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When I’m asked what I like to do in my spare time, reading a good book is at the top of the list. Having read and enjoyed prior works of Dr. Atul Gawande, surgeon and author, I was eager to see what his latest book, *Being Mortal*, had to teach me. I was not disappointed.

Drawing on his own experience with patients and his father who had a tumor of the spine, Dr. Gawande describes his personal and professional struggle to accept that patients cannot always be cured and in coming to terms with his inability to “fix” all problems. His stories bring to light the value and reward to both health providers and their patients that stems from a focus on comfort and quality of life in the time remaining.

While I’ve seen many improvements over the years with the growth of palliative care and hospice, the reality is that often patients are not getting the help needed to make the transition from aggressive treatment of their disease to care focused on comfort and quality of life. Too often the default favors treatments over care, longevity of life over quality of life, and, in the elderly, patient safety over their independence and autonomy.

As Dr. Gawande suggests, hospice caregivers inquire “How would you define a good quality of life” and rather than asking “What’s the matter?” we ask “What matters to you?” It’s amazing how that starting point helps both patient and our hospice team clarify what the goals of their care will be.

At Harbor Hospice we also train our staff to listen, listen, listen. We start with what the patient’s understanding is of their situation and move from there. Their goals become our goals… whether it’s to die at home surrounded by family; to be kept comfortable; or to reach a milestone such as an anniversary or the birth of a grandchild. We join together with them as their hope is transformed by coming to terms with being mortal.

In addition to being a wonderful physician, Dr. Gawande is a great writer. I’m confident that you’ll agree and will be surprised to find a book on this topic to be a “page turner” and one that brings into focus important considerations for how we care for the frail elderly and those with life-limiting illnesses.

Mary Anne Gorman is the Executive Director of Harbor Hospice in Muskegon and surrounding counties.
“Fifteen two, fifteen four. That’s all there is. There ain’t no more,” said my Dad, as he moved his peg four holes forward on the cribbage board.

The scene was nearly always the same -- people sitting around the kitchen table -- often at night, but during the day on weekends or holidays. The “usual” players were my brother Jim, my Dad, cousin Howard, Uncle Jim, Uncle Bill and me.

This was some of the entertainment we enjoyed in a rural Upper Peninsula household during the 1950s. Uncle Jim used a drill press to make several cribbage boards from an old oak table leaf. Pegs, made from a brazing rod, were stored in a hole in the side of the board and covered by a small piece of tin can held by a small screw.

“Looks like a 19 hand to me,” Uncle Jim might say, trying to suppress a grin as the other player continued to survey his cards, attempting to come up with a combination that would total 15. (For the uninitiated, 19 is an impossible score, equal to zero.)

The men would often have a couple of beers during the games and maybe a “bump” or two from the Seagram’s 7 bottle. The boys would drink Orange Crush from ribbed brown bottles. Sometimes mom or grandma would make some popcorn in a large kettle on the stove.

During games, the men often retold escapades of their younger years, providing much delight for us kids. This happened only when the women were not in the kitchen. Now that I think about it, I'm not sure the games were all that important. It may have been just being together that made it worthwhile. It was always the best two out of three, and then a challenger took on the winner for the next two or three games. If there were at least six players available, we played in teams of two.

“Well, let’s see if we can skunk you guys again.”

No scores were written down, but some previous game results might be brought up later. Most often, this was after having been skunked or -- heaven forbid -- DOUBLE SKUNKED. On a one-to-one basis, past failings were not usually mentioned, but if you’d played “partners,” that was different, as much ribbing took place.

When finished counting up points, someone might say, “Have you got all you want?” That meant you had missed some points and it was probably dad telling his son to do a recount. Other opponents would just say, “And I’ll take two points for nubs.” (If the Jack in a person’s hand matched the suit of the card turned up on the deck, it was “Nubs,” good for two points, and often overlooked.)

It was fun back then. There was some strategy involved when deciding which cards to discard when it was your “crib.” Near the end of the game it was important to keep good “pegging” (low numbered) cards. These were some elements of the game we liked to play.

That was part of how we “stood it.” “Grandpa, how could you stand it without TV, CDs and iPods?”

The cribbage board followed me to college, but usually stayed in a drawer. There were too many other things to do. In years to come, it became tough to find anyone who knew how to play the game. The board now rests in a corner of a desk drawer where it has been stored, unused, for many years.

“Fifteen two, fifteen four, five, six, seven and a pair makes nine. Gotcha.”

Nothing seemed better at the time.

Jerry, a Ford Motor Company retiree, has had many stories published in newspapers and magazines. Besides freelance writing, he enjoys working on old cars.
We made a last minute stop at the North Muskegon Meijers store the other day when my wife needed to pick up a couple of things. I stayed in the car while she went in the store. As I sat there waiting for Pam, I couldn’t help but think of all the changes to this area.

I was about three years old when we moved to this area by Reeths Puffer Schools. Our house was on Holton Road and the cross streets were Edna and Pappas Road. Edna is a street and Pappas is a road. So what makes a road different from a street? Hmmm… Edna and Pappas were dirt roads and I remember the oil truck pouring some type of oil to keep the dust down. Parts of the road would actually harden by all the oil. It wasn’t a gravel road I would say, but a plain old dirt road.

It was the spring of 1951 when my parents bought a new house on Holton Road. Before moving there we lived on Superior Street & E Holbrook, very close to Laketon and Getty Street where a barber shop called Charm’s was located. Today a variety store sits there.

As I continued to wait, again, my mind kept wandering and I wondered what my mother would say today with all the changes in the area. She passed away in 1975 at the age of 50. I couldn’t help but think of all the changes in the last 45 years.

When we first moved to Holton Road, the Reeths-Puffer school system was from kindergarten through sixth grade. Beyond sixth grade, students went to North Muskegon or Muskegon High Schools. In the fall 1958, Reeths-Puffer High School opened and the first class graduated in 1959.

From my parents’ house to the school was .9 miles. I was close enough to walk. The route I traveled was down Edna and across Becker Road into the woods, taking a well-traveled path to school, which was shorter, I think. There was nothing on the corner of N. Getty and Holton Rd at that time.

If you needed to purchase a few groceries items you would go to a little store called Harold’s, across the street from East Muskegon Roofing. (I think that was the name in the early 50’s.) Later, the grocery store expanded and a new store was built on the southeast corner between Holton and Becker Roads by N. Getty. It was a bigger store and carried many more products.

As the area was grew in population it was soon time for the grocery store to be expanded. A new store was built next door to the east and a variety store took the place of the old grocery store. There would be one more expansion for Harold’s Super Market. I remember when there was a hamburger sale at Harold’s—three pounds for 99 cents. Now with the price of grass so high we are lucky to get a pound of hamburger for three bucks. A little jocularity, thank you.

Becker’s wood extended from Roberts Rd, Giles Rd, N. Getty St to Becker Rd. In the 1950’s there were no houses that I can remember in the Becker woods area, with the exception of the Becker house on the corner of North Getty and Becker. A long driveway ran into the woods to the house.

