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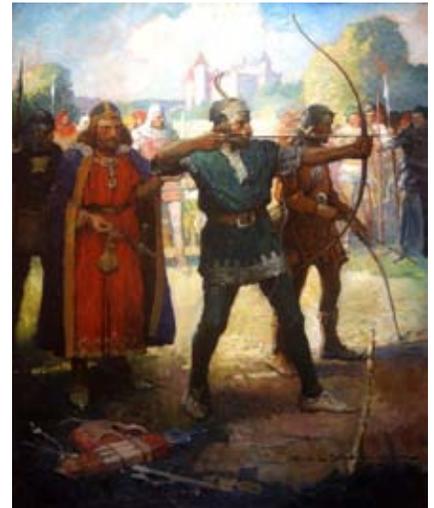
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ON THE COVER:

AJ and Janice Feeney, frequent visitors to the Bay area, recently visited a local Christmas tree farm to get an early start on the holiday season. AJ spends many happy retirement hours at his lathe creating beautiful bowls and copious amounts of sawdust. Janice, an avid paddle boarder, biker and hiker, drags him away from his workshop once every month or so to travel.

Cover design by TaitWoodward Graphic Designs

OutLook

For the Bay Boomer and Beyond... *by the Bay*

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 OutLookbytheBay@aol.com
 \$24.95 per year
 bimonthly (6 issues)

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 626C Admiral Drive #608
 Annapolis, MD 21401
 410 849-3000

ISSN#1948-044X

OutLook by the Bay is distributed throughout Anne Arundel County, in sections of the Eastern Shore and Baltimore. It is available free of charge in seniors centers, county libraries, hotels, coffee shops, doctor offices, supermarkets, senior communities, book stores, restaurants, private clubs, real estate offices, health clubs, hospitals and at all of our advertisers and is mailed to select homes in the Bay area.

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Just say yes. That certainly bucks the trend that we've been enjoying for so long: Just say no. The "no" that slips out so easily when we're asked to serve on one more committee, to babysit the kid's dog again, or to take the grandchildren with us on our next out-of-town adventure or to coordinate the volunteers to feed the homeless. Refusing is painless enough because it's over the phone when the Disabled American Vets call asking for donations or when the Boy Scouts are collecting for the food drive.

Here we are coming into the holidays. Can you think of a better time to get back to "yes I can" or "yes, I'd love to?" And yes to exactly what you may ask? Well how about yes to the new class forming on art for the beginner? You've been thinking about it long enough. How about yes the next time your friend wants you to join her volunteering at the hospital for an afternoon. Or how about a thumbs up to an invitation to go hiking in Patapsco Park. Or just agreeing to take those grandbabies for the weekend. Can you hear yourself saying, "We're here, we've got a nice playground nearby and would love to entertain them and get to know them a little better." How 'bout joining that political cause that you have so much to say about but have been reluctant to join. How about throwing that dinner party you've been thinking of having but have found one excuse after another to put it off. Why not quit dallying and go over to meet the new neighbor and bring her some homemade cookies. Well, maybe not homemade, but at least fresh from a bakery.

There's a yes that's involved with saying, "O.K., I will take charge of my health and get to those crazy tests now offered to detect those elusive diseases." And while I'm at it, "Yes to that gym membership that I've been thinking about but can't seem to follow up on." "Yes, to more conscientious eating," too, having talked about it endlessly. Here we are close to the beginning of a new year. Can you think of a more ideal time to institute a new plan? Think of your friend who has repeatedly asked you to accompany her on her morning walks. And it's time to do something about that closet that stares at me, screaming to be rid of all those business suits and expensive sweaters that I really will never wear again. There are people out there who could use them on their pursuit of gainful employment. How 'bout paying more attention to curing relationships that have grown weary with age and need some resurrecting after years of neglect – even the ones that fell by the wayside for mysterious reasons. And then how 'bout agreeing if asked to serve on the church's new committee on feeding the hungry. What's to be lost by showing up once a week, having a cup of tea with friends and try to figure out how to get the right food into the right hands?

Imagine the fun of getting over-scheduled again? You can always pull back if necessary. We're old enough now and have sufficient experience to know when it's enough. In the meantime, why not enjoy all the experiences that you might be missing and all the new faces you could get to know. Not every experience will be positive, but you may gain some more useful insights and create new relationships and avenues for further learning. There's a whole world out there with opportunities galore. Say yes; become a part of it.



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LETTERS to the editor

ASPIRIN ASPECTS

Many thanks to Dr. Graw for the interesting aspirin update. While I'm confident that my husband's heart-healthy diet, aggressive exercise regime and daily aspirin will prevent another heart attack, he carries an aspirin with him, just in case. I'll be replacing it with a "no swallow aspirin." The faster acting aspirin may provide just the edge he needs to prevent permanent heart damage in the event of another heart attack. I always learn something useful from *Outlook by the Bay*.

J.A. Crossen, Boston MA

GRASS

Mid-page, middle column on page 14, Ms. Conroy states, "If you have bluegrass (and chances are you do)..." Obviously she is not from Maryland or other state with similar weather. Lawns here are instead typically tall fescue for sun and fine fescue for shade. Bluegrass is anathema to the humidity and warm nights of zone 7, your primary market area (it does work in the higher elevations of western Maryland. Location matters in gardening.

Further, on page 29, there is a box providing "Suggested resources on gardening." In the future, when such opportunity presents itself, I hope you will promote our local www.hgic.md.edu which is the Home and Garden Information Center of University of Maryland's Extension Service. It contains a wealth of info on all related subjects including lawns, fruits, vegetables, ornamentals, trees, etc. Obviously, the center's information is specific for our region.

G. Lambert, College Park

Note from the Editor:

Thank you. We always appreciate when our readers catch us and can correct a misstatement.

BAY THEATRE

I wanted to write and tell you how much I enjoyed the article about The Bay Theatre, which a friend sent me in the mail. I especially enjoyed seeing that the mission statement which I wrote in 2002 is still in place, and continues to be followed. I know the theater needs people of integrity, skill and character such as your writer Tricia Herban, and I am so glad she is still involved.

Cindy M.B., Annapolis

REV. WRIGHT

Thank you for doing such a great job with your magazine. I look forward to it each month. I just wanted to commend Rev. Wright on his insightful "Bay Reflections" article. I liked it so much that I'm putting it in a frame on my desk so I can re-read it as needed. Wonderful, warm wisdom! Thank you.

Betty W. Annapolis

THE JOURNEY

I just read your Journey article in *Outlook By The Bay*. It is beautiful and seems to be just perfect for a new column. Thanks for expressing these important points so eloquently. I look forward to your next article.

Buzz S., Riva

APPS

My husband and I, who are known by our reluctance to embrace the new, had just purchased our new SmartPhones when your article appeared explaining apps. We're still at the point of trying to learn which button to push to turn it on but after reading your article on apps and how they can be not only helpful but fun too, we're excited to learn as much as we can about our little handheld computer. Steve Jobs was a miracle man.

J. and S. Jamieson, Severn

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SEEING WELL AS YOU GROW OLDER

By Michael J. Dodd, MD

Our eyesight is our most precious sense. It is said that more than 80 percent of the information we use and learn comes from our vision. We all want to maintain excellent vision through our lifetimes. Fortunately, our eyes require little maintenance and most of us will have good vision as we grow older. But this does not mean you should avoid getting your eyes checked. Regular eye exams every two years are recommended for all people over the age of 40.

What sort of problems can threaten our vision as we grow older? Is there anything we can do to protect our precious sight?

Assuming we had good vision as youngsters the first aging problem we encounter is known as presbyopia. This means that the natural lens in the eye loses its elasticity and the ability to focus on near objects. The usual time for this to occur is around age 42 to 45. Gradually, patients notice difficulty reading; they find themselves moving print farther away to keep it in focus. This happens to nearly everyone and is easily resolved with simple magnifying glasses to bring things back into focus. Many patients can purchase these at the drug store. Some patients may require a prescription for reading glasses and should consult with an eye specialist for a complete eye examination to be sure the eyes are healthy.

Another problem seen as we age is glaucoma. This is a group of eye disorders that is characterized by high pressure in the eye, which, if left untreated, can damage the optic nerve and cause vision loss. This can only be diagnosed by an eye specialist. There is treatment, which consists of eye drops, laser surgery or traditional surgery in an operating room. Everyone over age 40 should get a bi-yearly eye examination to be certain glaucoma is not present.

Cataracts are another aging problem. A cataract is a clouding of the natural clear lens which does the focusing in the eye.

If presbyopia is the first aging change in the lens, cataract is the second. As we approach 60, the lens changes color and gradually becomes cloudy and the natural transmission of light is inhibited. When the vision drops below 20/40, most eye surgeons believe that cataract surgery is justified if the patient is having difficulty. Cataract surgery is elective; there is no emergency. This is not like cancer where the cataract must come out quickly or the eye will be injured. Modern cataract surgery is quick and safe. Typically only eye drops are used for anesthesia and the procedure time is less than 15 minutes. At the time the cataract is removed a tiny plastic lens implant is placed in the eye to allow the eye to accurately focus.

Can we avoid cataracts? Contrary to certain product advertisements, there are no drops or medicines that will stop or reverse cataracts. A good healthy lifestyle is probably the best thing one can do to avoid or delay cataract formation. For example, smoking is a negative risk factor for cataract formation. If you still smoke, this is another good reason to quit.

Macular degeneration is an unfortunate aging disorder of the retina -- the inner layer of the eyeball which transmits the light image to the brain. This disorder is typically first seen by eye doctors when they inspect the retina during an examination. Small white spots called drusen are an early indicator that macular degeneration may be starting. During this early phase, patients do not notice any vision loss. Over time the drusen may lead to small areas of scarring which can cause loss of central vision. This makes it difficult to see details such as print, faces or road signs. Scarring with no blood or leakage in the retina is called "dry" macular degeneration. "Wet" macular degeneration occurs in those patients where bleeding in the retina develops. A hemorrhage in the retina may cause a sudden dramatic loss of central vision. T h e

Bay Health LIVING BETTER

major risk factor for macular degeneration is being over the age of 70. Studies have shown that smoking is also a risk factor.

Treatment consists of oral vitamins with high ratios of zinc and vitamin A. For those patients with "wet" macular degeneration, there is an injection available that can be given to reverse the hemorrhage.

The most important message for maintaining healthy eyes as we age is to eat properly, exercise on a regular basis, stop smoking and take vitamins daily. And don't forget to get regular eye examinations.

Dr. Dodd is an instructor at the University of Maryland Department of Ophthalmology and gives volunteer lectures at the Anne Arundel Community College Nursing Department. He can be reached at his Annapolis office at 410 224-4550 or mjddm1@gmail.com



A Pearl Harbor Survivor

By Henry S. Parker



Ruth ("Woofie") Parker and Lieutenant Junior Grade Harry Parker in Honolulu, Hawaii, late October 1941.

Early in the morning of Dec. 7, 1941, when the first bombs began to drop, my mother was making cornbread in my parents' beachfront cottage in Oahu, Hawaii. She didn't hear the explosions because their house was some distance from the action, but she was annoyed to find that the cornbread wasn't cooking because the power had gone off. My father would soon be back from his early morning swim, and she had wanted to surprise him. Oh well, she thought. Power outages were a small price to pay for an idyllic existence in a tropical island paradise.

Ruth Parker ("Woofie" to her friends) had arrived in Hawaii just six weeks earlier. My father, Navy Lt. j.g. Harry Parker, had preceded her to take command of a PT boat based in Pearl Harbor. They were virtually newlyweds, married only 16 months. Woofie, 21, and eight years younger than my father, felt fortunate to be able to accompany Harry on peacetime overseas duty. And to a

young couple in late 1941, Hawaii was a romantic luau of balmy tropical nights, sparkling beaches, bright flowers and lilting ukulele music.

As Woofie pondered cold-breakfast alternatives, the phone rang. "Have you heard?" her friend, Betty Preston, asked. The island is under attack. Betty's husband, Murray, was Harry's executive officer and the two couples had become fast friends. Then two neighbor boys arrived on bicycles and breathlessly reported that an airfield was being bombed. It was awful, they said.

Soon after, Harry arrived, back from his swim. He too had heard about air raids.

He knew he should immediately report to his boat. He dressed in his uniform, jumped into the car with Woofie, and sped to the Prestons' house. Leaving my mother with Betty, my father and Murray headed toward Pearl Harbor in Murray's car. Another naval officer, Waldo Drake, joined them. My mother was not sure when she would see her husband again.

As the men raced down the road, a formation of planes flew low over them, close enough that my father could see rising sun insignia on the wings and oriental faces in the cockpits. Japanese planes, Harry exclaimed. No way, Drake argued. This is just a drill. As a staff officer for the commander in chief, Pacific, Drake had heard of plans to conduct a war exercise. The "meatball" emblems were merely a realistic touch, he added.

Farther along, the men saw flames in the vicinity of the Army Air Corps base at Wheeler Field. They pulled over and climbed up a small hill that gave them a view of the field. Hangars and planes were blazing. Again Drake insisted it was all part of an exercise. The "fires" were simply smoke pots to add

realism, he said.

Soon Pearl Harbor came into view. The officers could see ships listing and sinking. Then a destroyer, the USS Shaw, blew up in front of their eyes. This was no drill.

My father and a skeleton crew boarded his boat, PT 22, and roared out of the harbor with orders to engage the enemy. They were joined by 28 other PTs in three squadrons. The 77-foot, wooden boats were unarmored and lightly armed (with two pairs of 50-caliber machine guns) but drew first blood against the Japanese invaders, shooting down two torpedo bombers while the attack was still in progress. My father's boat was in the thick of it, expending 500 rounds of 50-caliber ammunition and, with PT-21, bringing down a Japanese Zero. My father and his crew emerged unscathed from the attack. Their only casualty was a shrapnel hole in the main deck.

It was more than a day before my father could contact my mother. In the weeks and months after the attack my father fought at Midway and other distant locales. In late December 1941 his boat sank an enemy submarine. My mother remained in Hawaii, but moved with her friend Betty closer to Honolulu. Fearing a follow-up Japanese invasion, she bought the only "weapon" available—a toy pistol. She resolved to aid the war effort herself, first rolling bandages for wounded soldiers and sailors, then serving with distinction in the Army's Office of Censorship and the Women's Air Raid Defense. She worked two grueling back-to-back, seven-hour shifts. My father would periodically return to Hawaii. Finally, on March 30, 1943, he received orders to report to Melville, Rhode Island.

My father died in 1985. My mother, now 91, vividly remembers her first-hand experience of the Pearl Harbor attack. She does not think that she was especially courageous, but anyone who knows her — and her story — knows better.

This account is based on information from discussions with my mother, her brimming scrapbooks, the logbook from PT-22, PT boat action reports, online resources and an excellent article by Tiffany Strong published in Village Soup of the Waldo County, Maine Herald Gazette, Aug. 15, 2009.

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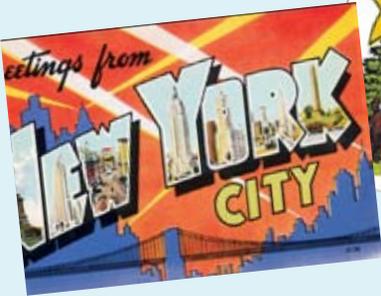
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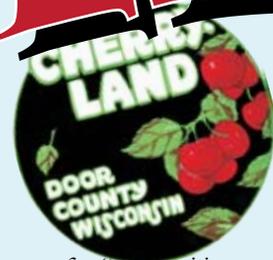


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TRAVEL



By Leah Lancione

Time for a winter getaway? While jaunts to nearby Ocean City or Rehobeth last summer had their signature charm, you may be longing for an inspiring tour of someplace new. Well, Road Scholar, the not-for-profit travel service, offers educational trips to all 50 states and 150 countries abroad. The service, created by Elderhostel, Inc., provides travelers with an opportunity to take part in exciting, expert-led excursions that range from cultural tours to study cruises. Sophisticated and stimulating adventures are available on any continent, all year-round.

The Road Scholar instructors who lead the education-focused tours are seasoned experts in the subjects associated with each particular trip. Topics range from history and culture, walking and hiking, homes and gardens, food and wine, theater, birding, photography and more. Popular packages include: New York: "Ultimate Opera: Two Nights at the Met," "Mystical Lands: the People and Culture of India and Nepal" and "Beyond the Pharaohs: Egypt Past and Present" (an adventure afloat).

Road Scholar's website (www.roadscholar.org) claims "fresh adventures to fortify the spirit and enrich the mind await both new and experienced participants." The difference between this and any other travel service is the focus on education and learning that is central to every trip. This is not just an ordinary tourist or sightseeing experience. Travelers learn through lectures about culture, food, people, landmarks, natural wonders, sports and the arts.

Single travelers can join a group and be paired with a roommate or select a room by themselves. Packages can also be geared for small groups with a specific interest or preferred activity level. Furthermore, intergenerational trips offer something for

everyone. Just think, you and your family can take a trip to Montana to take part in a "Yellowstone Adventure for Grandkids and Grandparents," or to Kentucky for "The Daniel Boone Experience – Rivers, Rails and Trails," or off to Arizona for a "Grand Canyon Family Adventure." Engage your children and grandchildren so the entire clan learns the value of lifelong learning.

If travel on a budget is a necessity, Road Scholar also offers year-round trips to locales closer to home. A few intriguing options include: "Delaware during WWII: On the Front Lines and Women Spies," Pennsylvania: "Christmas in Gettysburg: Past and Present" and Virginia: "Three Friends: Thomas Jefferson, James Madison and James Monroe."

Road Scholar's user-friendly website features the extensive list of already-planned adventures, highlighted programs, a search capability for programs based on location, interest, activity level, date or category, instructor and participant blogs, and last-minute deals.

The Senior Citizen Journal (www.seniorcitizenjournal.com) endorses Road

Scholar as a viable source for "senior citizens who are seeking a positive educational experience that will remain with them the rest of their lives." This online journal also provides articles with valuable advice for senior travel, including senior travel needs, WiFi and ATMs, senior travel on a budget and traveling with pets.

Odysseys Unlimited (<http://odysseys-unlimited-catalog.com>) is another travel site that will send you a free catalogue to explore an assortment of coordinated tours for small groups. Also consider visiting www.usa.gov/Topics/Seniors/Travel.shtml for resources that pertain to senior travel -- discounts, passes, tips and more. For up-to-date travel news and information for seniors and baby boomers, visit www.seniorjournal.com/travel.htm. Lastly, AARP online features a wealth of useful information, including expert travel advice presented by CBS News Travel Editor Peter Greenberg.

If you agree with the quote by Seneca that "travel and change of place impart new vigor to the mind," start planning your next great adventure now!

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TAKING THE STRESS OUT OF HOLIDAYS

By Robert G. Gram, Jr., M.D.

When Andy Williams sang his holiday classic, "It's The Most Wonderful Time Of The Year," I doubt he was thinking of jammed parking lots, ornery relatives and tight budgets. What could be the best time of the year is, too often, a pressure cooker of stress that leaves us wishing for the simpler times of yesteryear.

Talking with people of all ages over the years, I've learned that feeling overwhelmed at the holidays can come from many sources. The potential for higher stress begins just after Thanksgiving, with the onslaught of retail sales, holiday decorating and relatives calling. It doesn't end until we ring in the new year. Adding to holiday anxiety is that many families live miles apart, preventing them from visiting during holidays or stirring up lingering family feuds.

