni explains. "I've lost that repertoire now that I'm in my 80s. I don't play that music anymore."

At 83, Toni is still leading CanUS at Hermann's every month. She even joined Norrie MacFarlane's Dixieland Express for a show on Butchart Gardens' big outdoor stage in August 2022. This year CanUS also played a couple of memorial concerts for band members Hugh Barclay, Don Leppard and Borgy Borgeson.

CanUS has had lots of members over the band's 33-year history. Al Pease, 86, is still playing clarinet and sax. Joey Smith, the band's original arranger, is still on bass. Avram McCagerty has settled in on banjo.

Alfons Fear is a young, modern trumpet player who is learning traditional jazz from another new member, Australian Simon Stribling. Simon learned from his musician-father and sings harmony with Toni and Alfons. Stribling also brought his Vancouver-based Canadian wife Laurie Lyster into the band on drums and vocals.

Toni couldn't be more pleased with her new version of CanUS. She's also in love again. Thirty-seven years after her marriage ended, the electrician working at her View Royal waterfront home asked her out on a dinner date.

"I asked Nic if he knew how old I was. I had no designs on him. He was 54. I was 79," Toni says with a smile. "I told him we could be friends, and he asked if friends could go out to dinner. Finally, he asked, could we please leave this up to the universe?"

"That was four years ago," Toni continues. "Nic comes over and sets up the Bluetooth Soundbar for dinner music every night. We'll play Coleman Hawkins, Mel Torme, Les Paul and Mary Ford, Bix Beiderbecke, even Buddy Holly and Elvis. It's so much fun." |





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# REYKJAVÍK, ICELAND: MY KIND OF TOWN

by BRUCE SACH

I had my first Icelandic ‘What A Country’ moment even before touching down in Iceland. The air sickness bag on Icelandair, instead of a dry, boring sanitary notification, introduced the Icelandic word ‘Loftslag,’ explaining it meant ‘climate, being one of the things that is a surprise to every visitor to Iceland.’ I love learning new words in the language of the country I’m visiting, although I’d never had an air sickness bag provide me with such important vocabulary.

What whimsy! What cleverness!

That first morning (all North American flights to Reykjavík arrive in the morning) was overcast and cool.

“This is what we Icelanders call good weather,” deadpanned our bus driver. And soon after, I saw a street billboard with a model in a raincoat, and hood, boasting the caption, “Summer has arrived!”

In Reykjavík, I liked that tipping was not expected, and one guidebook (if you can believe guidebooks) even went so far as to say a tip would be seen as an insult. No one in Iceland confirmed this, but they were intrigued by the question, which garnered a similar reaction when I naïvely asked them if they believed in trolls, hidden folk and elves. (They were unwilling to give a direct answer in all cases!)

A few other things I immediately liked about this country: you can reportedly drink the water anywhere, even in streams; and airplanes land right in the middle of the capital city. It’s reminiscent of old times in Hong Kong and in my old hometown, Edmonton. International flights, however, connect to the main airport an hour by bus from the centre of town.

Like other island countries (think Japan), things are well organized and run smoothly. That said, there’s no apparent strict adherence to rules, meaning the people are flexible and reasonable: they may ask to take your ticket, but if you say you need it, they say “okay, just keep it.”

There’s no mad rush to follow a schedule. Like Japan, Iceland is a whaling nation – neither nation signed the whale hunting moratorium, and as we go to press, Iceland will return to hunting after a four-year hiatus. Icelanders were worried about how this decision would affect the country’s reputation. I’m not sure if it’s a game changer.

Many Icelanders speak excellent, or at the very least passable, English, yet they’re flattered by any attempts to learn Icelandic. ‘Smoking Banned in Lavatory,’ also from our fight, was my second stab at the language, and is not as off the wall as you might think. Smoking Bay is the translation of Reykjavík, so any Icelandic words related to ‘smoking’ become crystal clear.

## RETRO COOL

If you like Portland, Oregon, you’ll probably like Reykjavík, Iceland. How so? Reykjavík is retro cool, and although there were no ‘Keep Reykjavík Cool’ signs, this was the unstated leitmotif. No, I’m not talking weather now. Let’s face it, you’re going to have iffy weather, so close to the Arctic Circle. As locals say, ‘wear layers.’

The ‘retro-cool’ vibe was truly the feel at our retro chic Exeter Hotel, located in an old part of town overlooking the harbour. Self-serve breakfast was included in The Kock restaurant, where each table is covered with US basketball cards from another era. A wildly popular, and inexpensive pastry shop is part of the restaurant/hotel complex, which includes lockers for bags, if your flight arrives early, or if you’re leaving the harbour in a cruise ship, as we were.

