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OutLook *by the Bay*

The magazine for the Savvy Senior

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BAY VIEW - Words From the Desk

Tecla Emerson Murphy
Publisher
and
Editor-in-Chief



So why do we hang on to *things*, those pieces from our life, treasures we've picked up along the way, the trinkets that somehow define us. We have collections of things, things that once meant something and then only to ourselves. Recently I had the unenviable task of cleaning out nine decades of these pieces of nostalgia, an accumulation of items from a long and busy life. It was a task that most of us will be faced with at some time in our lives. A few weeks ago, my mother, at the grand old age of 92, went on to her great reward and I, probably because of the distinction of being the eldest daughter, was chosen to make order out of chaos. She had isolated herself for the past two years because of ill health and perhaps vanity, and much had fallen into disrepair both in possessions and relationships. A bit on the eccentric side, she had accumulated a veritable wealth of useless artifacts: plastic bags from interesting shops she'd visited in Europe, postcards of sites from all over the world, lacy doilies from another generation, a scrapbook filled with mementos from a 1939 trans-Atlantic crossing and monogrammed linen towels from a 70-year-old trousseau. All this and so much more. Five rooms neatly packed with what should rightfully have filled a 10-room house. Why this hanging on to the past? And more importantly, how does one sort through this lifetime of memorabilia? What was of value and what could be tossed? Certainly her watercolors, a talent she developed in later years, should be disseminated among family members, but what of the endless note taking dating back to the early 1930s? The notes were not quite in diary form and not quite as revealing as a writer could be if the words were to remain private. Instead, there was a vast collection of notebooks with carefully penned notations in that old European schoolgirl hand. And then what to do with a wardrobe that anyone with an ounce of fashion sense and a perfect size two would be proud to own. Scarves, costume jewelry (the good stuff long gone), shoes, purses, etc. Every card or note that her children and grandchildren had written had been categorized and put in one of the numerous file folders, most with notations made on the envelope. Some of her notations were not so nice as her side of the correspondence in her declining years became less cheerful: "He doesn't write as often." "She didn't thank me for the check." "Why doesn't he call instead of sending postcards?" Much of what was said or written in later years tended to alienate those around her, her crankiness often summoned a bitter tongue.

The difficulty however, was in the dissemination or disposal of goods. How to fairly distribute the pieces of nostalgia and deciding if it was just minutia that was being moved from one home to another. It was quickly determined that anything of monetary value was long gone. Never quite adjusting to the advances of the last quarter century, many of her treasures were bits and pieces of sentiment from times long past. Possibly some of the vast collection would have meaning to some of the family members. Mementoes can keep a memory alive and now with the approaching holidays an opportunity presented itself to unload pieces of a long and interesting life. Here was the chance to divvy up the collected treasures. The countless boxes of negatives and faded pictures will be gladly received by a favorite granddaughter, a budding archivist. The faded rug purchased in Turkey two generations ago would go to a brother setting up an historic home in New York. The few pieces of Dresden porcelain will bless the youngest daughter who has fond memories of the holiday china. An album of another time with pictures of women dressed in kimonos will go to a niece in Seattle. For my household, at this point in life, there's little reason to add to our possessions. I've opted to keep a few watercolors. I wonder though what is it that keeps us hanging on to bits and pieces of the past? And then why is it so difficult to toss the cherished pieces? How can we ever throw out grandmother's first catechism book (written in old indecipherable German). Well, I can't. Yet my life is about the present and the future. I find hanging on to the past stultifying. For me, it's better to clear out the clutter of the past and keep moving forward. But without these treasures there'd be no legacy, no link to the past and no way to be remembered. Is that, however, a good reason to live in clutter? I've found that being a minimalist is freeing! So this Christmas, as difficult as it seems, the nostalgia will be passed on. I'll take the inherited treasures, dress them up with a big bow and give them away, give them to a home that sees them not as further clutter but as a cherished piece that was loved in a past generation, perhaps evoking pleasant memories. As Tricia Herban writes on page 29, *The gift of something that has been treasured is most likely to become a treasure to its newly chosen owner.* I can go and visit and admire the lovely treasures in homes that will view these gifts as a legacy and I can continue moving forward. Happy Holidays

Tecla Murphy

Holiday

2008

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On the Cover: The Cannistraro's, originally from New England were lured to the D.C. area when Nick came on as the vice president of advertising at the Washington Post. Since retiring three years ago Nick and Buzzi have scaled down, building a home overlooking one of the Bay's most scenic creeks. After years of cruising and ocean racing in their Alden, they went over to boating's "dark side" purchasing a trawler type power boat which, along with children and grandchildren, takes them on their annual trek back to New England waters.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR:



A Dream Come True

Ms. Herban, your "Magical Month" is an absolute joy, and so are the photos. A personal treasure is the memory of standing atop the Arc de Triomphe at dusk as the lights flashed on at the Eiffel Tower. Stunning! Thanks for sharing.

~Thom B., Arnold

Tricia, I really enjoyed reading your article: A Dream Come True: A Magical Month.

I can identify with your feelings about Paris and France. My husband and I retired early, and the first thing we did right after was to buy an apartment in Paris. It has been eight years. We spend three months there in the summer time every year. We love it so much!

If you have time, I'd enjoy our sharing thoughts and experiences with each other.

~ Regards, MK Wilson

Tricia, I enjoyed your article on Paris which was featured in *OutLook by the Bay*.

I have visited Paris several times over the last few years, most recently last October-November and want to spend a month there in a similar fashion to what you did. I have visited the 15th and found it to be a charming neighborhood too.

Je parle Francais une petit mais je veux etre Francais et habiter en Paris bentiot. Would you be willing to talk with me about your planning and your trip?

Merci beaucoup et s'il vous plait, m' escriver. A bentiot.....

~Josef D., Annapolis

A member of my congregation gave me a copy of your article A Dream Come True: A Magical Month to read. What a delight!

My wife and I were able to spend a week in Paris with no demands or obligations earlier this year. It was heaven. Thank you for sharing your experience, which helped me to relive ours (and I'll be sharing it with my spouse), and to think once more about future explorations.

~ C. H., Prince Frederick



Our Heritage Revisited

Very much enjoyed the article on Our Heritage Revisited. We went up to New Freedom, PA, at the beginning of October and had not only a delightful 30-mile bike ride, but enjoyed lunch at Serenity Station as the article suggested. Thanks for introducing us to yet another unknown treasure.

~ R.M., Annapolis



Arlington National Cemetery

Recently we walked through Arlington National Cemetery, a place we've never visited after living in the area for 20 or more years. It was a sobering and an enlightening trip through history. We're glad we did it.

Thank you for a great article.

~ J.S., Chestertown

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A photograph of a woman with blonde hair, seen in profile, blowing a stream of colorful confetti from her hand. The confetti is scattered in the air around her. The background is a plain, light color.

Here's to Your Health, Happiness and Prosperity

By Kathryn Marchi

The holiday season is nearing and along with Thanksgiving feasts and Christmas preparations, another "custom" looms before us. It's that dreaded "New Year's resolutions" list that many of us feel obligated to make. That is followed by the tremendous pressure to stick to each resolution and then the feeling of failure as they are stricken off the list, one by one! Why do we put ourselves through all of that?

The main reason for broken resolutions is that we unknowingly set ourselves up for failure. Even if we carefully write them all down, we sometimes lose the list or put it away to look at later. Many of our resolutions are way above our capacity to attain them and some are too vague or generic to nail down. I remember one such list in which I resolved to lose 25 pounds. When that didn't happen pretty much right away, I scratched that one off! I also vowed to ride my horse three times a week when I only had time for one ride on the weekend. So much for that goal. Another list included three things: Eat healthy, well-balanced meals, exercise daily and lose weight. How boring! There was no specific goal and I quickly lost interest in that list too. Sad to say, I no longer make any resolutions at all until Lent! (My vow to stop eating sweets lasted only until someone offered me a Mrs. Sees' chocolate truffle).

So, what can we do to prepare an attainable list to ensure our "health, happiness and prosperity" in the New Year?

1. The first thing to do is write it all down and keep the list in a prominent place. I believe you'll be more inclined to work toward the resolutions once they've been "cast in ink." Also think how you can make these resolutions easier on yourself. Perhaps you want to enlist the help of a friend, spouse or grandchild. Their vigilance and enthusiasm may encourage you.
2. If you plan to lose weight, select a reasonable amount and mentally challenge yourself to take it slow and easy. For example, if you really want to lose 25 pounds, put five pounds on the list and work toward that. Chances are when you set up a weight loss program, you'll begin a trend and you might even lose the 25 pounds, or more.
3. Let's say you want to set up some kind of exercise program. Instead of vowing to "exercise daily" or "run two miles a day," choose the type of exercise you want to do such as water aerobics, biking, running or power walking. Then set a reasonable goal of doing this activity for 15 minutes,

two or three times a week. Who knows? You might get started and work up to either exercising daily or even running the two miles a day! Certainly your energy level will greatly improve which makes additional exercise more palatable. And, you might even help yourself achieve your No. 2 weight loss goal while you're at it!

4. Most of us know the value of eating healthy foods despite our craving for sweets, sodas or Big Macs with fries and a milkshake. Instead of placing a generic "eating healthy foods" addition to your list, invest in a good cookbook and vow to prepare at least two healthy meals a week. Weekends could even be "off limits," which, in my mind, makes it even easier to stick to this resolution! Setting up this plausible routine might even extend to three or four well-balanced meals a week. Here again, this works in tandem with losing weight.

5. So far I've only mentioned health issues which can lead to happiness. But there are other resolutions you can make to achieve that goal as well. Suppose you want to broaden your horizons or your social circle? Instead of vowing to "join a club" or "meet new friends," get more specific again. Decide what interests you have and find a group that will meet that need. Let that group be your resolution. If you qualify, you might want to join the Junior League, the Rotary Club or a charitable organization such as "Habitat for Humanity." If you like playing cards, you could join a bridge or mahjong group or even form one of your own. Along with this, you could resolve to learn a particular new card game or you might decide to take a specific continuing education course at the local community college.

But what about the "prosperity" part of your goals for the New Year? What can you do to achieve that? It's possible that prosperity means simply meeting or paying off some bills. If so, select a specific (here's that word again!) debt that can be cancelled or a worrisome bill you might want to "pay down." Be sure to make these payments according to what you can afford. Give yourself the right amount of time and set it up as a regular deduction on the computer or through your bank. You might also want to start a savings program. Again, be specific as to an amount you can afford. Start with a small savings program and then increase as you are able. You'll be in better financial situation as time goes on and your resolutions will get achieved.

Can you begin to see where I'm going with all of this? In choosing thoughtful and specific goals, you are setting yourself up to succeed. You might even be able to see how they all work in tandem with each other! The good habits you are forming are helping you keep your resolutions. And in writing those specific goals, you have become proactive in your own life.

Although I've only listed five possible resolutions, you might want to write more or less. It's entirely up to you. Remember to be specific and reasonable and you'll find it easier to keep them throughout the year.

In writing this article, I have begun to form a plan for my own New Year's resolutions. I'll keep you posted on how I do. 

Don't ever quit.

If You're Not Sleeping, Wake Up to the Many Remedies

By Peggy Markham

Bells are jingling which means the holidays are here! Along with the joy of the season, you may find "visions of sugar plums dancing in your head" all night long resulting in loss of sleep and a bah humbug disposition. Fortunately, there are plenty of choices for helping you get to sleep and stay asleep.

You are not alone in experiencing sleep deprivation resulting from insomnia, a common sleep disorder. As we age our sleep patterns change and too often getting a good night's rest becomes difficult. Many factors contribute to insomnia and the key is to recognize the problem and seek help before the condition becomes chronic. Sleep deprivation stems from various causes such as jet lag, side effects from medications, lack of exercise, poor diet, stressful events, an overactive mind at bedtime, work schedules and physical/mental disabilities. You should consult your primary health care provider to determine the underlying cause of your insomnia, but making some changes in your lifestyle can offer simple solutions to insomnia.

- * Be physically active and maintain a daily exercise regimen. Avoid vigorous exercise close to bedtime.
- * Establish a pattern for bedtime. Keep your room quiet, eliminate noise (use a white noise machine if necessary), routinely go to bed every night at the same time, consider a relaxing meditation practice, take a warm bath, eliminate energetic TV programs, make an effort to slow down your active mind (breathing exercises taught by yoga instructors is helpful).
- * Avoid caffeine, alcohol nightcaps and don't eat a heavy meal late in the evening.
- * Short naps during the day are restful, but late afternoon naps often interfere with falling asleep later. Avoid napping in your favorite chair prior to bedtime.
- * A comfortable, firm mattress can make a world of difference. Investigate the array of pillows available and determine which suits you for comfort and alignment.



Prescribed medications are available, but a physician is required to evaluate the insomnia and recommend a treatment. There are OTC (over the counter) sleep aids that usually consist of antihistamines that can induce drowsiness, but if taken too often they may become less effective. Use these products with caution.

There are many "natural" ways or alternative approaches to treat insomnia. A trusted pharmacy or a reputable health food store can help you with selections. The important point to bear in mind is to understand how these products work and seek professional advice to be assured of safety and effectiveness. Be aware of the interaction of medications.

Valerian and melatonin are two of the best known natural sleep aids. Melatonin is a hormone that controls the body's internal clock. It is most helpful for jet lag and irregular work schedules. Melatonin helps regulate the sleep cycle and is effective for people whose sleep and waking up cycle is out of sync. It can relieve insomnia for those who fall asleep too early or wake up in the middle of the night. Valerian is a sedative herb that shortens the time it takes to fall asleep and makes your sleep more restful.

Other gentle remedies would include Passionflower, Kava, chamomile, lemon balm, peppermint, skullcap and hops. A homeopathic approach would suggest the Bach flower essences, a tincture of botanical extracts, that are alleged to be mind-calming and pacify anxiety. The minerals calcium, magnesium and inositol may help insomnia. Essential oils can help reduce bedtime tension. Try lavender, jasmine or ylang-ylang, rubbing a drop on your wrists or temples before nodding off. As with all supplements, consult an accredited health care practitioner before self-medicating.

Don't forget the tried-and-true advice of drinking a glass of warm milk or enjoying a cup of herbal tea prior to bedtime. Even folkloric remedies are worth trying, but these are mostly good for a hearty laugh and humor is known to be a relaxant.

- * Eat pumpkin as a side dish for dessert.
- * Old timers maintain that leaving dirty dishes in the kitchen sink can cause insomnia.
- * Hold a piece of amethyst in your hand and sleep will follow.
- * Place chunks of onion in a covered jar and put it on the night table beside your bed. If you have trouble falling asleep, remove the lid of the jar and take a whiff of the onion. Replace the lid on the jar and you'll be asleep in no time.
- * Mark Twain's advice: "Lie near the edge of your bed and you'll drop off."

There is a belief of Chinese origin that suggests at about the age of 60 we enter a new phase of creativity and our minds become very active when we retire for bed or wake up in the middle of the night. Chinese sages call this "drunken monkeys." With these little demons to help you, maybe the middle of the night is the time to write that novel you've been keeping on the back burner.



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The British Are Here

By Kathryn Marchi

On the Fourth of July this year, a lone British flag, the Union Jack, flew from a house in our neighborhood. Thankfully, no one really took exception to it. It's a known fact that the "British are here." We don't need Paul Revere to ride in and tell us!

Fortunately, the outcome of that war of independence was fortuitous for both England and America. And we have been allies during several conflicts since. Many British folks live in the United States, many becoming citizens.

Several years ago, one of my relatives researched my father's side of the family and determined that I was eligible for the DAR, Daughters of the American Revolution. It was not meaningful to me then nor is it now, but DAR membership in the United States is said to be quite large. There is even an SAR for the Sons of the American Revolution!

So it shouldn't surprise you that British ladies living in the United States have a similar organization called the DBE, Daughters of the British Empire. Let the record show that I am a DBE member. This group is a "nonprofit, nonpolitical American organization." Membership is extended to women residing in the US who are of British or British Commonwealth heritage by birth, naturalization or proven ancestry, or whose husband's parent(s) or grandparent(s) are of British or Commonwealth birth.

Actually, before the DBE was brought to the U.S., a similar organization was active in Canada. A woman named Josephine Langstaff, who was of English descent and brought up in New Jersey, visited Canada and became acquainted with an organization there known as the Imperial Order Daughters of the Empire. She was impressed with the camaraderie of the group and its good works, so she formed a chapter in New York on March 15, 1909. Many more chapters formed in New York and then in other states, and in 1920, the DBE became a national society. It was a common bond for women of British heritage living in America. This year marks the 100th anniversary of their organization in America.

It seems that the DBE has made its greatest efforts in wartime. In 1914, during the First World War, members were responsible for the largest War Relief Fund, collecting large sums of money and selling war bonds. They also knitted and sewed clothing, stocked food kitchens, gathered hospital supplies and gave time and service, all of which benefited households on both sides of the Atlantic.