Across the street of N Getty was the fire department. My dad was a volunteer fireman during the 1950’s. Down Giles Road at the corner of Holton Road was Hoppa’s, another grocery store, and towards Naph-Sol on Holton Rd. were a gas station and Freshway Market. Today the area is much different, and it has grown since the 1950’s. From Naph-Sol (later Zephyr) east to U.S.31 there were no more than a few businesses. But today many businesses flourish.

I mentioned Charm Barbershop earlier. Well, down the road from our house toward the east, on the corner of River and Holton Roads, was Bill’s Barber Shop. I think that was nine-tenths of a mile from home, too. I remember the long walk down Holton Road with trees on both the north and south sides. Quite a hike for such a small boy…that’s my story and I’m sticking with it!

You may reach Keith at rightseat625bg@gmail.com Keith enjoys writing, photography, flying, cooking and living in downtown Muskegon.
This Little Light of Mine

I live in one of West Michigan’s many condo neighborhoods on a street with twelve homes. Each of us has an identical brick lamppost outside our front door which automatically lights a quaint lamp in the evening. These are controlled not by timers but by individual light sensors.

The thing is, I’ve never noticed any two lampposts turning on at exactly the same time, though several of the twelve experience the same amount of oncoming darkness. One neighbor’s lamp in particular is the first to turn on every night and the last to shut off every morning, by several minutes. Indeed, sometimes an overcast sky in the middle of the day is enough to trigger its illumination.

Obviously, its sensor is unusually sensitive. I’ve wondered how much electricity it uses, especially since I’m not sure if it’s billed to my neighbor or to the association -- which includes me! At least that’s what I used to wonder about until I began thinking of it differently.

Figuratively speaking, each of us is the guardian of a personal lamppost that’s capable of recognizing when darkness encroaches. It prompts us to dispel the darkness by casting our light onto a situation. Like the lamps along my street, our sensors differ from individual to individual. However, unlike my neighborhood, it’s a good thing for our sensor to be especially sensitive and responsive. A very good thing.

Even though there may be several tasks that aging prevents me from doing, I want to be someone who senses another person’s hurt or discouragement and who shines a positive word on their circumstances. I want to be someone who senses a struggle and brightens it with an offer of practical help. I want to discern appropriate opportunities to counter untruth or wrongdoing. I want to do all of this wherever I happen to be in the course of a day, whether among family, friends, or strangers. And, I want to do it as faithfully as my neighbor’s lamppost.

What would stop me? Am I afraid it will cost me something? Some slowing down, some noticing of others, some sacrificing of self, some risk? Am I afraid that people will think I’m quicker than everyone else to interject light? Am I afraid of it feeling odd to be the only lamp that’s lit? Am I afraid I’ll make a mistake and shine when it’s not really necessary?

As I watch eleven other lampposts on my street follow one lamp’s example by eventually shedding their light every evening, I can’t help but think I’d rather lead than follow in real-life situations. When I encounter someone needing a smile or a word or a hand, I want to lead the way in offering it. And, maybe all the lampposts that I see on a daily basis will serve as my reminder.

Judy Brown is the Resource Coordinator for Care Services of Evergreen in Holland. You may reach her at 616-355-5118 or jbrown@evergreencommons.org

By Judy Brown
When winter hits West Michigan, Tanglewood Park opens its facility for practice a few months prior to the big show in February. This show is Dancing with the Local Stars.

Francine Sagan Kilcrease (Pro) is the Fitness Specialist for AgeWell Services. Fran has been a part of Dancing with the Local Stars (DWTLS) since it was started seven years ago by the Women’s Division of the Muskegon Chamber of Commerce. She helps choreograph opening and closing numbers for the group as well as her own routine. The theme for 2015 was Mardi Gras, and the crowd got into the act with masks and beads.

Each year 12 PRO dancers are paired with STARS. There are four performances with 400 people at each, and it sells out quickly. The big winners are local food pantries and the Meals on Wheels program. Over seven years, this event has raised almost a half million dollars.

This year, Tanglewood Park was well represented and stole the show, bringing home multiple trophies. Francine was paired with Luke Reynolds, Executive Director of LifeCircles, also one of the partner agencies at Tanglewood Park. What a match they were. Dancing freestyle to All About that Bass, they were a crowd favorite from the start. Their dance had a little bit of everything and their personalities shown through. They were spinning, shaking it, doing flips and Luke even did the “worm.” The crowd cheered loudly encouraging them, and they did not disappoint. They were called out for repeat performances at two of four performances!

Throughout all the performances, Tanglewood Park had tables of staff, participants, family and friends to help cheer them on. It seems Tanglewood employees have many talents, as Luke and Fran’s sparkly teal costumes were made by Andrea Kozan of AgeWell Services.

Fran and Luke won Best of Show twice, Critic’s Choice and People’s Choice awards. The proceeds from the event will be announced in April. The event is co-chaired by Mary Kendall and Karen Mogdis. Can’t wait for next year! Thanks Fran and Luke for all your work and support to the community!
The Beat Goes On
Your Heart and Exercise

BY HOLLY LOOKABAUGH-DEUR
President of Generation Care

What does the word “cardio” mean to you as part of a personal fitness plan? With the volumes of “wellness” advice all around us, it is important that we sift through information and separate fact from fiction. For most older adults, the component of your exercise routine that focuses on challenging your heart muscle is perhaps the most important and most risky at the same time. Let’s look at the “aerobic” or “cardio” component of our day, with the goal of learning some simple, specific, and safe information.

Our heart is such a complex and amazing organ. With a built-in electrical control system, the heart responds to sensors that automatically sense the amount of oxygen and carbon dioxide in our blood. The heart automatically adjusts to changes in posture, emotion, physical demand, and even weather, and it happens every minute, every day, without even a conscious thought. Simply remarkable! It never rests, and is arguably the most important muscle in our bodies. So what is the best way to take care of it?

Our health is determined by many factors; some we can control; some we cannot. We can’t change our genetics – the inherent chromosomal makeup that is uniquely just YOU. Depending on which expert you talk to, genetics may control your propensity to heart and circulatory disease, as well as how you respond to exercise and diet regimens. A “healthy heart” diet will be discussed in future columns. One of the reasons your physician asks about your family history is so he/she can determine what risks may be impacting your health that you cannot control.

Focusing on what you can do, let’s discuss how to make our heart muscle strong and responsive. Cardiac muscle cells are different from skeletal muscle cells, but fundamentally, our heart is still a muscle. Back in the 1980’s and 1990’s, according to the American College of Sports Medicine, we were directed to a formula that tells how “hard” our heart should work to gain the benefits of exercise. First, using the formula of 220 – (minus) your age, determine your Maximum Heart Rate (MHR). So if you are 70, your MHR is 150. According to researchers, this is the maximum heart rate that can effectively sustain oxygen delivery to all tissues without compromise. We don’t want to exercise at this level. For people over 65, the recommended percentage of MHR for cardiac exercise is 60% of our MHR. Next, let’s figure out how hard your heart should work to receive the “cardio” benefit. If you are 70 years old this number is 90 beats per minute – that is the recommended exercise heart rate for exercise.