Winter also marks the time many people begin a self-imposed hibernation, venturing out only when necessary. A lack of exposure to sunlight can even lead to seasonal affective disorder, a medically recognized type of depression that leaves you feeling moody and without energy. Flu season also overlaps with the holidays. Being sick at this time of year isn't just a surefire way to feel overwhelmed, it also can be dangerous, especially for elderly people.

With all of these challenges, it's a wonder we get through the holidays each year. The good news is that, with a few small adjustments, you can enjoy a wonderful season full of celebrations with the important people in your life.

Start by keeping your festivities simple. Trim the tree and deck the halls with a small group of family and friends. Bring together a few neighbors for a meal, but do it potluck-style to keep preparations to a minimum. Gather the young people in your life and watch a favorite Christmas movie together, or teach them how to bake cookies using passed-down recipes. Do activities in the morning when you are most alert, and save the afternoon and evening for relaxing.

Getting outside may not seem appealing, but remaining active is one of the most important ways to keep a healthy body and mind. On a sunny day when there's no chance of ice, walking is one of the easiest ways to recharge. During harsh weather, walking up and down apartment halls, at a local shopping mall or on a treadmill are good alternatives. Walking with a friend or neighbor will make your outing even more fun and will help keep you both safe.

Limit gifts to a small number per child to avoid feeling overwhelmed, and consider giving a useful gift card to parents. Plan to shop early, over just a couple of days, and go on weekday evenings to avoid weekend crowds.

Use modern technology to your advantage and set up a webcam on your computer, or pick out a Smartphone for instant video chats. If this sounds foreign, recruit a young person to help. Finally, ask your teenage grandchildren to film and edit family videos and post them on YouTube as a holiday gift.

If you'll be playing host to family members, you might suggest they stay in a nearby hotel. Scout out hotels with senior rates (book in your name) that also have

kid-friendly amenities like indoor pools and breakfast buffets. This will allow everyone to have their own space and provide a place to be together for family activities. If your family members have long-standing disagreements, try to bury the hatchet. Rather than focusing on who is right, simply look forward to the future.

Volunteering is a fantastic way to feel good and prevent stress. Donating time at a local hospital, helping out at a shelter, or serving as a Salvation Army bell ringer will lift your spirits like nothing else. Take a few hours to sort through coats and gloves you no longer wear and pass them along to a shelter. There is something very special about anonymously buying a gift for an underprivileged child, knowing it will bring joy on Christmas morning. Call your local shelter for more ideas.

Above all, take care of your health as a gift to your family. Get flu and pneumonia vaccinations, wash your hands frequently and take time for yourself to enjoy activities that bring you joy. By putting your health and happiness first and enjoying the simple celebrations of the season, the holidays of yesteryear may, indeed, be right around the corner.



Dr. Gram, a grandfather of four, is a practicing physician and the founder and CEO of Righttime Medical Care. He can be reached at rgram@myrighttime.com

By Victoria Duncan

Show me some hands: Who admits to having mixed feelings about the upcoming season of festivities? Just what I thought, I have company. But even the most Grinch-like soul usually finds moments of joy along with those usual reasons for ambivalence -- the overloaded schedules, never-ending shopping list, food to prepare and presents to wrap.

Yet among my acquaintances of the same age, a new melancholy lingers in the air along with the tinkling of silver bells. The reason? Our family dynamics have changed and, with them, our traditions, those rituals and customs that add beauty and depth to our lives, are altered too. In some cases, it's enough to take the happy right out of the holidays.

Many of us have grown children who may be married with families of their own. Now, if we're lucky, we share holidays with our offspring and a new set of in-laws. If we're unfortunate and one side of the family corners the market, we may be left with nobody coming home for Christmas ever again. Over time, we've also lost a number of loved ones to divorce, illness or death. Our holiday table looks rather bare and in fact we might spend this holiday alone or nearly alone, perhaps for the first time in our lives.

A friend lamented that her newly married daughter and son-in-law have elected to spend Christmas at a luxurious country inn after explaining that it is time for them to make their own holiday traditions. For years, my friend has created a merry celebration for her family, complete with church services and piles of presents. Now, she dreads an empty December and resents the idea of shopping and mailing the usual bounty of gifts to her absent family.

Perhaps this daughter's holiday approach has the making of a trend, because I've heard this viewpoint several times. My guess is this "it's all about me, or rather, us" perspective comes from some well-meaning bridal magazine article gone awry with the message taken out of context. Of course, new couples must create their own traditions, but that doesn't require that they eschew their families or holiday customs they were raised with. A couple encompasses more than a

Holiday Traditions: WHY WE NEED THEM

husband and wife. Rather, each brings to their union a history that stretches back generations. This history, including the positives and negatives unique to each family, shapes who each partner is today.

In an ideal world, a wise and sensitive couple selects positive elements from each family, adds their own rituals, and blends them into a holiday of inclusion rather than exclusion. Doing so honors their own childhoods, bolsters family ties, pays tribute to their parents and connects them to the generations that preceded them in life. Everyone benefits.

If this was an easy task, holidays would not be fraught with tension and many a would-be reveler would not end up feeling like the grandma that got run over by the reindeer. But before lobbying for an amendment to ban all holidays, remember that these special occasions do serve a purpose besides stimulating the economy. When handled well, holidays lift us out of the ordinary, celebrate our faith and foster connections with our loved ones.

Perhaps those newlyweds feel overwhelmed with trying to balance the expectations of two extended families or are trying to assert their independence. And perhaps they are simply misguided about the functions of traditions and have misunderstood what makes a custom meaningful. While a stay at a country inn might be a treat, it falls pretty flat as a Christmas tradition of depth and substance.

Traditions, those regular rituals which can range from a daily practice such as saying grace prior to meals to the more weighted customs of a major holiday, solidify our identity as a

family. They say we belong, to each other as a couple but also to our extended families. These traditions provide a predictable rhythm and security to our lives within our chaotic world. When our traditions are challenged, we fight to keep them and when our traditions are broken, something within us dies.

Tevye, the main character in *Fiddler on the Roof*, opened the popular 1964 musical with a question and an answer which he belted out in a song: "How do we keep our balance? I can tell you in one word... Tradition!" Tevye couldn't tell us where each tradition originated, but he knew it spoke loudly to security, belonging and connection with those who comprised his clan and his circle of support. As he pauses before another booming chorus, Tevye says, "I'll tell you this: Because of our traditions, every one of us knows who he is. Without traditions, our lives would be as shaky as a fiddler on the roof!"

An alteration or loss of our treasured traditions unsettles us. We expect and look forward to our holiday rituals. Change is always difficult. So, if you find that you are feeling as shaky as that fiddler on the roof because your own traditions have been challenged or lost, consider these suggestions to help steady you through the season:

- **FEEL YOUR SADNESS:** Grief is an appropriate emotion in reaction to the loss of your traditions. Find a good friend for support.
- **ACCEPT CHANGE:** It's hard to let go of things

Regardless of the path you choose there will always be bumps in the road.

we hold dear, but avoid laying guilt trips on family members who want to make changes. This only alienates them and cements their resistance.

- **PRACTICE PATIENCE:** Most of us don't know how important our traditions are until they aren't there any longer. Your family may gravitate back to some of your customs as they mature.
- **SHARE:** Support and encourage married children to share holiday time with both families—even if your family is the preferred choice. Alternate years or holidays. You'll do their marriage a favor and grandchildren will learn to appreciate their wider extended family and have a healthy example to emulate when they become adults.
- **PASS THE PLATTERS:** Be gracious when your children take over hosting the festivities. Offer assistance and enjoy your free time. Smile when you think how sorry they will be when they find out how much work is involved.
- **TWEAK YOUR TRADITIONS:** Make changes to enhance your own life. Downscale buying those gifts. A magazine subscription, a park membership or a pair of tickets for a sports event make a thoughtful gift and reduce the labor of mailing packages.
- **SOOTHE YOUR SOUL AND LIFT YOUR SPIRITS:** Plan ahead for activities that uplift you rather than waiting until you are down and nothing sounds appealing. Deepen your faith commitment. Host a brunch or treat yourself to a concert. Stay busy, volunteer and plan projects around your home. If you feel more upbeat around others, reach out for company. These activities form the basis for new traditions.

As we age, our family constellations change along with our traditions and part of us will always mourn for those good old days. However, focus on those new memories waiting to be made. Remember that someday, today will be the good old days, so decide now to make it the best it can be.

Vicki is a licensed professional counselor and can be reached at Victoria2write@aol.com



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Legal Insights

This column presents general information regarding estate and disability planning and probate. It is not intended to create an attorney-client relationship or constitute legal advice to its readers. Individuals with legal concerns should consult with an attorney for advice regarding their specific circumstances.

My siblings and I would like to give our mother a Last Will and Testament as a holiday gift. Should we include a gift of any other document?

Dear Concerned Daughter:

This would be a very thoughtful gift, which will likely give your mother peace of mind, and ease the concerns of you and your siblings.

Before proceeding with plans to have just a Will prepared however, it is important for an estate planning attorney to meet with her to ascertain what her goals are, what assets she has and how they are titled and whether beneficiary designations are in place. The attorney will also need to know whether she has a taxable estate and will be able to handle her financial affairs or pay for her long-term care, as well as other considerations.

The reason for such an in-depth analysis is that in all likelihood, your mother will need more than just a Will prepared for her. For example, everyone should have a power of attorney, wherein they appoint an attorney-in-fact to transact legal and financial matters for them. With such a document in place, a court guardianship or conservatorship action, which are time-consuming and expensive, can most likely be avoided.

If it is determined that your mother's assets require continual monitoring, e.g.,

stock accounts, and her incapacity in the foreseeable future is imminent, a Revocable Living Trust may be more appropriate for her. Such a Trust would provide for management of her assets at such time that she is no longer able or willing to manage her assets. Such a document can be a useful asset management tool. If a Revocable Living Trust is prepared for your mother, her Will would not contain the usual Will provisions, as her property would be distributed according to the terms of her Trust.

Another document which is commonly prepared for individuals is an Advance (medical) Directive, which contains a medical power of attorney and Living Will.

In summary, further consideration is needed to properly ascertain what documents should be prepared for your mother in order to address the handling of her financial and personal affairs during her lifetime and the distribution of her assets upon her death.

I would like to leave a portion of my estate in trust for my grandchildren. At what age should trust funds be distributed to them?

Dear Concerned Grandmother:

That depends upon how mature your grandchildren are at the time of distribution, how much money will be distributed to each of them and whether they can appropriately manage their finances.

If your grandchildren are older at the time you create the Trust for them in your Will or Revocable Living Trust, you may be better equipped to evaluate whether they can appropriately manage money and can determine at what age or ages trust funds should be distributed to them. To ensure that each grandchild is distributed an equal amount of your assets, if that is your intent, the Trust could provide that upon your death, your assets are divided into a sufficient number of equal shares so that each grandchild gets one equal share that will be held for them in trust for them.

A Trust usually grants the Trustee the sole and absolute discretion to distribute trust assets to pay for a beneficiary's health, education, maintenance and support. Additional provisions may be added to give each beneficiary the absolute right to receive portions of their Trust assets, at a certain age or ages. For example, a Trust could provide that a beneficiary is entitled to receive one-third of their Trust assets when they reach the age of 21, and one-half of the Trust assets when they reach 25 years of age and the remaining assets at age 30. The foregoing distribution timetable, however, is not fixed in stone and varies based upon the maturity level of beneficiaries and their individual circumstances. For example, a Trust may provide that trust assets are not distributed to the beneficiaries at the ages designated unless they request that such distribution be made to them, so that if distribution to them as directed would be detrimental given their circumstances at that time, the beneficiary could decide not to request that the distribution be made to them at the age designated.

Other options would be to create a Trust whereby the beneficiary is not given any right to receive distributions of Trust assets, except for those distributions within the Trustee's discretion, and instead provide that all assets are to remain in trust and distributed to the beneficiary when they reach a certain age. A Trust could also contain incentives, for example, provisions stating that Trust assets will only be distributed to a beneficiary when he or she graduates from college.

As you can see, a number of factors need to be considered when choosing the appropriate age for trust assets to be distributed. I hope the above considerations will assist you in determining what age is appropriate for distribution to your grandchildren.

Valerie A. Rocco, P.C., is an estate planning, probate and elder law attorney with more than 30 years experience. Her responses to questions are based upon Maryland law. Ms. Rocco may be contacted at 410 266-1009 (Annapolis) or 410 997-4228 (Columbia), or visit her website at www.SeniorsAdviser.com

Bits & Bytes

www.HomesForOurTroops.org raises money for building materials and labor to assist in building homes for veterans. The focus is to create homes for disabled vets that are more habitable, providing maximum freedom of movement and giving them the ability to live more independently.

Oh Tannenbaum!

Now Available at a Farm Near You

By Penelope Folsom

Isn't this the year to pack up those grandkids, fill a thermos with hot chocolate and start a whole new holiday tradition? If so, try taking them for a day of fun to cut their own Christmas tree. Strolling through a rolling field of up to 1,500 trees per acre, with the scent of spruce and Douglas pine and Fraser fir wafting through the air, it would be hard to not get into the spirit of the season.

With farms now open from mid-November 'til the night before Christmas, it is easier than ever to find your own tree. Many farms will provide the equipment needed to cut that special tree and most will even cut it for you. Nearly all have trees that have already been harvested as well as additional greens for purchase. And if there's a question about the environmental impact of cutting a tree that took seven to 10 years to grow, keep in mind that a discarded cut tree is most often recycled, and if used as mulch, like most natural products, it breaks down

quickly. An artificial tree typically lasts about six years before being discarded and then will take centuries to break down in a landfill.

Many Christmas tree farms now make the trip more than worthwhile, offering a fun-filled day with hay rides or sleigh rides. Often as an added treat, some provide refreshments such as hot cider and cookies to go along with the Christmas music. There have even been reported sightings of a special visitor from the North Pole at some of the farms.

With more than 22,000 Christmas tree growers now in the U.S. (12,000 offer cut-your-own trees), there's bound to be one near you. Call before setting out to check location and hours. And a tip from an inveterate live Christmas tree buyer, cut an inch off the stump when you get home, set it outside in a bucket of water for a day and if at all possible, hose it down and let it dry before bringing it into the house. This will keep the tree fresh longer and remove any pollen or wintering insects.



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Hunter's Meadow Mountain Trees

Severn, MD

Phone: 410 255 2683

Pine Valley Christmas Trees, Elkton

Website: www.pinevalleytrees.com

Email: pinevalleytrees@aol.com

Address: 361 Fairview Rd
Elkton, MD

Phone: 410 398-2759

Simmons' Christmas Trees, Still Pond

Address: Still Pond Neck Road (Rt. 443)
Still Pond, MD

Phone: 410 778 0451 or 410 348 5407

*Websites to locate other
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Hook Up with (Sailing) History

By Vern Penner

What do Alicante, Spain, Auckland, New Zealand and Galway, Ireland, have in common aside from being seaports? Give up? They are the start, midway point and finish line for the Volvo Ocean Race 2011-2012, VOR the most famous round-the-world sailboat race. The 11th running of this event begins Oct. 29, 2011, with two days of in-port racing. Then, the first distance leg gets the gun Nov. 5, with the boats heading for Cape Town, South Africa. Subsequent legs go to Abu Dhabi, Sanya, China, Auckland, Itajai, Brazil, Miami, Lisbon and Lorient, France, ending in Galway in early July 2012. At each stopover, there will be two days of in-port races for shore observers to watch and toast. The longest leg, which will really test the crew and boats, runs between New Zealand and Brazil. It measures 6,700 nautical miles (nms); the shortest is 485 nms between France and Ireland.

Six boats have entered and are being measured and qualified under the 69 pages of rules which govern the design and construction of the Volvo Open 70 monohull sailboat. Why "70 feet"? Each boat has an overall length of up to 70 feet along with a beam between 17 to 18 feet and a bulb keel weighing close to eight tons at a depth of 15'. It might be your typical up-to-date, single-masted maxi racing sailboat competing in the Annapolis to Newport, but with some important modifications. One is a massive mast of 95 feet, which will carry a set number of allowable sails. Another difference explains why the sailboats are termed "open," because the cockpit is totally uncovered. There is only a miniscule roof and dodger covering the companionway entrance

below where living conditions are Spartan, to say the least.

Think shared berths, freeze-dried food, no showers and a tiny curtained-off potty. Then there is the unusual canting keel which will swing up to 40 degrees from side to side to keep the boat relatively upright and counter the force of wind acting on the huge sails traveling at breakneck speeds. Finally, the Volvo Open 70 rules allow a daggerboard on each side of the mast measuring the same length as the keel for added stability. Using all of the data drawn from the previous 10 races (five under the title of Whitbread Round the World), the Volvo Open 70 design stresses two things: maximum speed and maximum safety. Luxury and comfort are not included.

Who are these people who commit themselves to hurtle around the world's oceans at speeds over 30 mph in an open boat facing the constant buffeting of wind and water 24/7? There is no prize money and while corporate sponsorship pays the bills, obviously more than just a salary is involved. The Volvo Ocean Race is classic sailboat racing to the extreme. For those sailors attracted to the challenges of the sea in all weather conditions who are trying to continually maximize boat speed, there can be no better place. The race gets some of the

biggest names in world sailing and remarkably, there is a large group of VOR veterans in the 2011-2012 competition. New Zealanders dominate in total numbers and there are at least several Kiwis in each boat's 12-man crew, one of whom is solely responsible for media and not sailing.

A U.S. sailing legend by the name of Ken Read skips the entry sponsored by the German sports conglomerate PUMA and it doesn't hurt that Read is also the vice president of North Sails. The competition will be intense. Insiders say that at least any one of five boats could win the overall race based on total points awarded for the results of each leg and in-port race. Even the Chinese entry "Sanya" could be a real dark horse, although it is only a refitted version of a boat previously raced. The Sanya skipper, Mike Sanderson, is a two-time Volvo Race winner and has enough trophies to represent a real threat.

Considering the adverse conditions that all the boats will confront, it is no wonder there will be heady celebrations at the start and finish of each part of the race and certainly the in-port racing will be worth watching live on location. Some of the racing results are bound to set new records in terms of time and speed. So if you are making plans to travel in the coming year to any of the VOR ports of call, try to align your trip with the timing of the VOR events. Who knows? You might hook up with history, sailing history, that is. See www.volvocean-race.com for exact dates and details.

Vern, an inveterate sailor, participates in the Hospice Cup Regatta when he's not sailing the seas around the Cape Verde Islands where he served as US Ambassador. His son Rob currently works in Alicante for VOR in TV media distribution.



Bits & Bytes

If you're looking to get together with like-minded people for tennis, hiking, biking, book clubs, etc., log onto www.MeetUp.com and enter your zip code. Up pops all sorts of interesting low-key groups that you might enjoy joining.

If you don't take a chance, how will you advance?

Caring for a Loved One?

Do They Need Short-Term Rehab Care? or Respite Care?

By Gladys J. Smith

Do you have a loved one soon to be discharged from the hospital who needs temporary in-patient rehabilitative care? Do you think that you'll have to miss your family vacation because you cannot leave a loved one at home alone? Perhaps you are a caregiver who needs surgery and are at a loss as to where mom and dad could be safely cared for during your own recovery period. There are facilities in the Chesapeake area that provide post hospitalization short-term rehab stays. Many communities provide a full range of services including physical, occupational, and speech therapy which are eligible for coverage under Medicare.