With the outbreak of World War 11, DBE members worked hard to send food and clothing directly to families in Great Britain. In Maryland, alone, the DBE worked tirelessly with the British War Relief, the British Merchant Navy Club and the Red Cross. They raised money and provided food, entertainment and companionship for British soldiers who came to the United States either to bring back ships built on American soil or were wounded in sea battles and brought to the US for recuperation.

During this time, an aircraft warning system was established around the perimeter of Baltimore. Some members of the DBE volunteered to take U.S. Army classes in aircraft recognition so they could teach classes of volunteers to man posts operating 24 hours a day. Wherever they were needed, DBE members assisted the war effort. They were given certificates of appreciation by many organizations for their unfailing support both in the U.S. and England.

After World War 11, many English girls married "Yanks" and came to this country as "war brides." The adaptation for the English girls was not nearly as traumatic as others who did not speak the "King's English," but they did miss their homeland and traditions. They needed to find other English girls with whom they could share experiences and develop friendships. The DBE became the conduit for such activities.

Today, this organization is still going strong. Not only have chapters been established in

Baltimore City and County, but also in Towson, Bel Air and Harford. It shouldn't surprise you to know that we have a chapter right in Anne Arundel County. These groups of ladies meet once a month except in the summer, and offer each other friendship and "enjoyment of a common heritage."

It must be said, however, that these DBE chapters are not just social gatherings. Thankfully, there is no wartime effort to be done but there are philanthropic goals to meet. Chapters from Maine to Virginia provide support for a nursing facility in Ossining, NY, called The Victoria Home. This special place is open to all nationalities, not just the British. Each chapter also supports local charities. Here in Anne Arundel County, DBE members help support the House of Ruth, a Food Truck Fund and various soup kitchens in the area. They plan special events and functions such as a yearly fashion show and a flea market to help raise money for these charities.

Of course after these monthly meetings, the ladies of the DBE make time for a "good cup of tea and a good 'natter."

After reading about the Daughters of the British Empire and their good works and good fun, and, if you or your husband are of British ancestry, please consider joining the Anne Arundel Chapter. The ladies will give you a warm welcome and a good cup of tea!

For more information, please contact Dorothea Abbott, state organizer at (410) 758-2071 or e-mail dorotheav@aol.com

Holiday Concerts

Let Queen Anne's Chorale help put you in the Christmas spirit as it launches the holiday season with beautiful and joyful selections accompanied by a chamber orchestra. Audience members will have an opportunity to participate in singing some traditional carols. The chorale is funded in part by the Queen Anne's County Arts Council, The United Way of Queen Anne's County and The Maryland State Arts Council, an agency dedicated to cultivating the arts in our communities.

TWO PERFORMANCES

Saturday, Dec. 6, 2008, at 7:30 p.m.
Christ Episcopal Church, Kent Island

Sunday, Dec. 7, 2008, at 4 p.m.
Centreville United Methodist Church, Centreville, MD

Adults can purchase tickets at the door for \$10; children through high school are admitted free. Performances are accessible to the disabled. For more information, please call: (410) 827-0825 or visit www.qachorale.org



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Dandy Christmas Candy

By Melissa Conroy

With the economy disintegrating and wallets snapping shut across the U.S., Christmas present shopping is probably not high on your list of financial priorities right now. In fact, you may be wondering how you will afford to buy presents for everyone on your list as the Christmas shopping season opens.

One easy and cost-effective way to save on Christmas gifts is to hit the kitchen. Since food is an integral part of any holiday and all of us need a few extra calories during cold weather anyway, edible gifts are particularly welcome during the Christmas season.

Although many people give each other gifts of cookies, pies, breads and other baked goods for Christmas, why not try making some candy this year for the holidays? Candy is a unique and delicious treat to make, and it is a relatively inexpensive way to bring some holiday cheer to loved ones and family. While candy does require a little time and patience to make, it is no more difficult than baking a pie or creating other culinary delights.

Here are three different candy recipes for you to try, and all are relatively easy and inexpensive. The first two call for a candy thermometer, which is available in most grocery stores for a few dollars. When cooking candy, you will need to clip the thermometer to the side of the pan and position it so that the tip of the thermometer is immersed in the candy but does not touch the bottom of the pan. Letting the tip touch the bottom will give you a false reading and could ruin the candy. If the thermometer is too tall for the pot you are using, try clipping it onto the side of a drinking glass and placing the glass next to the pot so that the thermometer hangs into the pot. Just make sure not to let the glass touch the range!

“Candy is a unique and delicious treat to make, and it is a relatively inexpensive way to bring some holiday cheer to loved ones and family.”

Procrastination is no longer an option!



English Toffee

Among holiday goodies, nothing beats the buttery, nutty, chocolate sweetness of English toffee. English toffee is a traditional Christmas candy, and just one piece will tell you why this particular concoction is a longtime favorite. It is delicious!

- 1 1/2 c. of sliced, slivered, or ground almonds (or other nut of your choice)
- 1 12-oz. package of chocolate chips (milk, semisweet, or bittersweet all work well)
- 2 c. of salted butter
- 2 c. of sugar

1. If you like, you can toast the nuts to increase their aroma and taste. Spread them out on a cookie sheet and toast at 350 F for 10 minutes, stirring them a few times during the toasting. Set them aside.
2. In a heavy-bottomed stock pan, melt the butter and sugar together over medium heat. When they are melted, clip the candy thermometer on the pan and adjust it correctly.
3. Let the butter/sugar cook over medium-to-low heat, stirring it constantly. It needs to cook about 20 minutes total.
4. As it heats up and cooks, the toffee will bubble, foam and eventually turn brown. When it reaches just about 300 F and is brown, it is done cooking.
5. Pour the toffee into a buttered cookie sheet or bar pan that has a lip all around the edge. Be very careful as the toffee is extremely hot at this stage. Gently spread it around in the pan until it is even.
6. Let it cool for about 10 minutes, then sprinkle the chocolate chips over it. The heat of the toffee will cause the chips to melt, so spread the melted chocolate out over the toffee.
7. Sprinkle the nuts on top of the chocolate and use the bottom of a glass to press them into the toffee.
8. Let the toffee cool in the fridge for at least two hours. When cool, flip the toffee over onto a towel on the counter. Break the toffee into bite-sized pieces with a heavy cooking utensil.
9. Toffee is best stored in the fridge, otherwise the chocolate will be a little soft.

“Edible gifts are particularly welcome during the Christmas season.”



Nutty Caramel Chocolate Popcorn

This is a great candy that is hearty and satisfying. It doesn't require a candy thermometer and is super-easy to make. Make a batch of this for a movie night with close friends.

- 1/2 c. of unpopped popcorn
- 3 c. of assorted nuts (almonds, cashews, walnuts and macadamia nuts work well)
- 1 c. brown sugar
- 1/2 c. light corn syrup
- 1/2 c. butter
- 1 tbs. orange zest
- 1 tsp. vanilla
- 1/2 tsp. baking soda
- 1/2 c. chocolate chips or chocolate pieces

1. Preheat the oven to 250 F. Pop the popcorn and mix it with the nuts in a large roasting pan. Place the pan in the oven to keep warm while you make the candy coating.
2. Combine the brown sugar, corn syrup, butter, zest and salt in a saucepan. Bring to a boil and stir constantly. Once it boils, stop stirring and let it cook for four minutes.
3. Remove from the heat and add vanilla and baking soda. Pour slowly over the popcorn mixture and stir well until it is evenly coated.
4. Let the popcorn bake in the oven about an hour or until dry. Take it out of the oven and loosen it from the bottom of the pan. Let cool completely.
5. Melt the chocolate and drizzle over the cooled popcorn. When the chocolate firms, break the popcorn into chunks. Store in the fridge.



Turtles

The term "turtle" refers to a combination of caramel and chocolate. This easy and yummy recipe is a great way to ring in the holidays.

- 3 c. of pecans
- 1/2 c. of light corn syrup
- 2 c. of sugar
- 1/2 c. of butter
- 1/2 c. of milk
- 1 tsp. vanilla
- 1 lb. chocolate

1. Butter a cookie sheet generously and scatter the pecans evenly over the sheet.
2. Mix the corn syrup, flour, butter, and milk together in a saucepan over medium heat. Clip the candy thermometer on the saucepan and cook the candy until it reaches 250 F.
3. Remove the candy from the heat and stir in the vanilla. Pour evenly over the pecans and let cool until the caramel can be handled.
4. Melt the chocolate.
5. Cut the caramel into pieces and dip each piece in the chocolate. Let the chocolate cool until firm. 

DID YOU KNOW?

To keep what's left of your holiday turkey fresh, strip it off the bone before refrigerating. Put leftover meat in one freezer safe bag and store in the refrigerator or the freezer and save the carcass in another until you're ready to make a big pot of mid-winter turkey soup. And don't forget, when you make that big pot of soup add 2-3 tablespoons of vinegar — it draws the calcium from the turkey bones making a more healthful soup.



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Tai Chi:



On Balance, a Worthy Discipline

If you haven't tried it, by now you have at least heard of tai chi, the Chinese exercise featuring slow but continuous movements and postures that is being touted as a boon for seniors. The discipline has been credited with alleviating the symptoms of attention deficit disorder, helping seniors avoid getting shingles and measurably lowering stress in your life. While we let scientists sort through these claims, there is another humble but vitally important reason to consider tai chi classes: It might well prevent you from taking a serious fall.

Tai chi is ancient art, it has been scientifically examined only in recent years. Many of the results are controversial because the effects of tai chi and other nontraditional practices are inherently difficult to quantify or measure. But widespread research results are crediting regular tai chi classes with helping seniors to keep their balance. An Oregon Research Institute study found that people between the ages of 65 and 96 who took twice-a-week tai chi classes were able to regain physical functioning they had lost to inactivity as compared to a group of seniors not taking the classes. Researchers were able to reach that conclusion after only three months of tai chi when earlier studies had indicated improved physical functioning required longer periods of exercise. A 2007 study found that more than 700 people over 60 were 50 percent less likely to experience multiple falls after taking a one-hour tai chi class for 16 weeks. Other studies have found tai chi superior to more traditional balance exercise programs in preventing falls.

Seniors gradually lose their ability to hold their balance for a whole host of medical reasons that include not just sore joints, but the degradation of our abilities to sense gravity, osteoporosis, failure in the workings of the inner ear and the effects of diabetes on the body. Lest you need a brief reminder of the grim reasons for being concerned about falls, consider this:

The American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons says more than 11 million Americans over 65 fall every year. More than one-fourth of those falls result in serious injury. This includes more than 350,000 debilitating broken hip injuries annually, most of which are suffered by women. Of those women aged 50 or over, one-fourth of them die within a year after hip fractures. Overall, men are 49 percent more likely to die from a fall than women, when all fall injuries are considered, says the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

If you are looking for more benefits than simple stability, a recent paper by the Mayo Clinic staff confirms tai chi has been used to reduce stress, increase flexibility, improve muscle strength and definition, increase energy, stamina and agility, in addition to increasing feelings of well-being. The Mayo staff says the broad range indications are treated because tai chi is a discipline of the mind and body – "meditation in motion," some call it. As a result, Mayo says research is showing tai chi is offering a range of more specific benefits that include:

- improvement of sleep quality;
- slowing bone loss in women after menopause;
- lowering blood pressure;
- improving cardiovascular fitness;
- relieving chronic pain.

Putting tai chi in your life is simple at the start. All you need is to wear loose clothing and a pair of flat, stable shoes. Finding the right instructor is another matter. You should first do some reading about tai chi and decide how you might benefit from classes. You would then be best off to interview prospective instructors to see if they will meet your needs. There are many levels of tai chi, some faster, some more gentle. This is not a regulated activity where instructors can provide certified bona fides as to their skills. You will have to use your best judgment. 

Keeping Your House Fall-Free

You no doubt have heard of many of these tips, but maybe now it is time to finally pay attention to them. Do an inventory of how your house is fitted out from a safety point of view. The exercise may surprise you. Most of these suggestions are derived from the National Safety Council's Web site. For more information, got to www.nsc.org Here are some tips:

- **In the bathroom.** Yes, you should have a firm bath mat in your shower. And any rugs elsewhere in the bathroom should be nonskid. But if you have glass sliding doors, have you checked to see if the glass is shatter-proof? A night light is essential here. Grab bars by the toilet and shower are wise additions. As with anywhere else in the house, any liquid spills should be cleaned up immediately.
- **In the living room.** Shag carpeting and slippery area rugs must go. Make sure to move furniture to clear pathways in and out of the living room. Electrical cords need to be tucked away. If you can, get rid of the glass table and replace it with a wooden table with rounded edges.
- **At the front door.** Hand railing is essential here. Keep a bag of salt or de-icing chemicals near the front door for the walk and front steps.

Elsewhere, when the grandchildren or neighborhood kids visit, make it a house rule that toys have to be kept picked up. If you must reach high to get stored items, keep sturdy step stools at several places in the house for handy use. As best you can, try to use contrasting colors to highlight step-up or step-down areas between rooms in the house. Try to improve lighting in any dark areas of the house.

You can register for tai chi lessons at:

The Jing Ying Institute in Arnold, which has recently opened a new tai chi training room, and can be reached at (410) 431-5200. The Anne Arundel County Senior Center in Annapolis reports its tai chi classes are filled. But beginning Nov. 25, you can register for a new round of classes starting in January. Call (410) 222-1818 for more information.

Is a Living Trust for You?

By Albert Northrop

It comes in the mail and is an offer that is hard to refuse. You and your spouse are invited to a free seminar that will teach you all you need to know about a legal way to avoid probate, save money, avoid inheritance taxes and manage your affairs if you become disabled. It's all in the magic of the "revocable living trust."

But the seminars won't really tell you all you need to know. Hopefully this article will shed some light on things the seminar won't.

Realize first that there may be instances in which a revocable living trust (RLT) could be beneficial. A second marriage situation with children from the first marriage that you wish to protect; a grantor (the person creating the trust) who owns real estate in more than one state; or a grantor who lives in a state with truly high probate fees are all situations which may call for consideration of a RLT. Those same situations, however, also contain other complexities which clearly indicate the need for specialized consultation with an attorney and perhaps other professionals as well.

You will probably be told at a seminar that a RLT would be highly advantageous in many other situations. I'm not convinced.

First, you will be told that you'll save money. Avoiding probate means avoiding the "probate fee" paid to the probate court or register of wills. In Maryland, the fee is not onerous. For example, a probate estate valued at between \$500,000 and \$750,000 will be charged a probate fee of \$750. An estate worth \$750,000 to \$1 million will be charged \$1,000. This fee is paid usually about nine or 10 months after the probate estate is opened. If you plan to live another 15 or 20 years, the fee won't be due for roughly 16 to 21 years.

Contrast this with an RLT that could easily cost you \$2,000 to \$2,500 now in another state. So spending \$2,000-\$2,500 now to save \$750-\$1,000 20 years from now doesn't seem like saving money to me.

And what about inheritance taxes? In Maryland, there are no inheritance taxes for "lineal" heirs. Those include your spouse, your parents, your grandparents and up; and your children, your grandchildren, etc., going down, along with your siblings. All others, as well as friends, are "collateral" heirs on which an inheritance tax of 10 percent is paid. And that, to them, is on "found money."

Federal estate taxes don't kick in until the estate is worth more than \$2 million (2008) and the assets in the RLT are included in the grantor's estate for federal estate taxes.

Income earned by the trust is included in the grantor's income for income tax purposes because he or she is the owner of the trust.

All things considered, I don't see where taxes are an issue here.

The RLT may (note the word may) avoid probate. Maryland, like most states, has simplified the probate process. The necessary forms and instructions are available online and the register of wills office in each county has knowledgeable clerks to help with the process. Furthermore, the probate process provides the benefit of supervision over the administration of the estate and its assets, a benefit unfortunately all too often necessary these days. That process includes certain required notices as an additional safeguard against abuses. The beneficiary of an RLT might well never get any notice and may have to file suit against an unscrupulous trustee in order to protect his or her interests.



It is not unusual for a grantor to forget to put an asset in the RLT either at its creation or some years down the road. Any asset held in the grantor's name is subject to probate. It is often just such a situation and thus the RLT is created only to learn after the grantor's death that probate will be required anyway.

What about managing your affairs and avoiding guardianship? Very simply a durable power of attorney can be used to manage the financial affairs of an incompetent person in lieu of an RLT and is certainly less expensive and more efficient.

Living trust advocates will tell you that they can be used to avoid creditors. This is just not the case. The assets in the RLT are treated as assets of the grantor, and are, therefore, subject to attachment by the grantor's creditors. By removing assets from the grantor's name, his or her creditworthiness would also be harmed, thus limiting his or her ability to borrow money. Another consideration is that certain property contains a built-in insulation from creditors that might not be available with the RLT. A home owned by husband and wife as "tenants by the entireties," for example, can only be attached by a creditor of both.

