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Early Spring 2016

OutLook

for the Bay Boomer and beyond...

By the Bay

Help for Weary TaxPayers

Bay Gardening:
What Plants Can Teach Us

*Hoarding Disorder,
Do You Have It?*

It's Cherry
Blossom Time

Spring Cleaning Time

Walking In Annapolis Is a
Treat On Undiscovered Trails

fitness entertainment gardening nutrition

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FROM THE DESK

Recently a good friend and I tried to describe what we'd done for the past few decades. "Kept woman" came to mind, but perhaps the better description would be "housewife." Oh, the horror of it all. But most of our contemporaries at the time shared in our choice to stay home, rather than becoming part of that slippery climb up the executive ladder. Most of us reached this decision regardless of our educational backgrounds or circumstances. This was back in the '60s and we were supposed to be burning a particular undergarment in protest – protesting what specifically I can't remember!

But, there we were: a select majority who chose to stay home with our young ones as opposed to struggling to break through that illusive glass ceiling. We at-home moms had it all, which somehow eluded the Gloria Steinems of the world. And by the way, bless her for stepping out and leading the charge. She relentlessly pushed forward the fact that our equality deserved certain inalienable rights even though we were just women.

However, there were a fair number of us who *were* at home and for the most part it was good and it was by choice. Some of us had been working since a very young age like my friend Jan who babysat from age 11 for \$.25 an hour. And Sue who did errands for shop owners such as a run to the bank or coffee shop; she worked for tips only.

And it wasn't just the girls. Chris was helping his dad in the construction business from an undisclosed, very young age. Russ at the age of 9 shoveled coal in Pennsylvania for \$1 a ton and that extraordinary amount was only because his dad owned the company. All of these early workers, by the way, went on to highly successful lives.

Not too long ago, while picking up some late college credits in New England, I was asked to account for myself over the past few eons. (I was the oldest member of the class.) I jokingly replied, "I was a *kept* woman." Horror passed over the professor's sweet young face. My inclination was to respond maybe you should try it it's a fairly good life. But I didn't want to flunk the course so kept my opinion and good fortune to myself.

But really, think about it. In most cases our spending had to be cut back and we were often confined, but in return we were allowed to stay home the entire day – amuse ourselves, often with friends, while tending to home and hearth. Yes, there was endless housework, cooking and kids involved, but in hindsight was that so difficult? Recollection says that my obligation at the end of the day was to be able to account for our three little ones. Most times I was successful. Well, there was that time that I left the middle child at the gas station. And yes, she's never forgotten it! Oh well, when all was said and done, all three did become successful regardless of the fact that it was just an at-home mom who had the responsibility for their upbringing.

Think how much simpler our lives were back in the June Cleaver days. Our roles were well defined, making it easier in what the expectations were. I'm sure 50 percent of the female population isn't going to agree with that opinion, but nevertheless at the time it was mostly all good. And lest any counterparts are concerned about a lackluster existence in which brains were turning to mush, let me share this about my contemporaries who chose to put their intellect and creativity on the shelf for 20 to 30 years while busy nurturing young lives: Many moved on to exciting and satisfying lives such as Carolyn, who returned to her accounting practice, or Kathryn, who was welcomed back in the teaching field, or Sherri, who recently sold the two real estate firms where she was the broker so she could head her local hospital board.

So life where we were defined as *housewives* wasn't all bad. Our generation worked very hard from a very young age to get to where we are, which as with most good things, involved sacrifices and hard work along the way. And now, almost as a reward, we're free to do what we want. Our generation maybe did get to have it all and maybe being labeled a "housewife" or even "kept woman" wasn't so bad!



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Letters to the editor

VEHICLE DONATION

Wanted you to know we've already received a vehicle donation, courtesy of you running the Melwood/Rotary Vehicle Donation article in your Winter 2016 issue.

Thank you very much. Proceeds will support Parole Rotary Projects, the Rotary International Foundation Annual Fund and Polio Plus, as well as Melwood.

Thanks again for your support!

Bill Fine, wfine46@verizon.net

MEMOIR

In January I was stuck at home during the blizzard of the century. Had the opportunity to read cover to cover. Particularly enjoyed the article on starting your memoir. And what a perfect time to get it going. I'm up to page 10. It was much easier than I imagined and am looking forward to spending more time with it and maybe someday get it done.

Leslie, Edgewater

TIMEOUTS

Very much enjoyed "From the Desk" where you wrote about timeouts and time off. Can't wait to start mine.

Kathryn M., Centreville

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CHOOSING A BANK: YOU HAVE MORE OPTIONS THAN YOU REALIZE

By Louise Whiteside

"I've become increasingly frustrated with my bank. I'm considering switching to another financial institution, but I'm afraid I might take the plunge and end up with something worse. How do I know whether or not I'm choosing the right bank?"

That very much depends on your particular needs. Banks nowadays cater to a plethora of personal and financial preferences. Read on for an overview of the types of financial institutions now available to you.

1. Do you prefer to do your banking at a large nationwide institution with multiple branches, possibly offering the convenience of a branch at your local supermarket?

If so, a megabank may be your best bet. Such an institution has thousands of branches, plus fee-free ATMs, wherever you may live or travel in the USA. Megabanks usually offer the convenience of quick and easy deposits and state-of-the-art security systems.

Some disadvantages may include less-than-personal customer service, high fees, minimum balance requirements and poor interest rates on your savings accounts.

2. Would you like in-person customer service and lower-cost banking?

A credit union may be your answer. Credit unions, unlike large commercial banks, are owned and managed by their members. They usually offer free checking, higher interest rates on certificates of deposit and lower interest rates on auto loans. In addition, they often require low or nonexistent minimum account balances. The disadvantages of a credit union may include a smaller number (possibly only three or four) branches, and limited eligibility for membership (most are connected to a place of employment, a labor union or a church). (Example: Pentagon Federal Credit Union)

3. Do you like the idea of banking from home on your personal computer?

You may prefer online banking. The convenience of conducting your financial interactions from a home workstation can be a real timesaver. This can include depositing checks by copying them using your iPhone. In addition you will most likely enjoy higher yields on your savings and access to free ATM usage through multiple bank networks. However, if you prefer in-person contact at your bank, an online banking system will not be to your liking.

(Example: Schwab Bank)

4. Is personal customer service your highest priority?

A small regional or community bank may be for you. You can probably find a community bank in your neighborhood, and will most likely be able to establish a friendly relationship with its manager

and staff. Disadvantages may include a smaller number of branches and, in addition, a community bank may not be part of a network of ATMs, an inconvenience if you are away from home. (Example: First Citizens Bank)

FINDING YOUR PERFECT BANK:

Word of mouth is always a great resource. Where do your friends, family members and co-workers bank? With which institutions are they most satisfied?

Visit local banks and meet with their customer service representatives. Notice how you are received by bank staff. Usually you will get an initial gut feeling about the bank's customer service.

Ask questions, such as:

1. What kinds of yields does the bank offer on savings accounts?
2. Does the bank provide fee-free ATM access locally and elsewhere?
3. What are the bank's minimum balance requirements?
4. Which bank services are free, and which must you pay for?
5. Is the bank manager easily accessible?
6. Does the institution have banking hours that fit your schedule?

Finally, visit www.veribanc.com For a minimal charge, you can receive a full report on the bank's financial condition.

Remember: You are the customer, and you deserve the service you expect from whatever bank you select.