Hmmm… Let’s think about that. Many of us achieve that level walking up a simple flight of stairs! Do we really need formulas to figure out how much and how hard to be physically working to obtain benefit to our heart? According to leading experts in the geriatric research world today, use of the maximum heart rate formula is just no longer the gold standard for implementing effective programming for older adults. The two words that are most emphasized in the literature are FREQUENCY and CONTINUOUS when it comes to working the heart. Specifically, if an adult over 65 wants to improve cardiac health, simply move continuously (such as walking at a good pace) for 20-30 minutes, 3-4 times per week or more frequently. Yes, it really is that simple. You may not need to monitor your heart rate; rather, self-assessed levels of “perceived exertion” are recommended as a guideline. Borg was the first researcher to define Perceived Exertion, teaching patients to rank how hard they are working on a number scale 6-20. This scale correlated to heart rate and effort, and was designed for adults under the age of 65. Over time, it has been modified for all ages and SIMPLIFIED. A scale of 0 – 10 was created. Recommendations for healthy, older adults during cardiac activity are to maintain about a 3-4 level of effort for 20-30 minutes, 3-4 times a week.

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<tr>
<th>Borg</th>
<th>Rating Perceived Exertion Scale</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>Nothing at all</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>Very, very weak (just noticeable)</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>Very weak</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>Maximal</td>
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Here is the most important paragraph of this article… NO TWO PEOPLE are exactly alike, and if you have a history of heart conditions such as atrial fibrillation, cardiac valve issues, arteriosclerosis, right or left side heart failure, hypertension, myocardial infarction or angina, your “cardio” exercises should absolutely be discussed with your physician, exercise physiologist, and/or physical therapist. Sustained movement and cardiac challenge is important for every single person, but understanding any limitations and parameters is critical to safety. Even the amount of water you drink during and after exercise may need to be discussed. Better safe than sorry – always. On the flip side, don’t be afraid to get good advice at any age and start moving more. Your bones, muscles, arteries and veins, heart, lungs, balance, skin, and even your BRAIN will directly benefit from increased blood flow. If there was one piece of sound advice I would issue to anyone in our community who asks me about heart health it would be this – go outside (safely-use a wheeled walker if you need it for balance) and walk and breathe deeply for 20 minutes every day. Keep increasing as you are able – stride length, distance, time, speed, and frequency – and see new things in the world around you! Enjoy springtime and walk tall!!

Holly Lookabough-Deur, PT, DSc, GCS, is a Board Certified Geriatric Clinical Specialist and Physical Therapist and owns Generation Care, PLC.
Q: Are falls something older adults really need to worry about?

Holly: Our fatal fall rate in West Michigan is 76 percent higher than in the rest of the state. It is one of the things Mercy Health Muskegon is digging into. Why are we so much higher than the rest of the state? Is it maybe a medication that has been prescribed or something else? We want to find out just what is going on.

Dr. Thomas: Medications are one of the first things we review. The effects of medications on older adults can be very different than on younger adults. Older adults can be more prone to dizziness. Sometimes I’m able to address it immediately when I see a patient. If not, I send them to the team of pharmacists we work with to see if falls may be due to a drug interaction.

Q: Why are falls such a serious risk?

Dr. Thomas: It’s not like when you were a child: You fell, dusted yourself off and got up. When you fall as an older adult, the risk of breaking a hip is quite high due to thinning of the bones, particularly the hipbones. It’s not just the risk of breaking a hip that is of concern; it is the recovery from surgery. You are more bedridden and can’t do as much, you get weaker and you are prone to pressure ulcers. Breaking a hip has a high mortality risk with it. Head injuries, which can result in a serious brain injury or death, are another serious risk.

Q: Are other risks from falls besides serious injury?

Dr. Thomas: When some older adults fall and then subsequently deal with the consequences of even a minor fall, they become afraid to move and start to restrict their activities. This can lead to reduced socializing, which can lead to a decreased ability to do physical activities. The less people socialize and the less active they are, the worse cognitive impairment can become.

Q: Are there fall prevention programs?

Holly: Mercy Health is offering the “A Matter of Balance” class. We try to get people to talk about the fear of falling and talk about ways to minimize their risks, about ways they can become more active and really take control. There are things you can do to prevent falling. It is important that older adults understand that there are a lot of things they can do. We are training 15 new coaches from the Health Project at Mercy Health to help with the class year ‘round. A Matter of Balance classes are held at from 2 to 4 p.m. on Tuesdays at the Mercy Heart Center, 1212 E. Sherman Blvd. Each 8-week session costs $10. Scholarships are available. To learn more call (231) 672-4910.

Q: Dr. Thomas, what steps do you take as a physician to help your patients reduce the risk of falls?

Dr. Thomas: Whenever I talk to patients, I talk about falls assessment. We assess not only how they get up out of a chair and how they walk, but I also ask them if they have a cane or a walker. You’d be surprised how many of my patients are unstable but choose not to use their walker or their cane. I tell them, “You want to think of your walker or your cane as your third leg. That means every time you go somewhere, that thing needs to be in your hands and you have got to use it.” And, even if they are using a cane or walker, I ask if it has been properly adjusted by a physical therapist. This is just one example of what we talk about with patients to try to reduce their risk of falls.

You can submit your questions to Mercy Health Physician Partners Geriatrics by calling 231-672-6740.
Scams and ID Theft Trends

BY MARTY MILLER WITH THE MICHIGAN STATE POLICE

1. COMPUTER REPAIR SERVICES: Someone contacts you and informs you that there is a problem with your computer. They offer to fix the problems or look into your computer to verify repairs that need to be made. They either state up front that there is a fee, or after they go through the computer, inform you it will cost a certain amount to fix the problems.
   If you did not contact them to make the repairs, it is most likely a scam to gain your personal information or extort money from you.

2. SWEETHEART SCAM: Due to being lonely or seeking companionship, you become involved online with an individual you have never met face-to-face.
   After some time, this individual wishes to meet with you and asks for money to arrange the meet, or they ask for money to pay for medical or other bills due to their being in a negative financial situation.
   If you do not know them personally and for a very long period of time, they could just be wishing to extort money from you.

3. PACKAGE DELIVERY: A stranger contacts you, informing you that a package needs to be delivered and needs to be signed for. Once at your doorstep with package in hand, they state that a small delivery fee needs to be paid for and you can only pay with a credit card. You would need to swipe your card, enter your P.I.N., and sign for the parcel. The fee is very small, maybe a couple of dollars.
   If you did not seek out their services or request the delivery, it could be a scam to gain your financial records or personal identity. Victims have found several thousands of dollars in charges made against their accounts or personal identification stolen.

4. FAMILY MEMBER IN NEED: A family member or close friend supposedly is in desperate need of funds due to a medical need, financial need, or legal reason. They state that they need you to send funds to them immediately or else terrible things will happen.
   Verify who, what, when, where, and why this is occurring and where the funds are intended to go. Contact the receiver of the funds from a direct phone number you find, and verify the need for the funds. It is most likely a scam due to the urgency of the request.