Finally, it is suggested that a living trust ensures privacy. While it is true that a probate estate is a public record, in Maryland a schedule of the trust assets must be filed with the register of wills and thus it becomes a public record.

As with any important life decision, it is wise to have all of the facts and to realize both the advantages and disadvantages. In this regard, the best advice is to seek the services of a professional and sometimes, to even get a second opinion. I personally have a will, which I update every three or four years as necessary, an advanced directive (living will), and a durable power of attorney. I have no need for a revocable living trust.



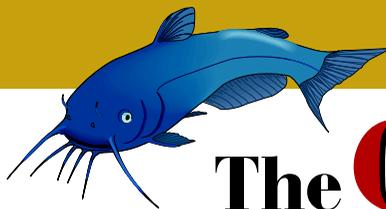
Al Northrop was admitted to the practice of law in 1975, served as a probate judge for more than 16 years, a district court judge for three years and is now serving on the Prince George's County Circuit Court by appointment of the governor in 2005. He was the lead author of "Decedents' Estates in Maryland" and resides in southern Prince George's County. He can be reached at Judge@OutLookbytheBay.com

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The CATFISH

Cathleen F. Ward, Esq. is a practicing attorney in the Bay area. She can be reached at catward@wardpratz.com or questions can be faxed to (410) 590-9700.

Dear Catfish:

We were so looking forward to having our grandkids spend part of the holidays with us. It now appears that our not-quite-alienated children are using them as a tool. We had to refuse loans requested by both sets of parents this year when we found that our retirement income had seriously dropped. We have made loans to both families before, none of which have been repaid, by the way. Now it looks to us like the two families have joined ranks and have decided that they'll be going elsewhere for the holidays. Do grandparents have any rights at all?

~ J.S., Edgewater

Dear J.S.: For attorneys, there is no time like the holidays. Parents, spouses and children around the globe gather and conspire to make life as miserable as possible for each other who must then give their worldly possessions to attorneys to fight it out before an overworked judge or magistrate. Seriously, I don't think that the law covers your situation as well as you would like it to. Grandparents have some rights, but not many if the grandchildren are otherwise well treated by their parents. I have written before that grandparents' rights to visitation vary from state to state and if a court in a grandparent-friendly state grants you visitation, the parents could move your grandkids to a less grandparent-friendly state.

You should try to talk to your children and ask them specifically why they are not visiting for the holidays. Now for the hard part: Let your children fully answer without interrupting them. You might be surprised that their reasons have nothing to do with the loans. If your children tell you that they are not visiting with you because of the loans, then decide whether you want to see your grandchildren enough to pay. "Heck, what's a little extortion among friends?"

Dear Catfish:

I am unable to afford legal services on my ever-dwindling pension. Is there some other way that I can make out my own will? It wouldn't be very involved, but I have never written anything down and have been told that I can download the forms from the Internet. If I fill out my own forms will my wishes be respected?

~ Annie K., Crownsville

Dear Annie: You could make out your own will, but there are technical requirements for a will that vary from state to state. So, if you miss a technicality, your will may fail—with devastating consequences. I have not examined the online legal software to determine how good it is. I suspect that the top brands of software are pretty good and entirely useful if you don't have a complicated estate. Also, try your public library as a low-cost resource for books on the subject that are specific to your state. Another option is to try to qualify for free or reduced-rate local legal services. You can search online for free legal services in your state and/or contact your state and local bar association. All bar associations have a referral network and a list of resources for free or reduced-rate legal services. Another idea is to ask your local senior center to provide a course on the subject or get them to schedule a guest lecture by an attorney. For the most part, attorneys do want to give back to the community and a call from a senior center to provide a talk might get the interest of lots of attorneys looking for pro bono opportunities. At least in Maryland, the bar association requests that all attorneys provide at least 40 hours of volunteer legal services every year. So get calling!

Dear Catfish:

My children think that I'm Bank of America. My husband died a few years ago but prior to his death he gave them every advantage. They are now disrespectful, irresponsible and a constant drain financially and emotionally. At this late date there's probably not much hope that they'll change, so my question is how do I parcel out their inheritance? If I left it all to them now, it would be spent on fast cars and expensive electronic equipment. They have no children that I know of and there are no signs that either will ever marry. However, their father's intention was that they should inherit and I need to follow his wishes although it is not written anywhere. Can I set something up so that whatever is left at my demise can't be touched by either of them until they reach the age of responsibility?

~ Perplexed, St. Michaels

Dear Perplexed: I love the idea that there might be an "age of responsibility," but I think that you are discounting the power of the far-too-common "age of Peter Pan." Some of my clients have set up a trust that holds all the money for the charmingly disrespectful, irresponsible, financial and emotional drains that are their children until the children reach a pre-selected age. One of my clients let her dirtbag kids (her words, not mine) receive only a portion of the interest from the trust starting when each attained the age of 55 and left the remainder upon the death of the last child to a charity. You can also set up a trust that only pays for certain expenses of your children like: education, housing, medical expenses or parental appreciation therapy. On a more positive note, and in keeping with the holiday spirit, your kids may reach the age of responsibility before you know it and care about you and not your money. You can always change your will as life changes.

The name for this column comes from a joke. What's the difference between a lawyer and a catfish?

One is a bottom-dwelling, dirt sucker. The other is a fish.

Now for the small print: The aforementioned is for entertainment, not legal advice or a legal opinion. The information is not intended to create and does not constitute a lawyer-client relationship between the Catfish, the publisher, or you.

Don't be afraid to take a risk.

A B.I.G. Bargain

By Leslie Payne

“Wear the old coat and buy the new book,” was good advice from Austin Phelps, an American Congregationalist minister and educator of the 1800s. But now thanks to the Parole Rotary Club, you can buy the new coat and the new-to-you book!

Books for International Goodwill (B.I.G.) is a local project making a global difference. Used books in good condition are contributed to B.I.G. by individuals, schools and colleges. Volunteers sort through the books preparing some for shipment to faraway places, while others are organized for sale at the Triangle Tobacco Warehouse, just a 20-minute drive south of Annapolis on Route 2.

One beautiful summer Saturday my husband and I went to a B.I.G. sale for the first time. The name should have warned me; a B.I.G. sale is exactly that.

My mouth dropped open in awe as we entered this warehouse filled with some 50,000 books that were all shelved, ordered and alphabetized. I felt like a kid in a candy shop as I pulled my reading list out of my purse and easily found many of the books I wanted along with others I couldn't pass up. At a dollar each, I came away with an armload of reading material and spent less than I would have at the movies. Other more experienced shoppers were filling sturdy bags with books for a modest \$30 per bag.

As I delighted in my new treasures there were volunteers preparing other books for shipment. The goal of B.I.G. is to provide basic tools for education in schools and libraries of poorer communities. Proceeds from the book sales help fund shipments of books to people in places such as Kenya, Malawi, the Philippines and Haiti. Through the hard work of volunteers here in Maryland, and working through Rotary clubs in the receiving countries, B.I.G. ships books for less than 20 cents per book. For less than \$5,000 they can ship an impressive \$20,000 worth of books.

The warehouse is not heated or cooled, so dress for the weather. But in the 90 minutes I spent book shopping I helped to recycle, fund education in underprivileged communities, spread literacy by keeping books alive and I came home with some excellent reading material. It was easy, fun and I can't wait to do it again.

"Spreading Literacy by Keeping Books Alive"
(their motto)

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IT'S POSSIBLE.

SAY WHAT? Who's Coming To Dinner?

By Yarrow

Perhaps the family holidays have changed for you over the years – you know, when you gathered your loved ones around the homestead to feast on a traditional meal of turkey with all the fixin's.

I remember the unsettling months approaching one holiday season when my life was turned upside down. I found myself wondering who would be seated around the table on Christmas Eve enjoying my famous oyster stew and exchanging gifts. For that matter, I solemnly found myself asking, "What would this year's holiday scene look like overall?"

Regardless of your annual circumstances, change, especially when it comes to family traditions, can be challenging. Clutching onto the "way things have always been," however, is an exercise in futility because the only "thing that is permanent is change itself."

To learn more about what impact understanding change has on your overall happiness, Deepak Chopra's "The Happiness Prescription" goes into detail on the subject. Well, heck maybe you can put this book or DVD on your holiday gift list and ask that it be delivered prior to the festivities. This way you have time to adopt a new way of thinking and try it on for a few weeks before the unwrapping of your new holiday traditions.

Divorce or death, and other life changes in general that affect spouses, children and extended family and friends are some of the factors that shift the ways we celebrate our holidays each year.

Approaching a new holiday with an old paradigm of expectation is surely a recipe doomed to fail. To avoid being the supreme example of an "old fogey who doesn't get it," embrace what "just is" in the lives of your loved ones this holiday season.

After all, this is a new year, a natural time for enjoying your life and an exciting opportunity to get in touch with what really is important — listening and understanding what really matters to others, what are their pleasures and challenges and what their life is for them now. Connect in real ways and imbue your life with vitality and sparkle.



Now, make your list for creating new holiday traditions and check it twice. Here are six sweet nuggets to savor:

#1 Embrace Who Is Coming to Dinner.

A distant voice across the airwaves may be echoing a family news blast like, "Grandpa's bringing who to dinner?" Or, "No, we can't have dinner at Aunt Lucy's this year. You may not have heard that she passed in July."

Whatever the circumstances are in your life, this year's holiday season will be inherently different simply because it is "now" and not "then."

If you are "dug-in" to the good feeling of knowing what to expect and don't want to change your position, I have a term that I use to describe my life – Multi-culti. This term evokes a smile and raises curiosity when I speak about it. It is a concept that is endearing and helps people get "unstuck" from thinking about life from an "either/or" mindset.

Regardless of who is or is not going to be joining your holiday festivities this season, or at anytime for that matter, be mindful that this is 2008, not any other year. Resist pointing backward!

Here are some tips on ways to welcome unusual circumstances, unexpected guests and uncomfortable feelings:

- 🌿 Check your expectations of what is "supposed to happen" at the door;
- 🌿 Discard divided loyalties;
- 🌿 Don't force festivities;
- 🌿 Honor your feelings and the feelings of others;
- 🌿 Anticipate fun!

#2 Just Show Up. The most important thing is to release all expectations of how you think holiday festivities should be spent. Remind yourself to:

- 🌿 Stay in the present and be open-minded;
- 🌿 Try to be mindful that these precious days are just a few hours out of your life and soon enough you can return to your regular, predictable routine;
- 🌿 Breathe! Breathing deeply and regularly will help diffuse a feeling of overwhelming emotions, clear your mind and keep you centered so you can be in the present and enjoy every moment.

#3 Divide & Conquer. Planning is key when deciding the calendar of events and especially important when new holiday traditions are being formed with family and friends who may now call any number of countries home.

Taking a poll and coming to a consensus with family and friends of what will work for everyone is critical and commands patience. Remember, things change in everyone's life, not just yours.

Good starting points include consideration of:

- 🌿 dates, times, and places. These logistical hurdles are all considerations to discuss because they likely have changed;
- 🌿 decisions on creating a menu that embraces vegetarians, vegans, diabetics and people experiencing food sensitivities;
- 🌿 sharing the cooking preparation;
- 🌿 recruitment of others if you need help hanging the lights, preparing the table and shopping;

"..this is a time for enjoying your life and an exciting opportunity to get in touch with what really is important."

 necessities for guests to relax, such as a wireless Internet connection to occupy any teenager and to help reduce stress for family members committed to keeping on top of job responsibilities while on vacation;

 accommodations needed for family pets who may be accompanying their human counterparts.

#4 Create Neutral Conversation. So how do you get the conversation started with someone you haven't seen since last year or perhaps never?

First and foremost, remember your etiquette. Talking about the tempestuous three -- money, politics and religion -- are best avoided. So is the often-asked initial question on Philadelphia's Main Line, "Who is your father?" Most often these topics dampen a festive time.

Hair style, body art and fashion fads are really great conversation starters. There is a story behind every obvious expression of individuality -- even why Uncle Ernie smokes stogies. Be open to learning the history of dreadlocks, tattoos and calf-sweeping pant pockets. Yes, these may show up eventually around your dining room table or in another social setting.

To put these current American pop culture phenomena into a comfortable perspective, you may recall the judgment around Mohawk haircuts, Camels rolled in white T-shirt sleeves and racy movies, way back before Hollywood's movie industry rating system was developed.

Be willing to put all preconceptions aside and try neutral conversation starters such as:

 the who, what, where of a person's life. This general information helps to compile a geographical picture of the person to whom you are talking and provides tangible topics for further conversation;

 favorite hobbies or activities;

 the most memorable or exciting things of the past year;

 education, travel and dreams;

 2009 New Year's resolution or intention.

#5 Write and Post Your Gratitude List.

Well, hey, it's just an idea. A gratitude list just may be a starting point for writing your traditional holiday greeting letter that you send to family and friends, providing them an encapsulated version of your past year. Regardless of your ventures, foibles or lack of adventure, consider their delight when they spot their name as one thing you are grateful for having in your life.

To remind yourself of your good luck and fortune, post your gratitude list on your refrigerator door, computer or some place that you see often. A gratitude list provides a basic nudge for happiness.

#6 Give the "Gift of You" to Yourself.

For some people, the thought of anyone spending a holiday alone is somehow counterintuitive to ensuring a happy, fulfilling holiday experience.

Au contraire! Some "alone time" can be less stressful than one spent compromising your true desires. Spending time alone has unlimited possibilities. You can:

 recharge and re-energize yourself in ways that work for you;

 nurture your inner-most being;

 engage in activities that stimulate your mind and amuse your soul;

 do some of the things you always wanted to do;

 Make your time alone count in ways that are meaningful to you.

Maybe your "gift list to you" contains:

 taking on a home improvement project that's been eluding you;

 rediscovering one of your old talents;

 reading the latest suspense novel or revisit a traditional classic;

 renting a DVD especially chosen for your zodiac sign. For instance, "The Bishop's Wife" is suggested for Virgos and "Holiday Inn" for Libras. (See link in sidebar.);

 traveling to a hot springs and spa. I have my personal favorites on this! New Mexico's Ojo Caliente and the town hot springs around which Pagosa Springs, Colo., was developed. No, I don't get a commission for suggesting my favorite places on the planet. Just happy to share nature's beauty;

 indulging in a personal spa right at home;

 Planning your calls to family and friends to extend holiday wishes without getting all wrapped up in the usual drama while staying connected and enjoying your freedom.

 indulging in a personal spa right at home;

 Planning your calls to family and friends to extend holiday wishes without getting all wrapped up in the usual drama while staying connected and enjoying your freedom.

Yarrow lives in Annapolis and is busy being an author, speaker, trainer and personal energy coach. Download free resources and schedule Yarrow to speak at www.ConsciousToolbox.com or call (410) 271-1377.

Resources and links to nourish your holiday season:



Happiness Support –
www.DeepakChopra.com

Movies by Zodiac Signs -
<http://tarot.com/articles/astrology/holidaymovies-bysign.php>

Vegetarian Recipes -
www.allrecipes.com

Holiday Check Lists and
Planning Guides –
www.realsimple.com and
www.getorganizednow.com

Holiday Activities Guide -
<http://www.oldeeducator.com>

Travel Packing Guide -
www.holidayextras.co.uk/holiday-checklist.html

As you succumb to shopping, cooking and getting in touch with long-lost relatives, now is the time to get a head start on designing next year's family holiday traditions. To avoid centering all of the traditions on one single holiday next year, play up other occasions through the year, like graduations, birthdays, weddings and anniversary celebrations.

Let your family and friends know to expect more communication from you this year and that you would enjoy hearing more frequently from them as well.

See if taking these approaches help you create some new holiday traditions. 

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Weigh Less Live More



By Ellen Kittredge

This is the first in a series of articles on finding the right foods to naturally rev up your metabolism and see lasting weight loss.

Weight loss is a confusing and complicated area of medical research and there are as many diet and weight-loss programs as there are extra pounds around the average person's midsection. Do they work? Some do, most don't. However, we can't give up. There is clearly a need to continue researching, experimenting and learning in the area of weight loss and metabolism, because obesity is becoming a real problem in this country.

Where do we start though? In my investigation of current weight loss programs, the most convincing area of weight loss research that I've come across is based on a groundbreaking concept called nutrigenomics, which is the science of how food talks to our genes.

Food talks to our genes? That's right, every molecule we ingest gives our body a certain message. The instructions in the message boil down to one of two things: weight loss and health or weight gain and disease. It really is as simple as eating the right foods (and of course moving around a little every day is important too!). However, determining which foods are the "right" foods for each individual person is where things get a little more complicated.