Respite care, which features short-term stays designed for the comfort, enjoyment and attentive care of your loved one, is a service that is a lifesaver to the many caregivers who desperately need a reprieve. Many of the respite care communities offer stays of up to 30 days or more, often with a specified minimum. The price for respite care varies by community. Some have a flat fee per diem price, while others charge a rate that is commensurate with the level of care that will be provided. Try to book your reservation as soon as you have specific dates in mind as space is usually limited.

Here are some tips for using rehabilitative or respite care: Plan ahead. Obtain

the paperwork necessary from your loved one's primary care physician. Meet with the facility's staff early to make reservations and to determine what paperwork needs to be signed. Be sure that the advance directives and the power of attorney are all up to date with copies available for the facility. Plan to bring comfortable clothes as typically there is a full schedule of activities, in which the guest may choose to participate. Comfortable clothing will also allow them to easily engage in the exercises they will partake in if they are there to receive physical and occupational therapy.

Although it may take a couple of days to acclimate to the new surroundings, guests almost always enjoy their stay and look forward to return visits. There have been many instances where the individual had such a pleasant experience that they've chosen to return to the facility to stay full-time, thus simplifying the job of the caretaker in transitioning their relative into a retirement community.

Now take a deep breath and relax knowing that your loved one is in capable, caring hands.

Gladys Smith can be reached at BayWoods of Annapolis 443 837-0025 or gsmith@BayWoods-of-Annapolis.com

Gifts for a Home-Bound Friend

By Penelope Folsom

Most of us draw a blank when we try to find just the right gift for a friend who is home-bound. Here's a list that should help with ideas for gifts that anyone would love to find under their Christmas tree.

- Large-print books and crossword puzzles found locally or at www.amazon.com. Mechanical pencils with erasers would make a nice accompaniment.
- Stamps www.shop.usps.com as well as pens and stationery. An assortment of greeting cards that can be sent to commemorate various occasions would be ideal. Any local paper store would carry a wide selection.
- Newspaper or special interest magazine subscriptions found at any of these websites: **WSJ.com** or WashingtonPost.com or **Out-lookbytheBay.com** or magazines.com.
- A warm washable throw or small blanket found at www.thecompanystore.com.
- Exercise equipment that can be used while sitting. A good selection is offered at www.activeforever.com.
- Solo games and jigsaw puzzles found at Wal-Mart or Barnes and Noble are always a hit. Solitaire can also be played on line at www.worldofsolitaire.com. Careful, it's addictive.
- Audio book subscriptions can be found and are free at www.librivox.org or www.audiobooks.org. The latter charges a small fee, but carries an extensive list.
- A lap desk for letter writing and to hold a computer could be the best gift ever and can be found at www.levenger.com.
- And to truly get into the holiday spirit, a decorated, table top Christmas tree found at www.llbean.com that can be delivered for free to the door.

Perhaps the most welcome gift would be a visit. Bring along a basket of goodies filled with such things as Christmas cookies, a couple of paperback books, a good magazine, a DVD or CD if electronic equipment is available, a Christmas candle and a sprig of holiday greens.



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Holiday Celebrations

there's one near you!

By Ellen Moyer

Some say “every day is a holiday,” a time for celebration and joy. Yet some days are more special than others.

Two of our best holidays are in November and December: Thanksgiving, declared a national holiday in 1941 by President Franklin Roosevelt, and Christmas, declared a national holiday by President Ulysses Grant in 1870. Today, weeks in advance of these two very special days, the planning cooking, shopping, decorating and preparing begins. The spirit for remembrance and merrymaking captures communities too. Mega holidays are a great time to kindle special memories with kids and grandkids. There is a lot going on all around us.

Thanksgiving, when Americans travel the most, is the time when we all gather together to feast on turkey, potatoes and squash, cranberries and pumpkin pie. It is a joyous time, a tradition dating back centuries when people gathered to give thanks for the bounty of the fall harvest. Explorer de Champlain in 1606, a few years before the Pilgrim celebration, created the Order of Good Cheer to give thanks and celebrate the survival of long journeys. The founding Charter of the Berkley 100 in Charles City

County, Virginia, in 1619 required a day of thanksgiving. Today, one of our traditions is when a big turkey celebrates its presidential pardon, neck intact, from being served at the White House dinner table.

Local Festivities

A not-to-be-missed interactive holiday attraction begins at the Gaylord National Resort on the Potomac in Maryland in mid-November. The winter wonderland is created entirely of 5,000 blocks of ice hand sculpted by artisans from around the world. This should be ranked in the top 10 of holiday attractions, a wonderful place to begin your holiday excursions before the hectic days of December shopping and parties.

Santa Claus, our mythical gift giver, is December's focus. Originally known as St Nick, the Dutch named him after Bishop Nicholas who was noted for his care of children and his generosity with gifts. The 4th century bishop appeared at his Dec. 6 Festival of Giving in red clergy dress accompanied by helpers who inquired about naughty and nice behavior. Now, seven hundred years after St. Nicks Day, a red-dressed Santa arrives for the holiday season at a variety of times and

ways: by boat in Annapolis Harbor, by water skis along with a jet-skiing Grinch on the Potomac, by airplane at the historic College Park Aviation Museum (301 864-6029) and by car in a parade in historic Leesburg. Take the kids and catch them in some memorable pictures with Santa.

Kids love trains too and there are plenty of them around during the holiday season. Toy train exhibits are on the top 10 list of celebrations in the area. Union Station in DC showcases a Norwegian winter wonderland and model train display (202 333-6000). Outdoor model trains run at the Botanical Gardens near the Capital with live music on Tuesday and Thursday evenings. Trains can also be found under the nation's Christmas tree on the ellipse near the White House. Homestead Gardens in Davidsonville and the College Park Aviation Museum feature trains. At the National Zoo, kids enjoy fun rides on Thomas the Train, or a FedEx Panda Express or Amtrak's wildlife train from the Zooimagination Train Station.

Candle Light Tours

For adults needing a vacation from the energy of young charges there are

candlelight tours of historical homes. Sotterly Plantation, circa 1703, in Hollywood, Md., features an historical dramatization of Christmas. Reservations are required (301 373-2280). Candlelight tours of historic houses are held in Virginia at Mt. Vernon, in Alexandria at Montpelier Mansion and at various sites in Annapolis.

It's hard to imagine, but the Christmas holiday was not always popular. It was banned by the Puritans in England in 1647. They evidently forgot that Christmas began 2,000 years ago as a celebration of God coming into the world with the birth of Jesus. The holiday was also outlawed by the Puritans in Boston from 1659-1681. In Catholic St. Mary's County, celebrating Christmas did not stop. Houses were decorated with holly and ivy and other greens, a custom firmly entrenched in 15th century London.

Caroling and Lights

It was St. Francis of Assisi in the 13th century who popularized Christmas decorations, nativity scenes and songs. In 1426, John Audley, a Shropshire, England, chaplain, had a list of 25 Christmas carols

sung bywassailers who went from house to house. "O Come All You Faithful," "Good King Wenceslas" and "Holly and the Ivy" from the Middle Ages are among the oldest musical compositions still sung today. Charles Wesley, who understood the importance of music to worship, composed "Hark the Herald Angels Sing." In 1818 Mohr and Gruber composed "Silent Night," a song for the St. Nicholas Church in Austria, which became one of the most popular Christmas songs of all time.

Lights have a special meaning linked to the Christian belief that the savior is the ultimate light of the world. In 1848 Queen Victoria created a sensation with a Christmas tree at Windsor Castle decorated with lights and ornaments surrounded by presents that is popular today.

For a holiday treat for the whole family, bundle up for free viewing of boats decorated with lights that parade in both Annapolis Harbor and in Baltimore. On the first weekend in December, decorated boats light up the skyline along the Potomac River while hundreds of Scottish clansmen parade in the annual Christmas walk in Alexandria. The

National Zoo displays thousands of animated lights on December weekends from 5:30 to 8:30 and it is free. In Virginia the Bull Run Festival of Lights features animated lights set to music (703 359-4633). At Sandy Point in Annapolis, Lights on the Bay sponsored by the AA General Hospital, a fee-based treat, can be enjoyed by car. The Howard County General Hospital sponsors the Symphony of Lights at the Merriweather Post Pavilion.

It's fun to search for your favorite light display, many are found in local neighborhoods. Play Christmas music on your iPod or car radio, and the drive turns into a wonderful holiday adventure. Then head home to the family Christmas tree, a replica of Queen Victoria's innovation, and a fire in the fireplace with a hot toddy and sugar cookies and enjoy a Merry Christmas. A raucous New Year's Eve is just around the corner to cap off your holiday fun.

Ellen, currently a talk show host on WNAV can be reached at ellenmoyer@yahoo.com or 443 370-1785.



The Dreaded Holiday Letter

Here are a few hints on how to compose the perfect holiday letter that people will actually enjoy reading:

- Keep it upbeat. This isn't the time to share bad news. If it's the only way to let people know of something unfortunate that's recently happened, try to follow it with something upbeat. Alice was divorced this year, but we're thrilled that she's decided to go back to graduate school.
- Add humor – something lighthearted goes along way.
- Keep it brief. Do you really think your faraway friends want a blow by blow of your disastrous trip to Katmandu or how Uncle Ralph spent four agonizing weeks with you this summer.
- Careful about turning it into a brag sheet.
- If you're feeling creative, write your letter in the form of a well-known story or song: It was the night before Christmas when all through the house all three children came home with all of their spouse. The stockings were hung by the chimney with care for Alice and Bob, John and Gale, etc.

By Penelope Folsom

Have you composed your holiday letter yet? Your adoring public is waiting to hear from you. But are you sure? Over the years I've received a few doozys! The kind where the writer should be embarrassed to have put out such drivel. You know the kind: Johnny is a Rhodes scholar and heading for three years in England. Alice is about to marry the man of her dreams and move to a chateaux in France and my husband Bob received a promotion and raise which will enable us to live next door to Julia Roberts. What they fail to mention is that husband Bob has also lost his license for drunk driving. Johnny has to appear in court again, something about a disgruntled ex-girlfriend and Alice, well you know how the reality of life goes for people like Alice!

In the past few years we've trimmed what was a very lengthy list down to only the folks who live far away who we don't want to lose touch with. No longer do we mail greetings to our good friends next door or the people who we have lunch with once or twice a month. Not only does it save time and money but it is probably as much a relief to them as it is to us and besides, if they want to know more about what we're up to they can catch us on Facebook.

KRASNOW'S NEWEST BOOK IS A MARRIAGE SURVIVAL GUIDE

By Leah Lancione

Annapolis-based author Iris Krasnow tackled the complicated issue of marriage in her *New York Times* best-seller *Surrendering to Marriage: Husbands, Wives and Other Imperfections* and does so again in her newest book, *The Secret Lives of Wives: Women Share What It Really Takes To Stay Married*. This time, Krasnow has interviewed more than 200 women at a “gearshift” in their marriages. The book goes beyond a mere probe of relationships or psychological/sociological rheto-

THE THREE RESOUNDING SURVIVAL STRATEGIES THAT EMERGE FOR WIVES INCLUDE:

1. Have a life outside of marriage and the home.
2. Take separate vacations from your husband.
3. Rediscover and engage in hobbies and passions that once provided fulfillment and fun.

ric, offering candid and riveting accounts by real women determined to go the distance in their marriage.

These wives are at the midlife stage when the kids have or are or are soon to be moving out, their professional ambitions have been reached and home life has settled into a more rhythmic, even predictable, pace. Krasnow admits she is at this stage and always writes from her heart. She confesses “many of us are going to be married, 50, 60 and even 70 years – and we need all the help we can get.”

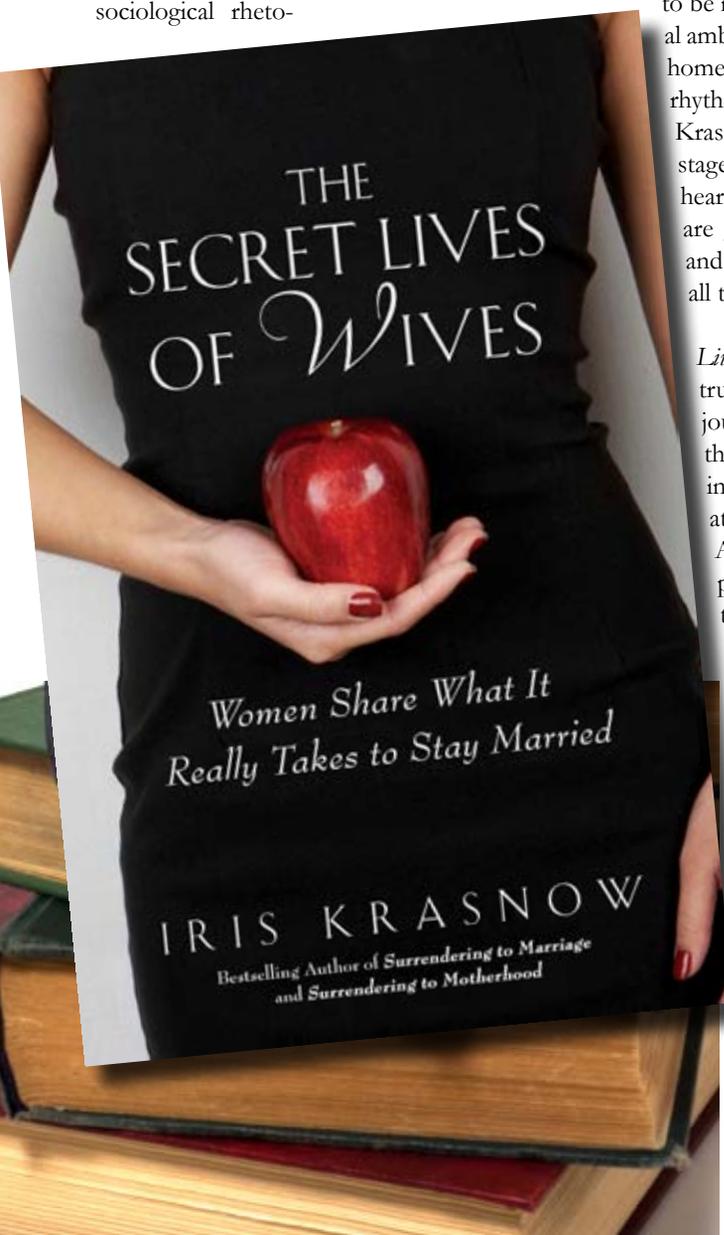
The women in *The Secret Lives of Wives* give heartfelt and truthful descriptions of their journeys in marriage and what they do to make it work, and in doing so, Krasnow has created this virtual survival guide. As she intertwines her own personal narratives along with the reflections by these other women, she is forthright in declaring that there is no perfect marriage or a gold standard by which everything should be compared. Rather, the intimate portraits present wives’ shrewd – and sometimes scandalous – tactics for reaching the “finish line” with their husbands. Each person’s story is different, each marriage has its strengths and weaknesses and each wife employs her

own tools to keep the “stitches of the family tapestry” woven tight. And yet, Krasnow detects beneath the unique histories some common and useful strategies.

At one poignant part of the book, Krasnow discusses getting back into horseback riding and how it makes her realize she’s “too young to be old.”

In encouraging wives to be more “authentic and bold and to have more fun,” Krasnow writes about escaping the grind or a tepid state of marriage by taking separate vacations (even separate summers). The age-old adage “absence makes the heart grow fonder” is proven by wives’ acknowledgement of returning from vacation feeling more mentally, spiritually and physically charged. Not to mention that many wives confess that the time apart reignites passion and enhances intimacy in a relationship.

This book is not, however, just another self-help manual for wives wanting to rekindle the old flames of passion in their marriage. Instead, the wives who look within themselves for happiness, instead of relying on their husbands, prove to have a better sense of self. These liberated women are not bound by their marriage commitment even though they have chosen to honor it to the end. The women instead invest in the freedom to become whoever they want to be. They travel on their own or with girlfriends. They pursue the passions of their youth—be it painting, swimming, writing, sailing or horseback riding, etc. They are still inspired by their careers or embark upon new ones. Yet they still find solace in their time-tested, comfortable marriage. Krasnow herself confesses in the book, “I’ll take the slow burn of a long love instead of the bonfire



of euphoria that rises quickly in spectacular flames but ends in choking smoke. Staying married allows me to relax in a crazy world.”

One of the women interviewed, a Maryland filmmaker, presents this sage advice: “None of us knows how long our life will be, so you have to dig in, dig into your passions, and dig into your life partners.” Quite simply put, work with what you’ve got. Ultimately, *The Secret Lives of Wives* shows women that it’s OK, even beneficial to marriage, to find and do what makes you happy. In essence, Krasnow has given wives “permission to rewrite the rules of their own marriage.”

The wives interviewed have chosen to explore what feeds their souls apart from marriage, but they still uphold the vow “until death do us part.” Krasnow also praises the steadfastness of Depression Era mothers and grandmothers who didn’t evaluate their own level of happiness and stayed strong and committed through the worst of times. She admits in a rousing passage,

“They weathered the Great Depression, which took courage and tenacity, and they didn’t back down from hardships in life or in relationships. Marriage is messy, and they knew you had to get in there and fight for the relationship’s survival.”

Krasnow acknowledges that a secret to surviving marriage is realizing that there are going to be many “potholes” and obstacles along the way that you just have to push through. “You have to move forward knowing that there will be light for the next morning.” The women from her hometown of Oak Park, Ill., enabled her to expose more shared marriage survival qualities. These wives communicate well, fight fair, believe in the permanence of marriage and are more in love now than ever.

Throughout *The Secret Lives of Wives: Women Share What It Really Takes To Stay Married*, one account after another provides frank and illuminating details of women who have rediscovered themselves and found ways to make their lives more

interesting while also working on their marriage. Ultimately, these wives recognize that their marriages are a shared history of love, children, times of trial and happy memories ... and the hope of more to come. So, as Krasnow states so eloquently in the book: “Let’s keep the expansive quilt of our lives intact, an elaborate and personalized history woven through joy and pain and perseverance.”

Bits & Bytes

To estimate and print out postage online, as well as order stamps, go to www.usps.com Think of the holiday lines you’ll avoid.

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TO DO:

1. Go for bike ride
2. Visit grandkids
3. Plan dinner party

By Melissa Conroy

The next time you are at the grocery store, push your cart to the bakery section, load it with 30 5-pound bags of sugar, then take a good look. That is the amount of sugar the average American eats in a year. While much of that sugar intake comes in obvious forms like candy and baked goods, sugar is sneaked into quite a lot of foods you wouldn't suspect such as ketchup, salad dressing and spaghetti sauce. What with rising rates of diabetes and obesity exploding around the 50 states, keeping your sugar consumption down is a great way to help reduce your chances of piling on extra pounds, avoiding diabetes and warding off other health problems.

Unfortunately, some of the sugar substitutes we have available are not safe or healthy alternatives to table sugar. Aspartame (what Nutra-Sweet is made of) has long been linked to a host of problems such as tumors and Alzheimer's. Sucralose (sold as Splenda) is the result of regular table sugar being treated with chlorine, a substance that is best kept out of your body. Saccharine, sold under the brand name of Sweet'N Low, is known for having a bitter aftertaste and can trigger reactions in people who are allergic to sulfa drugs.