5. I.R.S./TREASURY DEPT. SCAM: You receive a message from an individual claiming to be with the I.R.S. or the Treasury Department. They have conducted an investigation into your past tax filings and they need you to contact them ASAP. As a result of the investigation, they have discovered that a mistake has been made and that you owe monies, and the funds need to be paid immediately.
   If you have not been contacted ahead of time by letter or personal service, this is most likely a scam. These agencies do not work this way.

IMMEDIATELY CONTACT THE POLICE IF YOU FEEL THERE IS IMMEDIATE THREAT TO YOUR WELL-BEING

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ger better is our promise to you. Let's continue to get better together.

When your loved ones are sick or hurt, there's just one thing you want for them; to get better.

And at North Ottawa Community Health System (NOCHS), that's exactly what we offer—better health, better service and better, more personalized care.

Getting better also happens throughout our community. The quality of care we provide is not limited to the walls of our facilities.

While we are helping people GET better in our hospital, we are working tirelessly to help people LIVE better in our community.

At the same time, we are getting better as a health system. We are better at helping you heal and stay well while providing a coordinated care experience at our many facilities throughout the area.

To learn more, please visit: nochgetbetter.com
MEALS...
AgeWell Services announces new center in Ravenna! Meals on Wheels have been delivered in Ravenna for several years and now we are excited to open a location for an on-site gathering. On the 2nd Tuesday of each month, you will find more than 80 older adults enjoying some activities, learning something new and socializing over a great lunch. The group is located in the First Ravenna Church at 3327 Mortimer Street. The next lunches will be held on May 12, June 9 and July 14. Reservations for the lunches are suggested by noon the Thursday beforehand. Call (231) 853-6621 and leave names of attendees and a phone number. “It is a great group of people. A lot of laughter, catching up with neighbors and just a good time,” according to Rhonda Fisher, from AgeWell Services. If anyone is interested in volunteering at this location or at any location, please call Mary at (231) 733-8641.

Join us for our annual Summer Kickoff Cook Out! The Café is hosting its annual Summer Kickoff Cook Out on May 27 from 11:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m. We will be grilling out on the patio. There will be hot dogs and burgers potato salad, baked beans, fruit salad, and strawberry shortcake!

MOTION...
Pickleball for Seniors – 4 indoor courts at Fellowship Senior Center at 4220 Apple Avenue open for play every MONDAY at 9:30 a.m. Call Kris at (231) 788-4783 for more information. This is open to anyone of any skill level. If you want to come and just watch, come and learn or come and compete – with 4 courts, you can do it all! Soup and Salad Lunch available at 11:30 a.m. (no reservations needed).

Construction Specials for Wellness Classes and Monthly memberships available! Not sure where to start in your fitness program? Stop in and meet with our certified trainer and staff who can help you. We offer all levels of fitness programs from sitting to weight lifting and everything in between. We are small enough to know your name and help you, but large enough to have many options to work out on equipment and in classes. Drop in and visit us at Tanglewood Park at 560 Seminole Road in Muskegon today.

MORALE...
FREE Blood Pressure checks – drop in at Tanglewood Park every MONDAY from 9:30 a.m. – Noon!

Foot Care – Nail trim, massage, lotion and polish for only $10! Every FRIDAY from 8:40 a.m.-12:20 p.m. Call the Wellness Office at (231) 733-8643 to schedule an appointment today.

Free Legal Advice – 1st and 3rd Thursday of every month, call (231) 733-8643 for an appointment.
Outside + You = Happy/Healthy Life

After a frigid winter that left us all stuck inside for far too long, our much-awaited spring brings us many excuses to get outside and enjoy the fresh air. The outdoor world gives us many opportunities to be well without a large investment of time or money. Outdoor activities are so much more fun and provide significantly more benefits. These benefits include:

Ease of Use

Outdoor activities are often free or very inexpensive. You can walk right outside your front door and instantly have one of the most diverse and fun “health facilities” in the world. You can lace up your tennis shoes and go for a walk. You can throw on a helmet and take a bike ride. You can pull on your gloves to do some gardening. All of which require very little money. The best part, you can do it anytime. Outside never closes (except during a lightning storm, of course).

Improvements in Physical Health

Being outdoors provides unique and extraordinary variation in “exercise” elements that will challenge you in ways that translate to better health internally and externally. Exercising outside can significantly improve your balance, stamina and body composition while reducing your risk of disease. And all of this happens while doing fun activities that don’t feel like work. The uneven ground when you hike in the woods or on the beach will help you with balance and joint stability. Getting up and down while doing gardening will strengthen your legs and core. Beyond the musculoskeletal system, being active outside reduces your risk of diseases, such as heart disease and diabetes.

Improvements in Mental Health

Being outside positively affects your mental health in a few ways. For one thing, exposure to fresh air, gentle wind and sunlight elevates your mood in general. Secondly, the vitamin D you absorb through sun exposure increases the hormones responsible for mood elevation. Finally, the accomplishments you achieve outdoor increase your self-esteem and your sense of overall exhilaration and joy. As a side bonus, when you exercise outdoors with friends, the increase in the bonds of friendship that ensue gives you a greater sense of connection to the world around you.

Keep these suggestions in mind when participating in outdoor activities:

• Start out with something safe and simple such as walking on the many local bike paths.
• Dress appropriate for the activity and the weather.
• Let others know your planned route and bring a cell phone with you in case of emergencies.

Try some of these activities:

• Utilize our bike paths. They are safe and easy terrain.
• Utilize Michigan’s hiking trails. But, be sure to let someone know where you intend to go.
• Walk our many beaches and piers.
• Try fun water sports such as kayaking and paddle boarding (SUP).
• Check out the West Michigan Outdoor Group “WEMOG”. They are a group of older adult outdoor enthusiasts.
• Do some gardening.
• Try cross-country skiing, snowshoeing and ice-skating. The Muskegon Winter Sports Complex has great trails, provides equipment and you can hire someone to teach you.
• Try playing on an adult sports league or coaching a children’s recreation league.

Living an active outdoor life can improve your life both physically and mentally. Plus no matter your level or experience, you can find an activity that fits you. I challenge you to try something new this week. See how wonderful it is; see how much better it is than walking on a mouse wheel, I mean treadmill!

Heather David, HHP, CPT, NC is the owner of Shoreline Natural Wellness & Fitness and a passionate healthy lifestyle educator. For questions or comments, you can contact Heather at (231) 750-2525 or heather@shorelinenaturalwellness.com.
Al Schneider left us in January. He was one of those rare friends you just don’t forget. We met when he was the religion editor for The Fruitport Area News. I read his column, “From the Back Pew” and wrote him a fan letter. It said I didn’t agree with much of what he wrote but I really liked the way he wrote it. He thought we should meet. We did and he invited me to do a column of my half-baked ideas. So began fifteen years of side-by-side columns with him as the very conservative Christian in the back pew so he could escape fast if the preacher said something he didn’t like, and me as the theologically mixed up prodigal. We didn’t know if anybody read us but we had so much fun needling each other than we couldn’t quit.