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MAYBE YOUR CHILDREN AREN'T INTERESTED IN YOUR TREASURED ANTIQUES & FAMILY HEIRLOOMS

By Joanne R. Alloway

Once we started downsizing, we realized we wouldn't be passing down much to our three adult daughters. One has a small apartment and two simply weren't interested in "old stuff." When my mother was 88, she gave me her mink coat, saying she didn't go out in cold weather anymore. I didn't want it and wouldn't buy one, but it made her very happy when I took it. I have gratefully worn it in extreme weather. More importantly, I remember the years Mom wore it proudly and glamorously.

Antiques are like that, whether they are personal items, jewelry, furniture, china, lamps, paintings or accessories. They bring back loving memories of parents, grandparents or friends. Our generation loves memorabilia and antiques. We'd like to know why many of our grown children aren't interested in them. I surveyed some young adults, asking if they liked antiques in their homes, and why or why not.

Interesting information can be found online at www.worthpoint.com/blog-entry/my-children-do-not-want-it-6-reasons-young-dig-antiques about millennials and their choices concerning antiques such as:

- They'd spend money on electronics before furniture.
- They think dining rooms are wasted spaces. No formal dinners mean china, silverware, serving pieces, etc., are unnecessary.
- They haven't any emotional connections to antiques. Broken households, frequent moving are possible reasons.
- Quality isn't a concern. More of a throwaway mindset. Their trend is modern or minimalistic décor.

Most of our respondents were not opposed to antiques.

"I like an antique if it has my family's history, but I wouldn't buy any. It's not my style now. I had some and returned them to my dad. Not sure if I'll have a change of heart someday."

Anne, 44, Columbia

"No thanks. I've got my own taste and style. Mom's house is wonderful the way she has decorated it, but I don't want any of her stuff - it wouldn't work with what I have and there isn't the space."

Sue, 31, Annapolis

"As a new homeowner, antiques and heirlooms were not only welcome, but a necessity for me and my fiancé. We've used the furniture to fill our downstairs and guest bedrooms. I like that they have a history today and in the future with our family."

Lauren, 28, Annapolis

"I don't own many antiques, though I enjoy them. My grandfather has a farm with several barns full of antiques I'd love to restore, but he's protective of them. I think young people are interested in repurposing old pieces to become something new. Where I live, there are antique stores; I don't have time to browse them."

Heather, 32, Shrewsbury, Pa.

"Antiques just aren't my taste; I don't really like them. Mostly I think they are too ornate. There are few things of my mom's I would like, they are art deco pieces."

Susan, 41, Columbia

"Years ago, I didn't like old things, but my realization of the uniqueness and beauty of these pieces has changed. My cousin sells vintage clothing and works estate sales; she helped raise my appreciation. After my grandmother died, I inherited some of her things. I kept her china and knickknacks and an old 45 rpm record player with a flip-open radio my grandfather gave her over 50 years ago. As I've matured, family heirloom value became apparent."

Argie, 29, Halethorpe

"I'm a keepsake person, and love things that inspire memories. An iron pot that I watched my grandmom cook in, and an old mirror hanging in my mom's house that I played dress-up in are things I will want someday, whether they match my decor or not. They allow us to hold onto memories and tell stories to future generations."

Jamie, 34, Baltimore

If your kids aren't this open-minded, take heart. Read Mithra Billesteros' lighthearted discussions on various categories of antiques at <http://www.thebubblejoy.com/blog/2015/7/15/why-our-kids-dont-treasure-our-treasures>

Hope does spring eternal. You never know what may change their minds.

Joanne is a freelance writer and author of two nonfiction books. She can be contacted at jrwrite@aol.com

"Family heirlooms are important to have in your home, as each one tells a story. Some aren't very modern, but those from different time periods are cool, and make good conversation starters. Having one is nice to remember a family member."

Maria, 21, Mastic, N.Y.

"My mother is kind and genuine; she is always trying to give me things to furnish my house. However, I don't always like what she's offering. Our styles and tastes are different, as are the times. I don't want to seem ungrateful, but I don't want all she offers. I've kept things that have personal meaning, or aren't too big - such as jewelry and china - which have family history, and I will pass on to my children."

Pam, 35, Elkridge

"I don't own many antiques, though I enjoy them. My grandfather has a farm with several barns full of antiques I'd love to restore, but he's protective of them."

It's not too late to be who you might have wanted to be.

MANAGING THE COMPLEXITY OF LIFE

By Kater Leatherman

Simplicity is becoming harder to attain. We are being worn down by too much of everything, pulling us in so many directions that we can't stay centered, or focused. Even the 1980s seem utopian in comparison to now. So, what is making life so complicated and what can we do to better manage it?

For starters, let's look at the vast number of choices available today. You go to the drug store for Band-Aids and find yourself standing in front of at least 20 different kinds. Or, how do you choose a television program when there are 500 channels? Communicating with others sounds simple until you have to stop and ask yourself, "How does this person prefer to connect? Text, Facebook, email or phone? If it's the phone, do I try their cell phone or landline?"

The days of making a simple phone call to solve a problem has all but vanished. It can take 20 minutes to navigate your way through the prompts to reschedule an appliance repair. Requesting a paperless bank, insurance or bill statement requires setting up an account online. You could spend an entire day canceling the catalogs that fill your mailbox every month, and then it takes three months for them to finally stop.

Obligations are another culprit. How did we arrive at the place of having to do it all? To be nice? To be loved? We want to make life easy for others, especially our kids, so we don't, heaven forbid, impose on them.

Another big contributor to the complexity of life is the litigious society we have created. Recently, my brother-in-law ordered a new blade for his blender. Before the company would ship it out, they required him to sign and fax a liability form in case he injured himself while installing it.

While technology offers big advantages and promises to make our life easier, figuring it out is often impossible. Who hasn't, at one time or another, felt like they needed to "get certified" to figure out the television remote, the newfangled washing machine or the GPS? And, do all of those bells and whistles really make us any happier?

No wonder our brains feel scrambled, our energy sapped and our precious time siphoned. Whereas before you could make do with writing yourself reminder notes on a piece of paper or a day planner, you now have to contend with a device that defines appointments and tasks, categorizes them in an infinite number of ways and cross-references them with other contacts, tasks and notes.

It adds up fast, so here are three things you can do to better manage your life. **FIRST**, learn to say no to others in a more skillful way. **SECOND**, reduce waste by becoming a more conscious consumer. Remember, everything you own has to be either repaired, maintained, insured, watered, stored, filed or dusted. And, **THIRD**, be less accessible. We are besieged with peeps, buzzers, alarms, ring tones, alerts, flashing lights and electronic voices, so spend some time each day going inward. It will not only give the mind and body a much needed rest but restore balance and sanity to your life.

Kater is a home rejuvenator and organizer, home stager, yoga teacher and self-published author. Visit her website at www.katerleatherman.com or email katerleatherman@gmail.com

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Walking Undiscovered Trails in Annapolis

By Ellen Moyer

It is Spring and my feet are feeling springy, tapping out “Let’s Walk.” Trees are budding, daffodils are blooming and I want to be among the flora and fauna. Well, we do live in an urban environment, but off the sidewalks there are trails to discover.

Down the hill from the swimming pool in Truxtun Park is a bridge across an arm of Spa Creek. The bridge replaced a nuisance attraction and has been in place for almost 50 years. It connects the park to Truxtun Heights and a ramble to the Chesapeake Children’s Museum, where another bridge down another hill built by the Seabees crosses another water spur of Spa creek. Maryland Hall with its indoor café is ahead. Continue straight ahead to a running track, a remnant of the athletic fields of the once-upon-a-time high school now used by the Striders and an opportunity to increase your steps before heading for the café. Still on the go, now working on 10,000 steps a day, meander to Spa Road and across to the Senior Center or the Boys and Girls Club. Continue down Russell Street, up West to the library and through the parking lot to Poplar Trail.