Enter stevia, a naturally-derived sweetener that was first discovered by the Guarani people of Paraguay centuries ago. Stevia is a genus of about 240 plants that are native to Mexico, Central and South America. The leaves of the plants are up to 300 times sweeter than sugar and various culture groups have been using the leaves to sweeten their drinks and food for centuries. In recent decades, Japan took an interest in stevia and began offering stevia extracts for commercial sale during the '70s. Stevia took longer to spread to the US, mostly due to resistance from the Federal Drug Administration, but in the last couple of years, the product has become widely available in grocery stores across the nation under such brand names as PureVia and TruVia.

Stevia is usually available in a powder or liquid form. The powder form generally comes in individual packets, each sachet equal to about two teaspoons of sugar. Stevia tastes sweet like sugar, but it has a faint licorice flavor that can intensify depending on how strong the derivative is you are trying. Unlike artificial sweeteners such as aspartame, stevia does not have a bitter, distinctly chemical taste or unpleasant aftertaste. It dissolves easily into liquid, and it complements the flavor of foods it is added to. Moreover, once you start using it, it becomes harder to distinguish the difference between table sugar and stevia.

Stevia is great in tea and coffee or sprinkled over fresh fruit, but you can also cook with it too. Unlike aspartame, which doesn't work as a baking agent because it breaks down in heat, stevia is a good sugar substitute for baking and cooking. However, you need to do a little planning before you break out the baking pans because the sugar-to-stevia conversion requires some knowledge. Since stevia is much sweeter than regular sugar, you need to plan appropriately. The website www.stevia.com has a very helpful conversion chart for different stevia dosages such as powder packages, and the chart helps you decide how much stevia you need for your baked products. A little experimentation helps too, and it is generally better to use too little stevia than too much. Once you can deduce the best amount of stevia to use for your recipe do be aware that stevia doesn't crystallize, so if you use it for candy or to make a caramelized topping for a pudding, your results will be less than ideal. But in most bakery recipes, you can easily swap sugar for stevia.

Even better, stevia can be a boon for diabetics and anyone else watching their sugar intake because since it is sweeter than sugar, a

smaller amount is needed to satisfy sugar cravings. There is also some research that indicates stevia doesn't affect blood sugar the way regular table sugar does; in fact, stevia may actually help regulate blood sugar levels. While this topic remains controversial, it is clear that a little bit of stevia is better and healthier than a lot of table sugar or a package of some chemically-derived artificial sweetener.

If you are searching for something sweet to put in your coffee or cookies that won't give you a dose of chlorine or leave a funny taste in your mouth, stevia may be just the thing. Easy to use, tasty and naturally derived, stevia is the new sweetener that is actually quite old with a firmly rooted history. Try it today for a sweeter, less sugary life.

All About Stevia





By Terry Portis

Did you (or will you) have mixed emotions about becoming a grandparent? Sure, you cannot wait to hold the baby, but taking on the title of “grandma” is just not all that exciting for you. For some people, the word “grandparent” conjures up an image of a frail, silver-haired person in a rocking chair. You could sit on their knee and listen to a story, and they probably had a piece of candy for you. It is time to put that image away, because grandparents of today are quite different!

It is quite possible that we have more grandparents than ever before in our country. About 73 million people, or one in four adults, are grandparents. By the year 2020, one in three people will be a grandparent. The rate of people becoming grandparents is growing at twice the rate of the overall population. According to *Grand* magazine, more than 75 percent of the people over the age of 50 are grandparents. These are staggering statistics.

Active and involved

Grandparents today are not sitting on the front porch waiting for the end to come. They are active, many are still working and they often have leadership roles in their community. Most are involved in their grandchildren’s lives, seeing them once every week or two.

Don’t forget that people over 50 control 70 percent of this nation’s wealth. Grandparents are making or influencing many of the daily spending decisions in our country. MetLife’s Grandparents poll has found that grandparents provide \$370 billion annually in financial assistance to grandchildren.

If policymakers overlook grandparents as a vital economic force, they are making a huge mistake!

Family expert Amy Goyer suggests that grandparents have become a safety net. As adult children struggle with economic and

These are *Not* Your Parent’s Grandparents

employment issues, grandparents may step in to help with errands, to pay for health insurance, or just to be there to provide a sense of stability during difficult times.

More grandparents than ever before are becoming primary caregivers for their grandchildren. According to latest census information, 5.8 million children now live with their grandparents. In these households the parent may be present, but often is not.

There are costs for caregivers

Raising children the second time around can have financial, physical and social consequences. According to AARP, 19 percent of the grandparents raising grandchildren are at or below the poverty line. The risk of heart disease in women increases, and

carrying for a child may isolate the person from others their age.

The good news is that there are resources now to help grandparents who find themselves parenting again. AARP has an excellent grandparent’s resource site. Their site includes GrandFacts, which gives state-specific information for grandparents who have become caregivers for their grandchildren.

AACC’s Parenting Center offers courses for parents, grandparents, caregivers and teachers. You can get more information by calling 410 777-2159 or sending an email to parenting@aacc.edu

Dr. Terry Portis is director of the Center on Aging at Anne Arundel Community College. He holds a doctorate in counseling psychology and can be reached at tdportis@AACC.edu



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Bridging the Communication Gap Between GENERATIONS

By Pat Jurgens

The phone rings four times and the call is picked up by a recorder: "Hi, this is Jeff. Not home now. You know the drill?"

Across the country Jeff's retired mother Annette puts down the receiver in resignation. She was hoping to talk with her son about coming home for the holidays. She wonders if he'll call back while airfares are still on sale. It could be days before she hears from him.

Seniors who are retired probably have more time than ever before. We have the chance to think about our lives and the people we love. And we may lose touch with loved ones if we don't keep up with the rapidly changing world.

When was the last time you had a lengthy conversation with your son?

Or received a newsy letter from your niece? Letters home are now a thing of the past; even thank-you notes are rare. The landline telephone is fast disappearing, and Smartphones have expanded functions with access to Internet, email and texting. Our grown children no longer need to be at home or in the office to conduct business, plan family outings or talk with friends. They can let all their friends and family know what they're doing on Facebook with photos and chat. It may be less personal, but communication is instant in our children's world.

What to do?

If your grown children live in distant places it may be a matter of discovering what form of communication works best for them. After days of leaving messages on the telephone recorder, Annette finally begins to realize that whenever she emails her son she receives a reply rather quickly. It is her insistence on wanting to talk with him by phone that keeps her unconnected. When she tries texting him a message, she immediately gets a return phone call. Bingo!

The key is for us is to be willing to change our expectations and learn to be open to new ways of communicating.

In the workplace people keep up with the latest technology. Those of us no longer prodded by a work environment need to find other ways of keeping current:

- Our best resources may be the people

with whom we want to communicate, our kids. They can set us up with Internet access and email, and explain Skype where you can talk to and view the other person over the Web. They can also teach us about specific applications, such as how to manage photos, download music or use a GPS

- A young neighbor may be willing to problem-solve computer issues in exchange for driving him to the airport or by thanking him with a homemade apple pie.

- The public library has free Internet access if you don't have it at home; they often provide classes in how to navigate the Internet and operate word processing.

Instant Communication Devices

If you're on the go, an iPhone or iPod may be a convenient option for email, accessing your calendar, taking and sending photos or listening to music. Smaller than a laptop, the iPad may be just the thing to take on a trip, enabling you to get hotel reviews, find a route by GPS and download photos from your camera. The Kindle is a great new electronic format for reading ebooks. Be willing to explore the new options and ask questions. You don't have to know about everything that's out there. It's about being interested in what's here and now, the world in which the younger generations are living.

Since they grew up with computers and found electronic games in their Christmas stockings, younger folks seem to understand electronics with a quick, intuitive sense. We did not. Still, be assertive in communicating with your children and grandchildren. If they don't respond, don't give up. Keep a positive frame of mind and keep trying. Sooner or later they'll "get the message."

By being open, interested and willing to learn new skills, we're providing role models for those who come after us. This may be the best gift you'll ever give your loved ones.



Celebrate the Season *with an* Evergreen Centerpiece

By Neil Moran

With the rutabagas and onions safely stored under my house and several jars of tomatoes in the pantry, my thoughts naturally turn to doing something related to plants. The best activity I can think of after the gardening season is to start working on holiday centerpieces. I work on them in my

heated greenhouse, which keeps the mess contained, and I can still feel close to my gardening.

Holiday centerpieces are easy to make and will provide the fresh aroma of cedar and pine around your holiday table. They also make great gifts. Every centerpiece I've ever given away garnered some oohs and

aahs and appreciation from the recipient. Here is what is required to make a beautiful table arrangement for the holidays:

- Fresh cedar, pine, spruce or balsam fir
- A florist bowl
- Floral foam oasis
- Sharp scissors
- Glue gun and glue sticks
- A candle of your choice, but a taper or candle no more than two inches in diameter works best
- 12 red pine cones, but white spruce also works
- Artificial red berries
- "Snow in a can" craft spray

Usually, I obtain the evergreen pieces by selectively pruning some of the cedar and pine around my yard. If you're lucky, you can sometimes catch a neighbor doing some hedge work and get the greenery you need that way. For a big project, I see my brother-in-law, who owns several acres of cedar, pine and spruce.

Over the years I've found cedar to be the best choice for centerpieces, but it really is up to you. Cedar works well because there are no messy needles to contend with and they stay fresh longer in a home. Balsam would be the second choice as it tends to be easy to work with and will fill in a centerpiece rather quickly. A mix of green foliage – white pine, balsam and cedar – makes an attractive centerpiece and is probably best for a special occasion, one that won't be staying in the home for an extended period of time.

Cones, of course, can be collected from the trees or purchased at a craft store. The same goes for the artificial berries, glue gun and sticks and artificial snow.

As for the other materials, the bowls and foam can also be purchased at a craft shop or craft section of a large department store. A florist shop is also a good source for bowls and foam.

Steps to making a centerpiece:

1. Clip pieces of greenery to about 6 to 7 inches in length.
2. Take the foam oasis (dry at this point) and insert it into the bowl. You will probably have to cut the foam oasis to fit into the bowl, giving you one extra piece of foam for your next centerpiece.
3. Now, carefully work a taper or other thin candle into the center of the dry oasis. Shove it in about 2 and 1/2 inches. Option: Pull the candle back out and insert a little glob of the hot glue in the hole. Push the candle back into the hole and into the still-warm glue.
4. Begin inserting the short branches of greenery into the oasis, starting from the bottom. Do this carefully as to not split the foam.
5. Insert the branches all around the oasis until it looks almost full.
6. Begin your next row of greenery, nearly covering the lower branches.
7. Continue until you've got a full-looking centerpiece.
8. Now take short pieces of greenery and insert into the top of the foam until the foam is completely covered.
9. With the hot glue gun in one hand and a cone in the other, put a dab of glue on each cone, then simply press it into the foliage. Use as many cones as you want. I usually use four groups of three pine cones.
10. Put a dab of glue on the tips of the stems of the berries and insert them in between the cones.
11. Use the craft snow any way you want to mimic snow on the cones or foliage.

Tips: *The foliage will stay fresh indefinitely in a cold garage or outdoors. Be careful when using the hot glue gun not to let your skin come in contact with the hot tip. Decorative shrubs, such as arborvitae, don't take too kindly to a late fall pruning, as I found out the hard way. You may wish to get your greenery from a cedar tree or other plant from the wild, if you have access to such trees.*





GIVE OF YOURSELF:



Volunteer this Holiday Season

By Joanne R. Alloway

Whether you celebrate Christmas, Hanukkah or Kwanzaa, you can enrich your traditions by giving of yourself during the holidays. The holidays are a perfect time to make a difference in someone's life by volunteering.

When my children were young, we had a tradition of helping at nursing homes or soup kitchens. We enjoyed it and always felt great later. They're adults now and I continue this tradition with friends. With the sluggish economy, sharing our time and effort becomes even more critical. And if you go with friends, the experience is always more rewarding when shared. Hundreds of organizations in this area are helping people in need and could use assistance. Here are some simple things you can do.

FOOD. It may be our biggest challenge. Eighty food pantries are managed by the Anne Arundel County Food Bank and Resource Center. Their demand for food is great. Contributing by starting a food drive is not difficult; our neighbors and friends are usually happy to contribute nonperishables. If you've got a friend or two or some kids to help, this is a great project. Some helpful hints are on the website below. The Food Bank also collects used furniture, cars and household items, and they're happy to have

yours. They operate 10 soup kitchens, also with increased demand during the holidays. Volunteers are needed. Contact: www.aafoodbank.org or call Bruce at 410/923 4255.

CHILDREN. We worry about them most at the holidays because we want them to find happiness. Charitable groups we can aid to ensure this happens include:

• **Toys for Tots**, the Marine Corps Reserve Program, needs new, unwrapped toys. A local drop-off point will be Toys 'R Us in Annapolis; other locations are on the website at www.toysfortots.org. Contact: dastern@cisco.com

• **Big Brothers and Sisters** offers mentoring partnerships for kids and is hosting "Santa's Open Golf Tournament" at River Run Golf Club in Berlin, Md., on Saturday, Dec. 3. Cost \$75, plus a gift for a child 7 to 17 years old. Register by Dec. 1. Contact: santasopen@big-little.org

FAMILIES. Without the wherewithal, they experience greater sadness at holiday time. Contributing to a family's happiness increases your own. Here are a few ideas:

• **Salvation Army** on Hilltop Lane in Annapolis and on Crain Highway in Glen Burnie need volunteers to serve as bell ringers to raise funds, sort food and gifts for baskets and stockings for families, dress teddy bears, fill stockings for kids and adopt families. Volunteer dates are Dec. 17-20 in Annapolis and Dec. 18 in Glen Burnie. Contact: 410 263 4091 or 410 768 0477.

• **The Light House Shelter** in Annapolis collects food and distributes Thanksgiving baskets for needy families. Foods needed are non-perishable holiday dinner items that feed four to six people. Volunteers are needed Monday, Nov. 21, to distribute food baskets.

• **The Holiday Sharing Program**, through Anne Arundel County Social Services, benefits families and seniors by matching donor volunteers with families to provide Thanksgiving and holiday dinners and gifts. Dates: now through Dec. 30. Contact: TSteele@dhr.state.md.us

HOMELESS. Fifty single men and women reside at the Light House Shelter in Annapolis. Holiday gift bags are needed for the residents including winter gloves, scarves, hats, toiletries, prepaid phone or gift cards. Must be delivered to the Light House by Monday, Dec. 19. A "Bountiful Harvest" fundraiser for the shelter will be held at the Annapolis Marriott on Sunday, Nov. 13. Volunteers are needed. Contact: Jill at events@annapolis-lighthouse.org.

• **The Jewish Volunteer Connection** needs volunteers to knit or crochet scarves and hats for winter care packages for the homeless on Mitzvah Day. Contact: 410 843 7476.

SERVICEMEN AND WOMEN. Our armed services personnel are separated during the holidays while we are safe at home. Opportunities are available from Annapolis to Baltimore to help the military overseas. For locations and ideas check <http://our-military.mil>

OTHERS. It's impossible to mention all organizations that need volunteers, but many are in the "Holiday Volunteer Guide 2011," published by Anne Arundel County. You'll surely find one that suits your interests at www.VolunteerAnneArundel.org

In the spirit of the season, may you all find joy expressed in the eyes of those you meet while volunteering. Have fun!

Joanne is a freelance writer living in Annapolis and can be reached at www.allowaywords.com

Bits & Bytes
If your plan is to donate to a charity before the year's end, log onto www.CharityNavigator.org to confirm its validity and how it disburses funds. It will list expenses, income with charts and graphs and anything that you need to know.

Secrets of Healthy Aging

Are You IDEAL?

Insight into Determinants of Exceptional Aging and Longevity

By Karen Steward

Why do some people reach age 80 or 90 and older free of physical and cognitive disease? National Institute of Aging (NIA) researchers on the Baltimore Longitudinal Study on Aging (BLSA) are exploring this question through the IDEAL (Insight into Determinants of Exceptional Aging and Longevity) study. Although research exists on the relationship between long life and functional decline, we still know relatively little about why certain individuals have excellent health well into their 80s while others experience disease and physical decline earlier in life. The IDEAL study is recruiting older persons age 80 or more who are physically healthy and mentally sharp to participate in this research. IDEAL aims to discover the physiological, environmental and behavioral risk factors that distinguish these exceptional people from others who have not aged so successfully. (You can get information about participating in this study by calling 855 804-3325 or by emailing IDEAL@westat.com)

Previous research of the longitudinal study set the stage for the IDEAL study. NIA researchers have examined the normal processes of aging for over 50 years. What is normal aging? This may seem like a simple question, but for scientists, it gets to the heart of something quite complex: how to identify the true effects of aging and how to separate factors such as disease, socioeconomic disadvantage, or lack of educational opportunity from underlying biological or other mechanisms common to human aging.

The methodology of the BLSA, which was revolutionary in 1958, is still used to study aging today. As a longitudinal study, the same people have been repeatedly evaluated over time. Even in the IDEAL study, participants who are 80 or older at time of enrollment will be asked to return each year to be evaluated.

The findings of the BLSA have led to two major conclusions. First, normal aging can be distinguished from disease. Although people's bodies change and can in some ways decline over time, these changes do not inevitably lead to diseases such as diabetes, hypertension or dementia. A number of disorders that typically occur in old age are a result of disease processes, not normal aging. The second conclusion is that there is no single chronological timetable of human aging. We all age differently. There are more differences among older people than among younger people. Genetics, lifestyle and disease processes affect the rate of aging between and within all individuals.

Over the years, BLSA scientists and other researchers from a broad range of disciplines have identified factors that influence healthy aging. From their research have come action steps we can take to maintain our health and functions as we get older.

- Exercise and physical activity are good for you. People who exercise regularly live longer and better. It's never too late. Evidence from the BLSA suggests that people who begin exercise training in later life can experience improved heart function. Exercise and physical activity can reduce the risk of developing some diseases and disabilities that often occur with age. Balance exercises help prevent falls. Strength exercises build muscles and reduce the risk of osteoporosis. Flexibility exercises help keep the body limber and give the freedom of movement you need to do everyday activities.

- We need to pay attention to both our weight and shape. For older people, the health problems associated with obesity may take a back seat to problems associated with body composition (fat to muscle ratio) and location of fat (hips or waist on the body).

- For older adults, thinner is not always better. Older adults who are thin (a body mass index of less than 19) have a higher mortality rate compared to those who are obese or of normal weight.

- Think about what you eat. What you eat can either support healthy aging or cause health problems. Foods such as vegetables, fruits, fish and nuts may bring health benefits.

- Participating in activities you enjoy may actually be good for your health. According to BLSA data, people who are sociable, generous and goal-oriented report being happier and less depressed than other people. Other studies have shown that people who are involved in hobbies and social and leisure activities may be at lower risk for a number of health problems.

More findings from the BLSA about aging can be found on the National Institute of Aging's website on the BLSA webpage at www.nia.nih.gov/HealthInformation/Publications/BLSA/

The research efforts of the BLSA continue in the IDEAL study. As researchers further pinpoint the influences on how we age, and how some people age well, they also hope to develop more effective ways to intervene to prevent disease and promote healthy aging.