Later, his writing showed up here in the Perspectives and again he said I should get on board. When I told him I didn’t have anything of value to say, he said, “That never stopped you before.” That’s the kind of banter that makes true friends like each other even more.

Al was in a lunch group that included his good friends. There was a Mormon, a Catholic, an Anglican, the Prodigal and various others joining us from time to time. For a while there was a Dominican Sister.

Everyone who knew Al has a great and often surprising story to tell. My personal favorite is something I learned about him in 2012. We were talking about poetry and it was no surprise that he pulled out a book of famous poems. There was a big one yet to come. We got into song lyrics when he revealed that his favorite was a Rodgers and Hart song, “I took one look at you, that’s all I meant to do. And then my heart stood still.” Al Schneider had a sentimental and romantic side! Who would have thought it?

Al’s friend Father Bob Shackles officiated at the funeral with stories of their strongly differing views about some issues dear to each to each of them and how it was handled with good humor. He said “Al never hurt anyone.” Did Al pray for his friends that we might come to see things of the spirit as he did? I don’t know. If he did, he did it with love.

When I think of Al Schneider I hear Bob Hope singing “Thanks for the memory.”

Clif is on Facebook and he says he writes four blogs full of half-baked ideas about lots of things. Or maybe it’s five. To read them you can e-mail him at janman30@yahoo.com.
Soul Food

Reflections upon how spiritual growth improves our health

We all look for ways to feed our soul year around, but there is just something special about the spring and summer that lifts our spirits. However, my first thought for this article made me think of … what is the essence of spiritual care?

Did you know that health care providers honor any individual as an integration of body, mind, and spirit? The Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations, now known as simply The Joint Commission, is a United States-based nonprofit organization that accredits more than 20,000 health care organizations and programs. They have set standards of care that include the care of the spirit, which recognizes that human beings are more than what one speaks, sees or feels, but also that which brings an individual hope and meaning to life.

Some time ago I read, in a nursing diagnostic manual, this definition of Spiritual Distress: “The state in which a person or group experiences (or is at risk of experiencing) a disturbance in the belief or value system that provides strength, hope, and meaning to life.” (Source: Nursing Diagnosis, Carpenito-Moyet, ©2004 Lippincott, P. 743)

The contributing factors are recognized as:
1. Physical (Serious illness, loss of body part, or loss of function)
2. Psychological (Stress, depression, or grief)
3. Situational (Job layoff, loss of home, or the death/illness of a significant other)
4. Treatment Related (Medication side-effect, risk factors in a medical procedure offered, recovery from surgery, use of blood transfusions) and
5. Moral conflicts (Abortion; divorce; beliefs opposed by family, co-workers, friends).

During my study at the Grand Rapids Dominican Center I learned that the body is not an obstacle to the soul; rather the body is at the service of the soul. This goes along with Pierre Teilhard de Chardin’s quote I have shared before, “We are not human beings having a spiritual experience; we are spiritual beings having a human experience.” I now understand that mind, body, and spirit work together, bringing us abundant living.

Here are some ways to strengthen or deepen one’s spiritual life, while at the same time enhancing one’s recovery from a wide variety of health problems:

- Get regular physical exercise.
- Become involved in a faith community.
- Express creativity through music, painting, crafts, drama, etc. (As well as listen to or spend time appreciating).
- Create a network of supportive, positive, spiritual persons.
- Give yourself to some volunteer endeavor.
- Enjoy good humor.
- Spend time enjoying nature outdoors.
- Develop a habit of regular prayer and meditation.
- Become involved in a prayer/support group where you can share your needs and concerns. Study groups are good too.
- Explore God’s leading in your life with a Spiritual Director.
- Spend time on a Spiritual Retreat.
- Visit a bookstore or library, and ask to see the section on Spirituality. Today there are many authors from which to choose.
- Practice Proverbs 3:5 & 6

The meaning and joy that flow from developing our spiritual potential is described as a feeling of oneness, contentment, inner peace, unity, harmony, wholeness, and a felt connection with God. Most importantly, discernment comes to one’s decisions, and balance to all one’s life.

Soul Food is written by Rev. Gil Boersma, M.Div., a Board Certified Chaplain and retired pastor with extensive experience in healthcare chaplaincy. He continues to pursue experiences and education to deepen his spiritual life, and practices Spiritual Direction with individuals and groups upon request. He can be reached by sending a text to, or calling (231) 557-5640.

MAY | JUNE 2015

15

SENIOR PERSPECTIVES
When I discovered that the pharmacy at the southeast corner of Getty and Holton was torn down, I took its demolition as an affront. The missing building upset the landscape of my memory, leaving one less tangible place to anchor the last days of Barry’s life in Muskegon. In 1967, Barry and I sat on swivel stools at Wansten’s Pharmacy and drank Cherry Cokes. The pharmacy became a place made sacred by a final communion between brothers.

During my absence, Muskegon replaced the pharmacy with a large Meijer that included acres of parking and a gas station. To top off the sacrilege, progress plopped a fast food restaurant near the corner. Personal memories are trumped by public commerce as it should be, I suppose. My reaction stemmed from fear that what was remembered would be lost without a physical reminder.

In 2011 my wife and I returned to live in Muskegon County after being away for 36 years. As part of our relocation we chose a medical care provider kitty-corner across from the “One Stop Shopping Store.” On my initial appointment the doctor shared results of blood work then gave a short physical examination. My health was within acceptable limits, so the doctor released me with instructions to continue what I was doing and schedule an appointment for next year.

At the checkout desk I handed my paperwork to a young woman seated in front of a computer terminal. She looked at the report then asked, “Do you have a relative that attended Holton?”

“Holton? Do you mean Holton High School?”

“Yes, my mother attended there. She knew someone named Dulyea.” It was unusual to run into strangers who pronounced our last name correctly.

At twenty years of age I left my birthplace to discover multiple variations of my surname. My favorite was spoken by a bass-baritone singer from Spain who I met at the University of Michigan. He pronounced my first name “Jewel,” with the stress on the second syllable. He spoke my last name similarly but added a long “e” sound between the I and y. “Jewel Deleeyea!” But here I was, back in Muskegon, benefiting from my older brothers who carried our surname through the same schools I attended. Would I never have to tell another person, “My last name is pronounced like a boring cheer -- a dull yay?”

The young woman said, “My mother knew a boy named Barry Dulyea.”

“That was my brother.”

I read her name tag. “Lanel, what was your mother’s name?”

“It was Workman. When I visited Washington D.C. she asked me to look for his name on the Vietnam Memorial. I took a rubbing and gave it to her.”

I nodded, regarding her warmly. I thought of Wansten’s Pharmacy and its soda fountain and other places of our youth. Gone was the Doo Drop Inn restaurant, where once we ate so much garlic bread it ruined our dinner. Barry took me to see To Sir, with Love at the Michigan Theater. It wasn’t torn down, but was remodeled then renamed. Like our shattered lives it was sustained and improved over time.