Poplar Trail, a corridor from Germantown School to the police station, is the heart of the city’s walking trails. It was once a railroad line into the city and has been reclaimed into a park by the neighbors on the annual Greenscape Day, a program for planting trees and flowers. It was discovered and proposed in the city’s Parks and Paths designed by college students from George Washington University.

Some of the trail followed sidewalks marked by small signs of families walking together attached to street signs. Some of them can still be seen on signs in Eastport. Some years later, the trail markers, an idea borrowed from the English, who follow small arrows through pastures

with big sheep and over fences on their walking adventures, were changed to identify the Colonial Trail. It is an offshoot of the North\South National Trail from Maine to Florida that passes Annapolis and connects here with the East\West Trail to California. If you are in the mood you can walk or bike along trails that follow old railroad beds all over this country.

Not far from Poplar Park is a one-mile trail around the Naval Academy Stadium. It was constructed about 10 years ago when the stadium was expanded. The trail is maintained by the City Recreation Department and wanders past rain gardens created to solve the storm water runoff problems of old impervious surfaces. Nearby Rowe Boulevard is a pathway into the heart of the downtown historic district where you can connect with Art Tour trails outlined on the city Web or in the *Art in Annapolis* book available in the Visitors Center on West Street. There are plenty of places for an energizing cup of coffee before heading to Eastport and its history trail around the peninsula with its street-end parks. If available, pick up a brochure at the first sign at the foot of the Eastport Bridge.

At the end of Edgewood Road is an 11-acre city park, The Ellen Moyer Nature Park on Back Creek. It is a popular wooded area for dog walkers and even those without pets. A trail starts at the water level, crosses a bridge over another stream cut by storm water and ascends through the woods up to a deck on a high crest overlooking Back Creek. Some have said the fauna here is more like that found along the Blue Ridge. Imagine wetlands-to-mountain fauna in such a short time and space. The crest is a perfect picturesque place for a wedding. The calming influence of sparkles off the creek and sunbeams radiating through the oak trees encourages reflection on the meaning of life, the next steps on the day’s agenda or how to get along with your neighbors. Anyone suffering from anxiety should walk here.

Descending steps to the area flooded by 12 feet of Hurricane Isabel (a sign marks the height), the trail concludes with storyboards describing the environment. Back Creek Park was designed as an educational site to tell the stories of what happens to storm water. Still to come, Back Creek is not only a perfect place for walking, but for Friends of the Parks to explore ancient Indian oyster middens and mysterious-looking mounds and for creative native plant gardens.

Annapolis is a walking town. So don the walking shoes this Spring and explore the city’s undiscovered trails.

Ellen, a trails advocate and past member on the East Coast Greenways advisory council, can be reached at ellenmoyer@yahoo.com



There’s still time to make a difference.

By Kater Leatherman

Getting ready for Spring involves more than pulling out the lawn mower and dust rags. It's resurrection time and that means clearing space for change in all areas of our lives.

There's a very good reason for this: Seasons are all about change. Summer lavishes us with long days and the Earth's biggest bounty. Fall follows, the pace slows and we regroup. Winter is about hunkering down. And then Springtime comes -- the season of light -- and we're ready to immerse ourselves in, as writer Georg Feuerstein says, "nature's brightest costume."

For some, the first signs of Spring draw us out into the garden. Gardening is a wonderful metaphor for life. The ground is cleared before seeds are planted. Fertilizer, water and sun nurture and sustain the garden. But there will be weeds to pull. The clutter in our lives is like the weeds in the garden.

So, go ahead. Brighten your rooms by shedding those dark, heavy draperies and window treatments. The metaphor is that hiding behind your fears prevents the light of who you are to shine through. Organizing and cleaning each room to remove chaotic energy from your home is a metaphor to invite more calm into your life. One way to do this is by letting go of unresolved grief, self-imposed obligations or old beliefs.

Spring is also the best time to cleanse the body of physical clutter. There's a reason that dandelion greens are in season. They are an effective aid in cleaning out the digestive tract. Each season provides the perfect foods to support optimal health.

We know that material clutter isn't about the stuff, but what the

Pave the Way for Spring

Remind yourself that all you have is all you need

stuff reveals about us. Take a messy bedroom. This could indicate that intimacy is lacking or there might be an inability to relax enough to get a restful night's sleep. Clutter in the kitchen may suggest that you need to take better care of your health. And, if there are piles by the front door, this can show that you don't consider your home a refuge from the outside world

or that you want to avoid visitors.

Spring is the ultimate new beginning, a time of rebirth and renewal. So, remind yourself that all you have is all you need. Reconnect to the truth that you have the power to purge anything that gets in the way of you enjoying life. And reframe the belief that something negative will happen once you let go.

Kater is a home rejuvenator and organizer, home stager, yoga teacher and self-published author. Visit her website at www.katerleatherman.com or email katerleatherman@gmail.com

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RETIRING ON THE WATER

By Kathryn Marchi

There is a clever saying out there: "If you are lucky enough to have a house on the water, you're lucky enough."

It seems that humans always flock to the water for a vacation. We love our boating, fishing, or swimming in the ocean, or at the lakes and rivers, or just quietly sitting by the water taking in all of the sights and sounds. For early man, the water provided sustenance, transportation and power. Water has provided a vital means of connection to others since time began.

Shorelines all over the world are dotted with homes that look out over the waterways and folks who can't afford waterfront property find other means for living "on" the water. There are houseboats, moored at a marina, which have all of the amenities for the good life or larger sail or powerboats that can remain moored at a marina or move from place to place when cruising calls. Both of these options need exploring for sure.

If all you want is to "be" on the water, you can always travel nonstop over the waterways and oceans by simply booking cruises on one ship after another. Some avid cruisers opt to stay on the same line and others hop from one to another. This can be done for months or even years if you love traveling,

are in good health and financially flexible. It could be a great retirement opportunity; no matter how long one wants to stay aboard.

Interestingly enough, research shows that there are retirees who have actually accomplished this and have lived full

time on a cruise ship.

One 82-year-old lady lived aboard Cunard's Queen Elizabeth II from 2000–2008. She reportedly paid "as she went," booking one cruise after another. Due to her frequent traveler discounts, she paid approximately \$5,000 per month. Her quarters were quite modest, but she was able to enjoy her life aboard the ship. Another cruiser also chose this line and then moved from one of their ships to another for nearly 12 years.

Another happy cruiser lived for three years aboard a Holland America ship. After selling her five-bedroom home, she then moved full time to a Crystal cruise ship called the "Crystal Serenity" where she reportedly has lived for some seven years. She estimates her cost is \$164,000 a year and that includes a single occupancy stateroom, food, beverages, tips and entertainment such as shows, dancing and various other daily activities. She says that she is living a "stress-free" life.

These three women have lived the *cruising life*, as it is referred to. The costs they have incurred will obviously increase over the years so before anyone considers this lifestyle today, it would behoove them to check out the various cruise lines for overall costs, availability and amenities. There may be opportunities for discounted staterooms and other on board perks, which are offered to frequent cruisers. If you are flexible and don't mind taking what is available, these discounts can also be had by booking right before the cruise leaves. For more information log onto <http://money.usnews.com/money/blogs/on-retirement/2015/08/07/all-aboard-retire-on-a-ship>

There's another possibility for living aboard a ship: It's actually apartment living at its finest. In 2002, a ship called The World, the largest private residential ship, was launched and offered 165 apartments. These folks average 64 years of age; some live on the ship full time and others, part time. They actually co-own the ship and determine its itinerary. This floating community has all of the amenities one would find on land in a similar housing area.