ABOVE | The world-class Harpa Concert Hall and Conference Centre with an aesthetic inspired by Iceland’s unique landscape. INSET | Entrance to the Punk Rock Museum. TOC | Fish restaurants are common on the harbour in Reykjavík. Photos: Carole Jobin

The flying Kock is a popular beer item whose name amused me, especially after learning the Icelandic Phallic Museum is located just down the street. Genuinely funky cafés abound and even touristy areas, like Laugavegur and Skólavörðustígur have them, if you look hard enough.

Mokka-Kaffi and Mama Love come to mind. Come in, order coffee, read a book and/or go on their Wifi. Mokka-Kaffi calls itself the city's oldest coffee house. The funkiest café we saw was Reykjavík Roasters, whose baristas win prizes annually. (It can be found on Kárástígur Street).

Skólavörðustígur Street leads up to the highest point in town, the Hallgrímskirkja Church, built to resemble a columnar basalt 'organ pipe' formation. Trudging up to its doors is like a pilgrimage, followed by a wait to take an elevator trip up the main tower for views of up to 20 km away. It's not exactly the Icelandic equivalent of the Eiffel Tower but is worth the trip up.

From above, we spotted our cruise ship and thought we could see the steam of the famous Blue Lagoon, which we'd visited the day before. Visitors must eventually answer this question: Should we go to the biggest visitors' attraction in town, the area's equivalent of Disneyland? My answer: a resounding 'yes'! Give yourself at least four hours, go for the three-mud mask treatment, and know that you can have a relatively cheap snack overlooking the waters.

As a relaxing and fun activity, it's hard to beat, and I have fond memories of the 45-minute bus trip along a lunar-looking lava field where I felt transported to another planet! Some folks

visit the lagoon just before leaving Iceland, since it is located relatively close to the airport. Sounds like a relaxing idea, but in today's travel scene, might be a tad stressful, since airlines want you to arrive hours in advance of take-off. A better choice might be to go there upon your arrival.

Back in the harbour area, the Settlement Exhibition at the Reykjavík City Museum is in a unique spot, an ancient archeological site, showing what Reykjavík looked like 1,000 years ago. Situated inside a low-ceilinged basement, it's easy to imagine life at the beginning of Reykjavík's history.

A huge contrast is the nearby, but ultra-modern Harpa Concert Hall and Conference Centre, on the historic waterfront, where we saw a fabulous multi-media presentation. Another funky place you might want to visit is the tiny punk museum, down a wildly painted staircase which warns, among other things, that the museum is not a toilet!

Thing is, it was one back in punk rock's heyday. The old urinals are brightly painted and the old toilet bowl pokes fun at visitors – 'stick your head in and hear the ocean!' is one label that sticks in my memory. If you feel the urge, it's located just off the intersection of Austurstræti and Lækjargata Streets

Don't forget to chat with the Icelanders. They have a wonderful sense of humour and fun, and seemed to get all the English idioms I could throw at them. |

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

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# A RECIPE FOR LIVING YOUR BEST LIFE

by CHRISTINE BLANCHETTE

Mary Spilsbury Ross was born with the creative gene starting at an early age reciting poetry, dancing, making up plays, and singing with her sisters. She has had an exciting life, onstage and off and surviving multiple cancers. In a telephone interview, the vibrant octogenarian speaks of fitness and health, shares her passion for the arts, her latest novel and future projects.

Mary's introduction to dance began at age six. "My grandmother, bless her heart, took my two sisters and me to a Christmas pantomime, *Babes In The Woods* and I was smitten," she remembers fondly. "As the final curtain came down, I can remember dying to be on that stage and not in the audience."

Dancing professionally began in her last year at the University of British Columbia studying theatre.

"While dancing in a UBC production of *Bye Bye Birdie*, I met the vivacious choreographer Grace McDonald and she offered me a summer job singing, dancing and acting at Theatre Under the Stars (TUTS) in Stanley Park Vancouver. That was it, and come fall, I was on my way to Europe to forge a career on stage."

The Swinging 60s was spent dancing modern jazz in most major cities of Europe, Egypt, Lebanon, Greece and Iran. The new, modern choreography was difficult, physically and mentally demanding, much like an athlete training: endless and exhausting but exhilarating.

"I really believe that the strength, discipline and technique of dance was key to my survival when I was diagnosed with ovarian cancer," says Mary. "By that time, I was married with two children and given six months to live. My whole life turned upside down and I put all my energies into surviving and raising my children. Dancing professionally made me strong enough to tackle anything life has thrown at me."