If you are, or someone you know is: 80 or older, can walk a quarter of a mile unassisted without pain or shortness of breath, has no physical disease and no loss of cognitive function, you can help researchers discover the secrets to successful aging by enrolling in the IDEAL study. For more information, search online for NIA IDEAL.

Karen Steward, director for recruitment, at IDEAL can be reached at IDEAL@westat.com

Blue Christmas

how to handle the holidays

By Leslie Payne

Every holiday season I hear a gloomy Christmas song that makes me giggle. Just one note of Elvis Presley's "Blue Christmas," and I'm back in my senior year of college with two wonderful roommates. Whenever the song came on the radio, Cindy and I sang the octave jumping "Ew-Ew-ew-Oh-ohs" as we swung our hips backup-singer style. Sarah, with hairbrush in hand as her microphone, sang the lead. At the top of her lungs, Sarah and Elvis sang of blue snowflakes and memories. It was a miserably sad sound, primarily because Sarah couldn't sing worth a darn. When the song ended, we'd collapse into giggles at the silliness of it all. Whoever heard of feeling blue at Christmas anyway?

Fast forward several decades and that thought is not as amusing. Too often, feeling blue during the holidays is reality. Among the three roommates, we've lost five parents, two siblings, several friends, too many aunts and uncles and all our grandparents. Often, grief increases during the holidays as advertisers insist this should be the happiest season of all. Not always so. My method of grief management was once "I'll stay in bed until next year." While it protected me from constant in-your-face holiday happiness, I ended up with a dreadful case of bed head. I needed a new plan.

Last year before Christmas, a much better option presented itself. Sarah and I met at a local church for a "Blue Christmas" celebration, which was a beautifully designed service that offered a safe place to pause, grieve and reflect. It gave us permission to acknowledge our grief, so later we could celebrate in traditional Christmas style. We both cried some during the service, and that was OK. My only complaint was she still looked so beautiful, while my tears left me with a splotchy complexion and a case of the hic-

cup. Yet the evening was a tremendous comfort in the midst of the holiday rush.

Over the years, after trying a few different approaches, I've picked up some strategies to help deal with grief during the holidays.

- Acknowledge your grief and emotions by conceding that this year will be different.
- Realize that anticipating the holiday can be worse than the actual day itself.
- Make comfortable changes in traditions. Exchange gifts in the evening instead of morning, eat dinner at a different time or place. There is no right or wrong way to celebrate the holiday.
- Honor your loved one in a special way by playing her favorite music, making his favorite food, lighting a candle or hanging a special stocking. Have family members write down special memories and slip them in the stocking. Talk about your loved one with others.
- Take care of yourself. Get plenty of sleep, because this season can be physically and emotionally draining. Remember good nutrition. Exercise daily. Be sure to have some time alone, yet don't isolate yourself.
- Avoid additional stress. Don't feel obligated to do things just because you did them in the past. Ask for help and support in specific ways from friends and family. Avoid people who drain you.
- Be kind to yourself, give yourself grace when you're having a difficult time. And at other times, don't be afraid to laugh and enjoy the holidays. Each day, holiday or not, is a gift.

Leslie, a longtime resident of Annapolis, can be reached by visiting her website at www.living-withpayne.blogspot.com

"HOPE FULL HOLIDAYS"

Seminars by Life Center at Hospice of the Chesapeake to honor grief and memories, plus explore coping strategies for the holiday season.

In Anne Arundel County:

Saturdays Nov. 12 and Dec. 10, 2011, at 9:30 a.m. Registration required: 410 987-2129. (On Dec. 10 there is "Stepping Stones," a program for children ages 8-13.)

"BLUE CHRISTMAS"

Worship Service

Open to anyone struggling due to grief and loss, or difficult economic situations.

Thursday, Dec. 15, 2011, at 7 p.m.

College Parkway Baptist Church
301 College Parkway, Arnold, Md

For more information: 410 647-5594

RECOMMENDED BOOKS ON GRIEF:

Don't Take My Grief Away:

What To Do When You Lose A Loved One
by Doug W. Manning

How To Survive The Loss Of A Parent:

A Guide For Adults
by Lois F. Akner

A Tearful Celebration:

Finding God in the Midst of Loss
by James Means

It's not how busy you are - it's what are you busy with?

App in a Snap

By Gail Fowler

It's all about apps today -- those little programs you load onto your smart phone, in my case an iPhone. Sure, an iPhone is a phone, yet it's so much more. It's actually a small computer that fits in the palm of your hand, and just happens to have a mobile phone as one of its features. Wasn't it smart of Steve Jobs and company to market the Apple-developed hand-held computer as a phone?

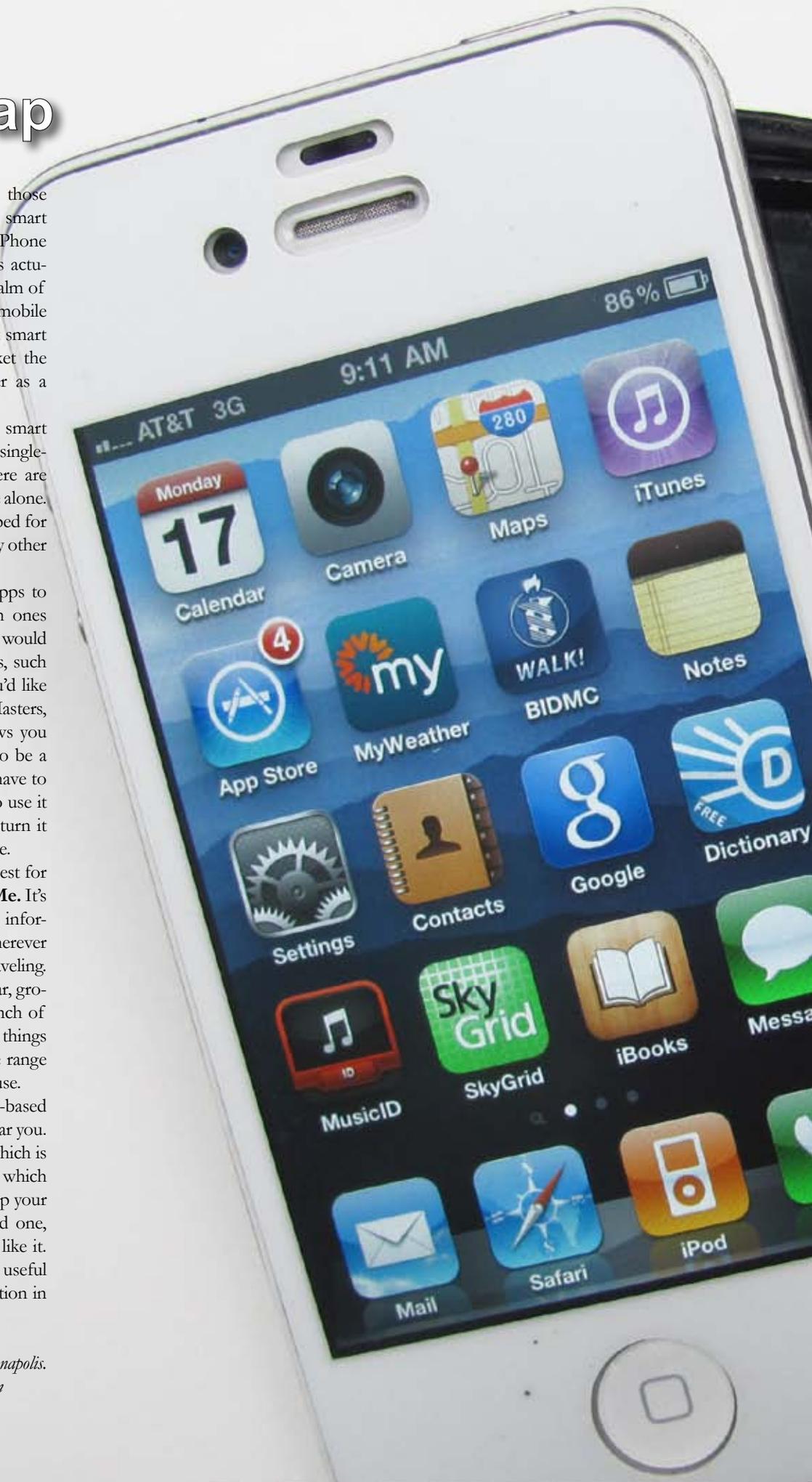
Apps are what makes your smart phone so much more useful than a single-purpose device. By some counts, there are more than 400,000 apps for the iPhone alone. And that doesn't include those developed for the Blackberry, the Droid and the many other smart phones being marketed today.

How do you know which apps to load onto your smart phone? Which ones would you use every day? Which ones would you use only in specific circumstances, such as when you're traveling, or when you'd like to check who's in the lead at the Masters, or maybe even view the network news you missed last evening. You don't have to be a techie and your smart phone doesn't have to take over your world. It's your tool, so use it however you like, and put it away or turn it off whenever you like. You're in charge.

The first app I typically suggest for a new smart phone owner is **Around Me**. It's a free app that gives you categorized information about your surroundings, wherever you are. It's indispensable when I'm traveling. It will guide me to the closest coffee bar, grocery store or perhaps the nearest branch of my bank. **Around Me** tells me where things are located and how to get there. The range of categories is broad and it's easy to use.

There are other location-based apps that can help you find services near you. There are two other free sites, **Yelp**, which is good for restaurants, and **Cheap Gas**, which is good for its namesake. You'll develop your favorites, too. For now, just download one, give it a try and delete it if you don't like it. You may be surprised at how easy and useful it can be to have this type of information in the palm of your hand.

Gail is a retired IT professional living in Annapolis. She can be reached at GTFowler@gmail.com



Catch Some **ZZZZS** to Put your Mind at Ease

By Leah Lancione

Everyone knows that a good night of sleep can make your mind and body feel re-energized. Conversely, a night of tossing and turning can make you wake up listless, grumpy and feeling like your brain is foggy. Why is it then that so many people don't heed the warning signs and don't get enough sleep, get too much or simply continue to disregard their irregular sleep patterns?

The National Sleep Foundation (www.sleepfoundation.org) reports that "the relationship between sleep and depressive illness is complex – depression may cause sleep problems and sleep problems may cause or contribute to depressive disorders. For some people, symptoms of depression occur before the onset of sleep problems. For others, sleep problems appear first." Even if you haven't officially been diagnosed with a sleep disorder, like insomnia, there's resounding evidence that bad sleep habits can result in or exacerbate depression.

For some new retirees, the normal cycle of waking and sleeping gets compromised once their day-to-day routine, which was dictated by work schedules for years, is gone. For some, not having to wake up early for work increases the temptation to stay up late and sleep in the next morning. Though an occasional late night and late morning won't wreak major havoc on the body, the cycle of poor sleep can have detrimental effects

if it becomes habitual. That's not to mention that lack of sleep at night often causes folks to nod off during the day which can also intensify the cycle of sleepless nights.

WebMD (www.webmd.com) also recognizes the link between sleep deprivation and depression. According to the health news site, the inability to sleep, sleeping too much or oversleeping can be signs of clinical depression. The website's depression center explains that sleep is a "restorative state" and that when someone either has interrupted or insufficient sleep, it can lead to "fatigue, tension, vigilance and irritability." In addition, the resulting fatigue can create a damaging and unhealthy scenario in which someone is so fatigued and physically drained that their activity and exercise level decreases and this "vicious cycle of inactivity and disturbed sleep can cause both physical and mood-related symptoms."

Patrick McNamara, an associate professor of neurology at Boston University, has suggested a direct connection between irregular sleep and depression in an article in the online health journal, *Psychology Today* (www.psychologytoday.com). Without going into the specifics of McNamara's scientific evidence involving REM (rapid eye movement) suppression and its antidepressant-like affect on sleep and moods, he describes depression: "We never feel totally refreshed by sleep and sleep, when it comes, is fitful and

punctuated by too many awakenings. I know of no cases of depression without profound disruption of sleep. It may even be that disruption of sleep can trigger depressive episodes."

In a discussion of depression in new retirees, W. Robert Nay, PhD, a licensed clinical psychologist, author and associate professor at Georgetown University School of Medicine, stresses the importance of getting enough sleep to maintain health and wellness. He says everyone should have a regular wake up and sleep time, bedrooms should be pitch black so the brain can produce melatonin, rooms should also be kept at a cool, comfortable temperature and only short power naps should be taken during the day.

If you have tried and failed to get control of your sleep patterns by following these steps, consider seeing your doctor to address the problem in more detail. The American Psychiatric Association's Healthy Minds, Healthy Lives online resource (www.healthyminds.org) notes that "poor sleep can often be a sign that there is something troubling you emotionally." Just remember how important it was for your babies and growing children to have proper naps and sleep to develop their minds and bodies. You, too, need good sleep to allow your body to restore and rejuvenate itself.

Sleep Tips

If you have started to recognize the negative effects of your sleep habits, consider following these similar tips presented by the Mayo Clinic (www.mayoclinic.com/health/sleep):

1. Stick to a sleep schedule.
2. Pay attention to what you eat and drink, i.e., don't go to bed hungry or stuffed. Also, nicotine and caffeine act like a stimulant and alcohol disrupts sleep later at night.
3. Create a bedtime ritual to signal to your body that it is time to wind down.
4. Get comfortable. For example, use room-darkening shades, a fan and/or earplugs -- anything that contributes to a comfortable environment. Also consider the comfort level of your pillows and mattress.
5. Limit daytime naps. Don't allow naps to be longer than 10 to 30 minutes.
6. Include physical exercise in your daily routine, (but not too close to bedtime.)
7. Manage stress. Stress can keep you up at night thinking about what you have to do.

Art and Accessories

ACCENT A WELCOMING HOME

By Tatiana Beckham

An important step in the decorating process that makes a house a welcoming home is the choice and placement of art and accessories. This is not a new idea. Enter the caves at Lascaux in France, for example, and you will see how paintings as old as 20,000 years elevate a crude cave with dirt floors and rough stone walls into a spiritual and enchanting space.

In your own decorating project, after the walls in your home are painted, the floors are polished and the furniture is placed to the best advantage, perhaps something feels not quite right about the room. The space still may seem anonymous, generic and cold. Here is where art and accessories will take the room to a completely different height and make it sing. These two elements create a mood, and endow the space with personality. They bring together everything else in the room to create a finished and pleasing ensemble. Art and accessories also tell the individual story of your experience, interests, travels, books read and people and places that are important to you. These things speak volumes about the who and why of that room.

When creating that special space with art and accessories, it is important to consider the relationship among all the elements in the room. Consider the architecture and furniture because art should not just hang on a wall, unrelated to anything else. This is after all a home, not a museum. For our purposes here, let's define "art" as anything that you choose to hang on your walls.

Not every wall needs a picture or grouping, so resist the urge to cover every surface. The purpose of incorporating art into your home is not to overwhelm but to enhance all the other items in the room and knowing when enough is enough. You do not need to show all your art pieces and accessories at once. If you have a large collection, you can always rotate your possessions. After all, you don't wear all your jewelry at once.

Step back and take a good look at the space before putting a single nail in the wall, because the artwork that you are about to hang should be connected to and integrated with everything else in your home. For example, don't place a tiny framed picture over a massive sofa. Plan your arrangement so that the art covers at least three-fourths of the wall space over the furniture item in question and make sure that it is not wider than the furniture. That way, both the artwork and the furniture share a symbiotic relationship and highlight each other.

Although there aren't any rules etched in stone when it comes to arranging art and accessories, common sense dictates that a large, oversized piece of art requires a wall large enough not only to hold the art, but to surround it with enough space to let it "breathe." Another helpful tip to hanging your art is to cut out the exact size of your picture on construction paper and place the construction paper on the wall to give you an idea of comparative sizes. Tack the paper on the wall with painter's tape. It is easier to move paper than trying to position and visualize a heavy painting on the wall.

When hanging a grouping of art together, lay it out on the floor first to decide the overall size and shape of the arrangement. Or again, cut out on construction paper all the shapes and sizes of the pictures and tape the paper to the wall. This prevents mistakes such as putting too many unnecessary holes in the wall.

Arranging art and accessories in a room is like putting together an interesting puzzle. It is a form of artistry that requires some practice through adding and subtracting, trial and error, balance and proportion, resulting in a perfect arrangement. The end result can be so much fun and so satisfying.

Tatiana Beckham and her partner Jean Phillips are interior designers, home stagers and e-decorators. They can be reached at Staging to Sell (410 271-1261), or at tj@staging-to-sell.net or visit their website at www.staging-to-sell.net

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Unique Gifts for the Holidays

By Kathryn Marchi

Time and time again, the question arises during this gift-giving time of year, “What can I get for someone who has everything?” Aunt Susie has enough scarves, jewelry, perfume and lotions and Uncle Herbie has enough ties, socks and after-shave. It’s safe to say that friends of our generation usually have everything they need or want.

The first order of business is to have a discussion with folks about beginning a different way of gift-giving for this holiday season. It may well be that others are just as confused about what gifts to purchase as you.

The following is a list of a few suggestions for gifts that are a bit different for those special people who seem to have it all:

1. Make a charitable contribution to a favorite charity in their name and ask that they do the same for you if they choose. Check out www.charitywatch.org

2. Purchase a gift certificate to a beauty shop, nail salon, yoga lessons or a full beauty treatment at a local spa.

3. Give a pair of tickets to a chorale holiday concert at www.qachorale.org or www.annapolischorale.org or to a symphony concert at www.bsomusic.org or www.annapolissymphonyorchestra.org or to any of the local theater productions or even a movie theater. If you want to spend more, consider season tickets.

4. How about a special interest subscription such as European travel or saltwater fishing. For a variety of choices go to www.Amazon.com

5. Order a food product for use during the holidays such as smoked salmon from Alaska, www.ovenheadsmokers.com or a Virginia-cured country ham at www.virginiatrading.com or for a wider choice, go to www.giftbasketsfordelivery.com

There are many companies out there who prepackage foods or fruits and will send these items for you. But you can also be creative on your own. For example, that wine-loving friend might love a basket or cooler filled with wines, wine glasses, cheeses, crackers, a wine opener or a cheese knife, along with unique cocktail napkins.

For friends who love to play bridge, fill a fabric bag with playing cards, tallies, pencils, books for scoring and handy playing tips and matching napkins. Baskets and other appropriate containers filled with all sorts of goodies are always a great gift; just choose a theme according to your friend’s interests.

6. If flower arranging is your talent, purchase a holiday bowl and put in your own design of fresh evergreens. And most people don’t mind receiving these gifts early since they can be used right away for the holidays.

7. Purchase a lovely baking dish and fill it with a delicious casserole that could be frozen ahead of time). Other homemade food items such as cookies, jams, pickles or special sauces can be placed in decorative dishes and given as gifts as well.

8. Set up a “service” such as house cleaning, window washing, landscaping and general lawn and garden chores for use whenever needed. (If applicable, some of these services can be done by children for either parents or grandparents.)

9. Instead of giving a gift certificate to a local restaurant, make out a certificate for a special lunch or dinner or in your own home. Choose a menu and print it out as if it were from a “gourmet” restaurant.

10. Games. There are so many choices out there and many geared toward adults, such as UpWords or Table Topics or even chess.

There are many more ideas out there for unique gifts and you can be as creative in the way you present them as you like. Many people simply like having a package to open no matter what is in it. Any of the above can be put into a brightly wrapped box with a bow on top to please them.