Bay Bytes

If you're already thinking of a Summer job at an interesting location, log onto www.CoolWorks.com Positions offered are trail guides, hospitality, cooking and countless others with many in the state and national parks. There's also a category, "Older and Bolder."

The story of your life isn't over yet.

The cost, you ask? A studio apartment will cost approximately \$600,000; a two-bedroom residence, \$3 million; a luxury suite, upwards of \$13 million. Of course, you must add in crew salaries, cost of ship maintenance, etc., and it becomes even more costly. There's also the possibility of leasing a stateroom on board. To learn more, go to www.aboardtheworld.com

If you're considering living on board a cruise ship in your retirement, here are some of the pros and cons for this lifestyle.

Let's consider some of the pros:

- Travel anywhere in the world you want to go.
- Excellent cuisine and beverages available any time with room service if desired.
- Daily housekeeping.
- Entertainment such as stage shows, excursions, lectures, games. Many retirees find that they can contribute their own talents to some of these activities -- as lecturers, leaders, arts and crafts teachers, etc.
- Socialization opportunities with a variety of age groups.
- Activities such as dancing, swimming and deck games.
- Medical facilities are available with doctors aboard for most medical conditions.
- It might not cost much more than an assisted living facility, depending upon your location. Google retirement living on a cruise ship for more information.

And now the cons:

- Proximity to family and friends on land can be difficult; friendships on board the ship are short-lived.
- Repeat destinations may become tiresome and cruise ships can only go to so many places.
- Unless residents are financially comfortable, inevitable cost increases could become problematic.
- When serious medical problems arise, the resident must be evacuated and perhaps have to leave the ship permanently.
- And an important consideration is one's medical insurance: Medicare will not pay expenses for medical services and supplies outside of the

United States. It is purported that Medicare will pay if the services are performed while the ship is in United States waters or within six hours of departure/arrival of a United States port. ([www.medicare.gov/Pubs/pdf/11037.pdf#cruise ships](http://www.medicare.gov/Pubs/pdf/11037.pdf#cruise%20ships)) Adequate private insurance appears to be a must in any case.

These are the major pros and cons and there are more of each when one gets down to brass tacks about such a lifestyle. It is obvious that retiring on a cruise ship is not for everyone but it is a great opportunity for those who would enjoy traveling, either part or full time, around the world on a luxury cruise liner.

If this appeals to you, do your homework and go online to any of the major cruise lines and plan accordingly. A possible beginning is to try several back-to-back cruises and who knows, you may find it so enjoyable that you'd consider living aboard full time!



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By Barbara Aiken

After a Fall and Winter of indulgent, hearty fare, the fresh flavors of Spring tickle our interest. St. Patrick's Day and Easter are part of the Spring festivities and folks are planning festive luncheons, brunches and dinners with family and friends. So what's on the menu? The first Spring asparagus has arrived and local globes of pearly green cabbage are mounded on market shelves. Such treats are available all year, but the taste of seasonal fare is more lush.

To celebrate the season of renewal, I suggest a creamy cabbage soup. This is healthy, simple and right in step with the festivities of early Spring. This flavorful recipe gives a nod to St. Patrick and Peter Rabbit.

Cream of Cabbage Soup

Serves 6-8

2 Tbs. light olive oil
2 bay leaves
1 onion, chopped
1/2 cup half-and-half or milk
8 cups chopped green cabbage, loosely packed
1 tsp. kosher salt
5 cups low-sodium chicken stock
1/2 tsp. freshly ground black pepper
1 small potato, peeled and cubed
3 slices cooked crumbled bacon, optional

In a large saucepan, soften the onion in the olive oil for two to three minutes until transparent. Add the cabbage, broth, potato, and bay leaves; bring to a boil. Cover and simmer for 30 minutes or until the vegetables are tender. Remove the bay leaves.

Allow soup to cool, then puree in a blender. Don't puree hot liquids with the lid in place—the heat from the liquid will cause the contents to burst from the top. You may puree the soup in batches depending on the size of your blender. Alternatively, use an immersion blender directly in the saucepan. If using a blender, pour the pureed soup back into the saucepan to warm. Add the half-and-half or milk; season with salt and pepper. Serve hot and if you like, garnish with a little crumbled bacon or snipped chives.

Store-bought chicken stock is fine; I prefer low-sodium. You can always add more salt, but you can't take it away. One percent or 2 percent milk can be substituted for the half-and-half or whole milk.

Use kosher salt in these recipes and others—it has a soft, less biting taste than table salt. Sea salt may also be used, but be aware that not all salts are created equal: Some are grainier and saltier than others.

A TASTE OF EARLY SPRING

Another favorite food of Spring is asparagus, and a frittata is a perfect vehicle to showcase its charms. A light meal beginning with warm cabbage soup followed by a hot-from-the-oven asparagus frittata, oven-roasted potatoes, sausage of your choice and some crusty French bread or popovers is a perfect seasonal menu.

Spring Asparagus Frittata

Serves 4

1/4 cup extra-virgin olive oil
2 Tbs. chopped fresh parsley
1 small onion finely chopped

5 large eggs
2 minced garlic cloves
1 Tbs. half-and-half or milk
1/3 cup sliced fresh mushrooms, button or cremini
1/2 tsp. kosher salt
1/3 cup grape tomatoes cut in half
1/4 tsp. freshly ground black pepper
2 cups asparagus cut in 1-inch pieces
2 oz. fresh crumbled goat cheese

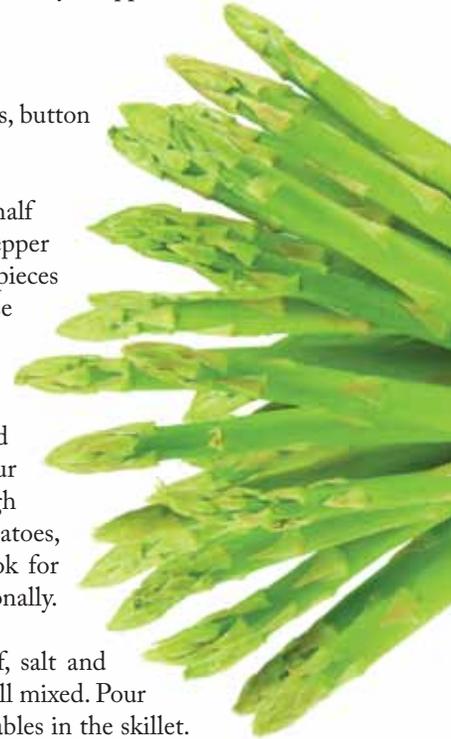
Preheat broiler. Heat olive oil in a medium (10-inch) cast iron skillet. Add onion and garlic; sauté for three to four minutes over medium-high heat. Add mushrooms, tomatoes, parsley, dill and asparagus; cook for two minutes stirring occasionally. Remove from heat.

Whisk eggs, half-and-half, salt and pepper in a small bowl until well mixed. Pour the egg mixture over the vegetables in the skillet. Sprinkle goat cheese over the top and cook over low heat until the eggs are set, about six to eight minutes. Place the skillet under the broiler for two to three minutes, until the cheese is bubbling and frittata is firm to the touch.