We all have certain parts of our bodies that don't work as well as they should, which means that it's harder for our bodies to operate like the well-functioning machines they are designed to be. When one part of the body is not functioning optimally, the unfortunate side effect is that it becomes more difficult to appropriately regulate weight. Some of us have sluggish thyroids, some have problems with insulin regulation, some have problems with detoxification pathways in the liver. Without getting into too much medical detail, let's just say that the average person these days has one or more reasons they are not able to lose weight as quickly as they'd like, and, assuming they do lose weight, to keep it off for very long.

This is why the vast majority of weight-loss programs and diets fail. The underlying reasons for weight gain and weight regulation have not been addressed. One medical researcher and practicing physician, Dr. Mark Hyman, has done some phenomenal work in the area of nutrigenomics and has come up with some very specific surveys to assess which areas of the body might be holding you back from losing weight. He also has some great suggestions for how to start to integrate the foods that heal the part of the body that is not working as well as it should, clearing the way for weight loss.

Future articles will go into more detail about the specific areas of the body that may be holding you back from losing weight, with information on which specific foods to incorporate to start to allow your well-designed machine to function optimally again! For now I will leave you with a teaser. This recipe contains broccoli rabe, which is full of lots of fiber, and helps with liver detoxification. Enjoy!

Mustard-Crusted Lamb Chops with Garlicky Broccoli Rabe

Servings: 2

Prep Time: 20 minutes

Cooking Time: 10 minutes

- 1 tbs. Dijon mustard
- 1 tbs. finely chopped fresh rosemary
- 1 tbs. minced shallots
- 2 tbs. whole-grain bread crumbs
- 2 tbs. minced garlic
- 2 tbs. extra virgin olive oil
- 6 two-to-four-ounce lean loin lamb chops
- 3 cups chopped broccoli rabe (about 3/4 pounds, trimmed)

Preheat the oven to 475 degrees

In a small bowl, make a paste with the mustard, rosemary, shallots, bread crumbs, one tablespoon of the garlic and one tablespoon of the olive oil. Rub the paste on both sides of the lamb chops, spreading evenly to cover the meat. Bake chops for five minutes on each side or until your desired degree of doneness. Place a piece of parchment paper on a baking sheet. Lay the chops on the paper about two inches apart.

Meanwhile, heat a large sauté pan over medium heat. Add the remaining olive oil and garlic. Add the broccoli rabe and toss in the pan to lightly coat with the oil and garlic. Cook for three to five minutes until wilted and bright green. Serve with the lamb chops.

Recipe From: *Ultra-metabolism: The Simple Plan for Automatic Weight Loss*, by Dr. Mark Hyman.

Ellen Kittredge is a nutrition and health counselor practicing in Annapolis who helps her clients experience real and lasting weight loss and improve overall health and well-being. She can be contacted at ellen@ellenkittredge.com or (202) 577-1940 for a free introductory session. Visit her Web site at www.ellenkittredge.com



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Celebrate and get that tree decorated

By Lesley Younes

Let's get the neighbors in, have some fun and for something different, get them to decorate that naked tree in the corner.

Great idea... a Christmas Tree Decorating Party. You can pull together an elegant buffet which will look like it took you two days to prepare and still be in good shape to celebrate the season. All this, while pulling your house together for the holidays. So get the atmosphere ready, put on some Christmas music, light a fire, or better still, use the remote to make those flames jump around. If you happen to have a piano and don't play, then remember to include in your guest list someone who does. Seasonal music on the piano will always inspire a pianist to sit down and tickle the ivories.

So here is how you start:

Cupcake Christmas Tree

Make your favorite cupcake recipe or use a boxed mix proportionate to how many guests you are inviting. These decorated cupcakes will be stacked on cake tiers to form the shape of a Christmas tree. If you do not have cake tiers, then you can make one by stacking three plates, one large, medium and small. Stack them with chunky small glass tumblers until they form the shape of a cake tier. Proceed from there and arrange your decorated cup cakes accordingly.

Buttercream frosting, bought or made from recipe below:

8 tbs. unsalted butter, softened
1 lb. confectioners sugar
1 tsp. vanilla extract
2 – 4 tbs. whole milk



Cream the butter and sugar together until perfectly smooth, add the vanilla and sufficient milk to make a smooth consistency for spreading.

You can decorate the cupcakes as simply or as flamboyantly as your imagination will allow, but here are a few suggestions for an elegant combination of white, green, red, gold and silver. Green sprinkles or jimmies, candy canes, fresh cranberries, gold and silver sugar balls.

Chateaubriand with Marinated Baby Vegetables and Mustard-Roasted Potatoes

Serves 4

Red wine-braised beef tenderloin with red pepper and rosemary
2 lb. center-cut beef tenderloin (chateaubriand), trimmed and tied
1 tsp. celery salt
1 tsp. coarsely crushed black pepper
2 slices pancetta (Italian cured bacon)
2/3 c. dry red wine
1 1/2 tsp. minced fresh rosemary leaves
1 roasted red pepper (found in jars in all supermarkets)
1 1/3 c. beef stock

Rub tenderloin with celery salt and black pepper. Cut pancetta into small cubes. In a heavy kettle, one big enough to hold the tenderloin, cook pancetta over moderate heat, stirring occasionally until crisp, and transfer to a small bowl. Pour off all but 1tbs. bacon fat. Increase the heat slightly and brown the tenderloin on all sides, about five minutes total. Remove from kettle. Add wine, bacon, rosemary and boil mixture one minute. Return the tenderloin and cook at a bare simmer, covered, turning occasionally for 25 minutes, or until a thermometer registers 125 for medium rare. Transfer to cutting board and rest for 10 minutes before slicing. In the meantime, add the beef stock to the kettle, boil down all the contents until reduced and slightly thickened, to about 1 1/3 cups. Use this to pour over the meat when it is sliced and placed on warmed plates.

Marinated Baby Vegetables

Serves 4

4 c. assorted trimmed baby vegetables, such as baby carrots, Brussel sprouts, cauliflower, pearl onions, pattypan squash, fresh baby corn and strips of red and green bell peppers.

Steam your chosen mixture of vegetables, sprinkle with salt and steam for about six minutes. When still warm toss them in the following mixture and marinate for about 15 minutes.

1 c. olive oil
 1/2 c. champagne vinegar
 salt to taste
 ground fresh black pepper,
 be liberal
 1 tsp. fennel seeds, crushed slightly to
 release the oils
 1 tbs. fresh oregano, leaves bruised
 dried crushed red pepper to taste
 (This dish can be served warm or at room
 temperature.)



Mustard Roasted Potatoes

Serves 8

1/2 c. whole grain Dijon mustard
 2 tbs. extra virgin olive oil
 1/4 stick butter, melted
 2 tbs. fresh lemon juice
 3 cloves garlic, minced
 2 tbs. freshly chopped parsley
 1 tsp. finely grated lemon peel
 1 tsp. coarse kosher salt
 3 lb. fingerling potatoes



Pre-heat oven to 425. Spray two large-rimmed baking sheets with oil or nonstick spray. Whisk mustard, olive oil, butter, lemon juice, garlic, herbs and seasonings together and toss potatoes. Taste to check for seasonings. Coat the potatoes well. Make sure the potatoes are in a single layer on the baking sheets and not touching each other. Bake for about 20 minutes. Check with the tip of a knife and cook a little longer if necessary. Fingerling potatoes have a delicious creamy and firm texture. This dish can be cooking while you are preparing the tenderloin.

Dates with Goat Cheese and Prosciutto

Makes about 8 servings

1/3 c. soft herbed goat cheese (or use Boursin if you prefer)
 16 Medjool dates, pitted
 4 wide, thin slices prosciutto di Parma (imported, as the domestic is too salty and thickly sliced)

Spoon one teaspoon cheese into each date. Wrap with prosciutto. Secure with a toothpick and broil until cheese bubbles, about three minutes. Serve warm. (This can be made two days in advance, wrapped in saran wrap and refrigerated until ready to serve.)

This will be an effortless get-together for the hostess. You will have fun, your guests will have fun and at the end of the day, you will have a beautifully decorated tree and maybe discover the voice of an angel.

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A Magical Holiday Extravaganza

Longwood Gardens,
a botanical wonder in Chester County, Pennsylvania

By Phil Ferrara



Photos courtesy Longwood Gardens / L. Ablee



As the holiday season approaches, its sights, sounds and smells evoke sentiments and memories. Imagine falling leaves, autumnal colors, a turkey roasting in the oven, perhaps the musical wonders of Christmas with kaleidoscopes of color and the gleeful voices of small children. Those seasons are upon us again! One perfect place to experience all of these sensations and the enchantment of the holidays is just a short journey from the Chesapeake Bay.

So, it is time to go north, north to Pennsylvania, north to an oasis of unparalleled beauty. Your destination is the Longwood Gardens, a place of magical wonders. Its primary attraction is to enjoy its horticultural splendors and the education you get from your visit.

Awaiting you are more than 1,000 acres of elaborate gardens, intricate mazes and meticulously groomed forests. As you meander along the quiet paths, you will encounter a myriad of plants, flowers, bushes and trees, many of them remarkably rare species. Interspersed throughout Longwood Gardens are ornate fountains spouting jets of water with elaborate designs and colors. They are accompanied by ponds with beautiful floral arrangements and exotic fish darting through the waters.

Complementing the wonders of the outdoor gardens are two indoor conservatories. Journeying through their awe-inspiring interiors, you will view two dozen botanical exhibits representing the world's varying climate conditions. Your

“Awaiting you are more than 1,000 acres of elaborate gardens,
intricate mazes and meticulously groomed forests.”

“Longwood Gardens is a unique treasure to visit and enjoy during all 12 months of the year.”

senses will be heightened by banana trees, colorful orchids, tropical jungles, desert gardens and bougainvillea.

But how did Longwood Gardens come to be? Start with a long ago era when the hunter-gatherers of the Lenni-Lenape tribes roamed the vast forests and hills of the river basins of the Susquehanna and Delaware. With the coming of the 17th century, the English Quaker, William Penn, was granted a charter to these lands and founded the colony of Pennsylvania. One of the rich and fertile southeast portions of the colony was titled to the colonial Peirce family who established a working farm and developed a huge arboretum of trees to preserve as forests. And finally came the industrialist and philanthropist, Pierre S. du Pont, who purchased this land as his personal home. He traveled the world to gather ideas and refine his vision for garden displays, so that he might beautify and landscape his estate. Today, the world-renowned horticultural masterpiece called Longwood Gardens is his legacy to the public.

Longwood Gardens is a unique treasure to visit and enjoy during all 12 months of the year. Seasonal exhibits abound with hundreds of educational and musical events, guided tours, fountain displays with music and fireworks on selected dates. There are programs and delights for every member of the family. Most importantly, the holiday seasons during November and December present a special time of unmatched sights and sounds---an unimaginable garden extravaganza.



Colors abound at the fall Chrysanthemum Festival, and during the Christmas season a spectacular array of dancing water fountain shows are conducted throughout the day and evening. As one watches mesmerized, it is easy to imagine the dancing waters as being truly alive. The grounds are decorated with hundreds of thousands of multicolored lights adorning trees and shrubs on miles of trails and garden paths. Music charms the visitor every step along the way. A walk through the gardens and conservatories in the Christmas season leaves everyone spellbound, many speechless from the colorful, ornate displays and horticultural wonders.



Many friends and veteran visitors to Longwood Gardens have offered timely advice. They note that "each visit is as thrilling as before" and that "you don't feel the winter evening chill when walking surrounded by the beautifully lighted trees and fountains." They also advise that "they love going and sharing a piece of history with family and friends" and that "everyone sleeps well after a full day of hiking throughout the gardens."

Others strongly suggest taking the kids to see the fish in the

ponds by the Italian Gardens and not to miss exploring the bell Chimes Tower, the tree house displays and the indoor Children's Garden, all exciting and entralling places. Finally, you cannot see it all in one visit. Rest assured that you will return, summoned by the beauty of Longwood Gardens.

And so this holiday season, go north and prepare to be dazzled. 

Phil, an avid hiker and traveler, can be reached at pferrara65@comcast.net

Longwood Gardens is three miles northeast of Kennett Square, PA, on US Route 1. All schedules, fees and exhibits are thoroughly described at www.longwoodgardens.org or by calling (610) 388-1000, ext. 100. Summer and Christmas season have extended hours. The Terrace Restaurant has both a café and a formal dining room.



Treat Yourself to a (Nearly) Stress-Free Holiday

By Louise Whiteside



It's the day after Thanksgiving. Your thoughts turn to that obligatory visit to your spouse's maiden aunt, or entertaining your sister-in-law's undisciplined little urchins. Then there are the cookies you haven't baked, the gifts you haven't bought, the decorations still in the boxes and the friends you've already invited to your open house.

Stress, along with Santa, is coming to town! At this point in your life, you're already familiar with the symptoms: the upset stomach, headaches, sleeplessness and coffee guzzling -- all irritating little signs that you're on overload.

We all get stressed occasionally. It's part of living. But at holiday time, we are more vulnerable. Although we're designed to handle brief periods of stress, too much of it takes its toll on our minds and bodies -- and even causes illness.

Fortunately, there are ways to take a proactive approach to stress, and even ways we can learn to de-stress after the demon has attacked. Try these steps to make your holidays a little less stressful and more fun!

Get Organized.

Good planning is a start. When a particularly stressful period is on the horizon — and the holidays are an excellent example — anticipate and prepare. Start with that old friend, the "to-do" list. Break your tasks down into manageable categories, such as shopping, decorating, baking and gift-

wrapping. Label each task with an A, a B or a C, depending on its urgency and time sensitivity, and do the A's first. Keep the list on your refrigerator door, and cross out each task as it's completed. What a relief you'll feel when only the C's are left!

Get Help.

Invite the kids or grandkids over for a tree-trimming or house-decorating party, and take them out for pizza afterward. Hire a housecleaning service to give your home a once-over before the guests arrive. Have your gifts wrapped at the store. Order those Christmas cookies from a great bakery instead of baking them yourself.

De-Stress.

OK, you've planned, organized, simplified and completed your holiday tasks, but you still feel bummed out by all the chaos around you. You're not alone. Try some of the following de-stressing agents:

- Chamomile tea has a calming, healing effect on the body. Try drinking a cup or two a day.
- Wrap some dried herbs (particularly chamomile, lavender and valerian) in a piece of cheesecloth and drop the pouch in your bathwater for a relaxing soak.
- Use scented candles or an aromatic sachet to soothe your olfactory senses.
- Take a good dose of Vitamin C daily. (Research has shown that 1,000 milligrams a day can regulate blood pressure and reduce stress hormone levels.)

- Meditation is a great stress reducer. Sit in a quiet place and close your eyes. Next, choose a word or phrase to focus on, such as "peace," "love," or "chill out." Concentrate on breathing in and out, repeating the word each time you exhale. When other thoughts come into your mind, gently "thank" them and return to your word or phrase. Do this exercise once a day and you'll be amazed at how the stress drains away.

• Music can reduce heart rate, blood pressure and stress hormone levels. Take a break and listen to any music that relaxes you. A variety of "relaxation" CDs are on the market now. If you enjoy the sound of ocean waves or waterfalls, they're available.

Prevent Stress Before It Starts

- Exercise for 20 minutes a day. Walk, swim, ride a bike or dance. Exercise boosts endorphins in your brain and lifts your mood.
- Limit your consumption of alcohol, caffeine and sugar. If you smoke, quit! All of these substances can ignite your body's fight-or-flight response, and make you jumpy.
- Take up a calming hobby, such as knitting, reading or painting, to help you take a break from the stresses of life and avoid those substances we just referenced.

Once you've gotten a handle on stress management, you'll find your new skills useful 365 days a year, and 24-7.

Channeling those jitters into productive activity will pay big dividends in the form of good health, more fun and a longer life. Who was it that said, "Don't sweat the small stuff?" 

For Louise, walking, writing and long drives in the country are the best antidotes to stress. Her advice for the holidays: (1) Start planning right after Halloween; and (2) KEEP IT SIMPLE!

The Festive Table — Quick and Easy



For a fall theme, start with straw flowers, miniature pumpkins and gourds, raffia or even straw from the local craft store. Arrange a base of colored leaves, then scatter larger pieces such as the small gourds and spookies (tiny pumpkins). Tuck pieces of dried wheat, straw or more colored leaves between the dried veggies. Add as much as you like: Full is better. If it's evening, decorate around holiday-colored candles — preferably in glass hurricane globes for safety. If time allows, hollow out spookies, one for each guest and drop in a votive candle. Be extra careful with any flame when decorating with dried materials.

Whether for Thanksgiving, Christmas or any other holiday that you're celebrating, it's the best time of year to make use of all the natural products available to set a magnificent table.