You know your family and friends, so get creative and come up with a gift that will be enjoyed and used instead of placed in a drawer or on a shelf.

Kathryn began her creative and unique gift giving last year with her “friends who have everything.” Donating to favorite charities was tops on the list, but the smoked salmon she received from Bay of Fundy, was a delicious addition to holiday parties.



Is there something missing in your life?



Ask the Undertaker

By Ryan Helffenbein

Greening is good. Not just for the environment, but especially this time of year. The green tree, evergreens placed on the railings, green suits of Santa's little elves. And the undertaking business has not escaped the trend this time of year or year-round.

Undertakers are ready to meet the growing demand for "green burials." This all-natural burial option – my dad calls it "cowboy burial" – that does not require preservation using chemicals or an outer burial container or even a monument. This relatively new method of burial entails use of an eco-friendly casket in a specialized cemetery or in a designated section of a traditional cemetery. Green burials provide a service that truly mimics customs of our ancestors. And it has caught the attention of baby boomers.

Some of you may wonder if embalming is necessary and if not, then must burial occur within 24 hours? Not true. Believe it or not, through the use of dry ice or refrigeration, funeral providers can delay the services until it is better suited for the family, typically three or four days. In the state of Maryland, there is no law that requires embalming.

Then why, you ask, haven't we heard a lot more about green burial? A recent funeral industry magazine has addressed this very question. It pointed out that the average run-of-the mill funeral director today simply does not understand it and is reluctant to change. Their grandpa never ran a funeral home of-

fering it, so why should they! In spite of this, green burial is growing in popularity, as we have gone from five green burial cemeteries just six years ago to over 15 in the U.S. today.

Another roadblock to consumer education about green burial is not just resistance in the industry but confusion. When I discussed green burials recently with a Baltimore funeral director, he explained that his firm offers a green burial service. He continued by explaining there was no embalming, the family purchases an eco-friendly casket and that is then placed in an unsealed concrete liner for burial in a traditional cemetery. OK, now this is a partially green burial, but not a true green burial.

Green Burial, natural burial, or cowboy burial, whichever you prefer, does not include an outer enclosure. It is the placement of an eco-friendly casket directly into the earth. Some may even choose to skip the casket and use shrouds. (Yes, we undertakers are bringing back some ancient customs.) In the specialized cemeteries that conduct green burials, graves are dug by hand, not with modern machinery. The caskets are lowered with the use of rope, not a steel lowering device. The graves are then hand-shoveled and closed, often with the family assisting. No backhoe involved. Traditional monuments will not be found in a green burial cemetery. In some cases, natural elements, such as trees or rocks are used to mark the location of a loved one's interment. In a tip of the hat to modern technology, families are given the GPS coordinates of the location, marked or not.

Green burial was first implemented in the United Kingdom. The very first green burial cemetery started in 1993 and now there are more than 200 in the U.K. The first green burial cemetery in the US was opened in South Carolina in 1998. Today, we see this becoming very popular along the East Coast and is offered even right here in Annapolis.

Maryland Green Burial is a good source of information for those who want to learn more about cemeteries in the area providing this service. Reach it at www.mdgreenburial.com

I'd like to end this year's edition of "Ask the Undertaker" with a "thank-you" to the readers of this column. It has been a pleasure meeting some of you in person, having the opportunity to answer some of your questions through the column and bring light to what has always been a dark topic. In the upcoming year, I plan to cover questions such as, "What steps are involved with pre-planning," "How can one be buried at sea" and the ever-so-popular topic of cremation. I welcome other suggestion you may have.

Ryan, owner/supervising mortician and pre planning counselor at Lasting Tributes on Bestgate Road in Annapolis, offers area residents solutions to high cost funerals. He can be reached at 410 897-4852 or Ryan@LastingTributesFuneralCare.com

Bits & Bytes

Would you like to ease your parents into the wide world of the Internet, but don't have time to teach them the basics? Have them log onto www.TeachParentsTech.org for easy to understand answers to basic questions.



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National Institute on Aging
National Institutes of Health

Reducing Christmas Clutter

By Edree Downing

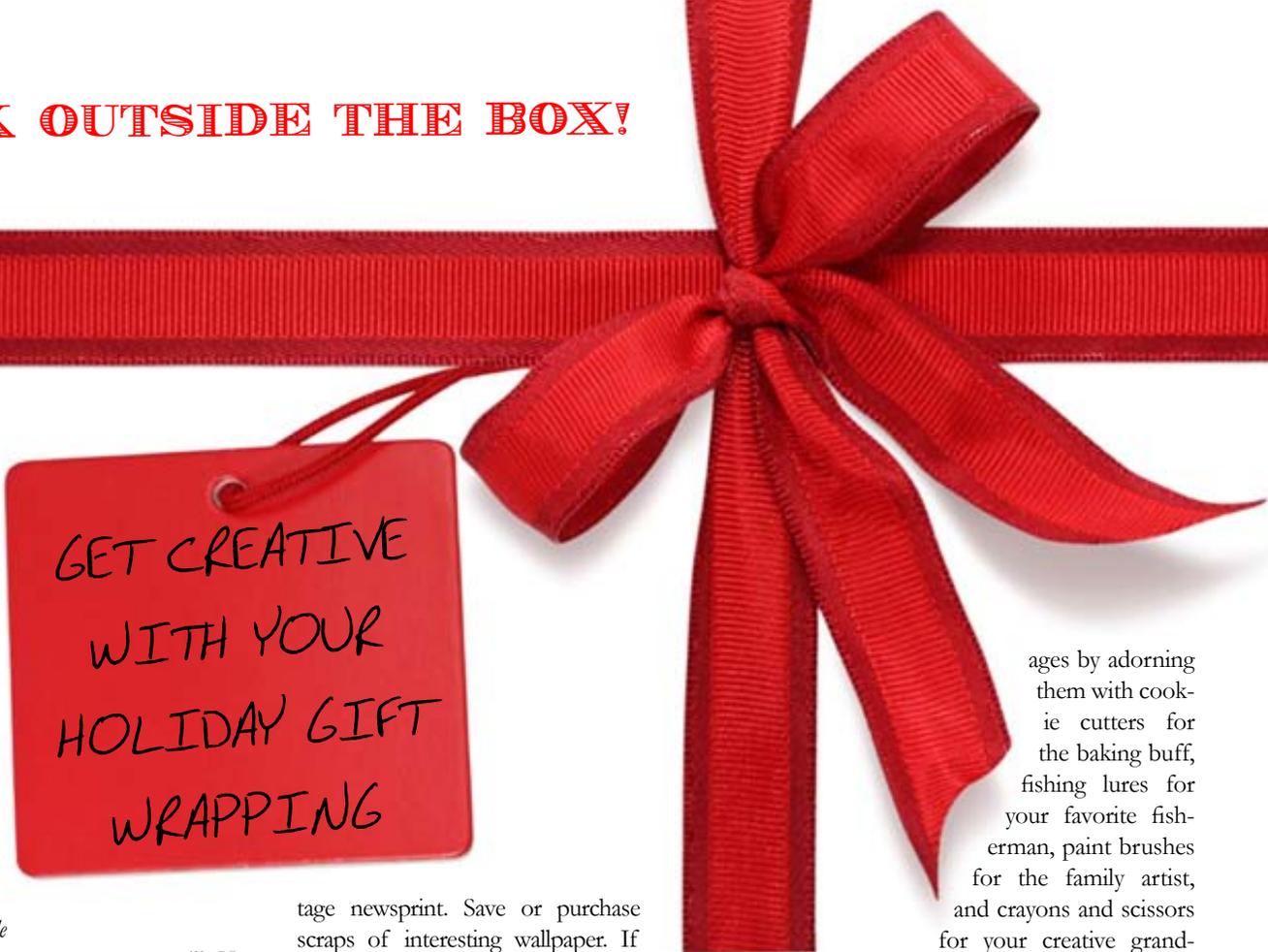
Are you still acquiring holiday treasures? Those charming little knickknacks that once a year need to be unpacked and then packed up again? Maybe it's time to start distributing some of that collection, which each year becomes more and more of a problem to store. We had a lifetime of Christmas decorations that filled 10 large bins at my house. For the last five years we've been doling out our collection bit by bit. My family loves receiving the different pieces that were used during their childhood. And then we all enjoy the telling of where a particular decoration came from as there is invariably a story that goes with it.

Not only do we have a fair share of holiday collectables, but over the years we've accumulated quite a nice assortment of holiday books. Many of these have been inscribed with a note from the gift giver, which makes them even more special. This year we're passing on *The Little Match Girl* that godmother Suzan inscribed with a nice Christmas message more than 30 years ago and *A Christmas Carol* from the children's grandmother, which will have to be taped as the pages are falling out. Sorting through and passing these timeless classics on to our children's homes will allow them to read and enjoy them with their children. And a real plus is that during our Christmas visits we get to read them to our grandkids. It's a win-win situation all around.

As meaningful as some of the holiday collection has been and as much as we've enjoyed it over the years, we have found that we're enjoying these treasures a lot more because others are storing and loving them.



THINK OUTSIDE THE BOX!



GET CREATIVE
WITH YOUR
HOLIDAY GIFT
WRAPPING

By Louise Whiteside

“Oh, it’s too pretty to open!” How often have you heard this sentiment of excitement and delight from a gift recipient? Personally, I must confess, not too often! For the most part, most of my gift wrapping has been rather commonplace: the usual square of tissue or Christmas wrap, a pre-made bow, a tiny cardboard tag with a run-of-the-mill greeting, or maybe a paper gift bag with a wad of tissue paper. In other words, not much of an attention-grabber! But craving a little adventure, I’ve recently found myself browsing through gift wrapping books and magazine illustrations, and to my great amazement, there are infinite possibilities for creating novel and elegant gift packages.

Think about it. Which do you think would be more fun: reaching through a mass of tissue paper and pulling a gift out of a bag, or opening a beautifully wrapped package with decorations that reflected your personality? Sure, the gift would be meaningful in any case, but which of the two would be more likely to send the message that the giver had gone to a little extra trouble just for you?

Let me share with you a few ideas – none very complicated or timeconsuming – that might give your gift wrapping a little more pizzazz. That might even earn you the “too pretty to open” remark from a loved one.

THE WRAP

Browse in flea markets or yard sales for vintage

newsprint. Save or purchase scraps of interesting wallpaper. If you’re artistic, draw or paint seasonal designs on plain paper. Cut colorful pages out of magazines for wrapping small gifts. Wrap a child’s gift in the Sunday comics or a colorful road map. Instead of buying the traditional red or green holiday wrap, spring for softer, more subtle shades, such as creams, delicate pinks and pale lilacs. Colored construction paper can be used artistically for a gift to a child or a teacher gift. Look through your fabric store for remnants of luscious satins, velvets, laces, linens and tulles.

THE RIBBON

Ribbons come in a multitude of textures and designs. Stroll through fabric stores, where you will find ribbons made of satin, grosgrain, velvet, taffeta and metallic fiber. Tulle (a netlike fabric) comes in precut rolls and is perfect for fashioning frilly bows.

EMBELLISHMENTS

Take a look in your sewing box for fancy buttons, in your jewelry box for strands of beads or pearls, or for stray earrings, in your Christmas collection for tiny ornaments and snowflakes. Be on the lookout for embellishments at yard sales, the dollar store or the cake decorating aisle of your grocery store. Scan the scrapbooking department at your local craft store. Children love candy canes and tiny toys on the tops of their gifts. Think of creative ways to personalize your gift pack-

ages by adorning them with cookie cutters for the baking buff, fishing lures for your favorite fisherman, paint brushes for the family artist, and crayons and scissors for your creative grand-

child. Dried flowers and sprigs of fresh holly, evergreen and poinsettias always make lovely embellishments.

OUT-OF-THE-ORDINARY PACKAGING

Dig out an old lunch box and create a whimsical container for homemade cookies. A Mason jar decked out in stars and ribbons is perfect for showing off homemade candies. See if you can locate a single blue-and-white delft plate at a thrift store. Fill it with your favorite baked goodies and wrap it in blue cellophane. Topped with a gold bow, this makes a handsome hostess gift.

It’s so easy, inexpensive and just plain fun to do creative gift wrapping. Once those creative juices begin flowing, you may decide never to go back to the old gift bag-and-mass-produced-bow again.

MORE GIFT-WRAPPING IDEAS AND TECHNIQUES:

Gifted Wrapping

By Christine Fritsch

500 Christmas Ideas:

Celebrate the Season in Splendor

By Kimberley Meisner

Wrapagami: The Art of Fabric Gift Wraps

By Jennifer Playford

THE MITCHELL GALLERY

St. John's College Campus in Annapolis

By *Tricia Herban*

Did you know that there is only one fine arts museum in Anne Arundel County? The Mitchell Gallery, named for donor Elizabeth Myers Mitchell, is located on the campus of St. John's College. Mrs. Mitchell, an Annapolis resident, responded to the vision of making museum-quality art exhibitions a permanent part of St. John's offerings.

Since its completion in 1989, the gallery has come a long way. An ambitious exhibition program fulfills the mission to make art accessible to all visitors. Each of the five major art shows presented annually is supported by a range of interpretive, exhibit-related programs including lectures by curators and scholars, tours, workshops and programs designed to engage the participant.

In the 21 years since its founding, more than 140 exhibitions have been presented, including works by major historical

and contemporary artists – prints, drawings, paintings, collage and sculptures. Branching out further into the decorative arts, there will be a show of Shaker pieces this spring.

Clearly, the gallery was conceived with a broad vision. The building itself has a grand design created by local architect, Chip H. Bohl, to meet exacting museum standards for security, light and temperature control. Being a member and upholding the standards of the American Association of Museums, the Mitchell Gallery is more eligible to borrow works by artists such as Rembrandt, Motherwell and Calder from collectors and other museums.

Each display room offers a slightly different perspective. One is windowless and has nine-foot ceilings with a limestone floor and another is floored with ash parquetry in a limestone grid and offers 14-foot ceilings and windows covered with light-diffusing

curtains. Both spaces have incandescent track lighting with dimming capacity, which is vital as works on paper must be preserved by lighting lowered from the typical 15-candle foot brightness to a brilliance of only seven.

These technical details may seem uninteresting or merely technical, but this attention to museum standards enables the Mitchell Gallery to borrow "museum quality" works from the Smithsonian's SITES traveling exhibition program, from Smith Kramer and from major national art museums such as the National Gallery of Art, as well as private collections throughout the country.

One further detail: Works must be kept at 45 to 50 percent humidity and the galleries must maintain 68 to 72 degrees. Gallery temperatures are recorded on-site and constantly monitored by the facilities staff.

Building on more than 20 years of successful exhibitions, the gallery is now taking another very significant step by seeking accreditation from the American Association of Museums. This comprehensive program examines all aspects of museum management – staffing, facilities, programming, board and community support. The process is in its final phase and a site visit will be conducted later this fall. Only 800 museums in the country have this coveted status.

The gallery is the perfect place to visit over the holidays. It is local in the same building that houses the Francis Scott Key Auditorium. Weekend parking is available in campus parking lots just off St. John's Street.



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Frank E. Schoonover (1877-1972)
Locksley Shoots Before Prince John, 1922, oil on canvas
 Courtesy of St. Andrew's School, Middletown, Delaware



N.C. Wyeth (1882-1945)
Bruce on the Beach, 1921, oil on canvas
 Used with permission from the Kelly Collection of American Illustration

Gallery exhibitions and programs are free to the public, although some require registration.

Upcoming at the gallery, Oct. 27 through Dec. 15, will be an exhibit with something for everyone: “Knights, Crooks and Heroes.” Art educator Lucinda Edinberg curated this remarkable collection of originals from the Golden Age of Illustration, 1880-1930. Showcasing works drawn from two private collections, the exhibit will provide a trip back to the days when television didn’t exist and the radio was the modern medium of its time.

Back then, the imagination was dependent upon visual illustration for its fulfillment. Instead of the wide screen, there was the printed page. Fine artists brought dramatic tales such as *The Count of Monte Cristo* and *Les Miserables* to life, noting significant clues and details as they presented the most gripping moments to the reader’s eyes. Books were lavishly illustrated. Chapter headings provided an opportunity for graphic design while frontispieces, the books’ front and end

papers, and, of course, the cover, all served as a canvas to be filled pictorially.

Andrew Wyeth’s father, N.C. Wyeth, the noted illustrator of *Treasure Island*, will be represented in this show as well as Dean Cornwall, Harvey Dunn, J. C. Leyendecker, Howard Pyle (teacher of Wyeth, Schoonover and Smith whose methods became known as the Brandywine School), Mead Schaeffer, Frank Schoonover, and Jessie Willcox Smith among others. A total of more than 40 illustrations, mostly paintings, will delight and intrigue viewers of “Knights, Crooks and Heroes.” These are not small pieces – most are 20 by 40 inches. The artists worked in a large format and then Scribner’s, or the publisher who had commissioned the work, reduced it to the appropriate size for the printed page.

In conjunction with the exhibition, the following programs will provide a glimpse beyond the printed page of illustration: Opening Reception and Family Program, Oct. 30, 3:30-5 p.m.; Collectors Program, discussion

by Richard Kelly and Robert Horvath, Nov. 1, 7:30 p.m.; Sunday Afternoon Tour, Nov. 13, 3 p.m. ; Book Club, tour followed by discussion of N.C. Wyeth: A Biography by David Michaelis 2:30-4:30 p.m. (registration required by contacting Kathy Dulisse 410 626-2530 or Kathy.dulisse@sjca.edu); Art Express, lunch-time gallery talk with juice and soda provided, Dec. 7, 12:15-12:45 p.m.

Further information about the Mitchell Gallery is available at www.stjohnscollege.edu or by calling 410 626-2556. Hours are Tuesday through Sunday noon to 5 p.m. and Friday evenings from 7 to 8 p.m. prior to the college lecture or concert in Francis Scott Key Auditorium. While there is no gift shop or dining room at the gallery, three restaurants are within a short walk: Reynolds Tavern on Church Circle, Harry Browne’s on State Circle and Galway Bay on Maryland Avenue.

Make time for exercise - it improves everything: mind, body, mood!



He Cooks!

By Mat Herban

Holiday cooking for Thanksgiving, Christmas, Hannukkah or any other winter occasion means putting out a fancy meal, but one that includes comfort foods that everyone loves. Potatoes always seem to figure into the mix because whatever the entrée meat may be, potatoes will complement it and they are also a wonderful background for gravy or sauces.

The two-potato dishes that follow are outstanding for their flavor. And equally important, they can be prepared ahead and baked just before serving. In fact, the two potato gratin could even be cooked the day before and reheated for the holiday feast.

TWO-POTATO GRATIN

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Butter a medium casserole dish about 3 inches deep. As this is a layered dish, the ingredient amounts will be determined by the size of your dish and how many guests you have. It is important to cover the casserole for the first 45 minutes so the potatoes can absorb the liquid and cook in it. After that, uncover the dish so it can brown on top and the sauce can evaporate and thicken.