If you don't have a cast iron skillet for this one pan dish, you can use another type of oven-proof skillet. A frittata is a simple, easy combination of flavor-absorbing eggs teaming with a variety of flavor-inducing veggies, meats, cheeses, seasonings and herbs of your choice to concoct a creation for any season. This egg dish is a color wheel of flavor. Consider using one of many delectable Maryland goat cheeses and local farm fresh eggs in this creation.

If you're like me, a meal isn't complete without a glass of wine. I would suggest Chablis, Sancerre, pinot gris or perhaps Beaujolais. Champagne or a sparkling wine such as a not-too-sweet Italian Prosecco or Spanish Cava would feel at home with this light fare. Enjoy!

Barbara has been cooking and baking for more than 40 years. Preparing delicious meals and pairing them with the perfect wine is one of her passions. She can be reached at barbara.s.aiken@gmail.com



Don't Miss the NEW, IMPROVED 6th Annual Naptown barBAYq Contest & Music Festival

Mark your calendars for the **6th Annual New and Improved Naptown barBAYq Contest & Music Festival** at the Anne Arundel County Fairgrounds in Crownsville.

On Friday, May 6, from 4 to 10 p.m. it's party time at the fairgrounds with a happy hour featuring half-price beer from 4 to 7 p.m., and a Peoples' Choice Wing Competition in the barBAYq Village.

On Saturday, May 7, gates open at noon with festivities until 10 p.m. Live music on two stages will be featured all day, and at 6 p.m. **Marshall Law** will take the stage for the evening concert. Be sure to check out the People's Choice Pulled Pork Competition starting at 2 p.m. until the pork runs out. It's a great way to sample the teams' BBQ and vote for your favorite.

The festival is a family affair and features a barbeque competition sanctioned by the Kansas City Barbeque Society, the two people's choice competitions, great food

and adult libations, live music, plus activities for all ages as well as arts and crafts vendors.

Fifty teams will compete for cash prizes and trophies in the categories of chicken, ribs, pork and brisket. The overall winner of the 2016 Naptown barBAYq contest will be named the grand champion of Maryland.

Tickets for the festival are \$15 per day, if purchased before May 1, and \$20 after that. Kids 12 and under are free with lots of free activities. For more information about the festival, to volunteer or become a sponsor, please visit our new website at www.barBAYq.com

*The Naptown barBAYq Contest & Music Festival is hosted by the Parole Rotary Club. **ALL PROCEEDS ARE DONATED TO LOCAL CHILDREN'S CHARITIES.***

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Help for Weary Taxpayers: Don't Forget These Tax Deductions, Credits and Tips

By Leah Lancione

If you admittedly join the one-third of Americans the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) says wait until the last minute to file their tax returns, you still have time to research or consult a financial adviser to take advantage of some deductions that are commonly overlooked. For example, Intuit TurboTax (<https://turbotax.intuit.com>) reminds folks who turned 65 in 2015 to “remember that you deserve a bigger standard deduction than younger folks.” And the following tips, credits and deductions are often overlooked during tax season.

OUT-OF-POCKET CHARITABLE CONTRIBUTIONS

Kiplinger personal finance magazine online (www.kiplinger.com) says to pay attention to and report “all out-of-pocket costs incurred while doing work for a charity. For example, ingredients for casseroles you prepare for a nonprofit organization's soup kitchen and stamps you buy for a school's fundraising mailing count as charitable contributions.” Make sure you have all receipts, and if your contribution is over \$250, the charity will have to vouch for your support. Kiplinger also says not to forget that, “If you drove your car for charity in 2015, deduct 14 cents per mile, plus parking and tolls paid, in your philanthropic journeys.”

EARNED INCOME TAX CREDIT (EITC)

According to TurboTax, millions of people forget this credit year after year. The IRS claims 25 percent of taxpayers who are eligible for the EITC don't claim it saying people don't realize that they are entitled to it. TurboTax explains the EITC is “a refundable tax credit – not a deduction – ranging from \$503 to \$6,242 for 2015 designed to supplement wages for low- to moderate-income workers.” The credit isn't just for those regarded as “lower income,” but also to those who were formerly middle class but either lost a job, took a pay cut or worked fewer hours last year and can now be classified as “lower class.” The amount of the credit is dependent on “income, marital status and family size.”

CREDITS FOR ENERGY SAVING HOME IMPROVEMENTS

Unfortunately there isn't a tax credit for homeowners who save energy by installing new storm windows or insulation, but there is still an incentive for folks who installed alternative energy

equipment on or in their homes “such as solar hot water heaters, geothermal heat pumps and wind turbines. The credit could be 30 percent of the total cost (including labor) of such systems installed through 2016 (www.irs.gov/uac/Cut-Taxes-and-Save-on-Energy-Bills-with-Home-Energy-Credits).

WAIVER OF PENALTY FOR NEWLY RETIRED

Here's another tip from *Kiplinger* that isn't a deduction, but can protect you from having to pay a penalty. *Kiplinger* says, “Because our tax system operates on a pay-as-you earn basis, taxpayers typically must pay 90 percent of what they owe during the year via withholding or estimated tax payments. If you don't, and you owe more than \$1,000 when you file your return, you can be hit with a penalty for underpayment of taxes. The penalty works like interest on a loan—as though you borrowed from the IRS the money you didn't pay.” However, taxpayers age 62 and older in the year they retire and the following year, are eligible for an exception. The magazine says taxpayers can request a waiver of the penalty using Form 2210.

CLEANING UP

Who knew that you could deduct expenses incurred having your clothes cleaned while traveling? According to **The FiscalTimes.com** “cleaning and laundering services when traveling are deductible as long as they aren't reimbursed by your employer.”

PHONE USE

The FiscalTimes.com also reveals that individuals who are self-employed can claim a deduction for the use of their phone for business purposes.

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS

If you are selling your home or plan to do so, the **FiscalTimes.com** recommends deducting any improvements done to the residence since they “add to the cost basis of your home and are subtracted from the sale price,” reducing any gain (and in turn taxes to pay on that gain.)

TRADE OR BUSINESS TOOLS

The IRS does allow employees to deduct the expenses for trade or business tools like software as well as subscriptions to professional journals as long as the IRS qualifies them as “helpful and appropriate for your trade or business.”

The IRS, which officially commenced this year's tax season on Jan. 19, “expects to receive more than 150 million individual returns in 2016, with more than four out of five being prepared using tax return preparation software and e-filed.” This year the official deadline for submitting 2015 returns is April 18 instead of the usual April 15.

For more tax credits and deductions information as well as a full suite of tools for taxpayers, visit <https://www.irs.gov> And if you get discouraged or the process seems just as complicated as the year before, take solace that Albert Einstein was quoted as saying, “The hardest thing to understand in the world is the income tax!”

The hardest thing to understand in the world is the income tax!
—Albert Einstein

PROBLEMS TO WATCH FOR IN THE AGING EYE

By Michael J. Dodd, MD

It is safe to say that aging has an impact on all body organs. As we all know, the skin gets wrinkles, the digestive tract slows, the heart may lose its normal rhythm. What about the eyes? What are the changes that aging causes in the eyes?

The first thing that is noticeable with aging is the loss of the ability to focus on near objects with the naked eye. Most people notice this in their early forties. The loss of ability of to focus for near is know as presbyopia (from the Latin root “presby” meaing old, and “opia” referring to the eyes). The natural lens of the eye is soft and flexible in youth and this allows the eye to focus for distance and for close up. The natural lens loses some of its flexibility by age 40 and this is the cause of the difficulty focusing at near. The solution is easy; simple magnifiers or “readers.”