About this time, Mary started writing recipes enjoyed while she was on tour with the Ballet that would in turn become her first cookbook, *Frugal Feasts*. Spicy pilaf from Turkey, lamb dishes from Lebanon and Iran, chickpeas from Greece and unusual pasta from Sicily, all on a budget of two dollars and fifty cents a meal. It was a bestseller.

Turning back to the '60s, Mary was inspired to co-author a non-fiction book with a British dancer who now lives in the south of France.



Author Mary Spilsbury Ross with Pepper.  
Photo: Richard Schmon  
Photography

"It was enormously fun and nostalgic to reread letters written to our moms and try and put them into some order," she recalls. "It inspired me to write on my own, a mystery novel of stolen Nazi artworks that are mysteriously connected to a travelling ballet troupe as it performs throughout Europe and the Middle East. *No Intermission* was completed in the middle of the pandemic and published by Pina Publishers in the US.

"I dedicated it to my late husband who did an enormous amount of historical research but, sadly, he did not see it finished."

Mary's next writing project is *Dining With My Dog*, a budget cookbook for 2023, jokes and anecdotes about famous dogs.

"The book is co-authored by Pepper, my Jack Russell terrier, who has decided opinions of what tastes good and why," she laughs. "I tried to draw some illustrations of dogs but will have to leave that to the professionals."

Mary has been an amateur artist for many years, "I love watercolors and sketched many places travelled with my late husband. I adore street scenes and would stand in the middle of traffic in Paris, Rome and Florence, drawing. Oil portraits are especially challenging. I'm drawn to painting dancers and am working on one now. It is very humbling. For inspiration, I watch classes with the dancers of Ballet Victoria. They are beautiful, dedicated, talented young people."

Staying fit and mentally stimulated is Mary's ultimate goal as she ages.

"Every morning I wake up thinking, you have ONE more day. Fantastico! Music goes on an old-fashioned tape recorder, and I begin to dance, starting with a classical ballet barre, a little cardio from Jane Fonda Fitness tapes and whatever inspires – belly dancing, a little boogie, the twist. Pepper and I hope to dance 'til I drop." |

*Find No Intermission on Amazon, Kindle and local bookstores.*

## DEALING WITH AGGRESSIVE DOGS



Exercising outdoors is a treat, but you need to be aware of potential threats.

While you may encounter aggressive dogs when you're outdoors, note that they aren't necessarily vicious. It's inaccurate to predict a dog's aggression based on breed alone. There are two types of aggressive dogs: the frightened dog and the dominant dog.

Most dogs are just frightened and bark as a warning. They're nervous about your presence and worried about themselves, their property or their owner. These dogs are more an annoyance than a threat and usually won't attack unless 'spooked' by sudden loud noises (screaming or shouting) or rapid movements like waving your arms.

The dominant dog is less common as they usually roam in packs. They aren't 'barkers' but approach you growling and snarling with bared teeth.

The SPCA suggests avoiding running from them. Rapid movements like running attract a dog's attention and could make the animal more aggressive. Running is only an option if you're very close to safety.

Try matching a dominant dog's behaviour by being dominant yourself, such as repeatedly saying calmly and assertively 'no' or 'go home'. It may make the dog retreat. Make no sudden moves. If you have a fanny pack or sweatshirt handy, be ready to 'feed' it to the dog. When bicycling, get off your bike and put it between you and the animal.

Avoid looking directly into the eyes of an aggressive dog. Staring may be perceived as a threat or challenge. Whether they're a frightened or dominant dog, turn slightly from them, but keep the animal in the corner of your eye.

Fortunately, it's usually the frightened dog you'll meet. With this type of dog, take a friendly approach but remain cautious: avoid staring, sudden motions and loud sounds. When a dog is nervous, it's not sure what you're up to, so it's important to put it at ease. Dog trainers suggest keeping a friendly attitude and a cheerful voice. Let your voice convey 'play' in some way.

Carry treats with you, especially if the annoying dog is on your regular running or walking route. Offer the treat using a friendly, cheerful voice, 'Hey there, want a treat?' And carrying a treat is a better option than carrying a weapon, like a water pistol or a sturdy stick.

Threatening a dog with these items may encourage aggressiveness. Same for pepper spray, warns the RCMP. Pepper

spray (illegal for use on humans) should only be used as a last resort – usually in the case of the dominant dog who's baring its teeth, ready to bite. The spray may be effective if you can spray it directly in the dog's face and eyes, but accuracy isn't possible in most cases. The dog could still bite after being sprayed, and it will likely become very angry, warns the RCMP. If you decide to purchase pepper spray, the sprays are available for varying distances so get a long-range one.