For a spectacular Christmas table, use fresh evergreens, cut in 6" to 12" lengths. Lay flat in the shape that you want. They can be round, oval or lengthwise if you are using a rectangular table. Add a few sprigs of holly with red berries and some magnolia leaves. A solid base of greens works best. Tuck in small colorful Christmas balls or red or white dried flowers or weave in a sparkly garland. If you have the time, spray paint a few small evergreen leaves gold and tuck those in. Add candles (careful with open flames) and voila, you have a magnificent holiday table.

Bring your family together this holiday season



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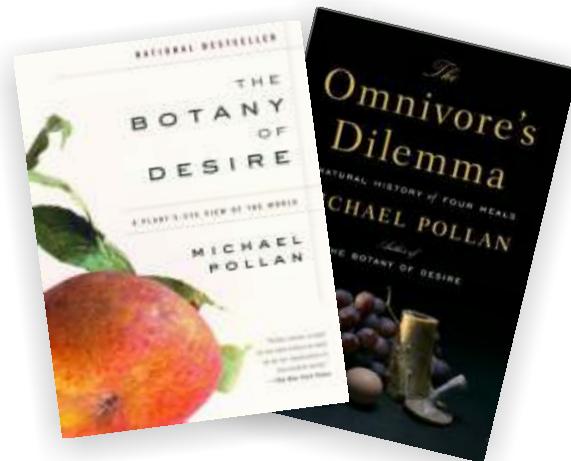
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Garden Gifts

By Neil Moran



“There are some neat things out there that will add to your enjoyment in and out of the garden.”

If you have a gardener to buy for this Christmas, you'll have no problem finding that perfect gift. However, it's probably more likely that you are that gardener, or else you wouldn't be reading this column. If that's the case you can make up your own wish list of garden must-haves. Either way, there are some neat things out there that will add to your enjoyment in and out of the garden.

Some Good Reads

While you wait for the snow to melt, indulge yourself in some good garden reading. You can never have too many garden books, right? But if I had only one I could buy, I'd purchase the *American Horticulture Society's A-Z Encyclopedia of Garden Plants*. In addition to more than 15,000 plants listed and illustrated in color (trees, shrubs, houseplants, flowers, you name it!), it contains excellent references to pruning, propagation and plant botany.

If you want to take your garden knowledge to the next level, check out books by Michael Pollan. Pollan has become a voice of sorts for getting back to the basics of growing and eating our own food. Along the way he offers up some interesting information on the plant world, such as the history of the apple and the role of corn in our food chain and economy. His two most popular books are *Botany of Desire* and *Omnivore's Dilemma*.

As for periodicals, I've read them all and I keep coming back to *Organic Gardening* magazine. Even if you're not strictly organic in your gardening practices, you should enjoy *OG*. Each issue is packed with timely information in an easy-to-read format that will help you in many aspects of your gardening.

Spring gardening

Why wait for summer to enjoy your favorite pastime when you can start a few things in the spring. A small (6' x 8') greenhouse might be just the ticket to get you out of the winter blahs. You can start a lot of plants for yourself and your neighbors in this grow house. A related gift idea is a grow light. This can be an inexpensive shop light (less than \$25) which is suspended a few inches above your seedlings, or a more expensive and efficient halite, for around \$250. You can purchase hobby greenhouses and accessories from mail order companies like Charley's Greenhouse (charleysgreenhouse.com).

Pruning tools

Pruning is a fairly easy skill to learn. To do it well, though, you need the right tools. Let your significant other know that you can't live without a new pair of Felco or Fiskar pruners. Hand pruners are the ticket to shaping everything from roses to small shrubs and trees. For larger limbs

(over 1/2") you'll need a pair of loppers and of course shears to trim the hedges. Spend a little more for a good pair of hand pruners, since you'll use them the most. Pruning not only gives plants a more uniform shape, it can increase the flower output. Don't know how to prune? Make sure Lee Reich's *The Pruning Book* finds its way under the Christmas tree.



Watering

One of the greatest inventions of the 20th century is the water wand. While not quite magic, it does make watering much easier, especially for hanging baskets. However, the cheap ones just don't last, take my word for it. Buy that special gardener a quality wand, like the ones sold by the Dramm company. The one I use has lasted several years now without breaking.

For that special woman in your life, there are lots of things to buy, but not necessarily things that would occur to men. I'm talking lawn ornaments! Garden centers have made a fortune selling globes, water fixtures and even candles, to the female garden enthusiast. At Garden.com and local garden centers, you'll find things like "whimsical stakes," chimes and fountains. These ornaments make great gift items for the proverbial gardener who has everything.

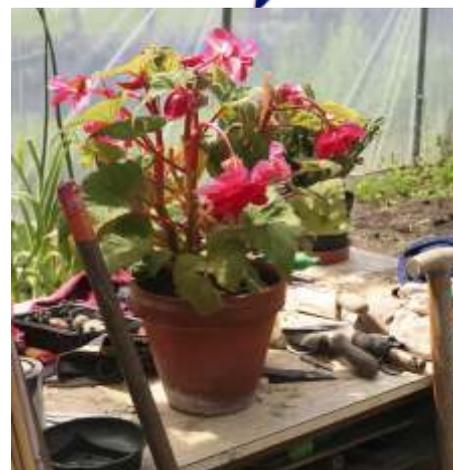
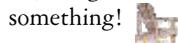
Go Big?

If you're looking to splurge this Christmas, check out ZRT (zero turn) lawnmowers. These riders can turn on a dime, but will cost a little more. The really nice thing about them is they can cut mowing time nearly in half. They also make mowing kind of fun. Gardeners like them because you can hitch a garden trailer to the back and haul things to and from the garden. Major brands include Toro, Ariens and Cub Cadet.

The heck with a white Christmas, how about a green Christmas?

By purchasing organic gardening products as Christmas gifts you'll be playing Santa to Mother Earth. Arbico Organics (www.arbico-organics.com) offers many products that are easy on the environment, including organic insecticides, traps, plant food and even pet supplies. They also sell a handy-dandy soil test kit for less than \$20. I almost forgot the best gift of all for a gardener: plants! Probably the best place to purchase quality garden plants in the winter is Logee's Greenhouse. Logee's, located in Connecticut, but accessible online at www.Logees.com They offer a great selection of indoor plants, including a great selection of unique orchids and begonias.

If you still can't think of anything to buy or you're afraid your significant other won't like what you get them, there's always the gift card. www.Yardiac.com offers gift cards to shop their huge store, stocked with 16,000 garden items. Surely, they'll find something!



For more information visit Neil's Web site at www.NeilMoran.com

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Honoring Those Who Went Before Us

Two traditions that commemorate the lives of America's fallen servicemen take place annually at the beginning of December. Both are worth the trip.

Antietam National Battlefield, in cooperation with the American Business Women's Association, places glowing luminaries on the graves of the 23,000 soldiers who were killed, wounded or missing in action at the Battle of Antietam. At dusk on Dec. 6, the luminaries are lit by the volunteers in preparation for the hundreds of cars, who with only parking lights lit, will wind their way through the five miles of road meandering between and around the tombstones. Each flame flickers for just a few hours, commemorating the life of a casualty from that horrific 1862 conflict. Now in its 20th year, plan to arrive early to join the line of cars that can take as long as two hours to reach the entrance. You can reach the battlefield by taking Route 34 in Sharpsburg. Pedestrians are strongly discouraged.

For another memorable experience, either join the volunteers or come as an observer to the Wreaths Across America at **Arlington National Cemetery**. The Worcester Wreath Company of Harrington, Maine, donates more than 5,000 wreaths to be placed on the grave sites of the veterans buried in Arlington. Last year, the tradition took on a national aspect when more than 32,500 Christmas wreaths were placed on the gravesites, honoring veterans across America. Started just 17 years ago by Morrill Worcester, the president of Worcester Wreath Co., it will take place this year at noon, Saturday, Dec. 13. Your group or organization can get involved either with a donation or by serving as a fund-raiser.



Antietam National Battlefield

Open to cars at 6 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 6. (Rain date is Dec. 13.) Entrance on Richardson Ave. off Route 34 in Sharpsburg, MD. For more information go to www.nps.gov/anti/planyourvisit/luminary.htm

Arlington National Cemetery

Noon Saturday, Dec. 13. For more information go to www.WreathsAcrossAmerica.org Arlington Wreath Project video can be viewed on YouTube.com To make a donation or serve as a fund-raiser for your group, log on to <http://www.wreaths-across-america.org/fundraising.html>

Start the New Year Right

Come Join the Mountain Club of Maryland, the state's premier hiking club. The Mountain Club of Maryland, founded in 1934, has the distinction of being the oldest such group in the state.

Based in Baltimore, it schedules hikes on Wednesdays and weekends year round. Each hike runs from four to 10 or more miles and takes place in local parks and paths located in state parks, national parks, national forests, and sites in and around Maryland, Pennsylvania, Virginia, West Virginia, New Jersey and Delaware. It is a volunteer organization that supports the "leave no trace" principles. Club members not only participate in weekly hikes but volunteer to work at maintaining local trails including the well-known Appalachian Trail. Members organize and lead hikes and other outdoor activities, such as camping, seasonal canoe trips, river tubing and backpacking weekends. A free newsletter, *Hiker Highpoints* and the *Trip Schedule* update the members on activities and list scheduled hikes, which are rated according to distance and degree of challenge - offering something for everyone.

In the spring and fall, members are invited to participate in work-related trips that maintain and renew trails. Informal workshops are also offered to train hike leaders, learn trail maintenance techniques and backpacking skills.

As active partners with the Appalachian Trail Conservancy and the National Park Service that jointly oversee that trail, the MCM is one of the 30 hiking clubs in America that share responsibility for maintaining sections of the 2,175-mile footpath that winds from Maine to Georgia. For more than 60 years, the MCM volunteers have cleared storm damage and deadfall from the trail, worked on repairing sections damaged by ice storms, hurricanes and severe erosion as well as building and maintaining four shelters along the AT in Pennsylvania. The monitoring teams frequently scout the boundaries of the AT corridor, and the AT trail maintainers regularly check on the conditions.

Always working hard at having fun, the club is open to everyone. Come join this dynamic group for either a leisurely or challenging hike while enjoying the great outdoors and making new friends. The cost is minimal and the good times are endless.



Membership information and a complimentary copy of the Activities Schedule and Hiker High Points newsletter are available at the mountain club Web site: <http://www.mcomd.org> or by calling (410) 377-6266 or e-mailing contact@mcomd.org

Treasured Gifts for Treasured People

By Tricia Herban



After I had been married for a few years and was making preparations to decorate my first home, I happened to be prowling around in my parents' attic. I stumbled across a double-headed brass student lamp that had sat on my father's desk for years. A modern lamp with a bright 100-watt bulb had replaced it, so it was relegated to the attic floor.

As soon as I saw it there, a rush of sentiment overcame me. I thought of all the times I had seen my dad at the desk, banging away at the typewriter with his rapid two-finger hunt-and-peck method. Almost every weekend, he'd be writing in the study. It was his base at home, away from the office.

After I emerged from the attic, I asked my mother if I could have the lamp. After all, it was just sitting there on the floor, lucky not to be kicked over. To my surprise, however, she said, "No."

Fast forward to Christmas of that year. Under the tree was a big box, wrapped in my mother's signature gift wrap—the Sunday comics. I had no clue. As I started to rip into the box, I heard my mother say, "Be careful—don't break anything." The white antique glass shades were on top, then the clear glass globes. And finally, I pulled out the brass student lamp itself. Bright and shiny and beautiful. Mother had taken it to a metal shop in South Philadelphia to be polished and



lacquered. She had heard my request and understood that the lamp held cherished memories for me. And as she transferred its ownership to me, I felt a trust being given—that I would love and care for this lamp and preserve it as both a functional object and as an antique.

A few years later, my mother gave me another treasure. This one wasn't very practical, but I had loved it from the moment she found it at one of her favorite antique shops. It is a brass kettle with an unusual lid shaped like a flower. The alloy in the handle is greener than the brass of the rest of the kettle, making it very distinctive. Although I could use it to boil water for my tea, I don't. Instead I keep it brightly polished in full view at the top of a pine cupboard.

I have many other items that belonged to my parents because I was an only child and everything ultimately came to me. And, of course, I use and delight in them as well. Some are much more valuable than the brass kettle and the lamp, but my greatest treasures are those two pieces that my mother chose especially for me to enjoy from her home.

Now that I am "of a certain age" I am looking around my own house. Of course there are charitable organizations such as Goodwill and Chesapeake Treasures—the Hospice thrift shop. They welcome gently

used items and I contribute to them regularly. But the things that are hardest to part with are those that have sentimental meaning. And so I plan to give a lovely white porcelain vase decorated with blue iris to my sister in law, for it was her mother who gave it to me.

Likewise, this past Easter, when our infant granddaughter was four months old, I selected a tiny silver souvenir spoon from the display rack in our dining room. It was decorated with a lovely engraving of a chicken and an egg and, in ornate script, the word "Easter." The spoon had been a wedding present. I polished it brightly and sent it off in a little white cardboard jewel box filled with cotton.

I live surrounded by memories made tangible by the things associated with particular experiences, such as the dishes my mother bought in an antique shop and used as her "good" set where we vacationed and which held countless Thanksgiving dinners. Then there's the cut glass vase from her front hall, pictures from her bedroom and living room, my mother-in-law's Victorian walnut side table and the list goes on to include folk art and ceramics that we have purchased on trips.

Already, I say to my son and his wife, "If you see something you want—ask me!" But that is not the same as the surprise and delight on their faces when they opened a heavy box one Christmas a few years ago to find my set of wedding silver – now theirs to enjoy for holidays throughout the years.

The gift of something that has been treasured is most likely to become a treasure to its newly chosen owner. For it is a treasure from the heart and a loving gift of trust for the future. Such gifts are priceless and we all have them to give.

Tricia lives in Annapolis and can be reached at triciah@erols.com



How many Christmases do you think you have left?



Gluten-free

Living with a Special Diet

By Susan Johnson

Two years ago my husband Charley was diagnosed with an autoimmune condition known as celiac disease.

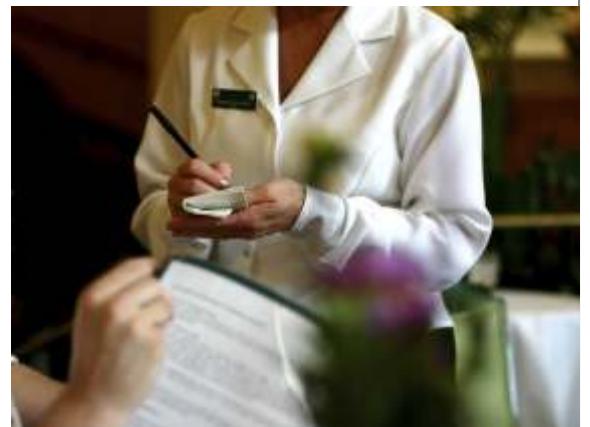
When we first heard this news our reaction was "How can a man 62 years "young" have this disease? This is a disease that young children have! Little did we know then the changes that were in store for us. People with this disorder are unable to eat foods that contain the protein gluten, which is found in wheat and certain other grains. It is not a food allergy and does not have the type reaction that one would see in food allergies such as peanuts or shell fish, but exposure to gluten makes the person sick and can have other side effects. The good news with the diagnosis was that my husband had been very sick for several years and now we finally knew what appeared to be the cause. Through the years he had suffered from recurring sinus infections, headaches, unusual sweats, skin problems, various intestinal distresses and debilitating fatigue, all of which are possible symptoms in adults with celiac disease. The not-so-good news was that shopping for food, stocking a kitchen, cooking and eating were all going to change for us in a big way. In addition to those basic changes, eating in other people's homes, eating in restaurants and traveling were areas of change for us. The really tough part was learning that the gluten tolerance is targeted to one "crumb" per day. As you can tell, we had our work cut out for us. Here's how the new regime played out:



At Home: After meeting with several nutritionists and getting lists of all the foods that my husband could and could not eat, I began the process of turning our kitchen into an environment where my husband could feel comfortable eating, knowing that his food was gluten-free. This meant not just getting the foods he could eat, but keeping all of his food totally separate from any foods that were not safe for him. Cross contamination is a tricky issue that needs to be addressed in all eating environments. A simple example of this is when you use the same tools (such as a knife, serving spoon, or even a toaster) for both nongluten-free and gluten-free foods. Vigilance is imperative on this. One suggestion is that when working with nongluten foods (such as when you have house guests or a dinner party), you have separate "work stations" for preparing different foods. Another part of our routine is to have separate condiments such as mayonnaise, butter, mustards, etc. for my husband and actually mark them for him so it is clear what is safe. Even after all this time, I still find myself making mistakes. At one point after about a year into our "new plan," I was feeling confident that I had everything covered and suddenly realized that we were sharing a toaster where I had prepared an occasional English muffin. Yikes! Remember the deal about "one crumb a day?" Now we have two toasters in our kitchen.