Glaucoma is a disease where the eye pressure is elevated above normal. If left undiagnosed, the elevated pressure can damage the optic nerve and cause loss of side vision and rarely, total blindness. Patients do not have symptoms and for this reason it is recommended that patients over the age of 40 should have their eyes examined once every two years. If a patient has elevated pressure, treatment is available in the form of eye drops, or laser surgery and rarely, intraocular surgery to lower eye pressure.

A cataract is a disorder of the eye where the clear lens becomes cloudy and creates gradual loss of vision. This process begins in the late forties and progress into the fifth and sixth decades. When patients get to a point where they struggle with visual clarity, even with glasses, it may be time to surgically remove the cataract. Today’s cataract surgery is nearly miraculous and usually will restore the patient’s vision to normal.

Macular degeneration is a condition of the retina of the eye which is seen in the aging eye (age-related macular degeneration). Early changes in the retina can be seen in the sixth decade. Small white aging spots called drusen are often precursors to macular degeneration. Later hemorrhaging and scarring of the central retina causes significant vision loss. Today there are several modalities for treatment. These treatments include vitamins which can slow the progression of macular degeneration and injections in the eye of certain drugs which can clear hemorrhages of the retina. In those patients who develop hemorrhages, they may experience sudden, painless loss of vision. This circumstance should be evaluated by an eye specialist as quickly as possible.

Another type of macular degeneration know as “dry” is not associated with hemorrhaging, but rather results in scarring of the retina. There is not a good treatment for this unfortunate condition.

This quick summary of aging eye conditions is just scratching the surface. A good policy for all patients is to get an eye examination every two years after the age of 40 and at least yearly after age 60.

Dr. Dodd, an ophthalmologist, practices at Maryland Eye Associates located in Annapolis and Prince Frederick. He can be reached at 410.224.4550 or mjdm1@gmail.com

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WHEN PASSION MEETS PURPOSE: THE HEALING POWER OF VOLUNTEERING

By Elyzabeth Marcussen

Many people who volunteer at Hospice of the Chesapeake are inspired to do so by having experienced the comfort-focused care a loved one received at the hospice. They want to find a way to give back to those who made those final days positive and memorable.

But that is not always their inspiration; it certainly wasn't the case with Susan Walker. As a child of the 1960s and 1970s, she had witnessed the indifferent and often brutal treatment of Vietnam veterans when they came home. Her experiences included the suicide of a close friend's brother and the struggles of her uncle, who she believes died at an early age partly due to the effects of post-traumatic stress disorder.

Walker had discovered her "holy discontent."

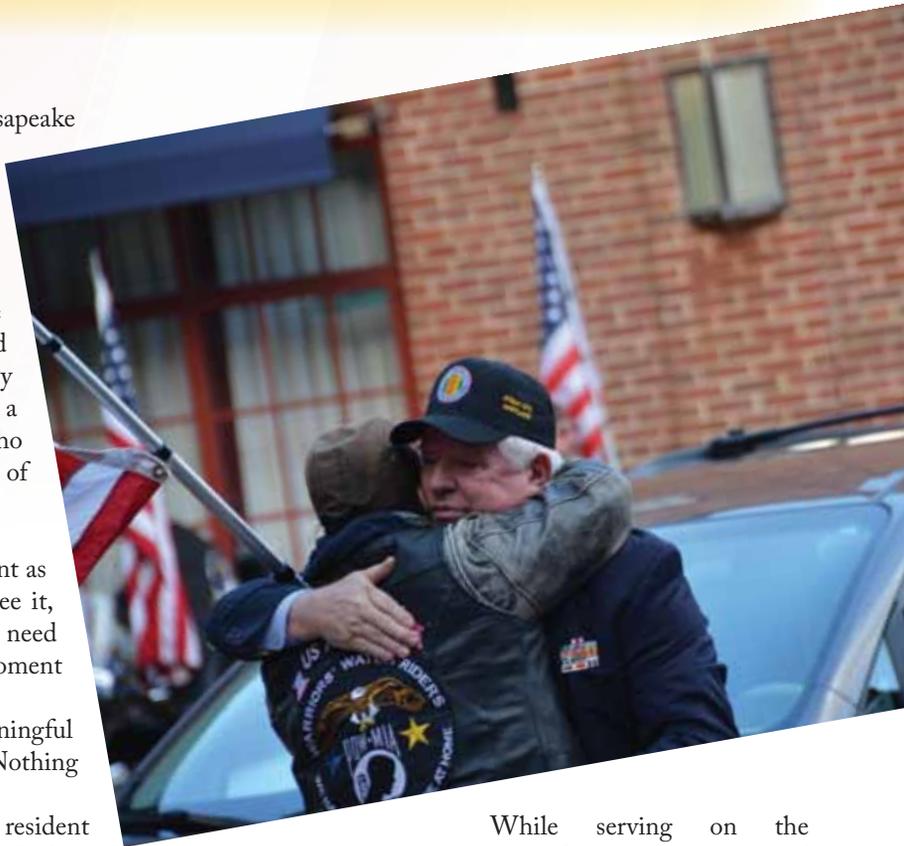
Pastor and author Bill Hybels defines holy discontent as "the one aspect of this broken world that, when you see it, touch it, get near it, you just can't stand." For Walker, the need to bring healing to Vietnam veterans comprises that moment when passion and purpose intersect.

"For years – literally, years – I searched for a meaningful way to honor and help our Vietnam veterans," she said. "Nothing seemed appropriate."

It certainly wasn't for a lack of trying. The Annapolis resident is a volunteer at the Annapolis Vet Center and has worked to help the homeless, about 40 percent of whom are veterans, at the Light House Shelter. But to her, the Vietnam veterans' experience is insularly unique. "Vietnam veterans can only share this (pain) with other Vietnam veterans."

She certainly didn't think she would find what she was looking for at Hospice of the Chesapeake. It found her instead. Or more precisely, its director of volunteer services, Diane Sancilio, found her.

The two met while volunteering with the Annapolis Film Festival and became kindred spirits. Sancilio told her about the work Hospice of the Chesapeake does for veterans, who make up 25 percent of its patients. Sancilio's mantra is to heal our veterans, "one veteran at a time." The nonprofit, which joined a national movement to support veterans at the end of life in 2010, does it with Honor Salutes, veterans events, the veteran to veteran care program and more. Walker attended several of these events, and she was hooked. She joined the We Honor Veterans Committee.



While serving on the committee, she heard too many stories of how many Vietnam veteran patients were filled with anger, hurt and resentment because of how they were treated on their return, having never been welcomed home or even thanked for their service. The need for healing was obvious. "Through many moments of grace – I don't know how else to describe it – the opportunity to promote that healing presented itself when we were able to meet with state Sen. John Astle, the only Vietnam veteran serving in the Maryland Senate," Walker said. "He readily agreed to sponsor legislation to designate March 30 as Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day in Maryland."

Talk about passion serving purpose: In the span of just 45 days, Walker, Sancilio and fellow committee members managed to see the legislation through and organize an amazing premier celebration filled to capacity with Vietnam veterans and their families that followed the bill signing in Annapolis. It was the first piece of legislation the newly elected Gov. Larry Hogan signed into law.

Why not do something today that will improve the life of someone.

She watched the veterans react as they walked through a sea of well-wishers, many of whom were on active duty and in uniform. "I felt the healing," Walker said. She saw and felt their pride, their honor, as hundreds of people expressed gratitude for their service in Vietnam. She heard that many of the veterans who attended talked to their families about their war experience for the first time. "I know it was a life-changer for me. It affirmed that this is an integral part of my mission," she said.