Ingredients

- 3 medium Yukon gold potatoes, peeled and sliced 1/8 inch thick
- 2 medium sweet potatoes, peeled and sliced 1/8 inch thick
- 1 Tbs. dried thyme
- 1/2 tsp. grated nutmeg (freshly grated has more taste)
- 1 tsp. salt, or to taste
- 1 tsp. pepper, or to taste (freshly ground if you have it)
- 1 1/4 cup heavy whipping cream

Layer ingredients as follows: white potatoes, thyme, nutmeg, salt, pepper and a little cream. Then make a sweet potato layer with the same seasonings and some cream. Continue layering until everything is used, finishing with seasonings and cream. Cover with foil and bake 45 minutes. Uncover and bake 45 minutes more or until potatoes are tender when pierced with a fork. Serves six.

SWEET POTATO "PUDDING"

This yummy casserole can be served as a main course item or as a dessert with a mound of whipped cream. Sweetened with brown sugar and seasoned with cinnamon, it could make a sweet potato lover out of the most determined rebel! This pairs beautifully with turkey or pork.

All the ingredients in this recipe get put in the blender. The mixture gets very thick and sometimes needs to be pushed around with a wooden spoon between spins, but you want it to be really thick so it cooks into a custard.

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Butter a six-cup casserole. The flatter the casserole, the faster this dish will cook. Be advised that if the mixture is more than 3 inches deep, it can take a long time.

Ingredients

- 1 pint (2 cups) medium cream
- 3 medium-sized sweet potatoes, peeled and cut into 1/2 inch chunks
- 3 eggs
- 2/3 cup dark brown sugar
- 2 tsps. cinnamon

Ingredients for Topping

- 1/2 cup slivered almonds
- 4 Tbs. melted butter
- 1/2 cup bourbon or rum (optional – flamed and added just before serving)

Put all ingredients in blender, dividing into two batches if necessary. In that case, just split the ingredients up a bit and when they are all pureed, mix them together well. Don't try to divide the eggs exactly, just put one into the first batch and two into the second. When everything is pureed and mixed, pour it into the casserole. Then top with almonds and melted butter. At this point, the casserole can be chilled for as long as a day, but bring it to room temperature before baking.

Bake for 1 1/2 hours or until firm (check after one hour). As it cooks, it will dome up some, so don't fill the dish to the top. When it is removed from the oven it will settle a bit. If you use the bourbon or rum, put it in a pan with a handle and carefully heat it over a low flame. Light it with a long-handled match and pour the burning liquid over the casserole. Serve at once or keep it warm until the rest of the meal is ready.

QUIZ-ACROSTIC SOLUTION

"Jingle Bells" may actually be a Thanksgiving song. The composer, James Pierpont, supposedly wrote the song for a Thanksgiving program at the church where he taught Sunday School. Give the original title of the song.

SONGS: "ONE-HORSE OPEN SLEIGH"

A.	Snowfall	M.	Eyesight
B.	Overhaul	N.	On the cheap
C.	November	O.	Pilgrims
D.	Gear	P.	Edicts
E.	Shortstop	Q.	Nest egg
F.	Otter	R.	Scott Joplin
G.	No joke	S.	Lust
H.	Earth-shaking	T.	Empty
I.	Hugh Hefner	U.	Incunabula
J.	Octave	V.	Giggly
K.	Ragtag	W.	Holiday
L.	Showmanship		

Special Gifts of Christmas

By the Rev. Dr. Harold B. Wright, II

Wet dressing and doughnut holes. My mouth begins to water at the very mention of Thanksgiving and Christmas. Wet dressing and doughnut holes. Oh, I like the turkey and pumpkin pie, and my eyes light up at the Christmas decorations and holiday parties, but my mouth is watering for a taste of these two items because for as long as I can remember, they were the staples of our holidays.

Wet dressing at Thanksgiving – not a dry, crouton-consistency dressing, not a moist cornmeal concoction, not even bread crumbs stuffed inside the cavity of the bird in the oven – but wet dressing, made simply with bread and onions and celery and seasonings, placed around the outside of the turkey while it cooks, simmering and marinating in the essence and juices of the roasting poultry. If you do it just right, once the turkey is carved and the potatoes are mashed and the dressing is spooned into a serving bowl, it looks more like a thick lumpy gravy than dressing. But oh the taste! Thanksgiving isn't real to me until my first helping.

The same goes for doughnut holes, which were passed down from my grandmother to my mother. The Christmas Eve tradition was homemade doughnuts. After church was over and we returned home and before we were hustled off to bed, my mother would make doughnuts. She would sprinkle them with confectionery sugar and we would stuff ourselves. But the best part wasn't the doughnut itself, the best part was the hole cut out of the middle. It was small enough to be consumed in one bite, but completely covered in the sugar topping. To this day, the final ritual of Christmas Eve – after the candlelight communion service, after the last present is wrapped and placed under the tree, after everything else – is the making and eating of the doughnuts – and the holes.

But if wet dressing and doughnut holes were all the holidays meant to me, they would be shallow and empty celebrations. If some mushy bread and fried dough were the

sum and substance of what those days mean, I would surely have missed the point. These two holidays, linked so closely together in time and observance, are more than just the bookends of a grand month of parties and reverie. They have form and substance that we often miss in the glitter and glow of lights, the decorations, food and family gatherings.

Thanksgiving is a time to give thanks to God for sustenance and majesty, for protection and provision. Dating generations before the Pilgrims landed on the Massachusetts shore, even to the very beginnings of creation itself when humanity began to realize and know of something or someone beyond themselves, thanksgiving is a fundamental response of the human soul. We come to realize that what we have and what we are is bigger than we are and comes from beyond ourselves. So turning our hearts and souls heavenward, we bow in humility and gratitude to the One who is greater than ourselves, however we conceive of that being. Thanksgiving is fundamental to self-realization and what we cannot do or make ourselves. We've surrounded that basic human emotion and response with Pilgrim stories, turkeys, parades, football games, family gatherings and even wet dressing. But the very essence of the day grows out of the depths of our souls in a spirit of gratitude and wonder at all that blesses and surrounds us.

It is similar with Christmas. The tradition is grounded in the Christian experience of the birth of a messiah: a baby born of humble parents in a small crowded town that evokes the sounds of angels and light of a star, the visit of shepherds and the gifts of magi that is articulated simply as glory. But we've taken that incarnational story and overwhelmed it with the trappings of our major holiday, from cards to gifts to decorations to Santa Claus to parties to jingle bell songs to doughnut holes. The essence of the day is not in the glitz and glamour, the essence of the day is in the amazing gift of the divine in the innocence and wonder and miracle of the human form of a newborn child.

So as for me and my household, these coming days will be busy and filled with preparations and anticipation. And I'll grocery shop for the ingredients to make the food my mouth can almost already taste. At the very core of my soul, though, these won't matter at all. It will be a time of amazing thanksgiving, wonder and worship and glory, focused on God.

The Rev. Dr. Harold B. Wright, II is the senior pastor of Calvary United Methodist Church, 301 Rowe Boulevard, Annapolis. He can be reached at cbjpw@calumc.org or 410 268-1776



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Finding Hidden Treasure by the Bay

By Cheryl Rhodes

Geocaching is a treasure hunt game enjoyed by thousands of people of all ages that is a wonderful excuse to get people to bundle up and get out of the house to discover new places in their community. It's a none-competitive game you can enjoy alone or with family and friends. The best part about geocaching is that it's virtually free. Once a geocacher has purchased a handheld GPS unit or a smart phone with a geocaching app, the only cost is gas to get to your destination. Smart phone users can purchase a \$10 geocaching app that can be downloaded and will turn the phone into a GPS unit. The advantage to using a smart phone is spontaneity and that most of the steps using a GPS can be eliminated. If you're out on the town and have a little time to spare, pull out your phone and check your geocaching app for nearby caches and let your phone's built-in GPS unit guide you there. More than just a walk in the park, a global positioning system unit (GPS) is used by the players to search for caches hidden by other geocachers. The information on where caches are hidden is shared on the Internet, with the most popular website to hide and log caches at www.geocaching.com. A cache is a small waterproof container that holds a log book and a pen for visitors to record their visit, and may also hold items for trade such as cookie cutters, key chains or small trinkets.

Ready to get started geocaching?

1. Start at www.geocaching.com and create your free account and profile that will identify the nickname you use for caching. Here is where you enter the GPS coordinates of your home address. That's as easy as stepping outside the house with your GPS unit and locking onto your current location.

2. In your profile, click on the link that says "search for nearest geocaches from your home location." You'll get a list of hundreds of caches hidden in your community, starting with the ones closest to your home.

3. Each cache has been given a clever name by the hider, such as The Big Bang Theory or Cousin Bob's Creepy Hangout. The list shows the distance between your location and each cache. It could be a couple of hundred feet or a few miles. The list of caches shows the difficulty of the terrain. They are rated from one star to five stars, one star being the easiest and five being the most difficult. A one-star cache has terrain that is wheelchair-accessible, possibly a parking lot or paved sidewalk. A cache with one and one-half or two stars might include walking across a field or dirt path with a small incline, something that wouldn't be too challenging for a fully mobile person. Five stars probably means you need to don scuba gear or rock climbing equipment to reach the cache. The five-star rating is also used to rate how difficult the cache is to find. Most caches are hidden in places like a hollow tree or under a log or rock. Some can be more difficult to spot such as a cache that is painted the same color as the space it's hidden in.

4. If your GPS came with a patch cord to your computer, you can check off the caches you want to find on the website and download directly to the GPS. If your patch cord is missing, you will have to enter the GPS coordinates by hand. They always have north

and west coordinates, showing the degrees of the longitude and latitude and the hours and minutes. The coordinates will look something like this: N 39° 14.307 W 076° 50.033. Fortunately, your GPS will figure it out for you! Most of the caches include a Google street map so you will have a general idea of what direction to head out in and where to park your car when you arrive.

5. Depending on your GPS, you may have been able to download extra information about the cache – the general description, any attributes of the area (parking, wash-room, restaurants, accessible 24/7, etc.). If not, you might want to print the page and take it with you for assistance. You can also view the logs left by previous geocachers. They might give you subtle hints about how easily they found the cache and the condition of the area around the cache. Recent rain storms and caching in the woods may make for a muddy day.

6. Ready to get in the car? Depending on how close the cache is to your home, you might want to turn on your GPS right away. Otherwise wait until you get closer. No sense wearing down the batteries! The GPS will direct you to the area where the cache is hidden. You will probably have to park and walk the final distance to the cache.

7. Trying to hone in on the cache is where it gets tricky. The GPS depends on 24 satellites circling the world to give you coordinates. The GPS of the person hiding the cache and your GPS might be off by a few feet. Other factors come into play, notably the weather. Nothing messes up those satellites and brings an end to geocaching like rainclouds. The accuracy of the GPS could be off 20 to 40 feet or more. Look for well trampled areas that show other cachers were in the area. Look for good hiding spots. The more caches you find, the more you'll get used to popular places to hide the containers.

8. When you find the cache, you'll see a log book inside. Depending on the size of the container, this might be a small notebook or it could be a piece of tightly rolled paper inserted inside a small canister. It's always a good idea to bring your own pen with you just in case the cache doesn't have one. Record the date and your geocaching name. If you dropped off a tradable item or took one with you, leave a note about it. Now close the cache and hide it exactly as you found it so no one who just happens by can discover it.

9. When you arrive home, turn on the computer and go to the geocaching website and log your find online. You can leave notes that might be helpful to the next geocacher such as mentioning that the area is overgrown with brambles, but try not to give too much away. If you leave too big a hint, the cache owner might email you to ask you to edit your log or they'll delete it. If you did not find the cache, make sure you log on and say you couldn't find it. It's possible the cache has gone missing and the cache owner may want to check it out and replace it if several cachers in a row all say they were unable to find it. The geocaching website automatically keeps track of your finds and you can view them on your profile.

10. Start planning your next geocaching outing and, who knows, the grandkids may want to join you.

In this noncompetitive game, the thrill is finding the hidden cache and logging in your success. Geocaching is more about going out and having fun while getting some exercise and enjoying the day.

Cheryl writes from Cloverdale, British Columbia and often brings her husband and two dogs along on geocaching expeditions. Cheryl can be contacted through her geocaching profile, mermaidude, or by email pytails@telus.net.

The Downward Holiday Spiral

By Susan Singleton

Holiday stress is more than just having too much to do and not enough time to do it. The preparation for this extended holiday season began with Halloween on Oct. 31 and culminates with the New Year's celebration ending Jan. 1.

To maneuver through the holidays gracefully and gain control over your own expectations and experience, you need to take a step back and discover what really goes on both biologically, mentally and physically during this eight-week period. Before getting to some advice for adjusting to the holidays, consider what you are facing.

FALL

The fall is really a very busy time of year. Summer ends, children are back to school, you transition from a very casual warm weather lifestyle to one that is more structured. Many people take on new interests. We slip into a very task-oriented, organizational mode. This is reflected in nature as we can see the animals scurrying around in preparation for the winter. We are fundamentally programmed to act this way as well. Our 24-hour grocery stores and endless supplies of food haven't phased out this ingrained response. We are gearing up in order to gear down.

HALLOWEEN

Candy! Candy! Candy! Who can resist. The weather turned cooler, days were shortened. We tend to not drink as much water during the cooler months and turn to hot caffeinated beverages instead. Your body also begins to crave protein and fats during this cooler weather in order to insulate itself, which can lead to nutritional imbalances if you ignore your intake. The whole holiday itself is about the hunt for candy, sugar and chocolate. This is the beginning of the spiral that leaves you mildly dehydrated, over-caffeinated, with sugar cravings, and the beginning of a nutritional imbalance caused by a shift in the seasons.

THANKSGIVING

Once Thanksgiving hits, we really can't deny the fact that the days are shorter, darker and cooler. Our bodies begin to reflect

the need to slow down after the flurry of activity in the autumn. Instead, we hit the ground running and congregate nationwide for a day of overeating and preparation for marathon shopping. This is also a time for visiting and spending time with family that can include travel, highlight emotional issues and create tension.

CHRISTMAS

Office parties, family get-togethers and social events can involve late nights, overly processed food and copious amounts of alcohol. Add to that the stresses of shopping and overspending, and creating an environment of Christmas euphoria for those around you. The demands of parties, shopping, houseguests and family reunions can also cause tension. Oh and guess what? You need to have your New Year resolutions and a plan for the "new you" just seven short days later for the New Year.

The physical, mental and emotional demands of getting through this eight-week

march of festivities takes a tremendous toll on our well-being. Additionally, the holiday season for many people is a time of self-evaluation, loneliness, reflection on past failures and anxiety about an uncertain future, which can spiral into depression.

Unfortunately, tradition and society work against our ability to maintain a proper balance during this time. Begin by acknowledging that you can do things differently this year.

Now that you know that there are many different forces working on you at this time of year, you can do one of two things. You can acknowledge and honor the requests that your body is asking of you in order to keep itself well, or you can get caught up in the frenzy and wear your body down. Make a simple change or two this year, be aware of what your body is asking of you and honor its influence.

Susan, a certified holistic health counselor, is the founder of Healthy Life Consulting, a holistic health and wellness practice. She can be reached at susan@healthylifeconsulting.com

See What a Difference these few tips can make this Holiday Season

- * Keep expectations of the holiday season reasonable. Try to set realistic goals for yourself. Organize your time and make a list of the most important things you need to get done. Be realistic in what you can and cannot do. Do not put your entire focus on one day, ie: Thanksgiving. Remember this is a holiday season with many events.
- * Instead of focusing on what you can't eat at holiday parties, choose instead to eat fresh, lightly cooked plant-based, nonprocessed food the day of the event. Do not go to any party hungry, rushed or exhausted.
- * Keep yourself well hydrated every day.
- * Eating foods out of season can suppress your immune system and can make you prone to colds, flu and other illnesses. Eating out of season also causes a nutritional imbalance that will leave you fraught with cravings.
- * Commit to adding a nutritionally dense smoothie to your day. Get a head start on your New Year's resolution to eat healthy.
- * Be aware of excessive drinking. Intake of liquor will only increase your feelings of stress and desperation. Not to mention that being in a continual hangover will snowball itself into the next few days.
- * Try something new. Decide which parties and events you are NOT going to attend this year. Limit your time at the ones you attend.
- * Spend time with supportive and caring people. Try to make new friends or contact someone you have not heard from in awhile.

How much time are you spending on things that don't really matter?

Beyond 'Twas The Night Before Christmas

Children's Holiday Book Ideas

By Peggy Kiefer

Most of us probably grew up listening to and then reading Clement C. Moore's famous Christmas classic, 'Twas the Night Before Christmas. This is a must for any child's library, but there are many other charming holiday stories, both old and new.

Perhaps you may recognize some of them, but others are contemporary or even for holidays such as Hanukkah. You might want to add a few of them to your Christmas or holiday list for the children in your life.

This is just a sampling of what is available, but it could get you started. A wonderful place to preview these books is your local library or bookstore if you want to peruse before buying.

1. The Sweet Smell of Christmas

By Patricia Scarry

An unusual book of wonderful smells, it will bring back memories of baking apple pies with grandma or finding an orange in your Christmas stocking. Children love scratching and sniffing the smells of Christmas.

2. Little Match Girl

By Hans Christian Anderson

An old classic, this book might be too intense for very young children, as the young girl dies from the cold, but it is one of Hans Christian Anderson's most famous tales.

3. The Reindeer Christmas

By Atsuko Morozumi

This beautifully illustrated book tells how Santa chose the reindeer over other animals to pull his sleigh.

4. Auntie Claus

By Elise Primavera

Spoiled children learn a lesson about the true meaning of Christmas as well as the Golden Rule.

5. The Little Fir Tree

By Margaret Wise Brown

This is another classic from many years ago and is a good one to read before Christmas. It is a charming story about a lonely tree that meets a boy who can't walk.

6. The Light of Christmas

By Richard Paul Evans

A book with short text, bright pictures and beautiful illustrations, it is a good choice for preschoolers. It is about a young boy who learns the true meaning of Christmas.

7. How Santa Got His Job

By Stephen Krensky

Better suited to older children, this is a book for those who know that Santa isn't real. It is a rather silly story about all the jobs a young man has to help him become Santa.

8. The Night Before Christmas Pop-up Book

By Clement C. Moore

Shortened a bit to accommodate all the pop-ups, this is the same story as the classic. Mice are the characters. The pop-ups are very colorful and might be too tempting for a child under four, as they would want to grab and tear them.

9. The Twelve Days of Christmas Anniversary Edition Pop-up

By Robert Sabuda

A beautiful rendition of an old classic, some editions have music to go with the story and the delightful pop-ups.

10. The Polar Express

By Chris Van Allsburg

Many children have probably seen the movie made from this book. It is about a young boy who rides a magic train to the North Pole where he receives the first gift of Christmas.

11. How the Grinch Stole Christmas

By Dr. Seuss

Who doesn't know this crazy and silly rhyming tale of a grumpy Grinch who learns the true meaning of Christmas after many adventures?

12. Santa Mouse

By Michael Brown

A little mouse with no home and no name meets Santa and is given a new name and a wonderful job helping Santa on Christmas Eve. A delightful rhyming story that may become one of your Christmas favorites.

13. The Trees of the Dancing Goats

By Patricia Polacco

A heartwarming tale that is a favorite of many Jewish children. Trisha and Richard are children who live with their mother and grandparents in Soviet Russia. They help their sick Christian neighbors decorate their tree and are given a carved menorah as thanks.

14. Hanukkah Haiku

By Harriet Ziefert

This beautifully illustrated combination of poems and paintings tells a story of a family's Hanukkah celebration. It is best suited for kids preschool through 1st grade.