I looked into young eyes of compassion, eyes that were not born when Barry was killed and said, “Thank you for remembering.”

Joel Dulyea, a United States Army retiree, sings with three choirs, acts as business manager for the West Michigan Concert Winds, volunteers with Kids’ Food Basket in Muskegon, and is writing a memoir for his daughter.
Note from Editor: We recently lost Isabelle, but her soul lives on in her stories that she wrote for Senior Perspectives. In honor of Isabelle, we will publish the remaining stories she had submitted.

It is true that Coca-Cola began as a headache cure. In 1886 an Atlanta druggist mixed up a batch of dark syrup in a 30 gallon brass bottle hung over a backyard fire. It was an experiment of various flavors and oils to make a flavorful non-alcoholic tonic. At first was sold in drugstores as a “brain and nerve” tonic, supposed to cure sick headaches, neuralgia, hysteria and melancholy. It was packaged in green pint-size bottles to mix with water. Years ago when I was a young mother I had a child with a croupy cough that just wouldn’t quit. My friend Carol Hoffman said her doctor had recommended buying a bottle of coke syrup from the drugstore. I did buy it and it did work. I don’t know if drugstores even sell it now.

Coca Cola is a secret formula that includes extracts of African Koala nut and coca leaves, both strong stimulants. Coke was one of thousands of exotic patent medicines that sold in the 1800’s. It actually contained a trace of cocaine. It was legal back then and was considered a harmless substitute for alcohol. Some physicians even began to complain that Coca Cola was stealing their patients away. The accidental discovery of one of America’s favorite soft drinks happened when a customer came into a drugstore complaining of a terrible headache and asked for a bottle of Coke syrup. He had the druggist mix it with soda water, drank it, and pronounced it great. Coca-Cola was born!

By the 1900’s, cocaine use became controversial and the Coca Cola company decided to use only “spent coca leaves,” which is what was left after the cocaine was removed. It also stopped advertising Coke as a cure-all for headaches and other ailments.

Soon after, the company hired artists like Norman Rockwell to paint beautiful “Coke” illustrations for magazines and billboards. Sales boomed in the United States and it soon was shipped abroad. Today Coke is sold in 160 countries around the world and, while a bottle or can of Coke may no longer cure a headache, it is as American as apple pie.

My daughter Kim insists that it does cure headaches. My grandson Brian is a Coca Cola delivery man to stores within a radius of a hundred miles. He has worked for the company for many years. I personally am not fond of Coke to drink but many in my family wouldn’t be without it. I would prefer a good strong cup of tea. To each his own!!!

When my husband and I visited the Bellingrath Mansion and garden in Alabama many years ago, we found the mansion filled with Coca-Cola memorabilia. Every room of the fifteen room mansion was filled with antique furniture and every type of Coke memorabilia ever produced. In 1903 Walter Bellingrath opened a Coca-Cola franchise that covered a 100 mile radius. He handled the sales route by himself. He even walked railroad tracks between small towns when he lacked train fare. It was one of the most successful franchises in the United States.

The Bellingraths had no children but had many nieces and nephews. When someone would caution the children to be careful lest they break something, Bessie would smile and say, “Don’t worry. We have more.”

Bessie did have a heart attack at the age of 64. Walter always said the mansions and gardens were a memorial to his wife. The gardens are being maintained by the Bellingrath Morse foundation. They oversee the home (now a museum) and gardens. It benefits two churches, one Methodist and one Presbyterian, and colleges – Southwestern at Memphis, TN, Stillman in Tuscaloosa, AL, and Huntington in Montgomery, AL. Bellingrath Gardens is a beautiful place and it’s worthwhile to take a trip there. I’ve always been happy that I was able to see such an interesting and charming place.

Isabelle enjoyed reading best-seller books, her grandchildren, writing, live theater and living in the country.
Whitehall, Michigan – The 37th Annual White Lake Area Arts & Crafts Festival is expected to draw thousands of people this Father’s Day weekend, June 20-21, 2015. Goodrich Park in Whitehall is home of this favorite festival.

More than 75 talented and creative artists will participate in this very popular juried art show from 10:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. on Saturday the 20th and from 11:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. on Sunday the 21st. Those attending can purchase a variety of hand-made art and crafts such as jewelry, wood furniture, birdhouses, ceramics, items for the garden, clothing, paintings and prints, folk art, leather goods, floral designs, stained glass, signs, children’s toys, and bath items.

A great line-up of musicians will entertain the crowds throughout the weekend. The wide array of music is sure to be enjoyed by the many that come out for a great afternoon filled with food, fun, and music. For those with an appetite, a variety of food vendors will be serving pizza, hamburgers, hot dogs, corn dogs, Italian sausage, fried vegetables, elephant ears and toes, fresh squeezed lemonade, candy, root beer floats and sundaes, kettle corn and crepes. Vendors will also be offering various cuisines.

This year’s art work for the Arts & Crafts poster was created by local student. This colorful poster will be on display at local businesses around town and will be available for sale at the blue & white Chamber booth for $3.00 each.

Spend a leisurely day at this popular outdoor event which is held off the shores of White Lake and under the trees at Goodrich Park. It’s a beautiful spot to meet up with friends and neighbors you haven’t seen for a while, discover some great finds and enjoy the music and ambiance of a sunny summer day.

HarborLight Credit Union is the proud sponsor of the music and entertainment portion of this favorite fun-filled festival. For more information on the Arts and Crafts Festival events, contact the White Lake Area Chamber of Commerce at (231) 893-4585 or visit www.whitelake.org.
My dad was born in Sweden and came to the U.S. as a 20-year-old in October, 1929, the beginning of the Great Depression. His education back home had been very limited. He did have, though, a lifetime longing to learn more. One of the first things he did upon arriving in Chicago was to enroll in a city high school that had evening courses for immigrants to improve their English skills. He improved to the point where he was able to read and write English quite well and spoke with virtually no discernible accent.

Now, as I began to learn English as a child, I began to understand him more and more. He spoke using basic, understandable words. But there was a word he used frequently that I could not understand even up until I was in high school. It was not in any dictionary that I could find at that time. So, what was that word used by my dad so often? Copacetic! At the beginning, I had no idea what he was saying. “Everything is copacetic;” he’d say.

What could that possibly mean? Everything is what? Copacetic? Everything is clean…dusty…terrible…terrific? Slowly I began to understand by his usage that it meant everything is A-OK in today’s vernacular. That’s just about how today’s dictionaries define it. When is the last time you heard it used?

It’s possible that this word has created more column inches of speculation in the USA than any other apart from OK. It’s rare to the point of invisibility outside North America. People mostly became aware of it in the 1960’s as a result of the NASA space program. It’s very much a “Right Stuff” kind of word.