Dog whistles aren't a reliable deterrent, either, say dog trainers. These whistles emit high-frequency sound waves, audible only to dogs. But you never know the animal's reaction: the dog may go away or become more aggressive. So, like pepper spray, a whistle should be a last resort.

Dog attacks are rare, but they do occur. If you are attacked, play dead. Struggling will arouse the dog more and make it bite harder to maintain its hold. Lie on your stomach to protect vulnerable areas like your abdominals and inner thighs. Protect the back of your neck, too, if possible.

Attacks don't have to happen if you can avoid doing anything that will make the dog more frightened. That's why a dog barks in the first place because it's scared. The barking just means 'please go away.'

Being friendly shows the frightened dog you aren't a threat. So, there's no need to change your running or walking route. If you pass by the dog regularly, try making friends with it. Meet the owner. Ask if you can get to know the dog. The pet owner can help the dog become familiar with you as a regular presence in its territory. If the owner occasionally greets you as you walk by or points you out to the dog as being a friend, it puts the dog at ease.

The non-violent approach makes everyone happy: you, the dog and the dog's owner. And it may help the dog be more at ease with other outdoor exercisers.

If the dog remains a serious threat despite your actions, both the RCMP and SPCA advise either approaching the owner or, as a last resort, reporting the animal to your City Pound. |

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



# March is Embrace Aging Month!

Learn something new.  
Make new connections. Try new activities.

Eldercare's annual Embrace Aging Month is back. This March, check out what the community has to offer at the **55+ Lifestyle Show**. Attend free senior-focused workshops at the Yakimovich Wellness Centre to help you navigate the journey of aging. Make new connections and explore the possibilities!

## 55+ Lifestyle Show

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*Inspired Magazine hosts this fun and informative event on Tuesday, March 21 from 9 am until 3pm at Parkes Recreation Centre. Featuring all day entertainment, a variety of interesting exhibitors, prize draws, and much more. A great place to make new connections.*

### Senior-Focused Workshops at the Yakimovich Wellness Centre (YWC)

Life-long learning will keep your brain and body active and engaged. This year's offering will cover a wide range of interests including:

#### "Beyond the Pail"

challenges the notion of the 'bucket list' and presents another way of looking at the world that is more inclusive and doesn't necessarily require lots of money, excellent health, or taking risks outside your comfort zone.

March 6th via zoom

**Fraud Busters** will provide practical techniques to increase your financial and technological safety skills to help protect you and your loved ones.

March 22nd YWC

**Travelling Lightly and Safely: Tips for Women Travelers** gives ideas and tips for women travelers to make travel easier and safer while maximizing the travel experience. **March 27th YWC**

*These are just a few examples of workshops being offered at the Yakimovich Wellness Centre this March.*

*There are also workshops on finances, technology, legal questions, end of life decisions, managing various health problems, and more. All workshops are free, but pre-registration is required as space is limited. COVID protocols are in place at the YWC and masks will be provided for your safety and comfort.*

*"We don't stop playing because we grow old. We grow old because we stop playing."*

- George Bernard Shaw

For more on Embrace Aging Month or to register for workshops at the Yakimovich Wellness Centre visit: [www.gvef.org/embraceaging](http://www.gvef.org/embraceaging)



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# 4 Ways You Can Prepare to "Age Well"

## And reasons to stop procrastinating and plan ahead now

by **Tom Arnold**

Director of Development, Eldercare Foundation

What are the keys to living well no matter your age? Eating right, exercising regularly, and maintaining social connections are a great way to start. But if you're in your 50s, 60s, or 70s right now, planning for your future needs has never been more important.

Canada's population is aging rapidly. Here in BC, the number of seniors has grown 17% in the past 5 years, and will continue growing until 2035. This will affect the support services available to seniors, and looking ahead now can help you maintain your quality of life.

### Here are some key ways to prepare:

#### 1. Adapt your home.

Stairs, bathrooms, and kitchens can present significant challenges for older adults, particularly if they require walkers or wheelchairs. Making changes in anticipation of future needs will help ensure you can continue to enjoy the comforts of home for many years to come.

**Reason to act:** The Conference Board of Canada estimates that, to meet demand, the number of long-term care beds in Canada will need to double by 2035. As this would cost \$130 billion

to build and operate however, available beds may lag well behind demand, forcing more care into the home. Private care home options may also be out of reach for many due to costs that, today, can be as much as \$9,000-\$12,500 per month, depending on the level of care provided.

**2. Guard against falls.** Falls are the leading cause of injury among older Canadians, but many preventative measures are easy to implement. Exercise helps maintain strength and balance. Getting rid of clutter, worn carpets, and loose throw rugs can eliminate tripping hazards. Home medical alarms can help when adjusting to new medications, and safeguard seniors who are unable to get up and call for help after a fall.