15. Hershel and the Hanukkah Goblins

By Eric Kimmel

Eye-catching pen and watercolor illustrations tell an entertaining story about tricking scary goblins that have been haunting the local synagogue and stopping the villagers from celebrating Hanukkah. You will find this an excellent read-aloud book for the whole family.

16. The Crippled Lamb

By Max Lucado

Over a million copies of this delightful story have been sold. Written by a famous children's author, he is also a pastor. The tale is told of a crippled lamb who is left by the other sheep and waits for the shepherds in a stable where Mary and Joseph are with the baby Jesus. The lamb warms the baby with his woolly body.

Have a wonderful time shopping for and enjoying the variety of holiday books now available. Adding to your holiday book collection each year could well start a new and loved tradition in your family. Keep in mind that it is always a good idea to read the book first so you can match it to the young person for whom it is intended. Many of the old tales are quite intense and would be better for older children. Preschoolers and younger elementary school children love the brightly illustrated books. With the addition of fragrance and pop-ups to old favorites, the selection has never been better.

I am going to have a full house again this Christmas – children, grandchildren and even in-laws. Last year nearly killed me! Besides running away, how do I make this holiday easier?

Be honest and announce that while you love hosting Christmas, you need some help so you can enjoy the holiday too. Next, plan and delegate with an eye to group participation. If anyone lives nearby, let them take over Christmas Eve or Christmas Day festivities. If they are all out-of-towners, ask volunteers to sign up for a meal or for at least one course like dessert. Last year, my younger son and his wife happily planned and prepared Christmas Eve dinner. My oldest son and his wife delighted us with appetizers and dessert on Christmas Day. My husband and I managed Christmas morning brunch and our main course for dinner while my daughter-in-law's mother served up side dishes that were traditional in their family. I collected all the recipes in advance and provided the groceries since everyone was arriving by plane. Of course, this plan requires that you let go of control and maybe lower your standards for hosting a Martha Stewart-worthy holiday. The kitchen seemed chaotic at times, but everyone contributed and loved the spirited fun. Best of all, there was not a Grinch in sight!

Our children are married adults, each with a healthy double income. In the past, we've given generous holiday gifts, but we're now retired. How can we cut back?

Speak up about it, but please do it now and not the week before the holiday. Explain your situation and suggest that you either draw names for a gift exchange or limit buying gifts to those for children. Your busy family members might be relieved to simplify their shopping too. If you decide to continue with an adult exchange, consider passing on heirloom pieces that you are ready to part with, like your grandmother's linen napkins or the pearls you never wear. These trea-



sured items make a meaningful gift and will keep your expenses low. Finally, an “experience” gift is a great way to cut back on holiday shopping. A promised weekend of babysitting is always a welcome gift to young parents. Another idea is a joint gift for the entire family – a family portrait or a weekend at a mountain cabin next spring. In the long run, you'll save money and create memories too.

I am a widow with a new friend I'd like to include in our family holiday get-togethers. Hugh is nice-looking, but favors jeans and flannel shirts. My extended family always gets decked out at Christmas. I feel that I don't want to be embarrassed and I don't want him to feel out of place. How do I tactfully suggest that he spruce up a bit?

Dressing up is not silly. In many families, it is a sign of respect for the occasion, for other guests and is simply expected. But every family is different and the only way that Hugh will know what the norm is in your group is for you to tell him. Doing so is thoughtful and considerate. Be direct but kind. Men like to feel attractive too, so play that up. Pick out a beautiful tie in a color that matches his eyes. Tell him that you can't wait to see him in it at your family Christmas get-together. Then offer to help him put together an outfit that will show him off for the handsome fellow that he is.

Vicki Duncan is a licensed professional counselor and welcomes your questions. She can be reached at Victoria2write@aol.com



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The Price of Spice

By Melissa Conroy

The scent of cinnamon, cloves, nutmeg and ginger are heralds of the holiday season: What would pumpkin pie be without these lovely spices? Imagine cinnamon rolls or apple pie without cinnamon or egg nog without a dash of nutmeg. Indeed, imagine food without spice at all. How dull our lives would be without cardamom, paprika, bay leaf, allspice, chili powder, turmeric, dill weed and other lovely aromatic sprinklings that lend their zip and savor to our foods.

Since most households have a spice rack somewhere in the kitchen and containers of spices are available at any grocery store for a few dollars, most of us easily overlook the fact that throughout much of human history, wars were waged and desperate ventures risked for the piquant herbs and powders. The history of spices is fascinating and complex and it should make you deeply thankful that you can easily purchase a jar of ground cinnamon at the store or don't have to take out a second mortgage to add pepper to your meal.

There are countless spices grown and gathered across the world, and different cultures adapt them for their needs, so let's focus on a handful of common ones and talk about their diverse histories.

Pepper: No table in the US is complete without a container of ground pepper. The user of pepper dates back to before 2000 BC in India, but the Romans were particularly fond of it. Pepper became such a highly valued commodity and spice that the Dutch had a word *peperduur* (pepper expensive) to describe a particularly expensive item. In 1468, Duke Karl of Bourgeoisie displayed 380 pounds of pepper at his wedding feast to showcase his wealth, much as a celebrity today might flaunt a \$1 million dollar diamond ring.

Nutmeg: Nutmeg is the seed of several varieties of myristica genus trees whereas mace is the covering coating the seed. Long valued

because of their extreme rarity, nutmeg and mace were highly prized during medieval times. This is little wonder because the trees that produced nutmeg were only found on nine islands in the Banda Sea. During plague times, people used nutmeg in hopes that it would protect them from illness, and Arabic writers long touted the spice as an aphrodisiac that could also ease stomach problems.

Cinnamon: Cinnamon is perhaps as old as pepper, and both spices are mentioned in the Old and New Testaments. Like all spices, cinnamon was incredibly expensive, so much so that Nero was said to have burned a year's supply of Rome's cinnamon at the funeral of his wife Poppae Sabina to honor her.

Cloves: Although cloves only grew on a few islands, the world discovered the spice and people in Europe were using it before the first century AD. In China, people often chewed cloves before an audience with the emperor to insure that their breath was pleasant. The word "clove" comes from the French "clou" meaning "nail," since a clove does look like a nail.

Ginger: Use of this funny-looking root dates back more than 3,000 years ago. Although the spice was well-known in Rome, use of it all but disappeared in Europe until Marco Polo brought it back from the Orient and repopularized it. Queen Elizabeth I is said to have created gingerbread men when she presented visiting dignitaries with gingerbread shaped in their likeness.

While today we have access to a great variety of inexpensive spices, throughout much of human history, spices were enormously costly, primarily because of the effort involved to get them into the hands of customers. Bill Bryson in his excellent book *At Home: A Short History of Private Life* notes that "By the time they reached European markets, nutmeg and mace fetched as much as sixty thousand times what they sold for in the far

east." The demand for spices was largely what spurred so many travels to foreign lands as dauntless explorers sought better trade routes and easier ways to get the spices their customers demanded. Bryson notes, "For centuries spices were not just the world's most valued foodstuffs, they were the most treasured commodities of any type."

However, the challenges facing these spice merchants were enormous. Travel over land meant crossing mountains and deserts under the constant threat of robbery. Sea voyages were long and perilous, and many a ship sank below the water with a priceless cargo of spices on board. In 1453, the Turkish Empire cut off the land route from Asia to Europe, forcing explorers to find alternative routes to bring their spice cargo to waiting customers. Thus such adventurers as Pedro Alvares Cabral, Christopher Columbus, Bartolomeu Dias, Vasco de Gama and Ferdinand Magellan tackled the oceans in attempts to find a way to reach the Spice Islands via boat.

With new trading routes open, European countries quickly began jockeying for power over the spice trade. The Dutch-Portuguese War was one such conflict and part of this war involved the Dutch seizing the island of Ceylon which was the largest cinnamon supplier, only to have it taken from them by the French and then English in 1795. Many battles and conflicts that raged across the world for centuries can be tied directly to spices. Countless men died in battle and thousands of others wearily transported spices from one end of the earth to the other, risking untold hardship and danger. It is small wonder that Bryson concludes "I can tell you at once that nothing you touch today will have more bloodshed, suffering, and woe attached to it than the innocuous twin pillars of your salt and pepper set."

Happily today, we have easy access to inexpensive, high-quality spices from around the world. Imagine a 4-ounce jar of pepper costing as much as a car. Think of how much a pan of cinnamon rolls or an apple pie would cost if spices were at medieval prices.





The Web has gotten so big on phones that they now make phones that have high-speed Internet. And for everyone who hates that annoying keyboard on normal phones, almost all of the smart phones have a QWERTY keyboard which is a techy way of saying it's identical to the keyboard on your computer or typewriter.

One downside to the smart phones is the \$30 data usage fee per month, which basically means if you turn on the phone, they are allowed to charge you this. Smart Phones are taking over, and it's annoying for people like me, who want a cheap phone, that just texts and calls. I have indeed found a phone like this; it was in the back corner of the store, covered in dust. But it works like a charm, so I won't complain, Smart phones are great little machines, and can really help if your days are busy and you're never home. But me? I'll stick to my phone, it hasn't failed yet.

Scudder has spent the better part of his life trying to keep his grandparents apprised of the latest technology. He thinks he's making headway. He can be reached at sasodergreen@aol.com

SMART PHONES

By Scudder Sodergreen

Yesterday, as I was shopping for a new phone, and obviously under a tight budget, I was looking for one that called and texted, both of which are essential to my life. When I entered the store, I was greeted by Miss Perma-Smile. She asked me what kind of phone I wanted. Android? iPhone? Smart phone in general? Do I want roaming capabilities? How strong a camera did I need? And so on.

Pretending to be way out of touch with current trends, I answered, "I want one that texts and calls." She looked me dead in the eyes and laughed. Now I personally didn't see the humor in my answer, but I was soon told that if your phone doesn't text, it's not a phone. Well this was news to me as I had never texted anyone from my house phone before. So she took me down the line of all the latest and greatest smart phones which she tried to tactfully say were smarter than me. Thanks for the support.

Smart phones are the next genera-

tion of phones and these things do everything! From emailing, games, agendas, word documents, anything that you could do with your computer, you can now do with a smart phone, which of course includes texting and calling. A smart phone is mainly based off of its operating system or OS. You've probably heard of it in connection with the recently released Apple software, but the operating system is what runs your phone, how it runs and all the new features it has on it. Think of a smart phone as a hand-held computer with phone capabilities!

Another feature of these smart phones are apps. Apps are the small programs that can be easily installed and used, for education, entertainment and work. Of course, now the Internet seems to be a given when it comes to phones, and smart phones are no different, Phones gain their Internet from the 3g network, which is just a high-tech way of saying the wireless signal the phone receives in order to make calls. (We now have 4g as well, but it hasn't quite caught on yet.)



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Photo: Karen Owings

BAY CREATURES THE AMERICAN OYSTER

(oysters in the shell may be refrigerated for up to a week and still be good to eat if still lively).

Oysters reproduce prolifically. In early summer fertile females release successive clouds of eggs, producing 100 million eggs or more in a single season. The eggs, fertilized by discharged sperm from adult males, soon become free-swimming larvae. In two to three weeks larvae grow a “foot,” settle on a hard surface (oyster shells are preferred), and secrete a substance that cements them in place. The sedentary juvenile oysters are known as spat.

Seemingly sexually conflicted, oysters start out as males but, by the second year, when most oysters are mature, half or more have become female. Sex inversion can continue as oysters grow older. When males are scarce, some females may switch back to the opposite sex.

Oysters feed by pumping seawater through their gills, straining out food particles. A single adult can filter up to 50 gallons of water daily. In their heyday the Chesapeake’s teeming oyster populations could filter the entire bay volume – ten trillion gallons – in less than a week.

So these mollusks are hardy, adaptable, well-armored, prolific breeders and prodigious eaters. Small wonder that they have survived, almost unchanged, for 200 million years. Still, very few larvae make it to adulthood. The developing shellfish are done in by predators (notably crabs, snails, starfish, fin-fish, marine worms and humans), disease (especially the parasites, MSX and dermo), pollution and extreme weather conditions. In the last several decades, overharvesting and deteriorating water quality have accelerated the decline of oysters in the Chesapeake.

But it is not yet time to write the bivalve’s obituary. Though the jury is still out, our local stocks may be recovering. For one thing, they seem to be developing natural resistance to MSX and dermo – mortality from diseases has recently declined significantly. And the Bay’s water quality is gradually improving, even if the changes are frustratingly slow.

Equally important, programs to rebuild the Bay’s oyster populations are beginning to bear fruit, especially in Virginia. Restoration efforts include reef-building, hatcheries and aquaculture. Reefs, consisting of accumulating layers of oyster shells, are critical for the survival of the species. Shells provide suitable settling areas for spat, and the elevated surfaces help keep growing oysters above smothering sediments. But the Bay has lost 90 percent of its oyster reefs since the 19th century. Using recycled oyster shells, Maryland and Virginia are trying to establish new reefs in sanctuary areas temporarily closed to harvesting.

Hatcheries produce juvenile oysters in carefully managed facilities. The young shellfish are later seeded into the Bay. The University of Maryland’s Horn Point Laboratory in Cambridge is the world’s largest oyster hatchery with the capacity to produce two million oysters a year.

Aquaculture – farming the sea – has particular promise for rejuvenating the Bay’s commercial oyster industry. Worldwide, farming produces more than 4 million tons of oysters annually, worth more than \$3 billion, but the enterprise is still in its infancy in Chesapeake Bay. That is changing. Virginia is actively promoting oyster cultivation by streamlining the permitting process, providing grants and supporting the development of sterile oysters that grow to market size in one year, two years faster than in the wild. Virginia oyster farmers now lease more than 100,000 acres of Bay bottom. Maryland recently passed legislation to facilitate permits for this emerging business opportunity.

It is too soon to judge the effectiveness of these efforts. But two things seem certain. Restoration of Chesapeake Bay’s threatened oyster populations will help revitalize the region’s maritime economy and improve the quality of the Bay’s fertile waters.

~ Henry S. Parker hspshp@gmail.com

It’s hard to explain our hunger for oysters. How could we possibly crave something that looks as though it was dredged from the depths of a spittoon? The first person to sample an oyster must have been uncommonly brave – or famished.

But humans have been eating oysters for eons. Prehistoric shell heaps rim coastlines worldwide. By the late 19th century, when the legendary gourmand, Diamond Jim Brady, was reportedly devouring several dozen oysters a day, Americans had a huge appetite for these bivalves. Chesapeake Bay’s oyster landings averaged 25 million bushels a year and both demand and supply seemed inexhaustible.

Those days are gone, and not just because of Diamond Jim. Bay watermen now bring in less than 1 percent of peak landings a century ago. What happened? Overharvesting, pollution, disease and habitat destruction have all played a role in the mollusk’s demise. Today the local oyster fishery seems to be on life support.

But there are signs that oyster populations may be on the rebound. More about that later. First, a little background about this popular seafood.

Chesapeake Bay’s signature shellfish, the American or Eastern Oyster (*Crassostrea virginica*), is fundamentally a hardy creature, able to withstand wide ranges of temperature, salinity and oxygen levels. It can survive long periods out of the water

Say yes next time you’re asked to do something outside of your comfort zone.

HOLIDAY QUIZ-ACROSTIC

					1 G	2 O	3 U	4 D	5 V	6 G			7 U	8 H	9 R	10 B	11 E		12 C	13 N	14 V					
15 H	16 R	17 F	18 B	19 K	20 O	21 U	22 M		23 C	24 T			25 W		26 S	27 L	28 D	29 U	30 H	31 P	32 O	33 V				
					34 J	35 M	36 G	37 K		38 O	39 N	40 L	41 Q		42 P	43 H	44 Q		45 N	46 A	47 T	48 R	49 G	50 Q	51 I	52 B
		53 R	54 K	55 O	56 C	57 E			58 N	59 O	60 J	61 E	62 L	63 W	64 C	65 M		66 H	67 I	68 O	69 T	70 R	71 L			
72 F	73 P	74 A	75 W			76 A	77 C	78 F	79 Q	80 N		81 H	82 B	83 I		84 M	85 J	86 H	87 V			88 A	89 L			
90 F			91 L		92 E	93 N	94 H	95 A	96 G	97 L	98 Q	99 W	100 B	101 R	102 I	103 K			104 E	105 I	106 C	107 V	108 H			
	109 U	110 L			111 J	112 K			113 R	114 E	115 P		116 U	117 I	118 S	119 D	120 J	121 H			122 L	123 W	124 N	125 O	126 M	
		127 N	128 B			129 F	130 A	131 U	132 H	133 I	134 E		135 A	136 U	137 N	138 W	139 B	140 T			141 R	142 P	143 M	144 G		
145 E	146 W			147 I	148 U	149 C	150 D			151 N	152 L	153 Q		154 E	155 K	156 H	157 M	158 L	159 R	160 U	161 A				162 J	
163 P	164 R	165 S	166 C			167 B	168 I			169 T	170 I	171 M		172 S	173 R	174 Q	175 V									

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Directions

1. Read the definitions and supply the correct words over the numbered blanks.
2. Transfer the letters to the corresponding squares in the diagram.
3. Reading left to right, the completed diagram poses a trivia question. Words are separated by black squares.
4. Reading down, the first letters on the numbered blanks give the subject category followed by the answer to the trivia question.

- A. Blanket of white
- B. Recondition
- C. 1968 romantic film, remade in 2001: *Sweet* _____
- D. Implements
- E. Position played by "The Scooter"
- F. Son of Hreidmar in *Volsunga Saga*
- G. Real McCoy (2 wds.)
- H. Momentous (hyph.)
- I. The pre-eminent playboy (2 wds.)
- J. A to A, B to B, or C to C, e.g.
- K. Disheveled
- L. Effective theater skills
- M. Vision
- N. Inexpensively (3 wds.)
- O. Mayflower passengers
- P. Pronouncements
- Q. Savings (2 wds.)
- R. Composer of "The Entertainer" (2 wds.)
- S. Passion
- T. Purposeless
- U. Books printed before 1501
- V. Like some preteen girls
- W. Jazz singer Billie _____

135	95	46	76	88	130	161	74				
167	100	128	52	82	139	18	10				
64	106	149	56	12	23	166	77				
4	150	28	119								
57	114	145	61	92	11	134	154	104			
78	17	129	72	90							
36	144	1	49	96	6						
8	94	108	81	43	66	121	15	30	156	86	132
133	67	147	117	170	51	168	102	83	105		
85	120	162	111	34	60						
155	19	103	112	54	37						
97	152	89	122	110	91	40	71	27	158	62	
171	22	126	84	35	157	143	65				
39	137	151	127	80	45	93	124	13	58		
68	2	20	32	125	59	55	38				
115	73	163	142	42	31						
174	153	50	79	44	41	98					
141	16	70	113	164	53	173	48	9	101	159	
165	118	172	26								
24	47	69	169	140							
148	29	116	131	3	160	7	136	21	109		
107	33	87	175	5	14						
123	63	146	99	138	25	75					

Please visit amazon.com to order Sheila's book, **Quiz-Acrostics: Challenging Acrostic Puzzles with a Trivia Twist**, published by Puzzleworm.

Sheila can be reached at acrostics@aol.com or visit her web site: www.quiz-acrostics.com.



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