To quote from the Chicago Tribune on May 20, 1969: “The first stages of Apollo 10, like most of the flights that led up to it, have gone like clockwork. In the words of ground control at Houston, everything has been copacetic – a term of undeter-

Social Security helps people with kidney disease

Social Security wants to help spread the word about the importance of kidney health and what to do if you think you or a loved one has a kidney-related disability. Kidney disease prevents your kidneys from cleansing your blood to their full potential. Did you know that one out of three Americans is currently at high risk for developing kidney disease? According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 20 million Americans have chronic kidney disease, and most of them don’t even know it.

Ebie is a prime example. Ebie was an emergency room worker with an active life at work, home, and in his community. He had no idea he had developed a kidney condition until one day he felt ill while driving to work and had to call a coworker for help.

Our Faces and Facts of Disability website features Ebie’s story. He says people who receive Social Security disability benefits “can provide for themselves better and have a high quality of life.” As Ebie explains, many people with kidney diseases can greatly increase their quality of life with Social Security benefits. You can learn more about Ebie’s story at www.socialsecurity.gov/disabilityfacts.

If a kidney disease such as end-stage renal disease (known as ESRD) requires chronic dialysis and prevents you from working, Social Security may be able to help you. If you’re undergoing dialysis, have had a kidney transplant, have persistent low creatinine clearance levels, or have persistent high serum creatinine levels, you may qualify for disability and/or Medicare benefits. You can find more information about eligibility based on kidney disease and the benefits available to you by reading our publications, Disability Benefits and Medicare, both available at www.socialsecurity.gov/pubs.

If you think you may be eligible for Social Security disability benefits based on a kidney disease, please do not wait. Go to www.socialsecurity.gov/disabilityssi, where you can apply for benefits online.

Vonda VanTil is the public affairs specialist for West Michigan. You can write her c/o Social Security Administration, 3045 Knapp St NE, Grand Rapids MI 49525 or via email at vonda.vantil@ssa.gov
mined origin which means perfect.”

Thinking now about that word, I decided to see what I could find out about its origin. Here’s what I found.

1. Thought to have started in the South and used by African Americans.
   Bill “Bojangles” Robinson, a song and dance man used it as far back as 1919.
   It was slangy and was used in that way.
2. Possibly from “copasetti” used by Italians in NYC.
3. It could have come from the word “copasanee” that the Chinook Indians used.
4. Maybe Cajun French, or the word “coupersetique” which the Creole French defined as “that which can be coped with.”
   Sounds possible.
5. Maybe from the Greek or Egyptian Coptics?
6. How about the Hebrews who said “all is in order?”
7. Irving Bachellor used it in his 1919 Lincoln biography.
8. John O’Hara used it in his novel Appointment in Samarra and thought it came from “copasetti” (number two above).
9. There was also a CD album by Velocity Girl in 1993 simply called “Copasetic.”
10. The definition I like best is “the cop is on the settee,” meaning law enforcement is resting and things were thus okay.

You’re gone now, Dad, but see what a can of worms you opened? I wish I could still talk to you and find out where you found that word so many years ago. I haven’t heard it used by anyone, so it’s all yours. It stays in my mind and so do you. Happy Father’s Day, Dad, wherever you are. I hope things are running smoothly, going well…very copacetic!

Richard Hoffstedt was born to Swedish immigrants in 1934 and raised in Chicago. He is a U.S. Army veteran. He has been married to Shirley for 60 years. Richard has four daughters, twin sons, four grandsons, one granddaughter, one great granddaughter and one great grandson. Richard is an engineer by profession. His interests are music, reading, travel, water color painting, Mark Twain and John Steinbeck.

**MMAP Minutes**

Now that the snow has finally melted and we have put our boots away, be sure to enjoy the sunshine. We in the MMAP office are busy keeping updated on Medicare issues that are important to all of us.

We will be putting on another “New to Medicare” also known as “Medicare 101” presentation, here at Tanglewood Park in Muskegon. We will be hosting this on June 24, 2015, from 10:00 to 11:00 a.m. This presentation is geared to those who will be eligible for Medicare this year. We offer basic Medicare information that everyone should have prior to making their Medicare decisions. No need to register, and it is free!!!

This presentation is put on by your local MMAP office and our very knowledgeable MMAP volunteers. MMAP volunteers love to help educate the community about Medicare and the many different topics with Medicare. Hope to see you there.

Muskegon office 231-733-3572
Oceana County Council on Aging 231-873-4461
Four Pointes Center for Successful Aging 616-842-9210
Evergreen Commons in Holland 616-396-7100

Vickie DeCheney is the Regional Coordinator for the Medicare Medicaid Assistance Program (MMAP). Vickie is retired from the Dept of Human Services where she had 30 years of service. In the summer you can usually find her at the cottage on Darlington Lake, Hesperia.
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Equal Housing Opportunity
Q: What is chiropractic and how can it help me?
A: Chiropractic is concerned with the relationship between the structure (primarily the spine) and the function (coordinated by the nervous system) of your body and how that relationship affects your health. Chiropractic care removes nervous system dysfunction by gently restoring proper motion in spinal joints, allowing for better communication throughout the body.

Q: What kinds of conditions can chiropractic help?
A: Chiropractic can help with multiple areas of the body, in particular in decreasing pain associated with back problems. Patients often see an improvement in posture, healthier spinal discs, quicker recovery from injury and illness, improved digestion and circulation, better immune system function, prevention of colds and the flu, decreased allergies and asthma; healthier kids—less ear infections, asthma, bed-wetting, constipation, and anxiety; healthier seniors—better balance and less likelihood of falling.

Q: Is massage just for relaxation?
A: When there is inappropriate movement caused from an injury, the soft tissue and muscles surrounding a joint become tight and painful. A chiropractic adjustment is often used to restore motion to the joint, but this does not automatically relax and reset the surrounding tissue. These soft tissues must be treated as well, to fully restore the painful restricted motion. We incorporate multiple massage and tissue manipulation techniques to bring optimal health and function back to tissues in distress.

Q: What does chemical stress mean in terms of my body?
A: Not only is your body affected by the food you eat, but also through every chemical that comes in contact with you. Evaluating your nutrition, but also talking with you about other toxins, your level of hydration, your overall lifestyle, and other environmental factors like the air quality at home and work, will allow us to recommend specific diet modifications and supplements to take to help your body heal in a timely manner.

Q: How do my emotions and mental status affect my health?
A: We live in a highly agitated society. We’re constantly bombarded by a multitude of “needs,” from work to home life to social relationships. We will talk with you about how well you are coping with these demands and caring for yourself. We wish to be a refuge, providing time to for clients to recharge, so that you can be at your best. Clients may choose to work on mental and emotional stress through Reiki or guided meditation and we are also happy to refer clients to psychological counseling for more support.

Dr. Jasmine Hornberger is a State Licensed and National Board Certified Chiropractor at Inspired Health Chiropractic at 1428 Waverly Ave. in Grand Haven. You can submit your questions under the ‘Contact’ tab at www.inspiredchiro.com
Do you enjoy watching the birds or other wildlife outside your window? Or, if you are a hunter, do you wonder what walks by your stand when you’re not there? The answer might be a trail camera!