**Reason to act:** 20-30% of Canadian seniors experience one or more falls each year. A fall that results in hospitalization is the catalyst for more than one third of the seniors admitted into long-term care each year.

#### 3. Explore options to manage chronic illnesses at home.

As Canadians live longer, chronic illnesses like hypertension, kidney disease, COPD, diabetes, and dementia are on the rise. In addition to making healthy

lifestyle choices that can delay or slow symptom onset, learning about managing your illness can help maintain your independence, and ease the burden on family caregivers. One excellent local resource is Island Health's Community Virtual Care program, which offers coaching and symptom monitoring to seniors living with chronic illness.

**Reason to act:** Conservative estimates suggest that 37% of Canadians 65+ are already living with two or more chronic illnesses, and chronic illness risk increases with age.

#### 4. Write advance care directives.

Canadians are living longer than ever before but, for many, several of those years will include living with serious illness. Creating advance care directives can ensure you get to live your whole life on your own terms. It's a formal way to let people know what kind of health and personal care you want in the future, and who you'd like making decisions for you, if you're ever unable to speak for yourself.

**Reason to act:** On average, Canadian seniors will spend roughly 30% of their post age 65 lives in an unhealthy state, where their ability to care for themselves may be compromised.

**Need more help to get started with your planning today? Several of these topics, and many more, will feature in free seminars offered during Eldercare Foundation's Embrace Aging Month. See the opposite page, or visit [www.gvfe.org/embraceaging](http://www.gvfe.org/embraceaging) for details.**

# PURSUE YOUR PASSION

by SAM MARGOLIS



Photo: Steve Noble

Barry Casson is, indisputably, a man who gets the most out of life. At various points, he has toured abroad as a musician with the likes of Chuck Berry and Bo Diddley, published thousands of news photographs, brought important stories into people's living rooms as a television cameraman, created highly acclaimed movies, started Vancouver Island's first film school and taught several generations of performers to play drums.

These days, as an author and public speaker, Barry is harnessing his passion and lifetime of experiences into inspirational talks and presentations based on his new book, *How to Become Who You Were Meant to Be*. Imparting the valuable lessons and wisdom he has acquired through hard work, determination and plain, old-fashioned gumption, Barry firmly believes we all have it in us to reach our full potential.

"I want people to invest in what they are gifted in to lead a good life," he says. "I don't care who you are, everyone has a gift. If you can, follow that gift because that's the only thing that will make you happy. Whatever it is, do that thing. That's what I have done. In my case, it's morphed. When I did photography, I was really into it. When I did filmmaking, I was really into it."

"When you are in your element, it doesn't matter if you are working eight hours or 16 hours, you're alive because you are doing what you want to do. We have all heard the phrase 'starving artist,' and many of them are. I know some artists who are not very wealthy, but they are very happy, because they are doing what they were meant to do," he says.

Citing a *Forbes* magazine report, which pointed out that most working Americans were unhappy in their jobs, Barry declares, "You won't be happy in a job you don't want."

And, he emphasizes, it is never too late to find one's passion. As a drum teacher, he sees retired professional people who are now "doing what they always wanted to do

— which is play drums. It makes them happy."

The equation is simple but not necessarily easy, Barry stresses. "Life comes down to two things, you either do it or you don't do it. It's not complicated. It's finding the chutzpah and the energy and dealing with what comes with the challenge when you take it on. It ain't a piece of cake."

In *How to Become Who You Were Meant to Be*, Barry goes through 10 methods he used to accomplish his goals. The book, which includes a foreword by his friend and former bandmate David Foster, also chronicles inspiring stories from different times in his life and underscores the lessons to be learned from them.

On some occasions, Barry confronted tricky circumstances during which belief in himself, he writes, was not enough. Rather, he needed to also take action. As a young musician in the 1960s, for example, he suspected that his rock group, the Victoria-based Bobby Faulds and the Strangers, might have a shot at the big time. He managed, after scouting the music scene in London for a few weeks, to convince his six fellow band members, three of whom were married, to leave their day jobs and wives and fly to England.

As Barry details in the book, by daring to take a chance, experiences the band members could not have possibly imagined beforehand began to unfold as they circumnavigated the United Kingdom, hopping from one venue to the next, meeting rock 'n' roll royalty and establishing a name for themselves.

Several years later, back in Canada and appearing at a nightly gig on drums at a Victoria nightclub, he searched for something to keep him occupied in the daytime. An interest in photography ensued. One day, Barry worked up the nerve to show a number of his photographs to the local daily, *The Times Colonist*.