At Friends' Homes: When people first learn that someone has a food sensitivity or allergy, they immediately become worried that the food that they might serve this person will make them sick and in some cases people stop including that person in dinner parties, overnight visits, etc. We have been very lucky in that most of our friends decided to learn about celiac and wanted to find ways to serve "safe food" for my husband. I have found that if I (being the primary food planner in our family) share ideas that are easy, bring extra foods (say an appetizer that is safe for him, a plain baked potato just for him, his own salad dressing and butter) and get involved in the planning, it is easier on everyone and not so scary for the hostess. Since I used to be afraid I would "poison" a close friend of ours who has multiple allergies and sensitivities, I really understand how people feel and am happy to step in and offer suggestions. Our friends generally call the "boss" (that would be me) and share the menu ideas before they have us over. We are lucky to have friends like these. Some people in similar situations talk about feeling excluded from things and very isolated.

Restaurants: Many people with food sensitivities avoid eating out altogether as they are afraid of how things are prepared, and they don't enjoy their meals. We have found that if we speak to the server (and in many cases even the chef) and explain the situation, most people are very willing to help and the meal can be both enjoyable and safe. In the case of celiac disease, many restaurants are now advertising gluten-free meals and we also provide informational cards



that the server can read and share with the chef. We were on a vacation recently (a scary prospect initially) and the resort went out of their way to accommodate all of my husband's special needs. Every day the chef would meet with him to discuss what foods he could and could not eat. As a result we had a wonderful time. Strangely enough, buffets with so many choices can offer the biggest challenges. There is really no control over where the utensils go. Just out of the fruit is generally OK. A utensil in the potato salad? Any mixture like this needs careful scrutiny and often contains something with wheat in it. Even a simple green salad is often too close to the croutons and bacon bits to be trusted!

Travel: Since my husband travels quite a bit in his work and uses both the airlines and trains, this is an area which we had to address. Unless something is packaged and he can read the ingredients, he generally will not eat anything served on a plane or on a train. On the train, he can take his own food, but planes are difficult because of all the security precautions. On a long flight he really needs to take more than snacks and generally must rely on Ensure as a meal substitute. He was able to get a "note" from his doctor that he presents at the security checks when he is carrying on the Ensure. (Since it is a liquid, it presents a problem). This note is literally a note the doctor wrote on his prescription pad saying, "Charles must eat gluten-free". He gets mixed reactions to this note -- everything from asking him to bring an entire six-pack unopened to individual unopened bottles limited to the number they think he will need on a given trip. The words "gluten-free" must be clearly printed on these bottles. So far it has added extra scrutiny at security and the supervisor is usually called into the situation, but his note works and he doesn't starve on the airplane. Even though we have requested special meals for him prior to flights, we have not been successful at all and he always needs this backup plan.



Since my husband was diagnosed and we began talking about his condition with people, we have found that many people either have a family member (often a grandchild) or a friend who has this condition or some other problem with certain foods (allergies to peanuts, milk products, and shell fish for example) that requires changes and special attention. We have had lots of help in learning to live with my husband's particular condition and thanks to the Internet's Web sites, sharing forums, support groups, etc., and all the latest changes in food labeling, life for us is a lot easier than for people diagnosed even two years ago. By sharing our story and how we have addressed this major change at this point in our lives, we hope to help other people understand these issues, and make it easier for anyone also experiencing living with a special diet.



Susan and her husband, Charley, live on the shoreline of Connecticut. She enjoys nature in the woods, boating on Long Island Sound and is an avid reader. She can be reached at chastogo1@comcast.net

Celiac Disease Foundation:
www.celiac.org/cd-main.php
 has a Kid's Korner as well

Gluten-free foods:
www.glutenfreemall.com and
www.CeceliasMarketplace.com

Gluten-free restaurant guide:
www.Triumphdining.com/glutenfree-restaurants.aspx

WebMD for food allergies:
www.webmd.com/allergies/tc/food-allergies-topic-overview

Dr. Greene (food allergies in children):
www.drgreene.com/21_1093.html

The University of Maryland Center for Celiac Research: www.celiaccenter

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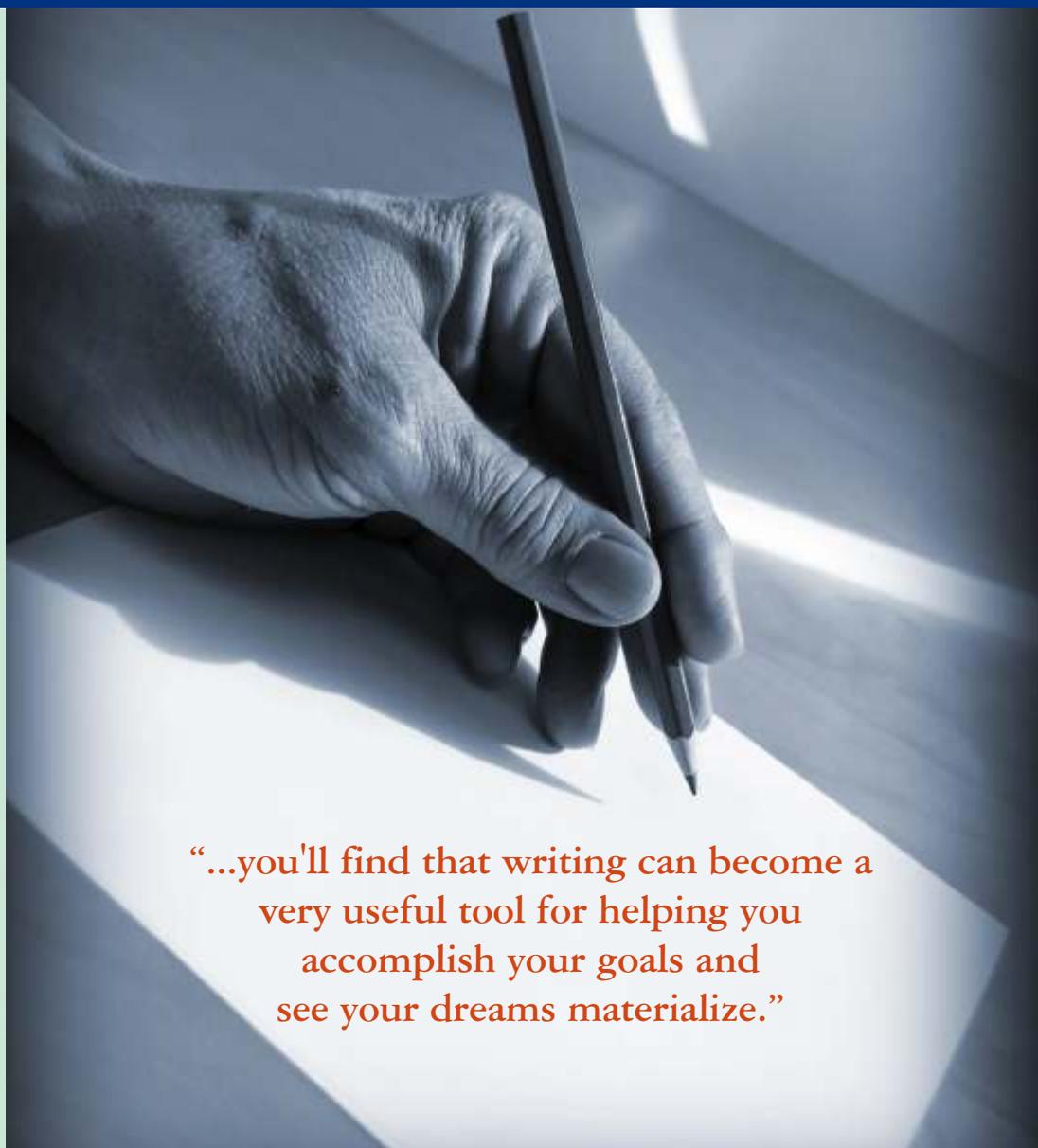
Be on the *Write* Track

By Melissa Conroy

“I want to lose weight.” “This year, I’ll finally take that dream vacation.” “I promise we’ll put that addition onto the house this summer.” “I resolve to stop fighting with my brother.” How many times have you said something like this only to realize a few months or weeks or days later that you were nowhere nearer accomplishing your goals? All of us have dreams, goals, desires and wishes. Unfortunately, we often do nothing more with these ambitions than talk about them. Meanwhile, other people in our lives are accomplishing their dreams, and it can be frustrating to see others succeed where we fail.

What causes some people to reach their goals while others never see their dreams materialize? There are many factors involved, but one common trait that many successful, accomplished people share is that they simply write down what they want to accomplish. Just about any self-help book, weight-loss program, or personal growth advice will offer this bit of advice: If you write down something you want to do, you are far more likely to achieve that goal. Dieters who keep a food journal are more likely to lose weight and keep it off, home owners who draw up a schedule for a home improvement project are more likely to finish it and students who keep a day planner are better organized and more successful students. Writing has a powerful effect that is extremely important for personal growth and achievement.

In my six years of teaching college-level writing, I have seen the deep importance of writing and how it touches all aspects of life. Here are some important concepts to consider:



“...you'll find that writing can become a very useful tool for helping you accomplish your goals and see your dreams materialize.”

- **Writing is an active process.**

It is easy to fall into passive behavior and move through the comfortable rhythms of life without actively engaging in and struggling with new challenges and growth. However, writing demands that we wrestle with words and concepts that force us out of a passive mindset.

- **Writing demands clarity of thought.**

The act of putting sentences and paragraphs together in a document forces us to examine our own thoughts and challenge these issues. Something that may make perfect logical sense in our heads often looks faulty and weak on paper, necessitating that we take another look at what we were thinking.

- **Writing is concrete.**

Oral and cognitive words flit effortlessly in and out of our lives, sometimes leaving no mark behind whatsoever. However, words put to paper have permanence. They give us something solid to review later on.

- **Writing is official.**

In many cases, a piece of writing serves as a legal document. We often take written words more seriously than spoken words. The common expression that “a verbal contract is not worth the paper it is printed on” nicely expresses this idea. Merely seeing something in print makes it all the more real than just hearing it.

Because writing brings so many good changes to your thoughts and mindset, it can assist you enormously in accomplishing your dreams. If you have a goal that you are determined to accomplish, writing can help you along the way. Below are several writing activities to try that can help you reach your goals and aspirations.

Create a Written Plan. No serious business person jumps into a new business venture without carefully evaluating the situation and creating a detailed business plan. Likewise, your goals also need a plan of action. Borrow the old journalism trick of "who, what, when, where, why and how" and use it to create your battle plan. Outline specifically what your goal is, who will be involved, what the time frame is, where this will take place, why this is so important to you and how this will be accomplished. Lay out everything so that you know what you want to tackle. Sometimes just having a plan to follow is all we need to actually accomplish something.

Know Your Writing Habits. What works best for you when it comes to writing? Do you like to compose everything on the computer? Is it easier to express your ideas through writing by hand? Do you like having a special journal or a particular pen to use? Is it easier for you to write in bed before you go to sleep, or do you write better at your desk during the day? Investigate what your writing habits are and what methods and situations are most conducive to helping you write well.

Mark Progress in a Journal. A journal is an indispensable tool for goal-setters. It is extremely helpful for you to chronicle your successes, frustrations and setbacks in a journal. Periodically read through your journal to note what progress you have made, identify problem areas, and find inspiration for changes you need to make.

Write Daily. Take a few minutes each day to jot down at least a few sentences. It is easy to forget important information, so a small block of time spent writing per day is helpful for putting everything down on paper and recording key thoughts and ideas.

Have a Visible List. When I was trying to finish a book draft for National Novel Writing Month, I had a big sign in my office that screamed in all caps WRITE 10-12 PAGES A DAY! The sign was a terrific reminder of my daily goals, and it helped me finish the draft on time. Likewise, if you write down reminders or a list of important activities, you will be more inspired to keep to the plan you have set.

Craft Regular Progress Reports. Pretend that you have to write a progress report to someone else which details your work so far on whatever goal you have set for yourself. This will force you to identify what is working, what is not working and what needs work. If so inspired, give the progress reports to a spouse or loved one. Having someone else checking on you to encourage you to stay diligent.

Enroll in a Writing Course. If writing is not your strong point or you would like to develop your writing skills more fully, check with your local community college or learning center to see what writing courses they offer. A creative writing, technical communication or a basic composition course can help clear up some sticky grammatical and mechanical writing errors you have and inspire you to try new writing ideas.

Although the thought of writing may make you think back to your high school English teacher and shudder with dread, the truth is you are the only one who has to see your personal writing. Writing is, foremost, a form of self-expression, so don't worry about sentence structure, grammar or word choice. Let your ideas flow and your pen wander, and you'll find that writing can become a very useful tool for helping you accomplish your goals and see your dreams materialize.



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Finding a Relationship:

Hope Could Spring Eternal

By Samantha Byrnes



“**D**id you hear that Jane met a man on the Internet two months ago and they are going to be married? She's crazy, because he's 80 years old and not in good health. He just wants a 'nurse with a purse'." This is a conversation I overheard recently in a local restaurant.

If you are ever in the company of a group of single women who are over 50, eventually the topic will come around to the topic of men and their availability. It seems things haven't changed from our earlier days.

The questions are obvious: where to meet decent, available men, how to compete with younger women and do I really want to get married, or just have a relationship, be it platonic or romantic.

We are all familiar with Internet dating by now. We hear stories of wonderful marriages that have developed from such encounters, and at the other end of the spectrum, men who deviously misrepresent, offing their age, weight, interests and single status.

It seems no matter how reliable an Internet dating service appears, there are always some men (or women) who use the service for other than honorable intentions. How do we know if this is the case? A good start is to never meet a new "friend" who you have met over the Internet at your home or in a private place. It is wise to pick a very public, visible coffee shop or café for a comfortable meeting, which would give you a good chance to chat, or possibly escape, if it is a disastrous meeting.

And then there is the problem of cost. The number of free or low-cost dating services are fast disappearing. One case that just went to court involved a woman who is suing a dating service for services not rendered. She had paid more than \$2,000 with a promise from them that she would meet a perfect match. The few men she was introduced to were far from the perfect match in her opinion. The charge can be anywhere from a nominal fee for dating services such as those associated with religious groups or organizations, to very specialized, high-tech services that utilize videos to introduce members.

When you talk to men and women who are happy in their relationships, you usually discover these singles have met through mutual friends or interests. Meeting on an airline is one way a relationship developed. Also, an interest such as a foreign language club, art group, sports group or business organization is a good place to start.

A close friend entertains me with her stories about her "friendship" with a gentleman she met on a trip two years ago. It seems what he wants from the relationship is not what she has in mind. He is looking for romance, possibly marriage, or at least to be living together. Since they don't live in the same state, she likes to keep the visits down to once a month or so. Although she says she has been quite specific about what she expects from this

relationship, she makes me laugh when she tells me that he just "doesn't get it." But they have wonderful adventures traveling and visiting interesting locales in the states where they live. She says he keeps hanging around, so he must have accepted the terms for now, even though he keeps sending flowers, telling her how much he loves her and calling on the telephone at least once a day, with a few e-mails thrown in.

So, I guess what I have learned from my friend is to consider what type of relationship you want and try to be honest with one another. Are you looking for a sometime companion to accompany you to a nice restaurant, a concert, play, sports event or party? Do you want a lover, with or without marriage? Or, are you looking for a good friend who is there when both of you feel the need for an ear to bend, a shoulder to cry on or a companion to accompany you on trips, etc. Maybe you want a partner for life, involving marriage or a "live-in" arrangement. Probably the ideal relationship would be a combination of many of these attributes, even if achieving that is a long shot. 

Hints from Ellen

How to keep your immune system in shape.

Top immune boosters:

1. Onions and garlic
2. Green herbs like parsley, dill, cilantro and spring onion
3. Probiotic supplementation and fermented foods
4. Cold-pressed oils like olive oil, fish oils, nut and seed oils
5. Freshly pressed vegetable and fruit juices

Top immune suppressors:

1. Sugar
2. Processed carbohydrates like cake, potato chips, sugary breakfast cereals, white bread and pasta
3. Chemically altered and artificial fats like margarine and processed vegetable oils
4. Exposure to man-made chemicals
5. Lack of fresh air and physical activity

Keep this in mind as the frigid days of winter begin and flu season threatens.