Walker is hoping to see even more Vietnam veterans and their families at this year's Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day celebration on March 30 at the Hilton Baltimore BWI Hotel, with doors opening at 5:30 p.m. Admission is free to the program which begins at 6:30 p.m. and the premiere of a documentary filmed by Annapolis High School students at 7:45 p.m. It will include a rousing welcome home, plenty of thanks and a chance to make a connection with others who served in Vietnam. "They can share their photos, they can tell their stories and there will be maps where they can show other veterans and their families where they served, and a program that will leave no doubt that we appreciate their service," Walker said.

And instead of jeers and anger, they will be surrounded and embraced by a loving community welcoming them home, many for the first time.

To RSVP or to volunteer, email veterans@hospicechesapeake.org or call Kendall Sofia at 443-837-1508.

WHAT: Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day Celebration.

WHEN: 5:30 to 9 p.m. Wednesday, March 30.

WHERE: Hilton Baltimore BWI Hotel, 1739 W. Nursery Road, Linthicum, Md.

WHO: All Vietnam veterans and their families are invited.

COST: Free.

RSVP: at veterans@hospicechesapeake.org or call Kendall Sofia at 443-837-1508.

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It's Cherry Blossom Time

By Melissa Conroy

Thousands of delicate white and pink cherry blossoms waving in the breeze are a familiar Spring sight and a lovely reminder that Winter has passed and warmer days are ahead. Although the cherry blossom season is fleeting, the trees' spectacular display is well worth the long wait, and millions of people across the world enjoy spending time under the flowering branches of cherry trees every Spring.

Cherry blossom trees are part of the genus *Prunus* and are cousins to almond, plum and other fruit trees. However, many blooming cherry trees are ornamental and do not produce anything except their lovely flowers every Spring. This doesn't mean that they are useless as a food source; if you are ever in Japan, you might be offered sakurayu (salt-pickled cherry blossoms in hot water) or sakuramochi (sweet pink rice and red bean paste with a cherry blossom leaf).

We have Japan to thank for the elegant show of blossoms that appear around the U.S. every Spring. Centuries ago during the Nara Period (710-794), Japanese people began the practice of hanami, where members of the Imperial Court would picnic under blooming trees. While the Japanese nobles originally chose ume (plum and apricot) blossoms for their picnic viewing, cherry blossoms grew in popularity during the Heian Period (794-1185) at the same time that hanami spread to the samurai class. By the Edo period (1603-1868), hanami was enjoyed by people from all levels of society with sakura (cherry blossoms) as the main focus.

Japan graciously spread both hanami and sakura to the U.S. as a gesture of goodwill and friendship through the work of several people, starting with a Mrs. Eliza Ruhamah Scidmore. In 1885, Mrs. Scidmore returned from her first visit to Japan with an idea to plant cherry blossom trees along the Potomac waterfront. Her petitions to the U.S. government were denied for 24 years before Dr. David Fairchild, an official for the Department of Agriculture, imported 75 cherry trees from Japan and planted them on his own property. Scidmore and Fairchild worked together to promote the cultivation of blossoming cherry trees in the U.S., and in 1908, Japan gave the U.S.

2,000 cherry trees as a gift. Unfortunately, the trees were infected and had to be burned. Undaunted, Japan sent the U.S. 3,020 new cherry trees of 12 different varieties, which arrived in D.C. on March 26, 1910. They were ceremoniously planted and thrived in their new home, attracting more admirers every Spring. In 1935, the first Cherry Blossom Festival was held in Washington, D.C., to celebrate Japan's gift. This festival still takes place every year in our nation's capital.

Today, the U.S. still cherishes Japan's gift and works to preserve the original trees' genetic line as well as its relationship with Japan. On Nov. 15, 1999, 50 new cherry trees were planted in West Potomac Park. These trees were propagated from a nearly

1,500-year-old cherry tree which grows in the Japanese village of Itash Neo and is a national treasure. In 2011, the U.S. sent 120 cherry trees to Japan that were propagated from the original 1912 cherry trees and were

the trees' spectacular display is well worth the long wait

given in order to maintain their genetic lineage and symbolize continued U.S. friendship.

While we in the U.S. enjoy cherry blossoms simply for their loveliness, these elegant blooms play a more central symbolic role in Japanese culture. The Japanese term *mono no aware* speaks of being attuned to life's ephemeral qualities, and the cherry blossom elegantly represents this awareness. The cherry blossom season is only a week or two and while this time is breathtakingly splendid, it is over quickly and should be cherished while it happens.

Japanese poetry, songs, plays and other artistic works often use the symbolism of sakura to remind people about the fleeting nature of life.

You don't have to travel to Japan to participate in your own hanami: There are several cherry blossom viewing spectacles around the U.S., the most spectacular being the National Cherry Blossom Festival that takes place this year from March 20 to April 17 (www.nationalcherryblossomfestival.org) In our nonstop, ever-moving world, we need little reminders to slow down and savor nature. You can herald the new season by indulging in a hanami of your own with some loved ones.

Bay Bytes

To become an election judge at one of the 160 polling places in the upcoming election, log onto www.aacounty.org/boards-and-commissions/board-of-elections-election-judges/ You will be paid for your time.

REDUCE, REUSE, RECYCLE

By Joan Amundsen

Maybe it's the nicer weather or maybe it's the nesting instinct that gets us cleaning in the Spring. Maybe some of us are downsizing and moving to smaller quarters. At any rate, each year as we get older, we collect more and more unwanted stuff, the clutter gets bigger and we need to downsize.

A good place to start is in the kitchen where you store all those pots, pans and "have-to-have" items that were supposed to do extraordinary things for your cooking skills. Recently I went through all my cabinets and came across several pieces that I couldn't remember buying or what they were used for.

Looking for a home for your treasures? Start with your family. Ask around. Perhaps one of the younger family members who are setting up a home or apartment could use some of your discards. Recently one of my grandkids took almost everything I didn't want any more, which included dishes, casseroles and utensils.

If no friends are interested, check with your church or local organizations. Many times their kitchens can use additional items such as coffee makers, crockpots and the like.

When it comes to clothing, if you haven't worn it in the past couple of years, move it out! It is suggested by many cleanup experts that if you haven't worn it in the last year, toss it. You can also donate your clothing or even linens to the Goodwill or Salvation Army. And churches often appreciate your no-longer-used table linens.

Wherever you decide to take your donations make sure you have made a list of the items so that you have proof of their value at tax time. Some of these organizations already have sheets printed up and all you need to do is fill them out. The Salvation Army has posted a link called a Donation Value Guide to help you put a figure on your contributions (<https://satruck.org/Home/DonationValueGuide>).

If you have clothing that still has price tags attached, or if they are designer fashions in a consignment shop, an opportunity exists to make a few dollars from your castoffs.

When it comes to bigger items such as furniture or sports equipment like a tread mill, it is probably easier to advertise. Go to <http://geo.craigslist.org/iso/us/md> or at <http://wallapop.com/> You don't want to be dragging around large, heavy items and it's easier for customers to come to you.

Then again, maybe there is the possibility that you want to have your own garage sale. These are always fun if you run the sale in conjunction with several other neighbors. Shoppers will always flock to a sale if it means there will be a lot more families to visit on the block.