"Hi, my name is Barry Casson. I thought you might like to look at... ah... my-my photos," he recalls saying to the city editor, seated at his desk not bothering to take his eyes off



what he was reading.

Barry placed his photos down on the desk. After a couple of minutes, the editor finally looked up and asked, "Was there anything else?" "Ah... no..." came Barry's response before leaving.

The next day, he picked up a copy of the paper and there was his photo splashed on the front page of the local section, launching the next phase of his fascinating career.

The central take-aways, Barry notes, from this turning point are to keep moving forward, not letting the fear of failure prevent one from doing what one cares about and recognizing the "sudden instances that seem unspectacular at the time can be life changing."

In segueing to another pursuit in the 1980s, filmmaking, Barry persevered through a series of hurdles, both technical and financial, to create educational motion pictures that are still etched in the collective memory, especially among former Boy Scouts and Girl Guides, to this day.

According to Barry, his best-known work, *Lost in the Woods*, a film teaching survival in nature, might not have been shown throughout North America had he ignored some of the steps outlined in his book, such as making a list of things to do and crossing out each item before moving to the next, realizing that many projects take longer than expected to complete and, most importantly, remembering "that nothing is more powerful than an idea whose time has come."

Besides encouraging and motivating people to fulfill their dreams, Barry still chases after his own passions; he can be found in Victoria teaching drummers of all ages at Tempo Trend Music and jamming with friends, old and new, at Hermann's Jazz Club.

As for relaying what he knows to others, Barry asserts, "I think I am at the right place to pass on what I have learned. When I see some inspirational speakers who are 30 years old telling others how to live their lives, I think to myself, 'You haven't even lived your life. How do you know?' 'I can tell you because I have been there, and I have done it. You have to go through a lot to be able to help others.' |

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A photograph of an underground tunnel with brick walls and a barred window. The tunnel is dimly lit, with a warm glow from a window at the top. The walls are made of rough, textured brick. A window with metal bars is visible at the top center. The tunnel leads to a brighter area in the distance.

# BUENOS AIRES: IN QUEST OF THE BLIND PIG

by LINDA BLAIR

This beguiling and intoxicating city creates an atmosphere of excitement combined with a little mystery, due to its multiple layers of history. Buenos Aires, Argentina stands waiting to be explored and explore I did! I couldn't wait to start peeling back the layers to see what could be found beneath it all.

The city's remarkable architecture abounds with a fusion of Colonial, Baroque, Neo-Gothic, Art Deco, Art-Nouveau and a sprinkling of French and Italian thrown into the mix. The structural designs here are definitely eye-catching. Historic sites and monuments are spread across this sprawling and colourful city that never sleeps. You can experience everything from gourmet meals in 5-star restaurants, to simple yet tasty food in coffee shops and sidewalk cafés that buzz with excitement.

Shopping comes in all styles of chic and elegance to sporty and casual. There's no shortage of museums, live theatres and clubs. Of course, the unmistakable sound of the rhythmic Latin beat can be heard and felt almost everywhere. This city appears to have it all. However, there's still one area that remains cloaked in mystery. Subterranean tunnels.

Hidden below the bustling streets and boulevards of Buenos Aires, you can find an underground labyrinth of tunnels where history and myth co-exist. Sections of this network of tunnels were once meant to be used as an escape route by some but were also utilized as a secret hide-away for undisclosed establishments.

Today, small segments of these mysterious and mythical passageways have been opened to the public for viewing. Nevertheless, there are still some clandestine businesses that continue to carry on trade deep within these tunnels, yet remain veiled even today.

I had heard whisperings of a "Blind Pig" being located

somewhere beneath these streets, and a Blind Pig is what I set out in search of in this subterranean labyrinth. Recognizing it might be a difficult undertaking and accepting the possibility it would not be easily found, if at all, I was determined to give it my best effort. Knowing in advance that this covert operation wasn't listed on any day-tripper's itinerary, made it all the more enthralling.

Most of the underground tunnels are concentrated in San Telmo, founded in 1536 and recognized as the oldest part of the original settlement of Buenos Aires. For this reason, San Telmo is considered to be the portal to an intricate underground labyrinth. It was here that a sizable mansion was built in 1830 and lived in by a wealthy family along with their six slaves, until a wave of yellow fever swept through the area in the late 1800s.

The mansion then sat abandoned for about 30 years until it was eventually used as a tenement building. Ultimately however, it was once again deserted and sat in a neglected state until it was purchased in 1985 by a man who had dreams of opening a 5-star restaurant. When one of the patios began to sink in this 20-room mansion, now more than 150 years old, one of the most significant and unexpected archeological sites in Buenos Aires was discovered.