Trail cameras can add so much enjoyment to the above pastimes. Below are photos of some of the wildlife caught by our camera. Before we moved to Stillwater Springs, we lived near Lake Harbor Park and saw a lot of wildlife on the dune in our backyard, mostly deer. We mounted the trail camera to check out the numbers and size of the deer. Imagine our surprise when the trail camera captured a fox, a family of raccoons, and a skunk! Photos at our hunting stands in the Upper Peninsula encouraged our hunting by revealing some big bucks in the area. And, in an instance or two, I was taken aback by photos of black bear. (They climb trees, you know.)

One of our neighbors here in Stillwater Springs has his trail camera aimed at his birdfeeder. I haven’t talked to him, but I’ll bet he’s captured some great photos of birds, wild turkeys, squirrels, and maybe a deer.

Louise Matz: At retirement, golf, gardening and grandchildren were primary interests. Since that time, her interests have expanded. Having more time to read and to travel is high on her list. She also discovered pickleball and MahJongg. With her husband, she enjoys bow hunting for deer in the Upper Peninsula, hunting turkeys and fishing in the Florida Keys.
“The bald eagle is certainly a sight to behold, His stick nest is found high up in a tree fold. From her perch Mrs. Heron watches him at play as he chases ospreys, trying to steal their prey.” ("What Do You See, Mrs. Night Heron?") When I wrote this poem verse in my second book, I had no idea that I would be writing a third tale, “Ossie the Brave Fish Hawk,” about bird piracy, showcasing the osprey, the eagle who steals his fish, and a third raptor, the great horned owl, who lays its eggs in the winter and then tries to steal an osprey’s or eagle’s nest to raise its young. I’m always learning new and interesting facts about the birds I write about.

Sometimes my research takes me “out on a limb,” putting me in controversial situations, where, to uphold the credibility of my books, I need to defend the facts I’ve included. Case in point: After “Ossie” was published, I was discussing the piracy of great horned owls (stealing an eagle’s or osprey’s nest) with the director of a raptor rescue center in Michigan. She took umbrage with my story, claiming that a great horned owl would never take on a ferocious bird such as an eagle. I think she was also upset at the idea of the likes of one of her rescues being accused of stealing. I was taken aback, to put it mildly, for if she was right, my book had lost credibility and I might as well toss it.

That winter, back in Florida, I was discussing “Ossie,” for a local Audubon society, albeit with some trepidation. When I reached the part of the story describing the owl’s attempt to steal the eagle Baldwin’s nest, I relayed what I had been told about owls. The director stood up. “I want you all to come with me,” he said. We followed him outside. He stopped and pointed to a nearby tree. “What kind of nest is that?” he asked. “An eagle’s,” we replied. “And, what is that bird sitting on the edge of the nest?” There it was. I wanted to jump for joy. I was right after all. There was a fledgling great horned owl perched on the edge of the eagle’s nest.

There are many more facts woven into the story and noted in an educational section at the end of the book; however, since the plot revolves around the eagle stealing from the osprey, a friend and ace photographer sent me the attached photo with the caption: “Sometimes the osprey fights back.”

Janet Hasselbring lives in Spring Lake, MI with her husband Don and Welsh terrier pup, Maggie May (of Rod Stewart fame). They winter in Pelican Cove, Sarasota, FL. Janet is the author of a series of children’s books, Tales from Pelican Cove, which portray wild/shorebirds of FL and beyond; a series about Country Dairy, which includes a pictorial memoir of life on her family farm (present day Country Dairy) in the 1930’s when her parents lived and worked the land; and a memoir of her mother and her life on the farm, entitled, “In the Garden.”

Osprey attacking an Eagle. (photo by Larry Monat)
The first five years of my life were in Chicago, where my grandfather worked for Spaulding sporting goods, making golf balls for twenty five cents an hour. At the same time, my father worked for Wilson sporting goods, making golf clubs. How ironic is that?

When we moved to the northern suburbs and I was growing into my early teens, I learned that a game was actually played with those clubs and balls, a bit like pool, only on a seven thousand yard table. I believed, then, that I genetically inherited the privilege of abusing both clubs and balls.

Not far from my home was a public links golf course where I took up the sport. After the first year was over, I discovered it’s more than a game. It’s an escape and a test of human endurance. To some, the sport is a pure carnard, but as Sir Author Conan Doyle said, “It’s a mystery and the game is afoot.” Others have said, “It’s the greatest game ever played.”

From my personal point of view, after more than fifty years of playing golf, the blunders made are beyond my powers of comprehension. My so-called golden years have turned to rust! A golf game is a roller coaster of emotions, with lots of anger and lots of cheers, but regardless of who plays, it will always remain just another four letter word.

From my thirties through my fifties, I could consistently belt that ball more than three hundred yards on any given day. But at seventy, Father Time is calling my name and gravity has a death grip on both me and my golf ball.

In the early 1990s, I took an exciting trip to England to visit Harrod’s store and to Scotland, to fly fish in the Tay River and play golf on the famous links of St. Andrews and Glen Eagles. This is where I learned many things, like the Scots think that anyone who puts trees or water holes on a golf course is insane. I can’t argue with that logic. At the Royal and Ancient Museum of Golf, I learned the meaning of the word G.O.L.F., “(G)entlemen (O)nly (L)adies (F)orbidden.” Knowing what I do about women, I’m sure that logic did not last very long!

Years after I retired, it took me a long time to find a partner for my first senior golf league. I couldn’t wait for the league to start. What an eye opening blunder it was, thinking that if I went to a driving range first I could improve a bit. The first day of the season, I was so nervous because everyone was about to find out what kind of a golfing train wreck I’ve become. Hole number one, I teed up, naturally going for the long drive on a par five, and I missed the ball completely over the top. But, I felt a little better by the time we finished our nine holes because, obviously, there were twenty nine other train wrecks in that same league.

This experience took me into a whole new world of things I never witnessed before: using your shoe for a club under a bush, wrapping clubs around a tree or a golf cart support post, and walking into the woods looking for one ball and coming out with eight balls. Other strange sightings: tossing cell phones in the pond, blaming the swing on aches and pains, and comments like, “These darn grips need changing again.” I saw some of the most horrible shots made with three hundred dollar drivers and pricey hybrid fairway clubs.

It’s amazing what Bobby Jones did with crude hickory shaft clubs, when he played on a cow pasture course. Maybe it really is all in the swing. But, Lee Trevino said it better than anyone I know: “The game of golf is played on a six inch course. That’s the space between your ears!”

After all is said and done, if you take the right kind of pills in the morning, turn off your cell phone, bring a dozen golf balls and have a stiff drink just before you tee off, I still believe “Golf is like a pleasant walk in the park.”

Mike Simcik is a Navy Veteran, with a degree in Arts and Humanities. He rebuilt and owned Twin Gables Country Inn for seventeen years, and owned five other businesses. He enjoys building bamboo fly rods, fishing, shooting clay sports, golfing and writing essays. Mike and his wife are celebrating their 46th anniversary.
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