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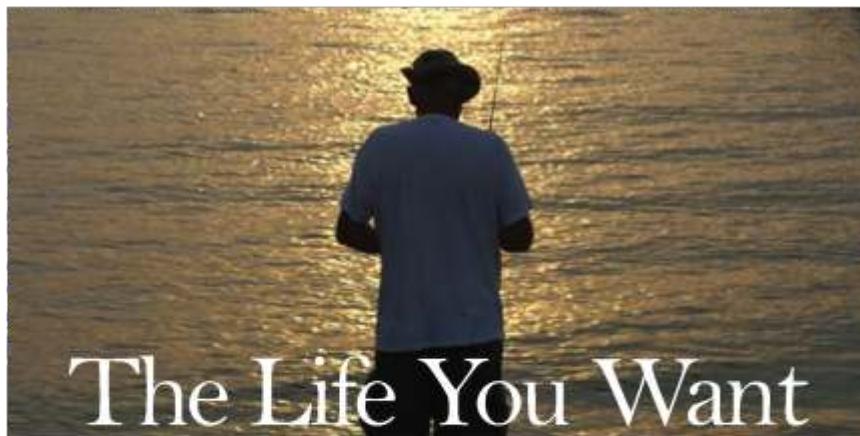
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Not So Sweet

By Melissa Conroy

Anyone who has traveled outside the U.S. may have come to this conclusion: North Americans like their food sweet. We guzzle gallons of soda, gobble down Triple Chocolate Caramel Blast ice cream, pour honey-sweetened barbecue sauce over our chicken wings and find a way to sneak sugar into just about everything from toothpaste to cigarettes.

Humans have a natural craving for sweetness, and for years people have enjoyed natural sweeteners such as honey, molasses and cane sugar. However, in recent decades, people have been discovering newer forms of sweeteners and innovative ways to mass-produce these sugars and sweeteners. These discoveries have allowed food manufacturers to produce sweetening agents cheaply and efficiently, and the general public responded enthusiastically to an increasingly sweet diet. With newer and cheaper ways to manufacture and distribute sugar and sweeteners, the amount of sugar the average person eats in a year has shot skyward in the last century. Today, the average American eats roughly 150 pounds of sugar a year, consuming it both directly (sweetening your coffee, for example) and indirectly (eating food products that contain sugar).

From those 150 pounds that you eat in a year, about one-third is in the form of high fructose corn syrup (HFCS). HFCS is a sweetener derived from corn. It was developed during the '60s and began appearing on the U.S. market during the '70s. Today, HFCS is an extremely common sweetener, appearing in a plethora of processed food. Most sodas and drinks are sweetened with HFCS, and numerous food products from candy to pancake syrup have "high fructose corn syrup" in their list of ingredients, sometimes as the first item listed. HFCS's popularity is due partially to the fact that it is a relatively inexpensive sweetener. Food manufacturers benefit from HFCS because it is easy to transport and utilize since it is a liquid, not a solid, and it doesn't crystallize like some other sugars do, making it an ideal sweetening agent for commercial food use.

Most of us know that too much sugar leads to all sorts of health problems, from diabetes to tooth decay. However, the unique makeup of HFCS has raised further concern among researchers, and there is a growing body of evidence stating that HFCS is a more unhealthy form of sweetener than other forms such as table sugar and cane sugar.



One reason why the U.S. has such staggeringly high rates of obesity could very well be the large amount of HFCS (about 60 pounds per year) that are part of the typical American's diet. Obesity rates in the U.S. began climbing sharply about the same time HFCS hit the market, and some experts argue that HFCS is a contributor to that increase. There is evidence that the human body processes fructose differently than sucrose (table sugar), which can contribute to obesity. Another theory is that fructose does not satisfy people's "sweet tooth" as effectively as sucrose, so someone may consume more of a product containing HFCS in order to be satisfied. In the process, you take in more calories and sugar, increasing the risk of obesity. Furthermore, consuming glucose triggers the body to produce leptin or insulin, but consuming fructose doesn't appear to prompt that release. This is particularly troublesome because both leptin and insulin help the body signal the brain that the stomach is full and are important hormones for regulating appetite and food consumption.

Obesity is not the only risk that a diet high in HFCS can bring; diabetes is another risk. According to the foxnews.com story "Study: High Fructose Corn Syrup Used in Soda Linked to Diabetes," regular table sugar has chemically stable sucrose components while HFCS has unstable fructose and sucrose



“Today, the average American eats roughly 150 pounds of sugar a year.”



components. HFCS's unstable components pose a specific risk because HFCS has been found to contain carbonyls. Carbonyls are compounds that connect with unstable fructose and sucrose elements, which can cause damage to the body's tissues. These carbonyls exist in elevated levels in the blood of diabetic patients. Rather shockingly, a single can of soda can contain several times more carbonyls than are found in a diabetic patient's blood. Other studies have linked HFCS with diabetes, and therefore anyone concerned with obesity or diabetes would be well-advised to watch their HFCS intake.

Additionally, HFCS is suspected of playing a role in the development of diseases such as hypertension and other heart-related disease. One of the reasons is because HFCS is thought to increase people's triglyceride (a fat found in the blood) levels, and this can lead to heart problems and other health issues.

Having said all this, here are some caveats to keep in mind. First, the overall amount of sugar you consume has a much greater effect on you than HFCS. Considering that there are 12 teaspoons of sugar in the average can of soda, six teaspoons in a Hershey bar, and three teaspoons in a serving of jam, it becomes painfully clear that consuming 150 pounds of sugar a year is not difficult. Therefore, completely eliminating HFCS from foods will not cause an astonishing drop in U.S. obesity rates anymore than banning trans fat in food will wipe out all heart diseases. Therefore, while it is better for your health to consume less HFCS, you also must seek to lower your total sugar intake. Be on the lookout for any ingredient ending in -ose such as dextrose, sucrose and lactose because the suffix -ose usually identifies it as a sugar.

Second, the issue of HFCS is hotly debated. Log onto the Internet, and you will see many studies arguing that HFCS does not pose a significant risk to consumers. However,

bear in mind that many powerful industries, manufacturers and lobbyists support HFCS. It is in the best interest of the farming and food industries if Americans keep chomping down on HFCS, so it becomes important to "prove" that HFCS is not a significant threat. However, there is enough concern from other nutritionists and researchers about the health effects of HFCS to warrant people limiting the amount of this sweetener.

Sadly, HFCS appears in a wealth of foods, and completely avoiding it can be more challenging than you might think. But here are some simple steps you can take to limit your consumption of HFCS:

- Strictly limit the number of sodas you drink because that is the No. 1 way people consume HFCS.
- Carefully read the labels of foods. In general, whatever is listed first under the ingredients section makes up the bulk of the produce. Be on the lookout not only for HFCS but regular corn syrup.
- Choose 100 percent fruit juice. Many "juice" products contain only a small percentage of juice and have high levels of HFCS.
- Choose fresh or dried, not canned fruit. Canned or prepackaged fruit is floating in HFCS.
- Be aware that HFCS shows up in products that are not necessarily so sweet. Wheat bread and peanut butter are two products that commonly contain HFCS.
- Avoid commercially prepared food as much as possible. If you eat unprocessed, unprepared food, you will consume very little HFCS.

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Make Your Own Photo Books

Sure to be a Best Seller

By Cindy Rott



Are you looking for the perfect Christmas gift, one that you know will not be a duplicate? Do your pictures sit in boxes? Or worse, are they 'stuck' on the computer destined to never be printed? Do you wish there was something easy you could do? Did you ever try scrapbooking, because you liked the concept, but found you hate the work? What if I told you, that you could make a custom photo book for everyone on your gift list, or just for yourself, without ever leaving your house. Preserving your photos will be a wonderful keepsake that you

designed, and it couldn't be easier on any of the many photo Web sites. Competition is fierce for your photo business, but my absolute favorite is www.snapfish.com. Snapfish is extremely easy to use, offering custom photo books with many different styles, sizes and designs. Prices vary greatly depending on your choices, but Snapfish has more 'bargain' choices than some of the high-end sites.

Creating your own photo book is as the Snapfish name sounds. Its online directions are superb, but here is a quick summary so you can see what I mean.

1. If you are new to Snapfish, establish a customer name and password.
2. Upload your photos to their site. This is not difficult, especially if your photos are already in your computer. I often just upload complete files, leaving the actual photo selection until later.
3. Pick what type of book and cover color. Samples are shown to guide your choices.
4. Pick your layout. How many photos do you want? You have your choice of one to six photos per page. On which pages do you want text? Do you want a recurring holiday theme or perhaps a beach theme? Do you want extra pages? Do you want a duplicate photo book at a discounted price?
5. Do a final review and purchase. Presto! In couple of days, you will have an original creation to give or to cherish.

When I am putting a book together, I try to pick a photo theme to unify the book. For my favorite kids I create a book about them. Usually I start with a baby picture, and work chronologically through their life. The children who have received their own photo books love it when my captions tell "their" story with a bit of fantasy. "Here is the day Princess Kate was born. This is a picture of her castle." You get the idea...

The photo books are also an awesome way to show off special vacations or reunions. Make the captions snappy, and suddenly people won't dread seeing your latest cruise photos. Making a memory of your latest girls' weekend or your book club through the years is bound to bring out happy memories and good times.



When that moment of inspiration comes along, what do you do with it?

MOVING ON: Feel Lighter, Liberated, More Alive! One Woman's Quest to Eliminate Every Form of Clutter and Create More SPACE in Life

By Kater Leatherman — Kiwi Books 2008

Contact Simplykater@earthlink.net to obtain a copy

These days, clutter ranks high as one of the most overused words found in the dictionary. Yet it is something that most of us will eventually be forced to confront. And we'll have to do it while battling society's insatiable need to seduce us into acquiring more in order to feel happy. But there are other forms of clutter besides material clutter, some that don't necessarily drain our bank account, have to be dusted or even maintained.

In *MOVING ON*, local author Kater Leatherman addresses mental, emotional, visual, verbal, spiritual, food and physical clutter. Internal clutter can include stress, old beliefs, toxic thinking, unresolved grief and anger, the effects of watching violence, not speaking the truth, consuming junk food and carrying around excess weight.

Instead of the self-help format that dominated the book market in the '80s, this one is an easy read that is both interesting and thought-provoking. It is a collection of short stories, informative articles, personal photographs and inspirational quotes.

"People are more likely to remember information through stories because they can relate to them," Leatherman says.

Her quest began in the early '70s when she moved to Colorado, worked on a dude ranch and later hooked up with a childhood friend who was living off the land. This lifestyle inspired her to reevaluate her own life. Slowly, Leatherman shed material possessions that she no longer loved or used, cleaned up her diet and got into therapy.

"We are born innocent, empty vessels," she is eager to mention, adding "but it isn't long before we begin the process of gathering both tangible and intangible clutter. This accumulation of stuff can take years to release. Some forms of clutter involve choosing to remember our past, but that is where our personal freedom lies. By eliminating clutter, we automatically create more space in our lives for what's important."

Stories include one small risk that changed the course of John Lennon's life, how yoga can help release physical clutter, why the author was forced to address a rather unusual phobia and what happened after following a sign that led to one of the most rewarding experiences of her life. As a boomer, I enjoyed reading her stories about growing up in the '60s.

Articles address topics such as the 10 most common fears when letting go of possessions, how to create more personal time, insight on ways to give yourself more while raising kids and the importance of letting go of tolerations, i.e., things you are putting up with on a daily basis that drain your energy. This is a great read for anyone wanting to shed toxic people, places and things. ~ *Joseph J. DiPrimio*



POWER AGING

By Gary Null, PhD. — New American Library, a division of Penguin Books, New York, 2003

Gary Null certainly seems to have the credentials to write this very informative book, *Power Aging*. He is the author of more than 50 books on health issues, as well as a lecturer, educator and host of a daily health radio show.

My impression after reading all this information was, "Wow, how can anyone ever take all those supplements, drink all that juice, do all that exercising, shop for all the healthy ingredients, cook it, juice it, etc." I think you get the idea that *Power Aging* is something that you take in small bits, a chapter at a time.

This book is divided into four sections with a total of 12 chapters. For instance, if you are interested in preventing cancer or facing up to it, you would turn to that chapter. There is also a section on Parkinson's disease, cardiovascular disease, Alzheimer's and depression. Included in each chapter are recommendations for a fresh approach to not just alleviate the symptoms, as traditional medicine tends to do, but to help prevent it or reverse the disease process. As would be expected, diet, supplements and exercise are the main protocols suggested. Herbs, vitamins, alternative medicines and diet are all covered for each problem.

The chapter of recipes was quite intriguing, as there were some ingredients that I had never heard of. Dr. Null recommends a vegetarian diet, which is not surprising, and only certain fish or seafood are included in this diet. He also outlines a wellness protocol comprised of general health goals such as relieving stress and using antioxidants.

Readers who are knowledgeable about diet, health and exercise are probably not going to find too many new ideas in *Power Aging*. But there is always something new that one can add to their health knowledge, and this is where I feel this book would fit in a library of healthy living. ~ *Peggy Kiefer*

SNOW IN AUGUST

By Pete Hamill — Little, Brown and Company, New York, 1997

Anyone who has ever been a daydreamer as a child will identify with the main character in this intriguing book, *Snow in August*. Even the title conveys a feeling of fantasy.

Michael Devlin is an 11-year-old who lives in Brooklyn, New York, in the 1940s. His father has been killed in the Battle of the Bulge in World War II, and he lives with his mother in a tough section of town. In the midst of a severe blizzard Michael struggles out of his apartment to his job as an altar boy in the local Catholic church. In the blowing snow and howling wind he hears a voice calling to him from a nearby synagogue. From this chance meeting with Rabbi Judah Hirsch, a friendship develops that is the main plot of the novel.

Michael needs a father image and Rabbi Hirsch needs a helper, and a fast friendship develops between this unlikely pair. Michael teaches the rabbi some English and about the rules of baseball and in particular about his hero, Jackie Robinson. In return, he learns some Yiddish from his new friend plus a wonderful history of Prague, the rabbi's home. Rabbi Hirsch also enralls Michael with tales of the Giant Golem of Prague, who has mystical strength and power.

Unfortunately, prejudice is widespread in the area, and the neighborhood bullies terrorize Michael for his friendship with the rabbi. They seriously injure the Jewish proprietor of the local candy shop, beat up both Michael and the rabbi and abuse Michael's mother.

You are left at the end of the story to wonder if the neighborhood thugs really get their "comeuppance" or to speculate that the ending is part of Michael's daydreaming and fantasy world. Read this beautifully crafted story and decide for yourself. ~ *Peggy Kiefer*

Are You Ready for...



By Ed Kelley

It is hard to believe, but in about six months from now, April 15th will be here. Preparing now for year-end tax steps is in your best interest to help **preserve your purchasing power**. A planning session with your tax professional is important, and here are just a few ideas why, which could potentially minimize your individual and/or business taxes.

Applying tax saving steps requires caution. A large benefit for this year may mean that next year or a subsequent year will suffer. It is necessary to evaluate both the present benefit and the future benefit or cost.

Tax planning is not reserved for Warren Buffet, Bill Gates or Charles Anderson. Charles Anderson is your neighbor next door--you remember him from the little league game last spring or the community Halloween party. Your neighbor Charles begins his tax planning in October each year. It helps Warren, Bill and Charles. Planning now will help you gain the rewards too.

It is my considered opinion, as a seasoned tax planner and preparer, that the tax rates in 2009 and years to follow will be higher than the 2008 rates. The many factors that lead me and others to that conclusion are in the news every day.

Tax matters come in various sizes, various subjects and generate various rewards. However, the rewards are yours when you plan ahead and properly. Preserving your purchasing power is important. Saving on your taxes may cost you cash. Let's look at Merle and Marge, a husband and wife filing a joint tax return. Their federal tax rate is 20 percent. M and M have learned that by making a \$2,000 contribution to a qualified charity they will save \$400 in federal taxes. This step saves taxes of \$400 with a net cash cost of \$1,600. The contribution should be made on the merit of the need, not necessarily the tax benefit.

In another example we will consider the medical expense deduction. Medical expenses in excess of 7.5 percent of your adjusted gross income are deductible as an itemized deduction. Adjusted gross income includes many elements of income which you and your tax planner will estimate for now. Let's look at another couple—Al and Sal. Sal is scheduled for surgery in early November 2008. With the deductibles and other medical expenses not covered by their health insurance year to date and for the pending surgery the total medical cost will be \$6,800. The table below presents the facts and the estimates. The basic expenses increase in 2009 to reflect the typical increases experienced in recent years. In the tabulation the columns headed "As Estimated," "2008" and "2009" present the medical cost without any rearrangement for tax purposes. That is, expenses fall in the tax years without any re-structuring or changing the timing of the expenses. You and/or your tax adviser will consider the options. The option in this case is to have Al and Sal taking one of two paths. In column "2008A" the dental and eye expenses are moved into 2008. The second option, column "2009B" moves the surgery into 2009, where the tax savings in an actual case may be greater. Of course, the doctors will be consulted before any actual rescheduling of the medical procedure.