An entryway that led directly into the past revealed that this particular two km stretch of tunnel was built around 1780. With a vaulted ceiling and broad passageway, many questions arose as to what purpose it may have been used for.

ABOVE | Part of the mansion that is now the El Zanjón de Granados Museum.  
RIGHT | Underground tunnels. TOC | The Blind Pig. Photos: Linda Blair

Archeologists eventually determined it was constructed as an intricate drainage system through a deep ravine. Its original design was intended to divert a small stream that continuously overflowed and ran directly through the city streets during heavy rains. This tunnel rerouted the polluted runoff, which included farm animal waste, to the outskirts of the city. Not nearly as romantic a story as I had envisioned.

After 20 years of renovations, this magnificent and beautifully restored mansion that sits above the tunnels, now exhibits numerous objects found during excavations that took place in the tunnels below. The love and care that went into the restoration is evident as you walk through the wide passageways with soft lighting that beautifully illuminates the 200-year-old exposed brick and clay walls.



Many of the older generation of San Telmo residents have memories of this underground world with its secret tunnels and passageways and were, therefore, not surprised by the discovery. This mansion now named the El Zanjón de Granados Museum, was the first stop in my search for the Blind Pig I had heard rumours of.

Another section of tunnels uncovered is believed to have been built by Jesuit priests from Spain who arrived in the late 16th century. A mission was soon established (Manzana de las Luces) in this area, with the intent of converting the populace to Catholicism. However, the priests were not warmly welcomed, and their teachings were resisted.

With brewing conflict, it is believed the Jesuit priests contributed greatly to what was originally meant as an escape route to safety, in case of an attack on their churches, priests or parishioners. Allegedly, the Jesuit tunnels were intended to link all the city's churches to this escape route.

However, very little documented evidence has been found to authenticate or refute the purpose of these undisclosed tunnels. It's not surprising. After all, they were meant to be kept a secret for the safety of their priests and followers.

Many parts of the intricate passageway and tunnel system below the streets are assumed to have been lost. It is said the expansion of the subway system contributed greatly to this loss, as did bulldozing construction crews working on other projects. Much of it is believed to have simply been lost to the hands of time and deterioration. These inexplicable tunnels with all their folklore and mystery continue to fascinate people from all four points of the compass.

Not finding the "Blind Pig" in these sections of tunnels, my search continued. With a fresh start, my quest began with what turned out to be some vague and rather insufficient directions. However, after a couple of U-turns and ultimately asking for directions more than once from some of the locals on the street, I was eventually able to find what I was looking for.

To my delight it was everything I had hoped for, intriguing, atmospheric and mysterious. Finally, I had found the establishment I had been combing the streets for, or at least I hoped I had.

Stepping through the doorway of the small shop, the tinkling of the bell above the door alerted an employee that someone had entered the premises. My confidence began to sag slightly as I pondered whether or not I had indeed found the correct storefront.

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Timidly, I told the young lady I wished to purchase a beverage. She smiled and said, “Follow me” as she opened the large door to the walk-in cooler containing flowers. I followed closely behind. At the far end, the floor opened to some L-shaped stairs that descended to a hidden underground room, and there standing before me in all its former glory, was the Blind Pig I had been earnestly searching for.

Dimly lit, this long, slightly curved, and cavernous brick-walled tunnel, was lined along the outer wall with tables filled with patrons while on the left side was an equally long bar where the clientele sat shoulder to shoulder. Bartenders behind the bar were feverishly making cocktails for the packed house.

Blind Pig, Gin Joint or Speakeasy, as some would call them, was once a secret meeting place for important and high-ranking officials, and sometimes used as a rendezvous by secret lovers. These restricted environments were accessible to only a select few. Entrance to these establishments required either a password, special handshake or business card passed from person to person.

These clandestine meeting places were most often hidden behind a secret or false door. I learned from Fernando (a young waiter here) that there are still a few of these hidden bars around the city that were once illicit establishments. These Retro-style bars replicate historical aspects of the speakeasies of yesteryear and are disguised in several unique and creative ways. Indeed, I was thrilled to have found this elusive little piggy!

Mystery and myth continue to swirl about these underground tunnels even today, and stories about sections of undiscovered passageways pop up in the news periodically as new discoveries are unearthed. So, if you ever find yourself walking the streets and avenues of Buenos Aires, take a moment to consider what might be concealed beneath your feet; it may surprise you. |

*For IF YOU GO information, visit [www.seniorlivingmag.com/articles/underground-labyrinth-buenos-aires](http://www.seniorlivingmag.com/articles/underground-labyrinth-buenos-aires)*

**Linda Blair** is a Freelance Travel Writer & Photographer.



## JUNE & JOHN

June and John enjoy dancing, cheek-to-cheek, as if they’ve been doing it for the past 50 years.

But they only got together five years ago, when she was 80 and he was 82.

John, widowed after 58 years of marriage, and June, divorced, had known about each other through a mutual friend and neighbour. That they happened to live five minutes apart on foot, in the same Vancouver neighbourhood, made it easier for them to then start seeing each other and spending time together.

It was June who first reached out to John, on the nudging of her daughter and their neighbour, sometime after John was widowed.

“I knew he liked to dance,” she says, “and so do I.” Their neighbourhood Community Centre, also nearby, offered afternoon ballroom dancing socials, so June took the chance and invited John to a Saturday afternoon event.

“I was at loose ends,” says John, “so I said yes.” It turned out to be a fun afternoon of both dancing and socializing with other seniors. “He was funny,” says June.

Then one social activity together led to the next, and their getting-to-know-each-other naturally progressed after that.

“It just clicked,” says John. “We have a lot in common.”

That included their British origins. June grew up in Kent, and John in Surrey, before they each ended up in Western Canada. “We understood each other’s background,” they concur. “And we enjoy British films.”

Later into their relationship, which had taken on a life of its own, June and John learned they also shared similar family tragedies. This mutual experience bonded them further.

“My daughter accepted him right away,” says June, referring to the daughter who encouraged her in the first place. “It took my daughter a while longer,” adds John, whose daughter lives in the UK, and, given the distances between them, needed a bit of time to get to know June.

A retired engineer, John still works a couple of mornings a week driving local deliveries for a neighbourhood business. “It keeps me going,” he says. “It’s important to stay active.”

Both agree that they’re still having lots of fun at their age. “He’s an absolute treasure,” says June, as she slides her arm into his. “He’s a keeper,” she adds, as John gives her hand an acknowledging squeeze. |


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# BEING BOLD REVISITED



by LAURIE MUELLER

People talked to me about their bold moves after I wrote a column about being bold in the May 2022 issue of *INSPIRED* magazine. Richard Wong sent me an email and suggested that he could talk about the boldness he had incorporated into his life after he retired.

Once upon a time, Richard was a government employee dealing with finances and contracts, but now he is retired and creating art and teaching others how to create art. “Oh well, you probably think, he must have been talented from birth.” Here is the story:

Richard retired and, like many others when they retire, looked around for a hobby to keep him occupied. He decided to try an art class at the local recreation centre. He enjoyed it. He learned about something he had no idea about before, so he took another course, and then another, and another.

One day, the coordinator at the Rec Centre asked Richard, “Will you teach a course for us?” That is when the “boldness” clicked in.

“Teach? I don’t know enough.”

“Oh, but yes, you do, you have taken so many courses, and are using them. People will benefit from what you have learned.”

And Richard, with hands a’tremblin’ taught his first class. “Be gentle with me,” he said. “I’m new at this.” And he loves what he is doing. From hobby to full-time profession, Robert Wong was bold enough to (a) learn something new and (b) take a step further to teach others.

Richard is now a professional wildlife artist and teacher. He teaches people water colour on Japanese art paper. When we talked on the phone, he told me that the more you practice your art, the better you get.

Many people believe a person’s talent is given to them, and those people have the ability from birth. Sure, some people may be that way. But most of us, even with talent, need to take time and practice our craft. The more we do, the better we get. Richard tells his students, practice what you learn and then practice some more. You will improve each time.

During the pandemic, like many creative entrepreneur’s, Richard began teaching his courses online. This has opened the world to his talent and knowledge. He told me that art can help us relax, de-stress and promote a greater sense of community as well as feelings of well-being. Richard was able to bring this kind of relief to people who wanted to practice art during a time when we all had to stay home.

Our boldness can come from stepping out into something new, being brave enough to put ourselves in a position that we may not feel comfortable. Sometimes listening to the call of someone else, who sees something in us that we haven’t yet discovered is just the nudge (ok the hard push) that we need to discover we can be more than we knew we could.

Too old? I think not! We are never too old to try something new. To practice being bold. After all, as Richard says, the more we practice something, the better we get at it.

Now he has a full-time career, a website and internet classes. And he is living his passion. Bold? You bet! |

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



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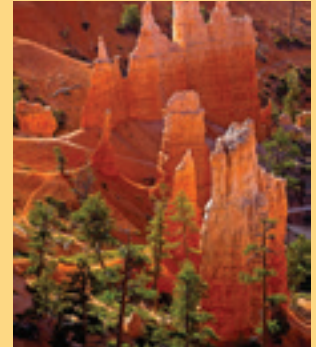
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