Al and Sal's Medical Deductions

Tax Rate 20%
 Estimated Adjusted Gross Income \$110,000
 Medical Threshold 7 1/2 % of Adjusted Gross Income \$8,250

	As Estimated		Tax Professional (Suggested)			
	2008	2009	2008A	2008B	2009A	2009B
Group Health Insurance	\$ 3,150	\$ 3,620	\$ 3,150	\$ 3,150	\$ 3,620	\$ 3,620
Prescriptions	\$ 850	\$ 918	\$ 850	\$ 850	\$ 918	\$ 918
Co-Pay During The Year	\$ 1,300	\$ 1,600	\$ 1,300	\$ 1,300	\$ 1,600	\$ 1,600
Typical Medical Expenses	\$ 5,300	\$ 6,138	\$ 5,300	\$ 5,300	\$ 6,138	\$ 6,138
Co-Pay for November 2008 Surgery	\$ 1,200		\$ 1,200			\$ 1,200
Dental Expense Pending		\$ 2,200	\$ 2,200			\$ 2,200
Eyeglasses		\$ 1,275	\$ 1,275			\$ 1,275
Threshold	\$ 8,250	\$ 8,250	\$ 8,250	\$ 8,250	\$ 8,250	\$ 8,250
Short of Threshold	\$ (1,750)			\$ (2,950)	\$ (2,112)	
In Excess of Threshold		\$ 1,363	\$ 1,725			\$ 2,563
Tax Benefit with 20% Tax Rate	\$ —	\$ 273	\$ 345	\$ —	\$ —	\$ 513

*This is an example of working with a professional tax planner. An actual case is likely to generate larger savings.

If you want the fruit you're going to have to go out on a limb.

Investments deserve a special evaluation. Capital gains tax rates are low compared to prior rates. If stocks or bonds will be sold in the near future then consider with your adviser the benefit of selling in 2008 or holding and selling at a later time with the possibility of higher capital gains rates.

Consider moving retirement funds in a traditional IRA to a Roth IRA. The tax rates for that move are known for 2008. Making this move later may cost more.

Because education is an important area, my wife and I opened a Maryland 529 savings plan for each of our grandchildren. After the initial amount our monthly contribution is small but it reduces our Maryland taxable income. Investing in future education while saving some present tax dollars is attractive and other benefits may apply too. If you are not a resident of Maryland research the tax regulation in your home state for the possible tax benefit.

Ask your tax adviser if the expired energy credit has been restored. Congress did restore some of these credits before year end, which could impact your tax dollars.

It is important to evaluate the tax planning steps with the hands-on assistance of **a professional who is involved in taxes full time** and not just seasonally. Many, many strong capable tax professionals are eager to help you gain the maximum tax benefits.

Now we will examine the business side. While I was in the CPA world tax season would begin in October. Working with business clients involved a delicate balance. Most of the clients had creditors, banks, vendors, equipment suppliers and others that needed to hear about the good operating results for the year. The client wanted to be able to renew the bank line of credit, to have the vendors continue open account terms, and more. However, good news for the creditors could mean a big bill from our uncle in the IRS office. **By estimating business results now for the year end, a business will still have time to implement steps to reach its goal.** We do not want the tax bite to put our cash flow in a state of shock. In short, we want the profit to be big enough to comfort the creditors and small enough to be able to handle the tax payment.

Several steps to reduce taxes will involve cash now. As with the personal tax options consideration must include reducing the tax

“When you visit the tax professional... you need to be organized in order to gain the most rewards for you.”

bite this year only to have a large tax bill next year. A balance is necessary. **In business, many facets of a business decision besides taxes are involved.** The weight of the other factors may overrule the apparent tax advantage. The business manager, as with the individual, will benefit from consulting with the professional who is involved with taxes on an ongoing basis.

One area to consider is the Section 179 deduction. The 179 deduction is a special section under the depreciation portion of the tax code. For the tax year that begins in 2008, January 1, 2008 or after, the deduction is limited to \$250,000. Under Section 179 certain types of capital equipment may be expensed entirely at the time of purchase instead of 15 years or so to depreciate the investment. **An investment of \$25,000 in 179 properties will save \$5,000 in taxes** if the taxpayer's tax rate is 20 percent. The decision to make the investment has to be based on more than the 179 deduction, such as timing of the investment, cash or financing availability, and more. To see if this applies to you, make sure to check with a tax professional.

Timing is to be considered in any tax-saving steps. A major repair in 2008 instead of 2009 may help reduce taxable income. When to begin an advertising campaign will be influenced by the business aspects plus the advantage of deducting the expense this year.

As a business operator you may be entitled to credits for hiring from certain groups of workers. The credits may, in some cases, be as much as 40 percent of the first year's wages of the qualified worker. Other federal credits are available if you are in a distressed community, or you are operating in an Empowerment Zone or a Renewal Community. You can explore the programs by contacting IRS or the Maryland business tax office.

You engage a dentist when you have a need. The auto mechanic services your car as scheduled or if a problem arises. In your business there are professionals with focused talents in marketing, manufacturing, engineering and accounting. **A tax professional is focused on bringing the benefits discussed in this article and more to you.** Having done this throughout my whole career, I urge you to engage a tax professional.

When you visit the tax professional, as an individual or a business person **you need to be organized in order to gain the most rewards** for you. Stay tuned for more tax tips and how being organized is being prepared.

It has been said that paying taxes is a certainty of life. But careful planning allows you to pay at a reasonable level and comply with the tax code.

Ed Kelley is a senior accountant for Retirement Planning Services, Inc. Ed has over 40 years experience as a corporate manager of finance and as a CPA. Contact Ed with questions/concerns at edkelley@swanportfolios.com or by calling (410) 451-9500.



Dear Vicki



Victoria Duncan is a licensed professional counselor who works with individuals and couples to address a full spectrum of client issues. She welcomes your questions at Victoria@OutLookbytheBay.com

Mirror, mirror on the Wall

When I saw the photographs from our summer vacation, I could no longer fool myself about the increasing wrinkles on my face. Now, I can't look in the mirror without trying to pull back the skin and remind myself of how I used to look. I'm thinking of plastic surgery, but it seems so vain. Yet, I can't stand looking so haggard and old either. How can I resolve this dilemma?

As the saying goes, "Growing older isn't for sissies." It can be incredibly challenging to see the march of time on your face, particularly in a society that so values youth and beauty. From my experience as a former nurse, I am always reluctant to consider unnecessary surgery because it carries significant risk. With that said though, a competent and gifted plastic surgeon can work wonders and many people are happy with their surgical outcomes. This is a very personal decision with no right or wrong answers.

Before you rush off to make that appointment, though, do some prep work on yourself, and you may decide to skip the surgery or, at least, minimize the extent of the procedures. On the other hand, if you decide on the surgical approach, some personal prep work will stand you in better stead to appreciate the results and to accept the inevitable aging process that will continue.

To start your personal prep work, do what I call a "systems check." In other words, take a look at what makes you tick in key areas that combine to give you that overall feeling of well-being and satisfaction in life. If there are glaring deficiencies, schedule a tune-up for those concerns before scheduling your plastic surgery. Perhaps in doing so, you will find that the signs of aging are not as troublesome as they now appear.

Begin, in an obvious way, with your physical health. Are you fit and at an appropriate weight for your height and body type? Sometimes, dissatisfaction with one's appearance has less to do with the aging process than factors that are within our own control. Additionally, are there bad habits, such as smoking or drinking too much alcohol, that need to be addressed? How's your energy level and sleeping habits? Getting enough rest not only makes one look better but will make you feel better also. Finally, do you follow through with preventative health measures such as

regular medical and dental checkups? Rule out the cause of your perceived haggard appearance as being due to any medical issue.

Moving on, take stock of your emotional well-being. What's your level of satisfaction with the important relationships in your life? Do you maintain a positive outlook and practice gratitude? How do you handle stress? Unhappiness and strain take a toll on our physical appearance. We not only wear our heart on our sleeves but, more importantly, on our face! Perhaps a few sessions with a therapist or life coach would be helpful in identifying some underlying issues contributing to your self-image and also teach you a few new tricks from the exciting field of positive psychology so you can learn to maximize all the good things already in place in your life.

How about your spiritual well-being? It may be that your aversion to the signs of aging are, in part, due to a fear of the unknown and the inevitable decline and death that is a natural part of life. Having a solid faith and spiritual source of strength grounds one, serves as a reminder of the bigger picture of what is important in life, and aids in filling an emptiness within. If this resonates to you, consider talking to a pastor, priest, spiritual mentor or a pastoral counselor about your concerns. Adding or beefing up a stale or neglected spiritual practice such as prayer, worship or the giving of your time, talents and resources to others often brings much solace when facing age-related losses.

Finally, check in with your financial health. Are financial worries weighing you down and wearing you out? Plastic surgery is expensive and not covered by insurance. Can you afford the substantial cost of this choice without straining your budget? After your system check comes out clear and you've taken the steps to address any problem areas that may be fueling your unhappiness with your appearance, reassess your desire to have plastic surgery. Perhaps it won't seem as necessary now. It may be that you are happier settling for a good make-over and wardrobe change to update your image to match your new level of satisfaction with your life.

Another possibility is that you might opt for a few minor non-invasive "touch-ups" to add an additional punch of refreshment to your appearance. A reputable plastic surgeon or dermatologist can offer you an extensive menu of such services that fall short of the big guns of a surgical procedure.

However, if you do decide to go forward with more extensive work, the time you spent on your system check will be time well spent in any case. Such a tune-up is always a good idea whenever you are making any significant change or decision. For that matter, a tune-up for ourselves is similar to the tune-ups we do for our cars. It is just good self-maintenance and will extend the life and performance of the equipment!

To Be a Friend

Three months ago, one of my good friends was in a bad car accident and had part of his leg amputated. He was a big golfer, hunter and outdoorsman and loved being active. Now, he believes that part of his life is over forever and that he is useless and a burden to his family. His physical health is healing, but his emotional health is in trouble. I'm really concerned about the possibility of his committing suicide. He is that depressed and has made some private comments to me about life not being worth living anymore. I also think he is saving up his pain pills. He says that he just doesn't need them, but I notice that when his wife gives him one, he takes it and then puts it aside in a drawer. I don't want to betray his confidences, but I'm worried and not sure that his family knows what bad shape he is in.

To be a friend sometimes requires taking a stand that may not be initially seen as loyal and caring. This is one of those times. Do not delay. Call his family immediately and share what you know. Have someone remove those pain pills from his place and alert his physician pronto. With the right treatment, your friend can heal physically and emotionally and go on to live a full life. His family will thank you and he, also, will someday thank you for your intervention.

You only get one childhood — you might as well make it last.



Christmas Crossword Puzzle

Across

1. Nods off
5. Al-Jazeera viewer, probably
9. Crockett's last stand
14. Border on
15. Tree trunk
16. 1988 Pulitzer winner Paula
17. Hammered designs
19. Garlic sauce
20. Santa... town
22. Catch some rays
23. Powder source
24. Ret. plan
27. Word on a Yankee dollar
30. French sailor and writer, Pierre _____
34. Marie Edmé Patrice de _____, French president 1873-79
37. Red dye used in cosmetics
38. I'm dreaming of ...
41. Gaggle contents
42. Hardy breed from Scotland
43. At a previous time
44. Fall bloomer
46. Felix or Garfield, e.g.
47. Name-serial number connector
49. Part of the Treasury Dept.
52. It's ... a lot like Christmas
60. Beelike
61. Suspensions of ongoing activities
62. Beautiful in Bologna
63. e.e.cummings, e.g.
64. _____-Mall
65. Beer maker?
66. The largest of the Inner Hebrides
67. Ultimatum word

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Dave Fisher (© Dave Fisher)

Down

1. 'Keep off the grass!' sayer, perhaps
2. Cain's victim
3. Cocoon occupant
4. Rex of mystery
5. Wormwood
6. Seamstress Betsy
7. Smart _____ (wise guy)
8. Gets drunk
9. Take or use
10. Tarzan's cover
11. Highly excited
12. Thaw
13. Mixture
18. Can.'s neighbor
21. It's often at the door
24. GIF or JPEG, e.g.
25. Less refined
26. Throbs
28. Letters Taiwan can't use
29. Knock off a bowler
31. Containing the heaviest known metal
32. Princesses headwear
33. Map feature
35. Hung-jury results
36. Stopped fasting
37. Tee proceder

39. Canadian whisky
40. Bother
44. _____ Arbor, Mich.
45. Supplies sparingly
48. Certain stipend
50. It makes a cavity
51. Hillside
52. Nursery dweller
53. Pointless weapon
54. _____ monster (lizard)
55. Cranny's partner
56. Color for Lee's army
57. Not written
58. Squirts a squeak
59. Chard relative

Solution to Fall 2008 "Kiddie Show Re-runs"

L	E	S	S		P	A	C	T	S		P	A	S	S	
A	R	E	A		A	W	A	I	T		A	R	C	O	
M	I	L	T		S	E	P	T	E	N	N	I	A	L	
B	E	F	I	T		S	T	A	R	B	O	A	R	D	
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L	I	Z			R	E	M	I	S	S		A	M	P	S
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C	A	P	T	A	I	N	K	A	N	G	A	R	O	O	
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E	N	O	S		G	E	O	D	E			L	O	O	S

On Dasher, on Dancer, on Prancer, on Vixen...

The romantic vision of the white-tailed deer, first cousin to Comet, and Cupid and Donner and Blitzen, is skewed as he has become a most unwelcome nuisance. The light-footed, wide-eyed creature can be seen at all hours of the day or night traipsing through the woods and fields. The sight of this beautiful animal that has the grace and symmetry of a prima ballerina causes most of us to stop and stare in fascination. What is it that makes us so often speechless at the beauty of what is now an all too familiar pest? The *Odocoileus virginianus*, tiptoeing through our forests and yards is now a common sight as man's habitat encroaches ever closer to its own. Once hunted extensively for both food and pelts, deer provided clothing, shelter and food, basics to the survival of America's first inhabitants.

No longer appreciated for what they made available to our earliest settlers, we now find ourselves using unusual methods to get them to go away and to keep them off our properties. Human hair, urine, garlic and bars of soap hanging from the trees are just a few of the methods that we currently employ to discourage the insatiable appetites of these once much-sought-after mammals. The feeding habits of this graceful creature can drive homeowners wild! As voracious herbivores, they have a penchant for the most expensive ornamentals – they consider hostas and day lilies dessert. Having a fondness for saplings and branches and newly emerged shoots, their grazing gives tender young plants little chance to survive and thrive, depleting our forests and tipping the environmental balance. In the past their natural enemies were bears, wolves and humans – the first two rarely seen in the Bay area anymore and the last long ago curbed of much of his hunting instinct.



In today's world, only with restrictions can man head out to the forests with his gun or bow in search of what kept our forefathers alive.

In the early 20th century there were protective measures in place so that the species wouldn't become extinct! Now with a purported population of upwards of 200,000, the white-tailed deer is commonly seen in every corner of Maryland. He has nearly lost his fear of humans - their encounters taking place often as their endless grazing brings them ever closer to houses and civilization.

With a life span of up to 10 years, and very few predators, and with the arrival of twins or often triplets each spring, their numbers continue to increase. Their fragile appearance is deceptive. Fawns are capable of traveling up to 35 mph within a week of their birth. Within a year the bucks have grown their first set of antlers, which they can effectively use as a defensive weapon. With the ability to jump 20 feet into the air with the smooth acrobatic style of an Olympian, they are also capable of swimming great distances, allowing them to also populate islands. Larger than the does, bucks can weigh up to 300 pounds with a shoulder height of 3 1/2 feet. Should a pack of dogs or the occasional coyote threaten a deer, they have sharp and powerful hooves that can do much damage. And Bambi, that sweet fawn beloved by children everywhere, is capable of causing numerous traffic accidents and is host to the tick responsible for spreading Lyme disease – a difficult-to-diagnose degenerative condition that is increasing at an alarming rate in the Bay area. Controls need to be put in place

to curb the rapid rise of this health threat, but also the damage done to farms and orchards and landscapes and our regenerating forests is incalculable. So how to control what has become an ever-increasing nuisance? There is no easy answer as to the management of their burgeoning numbers. Fencing a yard or farmland can be expensive, and inviting hunters on to your property in a congested area would be less than satisfactory. There are noxious repellents sold at the local farm stores, but their effectiveness lasts only a short time. One of the better plans would be to plant shrubbery that the deer find less than palatable such as holly. There are closely managed deer hunting programs that have been set up in an attempt to control the population, but this hardly makes a dent in their ever-increasing numbers. With the impact on our woodlands which in turn affects other wildlife that seek food and shelter from the forests, we need to raise our awareness. Our woodlands are vital and without the regeneration there will be further issues with the already fragile ecological balance. Keeping in mind that it is we who have imposed upon them and are now occupying what was exclusively their territory – a humane method of control should be developed. Perhaps with a change in our hunting policies or better land management or the development of an anti-fertility agent, such as the one introduced on Assateague Island to control the wild horse population, there is a chance that someday we will get back to living in harmony with nature and all that she has provided.





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