Now, don't wrinkle up your nose. These sales are not that difficult to do if you start planning right at the beginning when you pull out those "unwants." Separate the garage sale pieces from the other items right from the beginning. Tag the pieces as you sort them in storage containers. I have been running garage

sales for longer than I care to admit. When people learn what you have and the prices you are asking, they will look forward to attending your next sale. For information on how to get going, log onto www.yardsalequeen.com/yardsale.htm

This site has a great outlook on garage sales and offers some important pointers. She claims that yard sales are hard work. I don't agree. You are not trying to make a business out of it. You just want to sell your items and have a good time, while making a little money and having fun doing it. Any don't forget the reason for this sale. You are downsizing! So how can you lose?

Read carefully what The Yard Sale Queen says about advertising. This is very important for a successful sale. Be prepared for early birds, have plenty of change and small bills, and don't take checks. You don't want to be running around after the sale trying to collect from deadbeats.

Here is a list of suggested prices to charge for some items. It is best to check around at other sales, before you run your own, to see what the going prices for certain items are. You definitely don't want to overprice. For a price guide, log onto: www.garagesaletracker.com/garage-sales-guide-pricing.asp

And there you are. You have reduced, reused and recycled. You have helped the environment and hopefully had a good time doing it!

Joan can be contacted at joanamundsen72@gmail.com

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The Perfect Way To be a Grandparent

By Tricia Herban

Cruise ships are not my favorite thing and it's said that I don't particularly care for other people's children, but I had the time of my life recently on a Disney cruise. Perhaps it was because I'd never experienced the magical world of Disney except for the Donald Duck comic books that we would buy for a dime back in the dark ages before computers, cell phones and instant messaging.

Our week-long odyssey on the *Disney Fantasy* made up of family groups with as many as 40 all wearing matching gold-colored T-shirts.

There was also a couple in full wedding attire just getting married. Our modest contingent consisted of my son and his wife and girls ages 3 and 8. The trip was my daughter-in-law's idea of a vacation that we could all enjoy while the little one was still too young to deal with serious sightseeing.

More than 1,000 staff watched over the 3,000 plus passengers, keeping the ship spotless, babysitting the children in a fully equipped nursery and a Kids Club with a magical glass floor, computers and so much more. A fully staged show preceded dinner each evening. Our favorite was "Aladdin". Speaking of dinner, we dined in all three dining rooms, but conveniently, the wait staff rotated with us so that they soon knew our food preferences. Little Hailey wanted milk and I drank cup after cup of decaf English Breakfast tea! The children's orders were taken first and their food came quickly so that when they finished, we were just starting our entrees (after appetizers and soup or salad) and the staff spirited them away to Kids Club, allowing us to enjoy an adult dining experience.

That level of careful planning extended to the continuous grill service on deck, the soft ice cream that I ate by the cupful, and the variety of alcoholic beverages available in several adult-only bars. The openair decks offered a large pool with a gigantic TV screen, a hot tub, a kiddie splash pool with gentle water jets, a water slide and an enclosed water-powered float ride circling the top of the ship.

There were cooking lessons, tours of the ship and seminars on how Disney creates animation and special effects. At least four stores were generously stocked with elegant clothing and Disney merchandise from key chains to tote bags, to princess dresses and pirate costumes. Not only could your young princess be dressed like the character of her choice, but wait, she could have her hair custom-braided on the pool deck and magical makeup applied below. All the while, her parents could play shuffleboard, read on their balcony, sun and relax on the adult-only deck areas, or refresh in the spa. And the grandparents could do whatever grandparents do, which could be just about anything as the ship is fully accessible to those who happened to be handicapped.

The itinerary was well balanced with two days of cruising, two days on shore, another day of cruising and a final day on Disney's island, Castaway Cay. Shore trips were optional and many opted to stay on board. Excursions were reasonably priced, and like all the extras, adult beverages, spa services and store purchases, were magically purchased by a wave of your room key card. Tipping was facilitated with a recommended amount added to your tab unless you specified otherwise.

Staterooms were designed for multiple occupants. The toilet and sink were in a room of their own as was the tub/shower and a second sink. Beds were comfortable and if children were sharing the room, they could sleep on a pull-down top bunk and a lower bunk that served as a couch during the day. Our adjoining rooms made it very easy to visit back and forth, especially as the balconies could be joined simply by pushing back a dividing partition. Considering how closely we were connected, it is noteworthy that the rooms were virtually soundproof when the doors between them were closed.

Why have we decided to take another Disney cruise? Impeccable service that met the needs of everyone from the grandma to the little one who one day insisted on going to Kids Club all by herself without her big sister! Abundant food from fine dining to barbecue. Entertainment with remarkable special effects that included fireworks and Mickey-shaped mylar confetti floating down from the ceiling of the theater. Delightful turndown service featuring chocolate candy and whimsical animals made of folded towels. And above all—the Disney magic of meeting Daisy and Donald, Mickey and Minnie, Goofy, Pluto, Chip and Dale and all the princesses whenever you walked into the public areas. Whatever the occasion, they were dressed for it. Mickey wore his tux to the captain's reception, and his swashbuckling eye patch for pirate night. And, I must confess, the deal was clinched when Donald gave me a big hug!

Tricia, currently living near her grandkids in the Midwest, can be reached at mtherban3@gmail.com

Friendships

By Albert Northrop

In the Winter of 1991 I attended a seminar for judges in San Diego. When I got on the plane early in the morning at BWI it was quite chilly and gray as I recall. It was 75 and sunny in Southern California at noon. There may be a rare cynic out there who harbors the ungenerous thought that those two statistics were my prime motivation, but how unkind. Besides, many of you know of my love for skiing, although not so much on the East Coast. It was professional knowledge I sought, even if I had to endure such a variation in the weather. Besides, they only water ski in San Diego.

There were judges there from every state north of the Mason-Dixon Line and there I was from Maryland. Maryland was one of the states involved in the border dispute that was resolved by the establishment of the line in 1767. Charles Mason and Jeremiah Dixon surveyed the line that gave us the song, "Dixie." Why not Masie you might ask? The analysis of Jim Redwine, more on him in a moment, is that nothing rhymes with it but Casey, and baseball had not yet been invented.

Now why would a judge from Maryland need to vacation, excuse me, study in Southern California? I can understand why someone from Indiana would. Surely that someone was thirsting for knowledge as was I. That someone was the Honorable Jim Redwine, the one and only Circuit Court Judge from Posey County, Indiana.

Regardless of the reasons, Redwine, who hails from Mount Vernon, Ind., and I ended up meeting and during those six days of classes and one day in Tijuana, becoming friends. Since 1991 Jim, his wife Peg, Karen and I have spent a total of four days together yet we are fast friends. Had it not been for my efforts convincing Jim to take up snow skiing at age 50, he might have only the warmest of thoughts about me. (Jim's words.)

After we visited them for two days early in the month of August 2015 I began to think about the nature of friendship. What makes and keeps a friend? More generically, what is a

friend, and more selfishly, what is a friend's value?

Kahlil Gibran (1883 – 1931), an American poet of Lebanese descent said, "Let there be no purpose in friendships save the deepening of the spirit."

Whether it is the life-long friends who are my family, my college friends of more than 40 years, neighbors and soul mates who support every one of my adventures out West, and help at home and other locations, or the one who most deepens my spirit, Karen, Gibran has defined what I enjoy.

We are embarking on a political season that promises to be contentious. Even among close friends there promises to be serious differences of opinion as the presidential election nears. We all may challenge the spirit referred to by Mr. Gibran during the coming months, but at the end of the day we can share a drink and look forward to good times together -- in an ever-deepening spirit.

Al Northrop was admitted to the practice of law in 1975 and is now serving on the Prince George's County Circuit Court. He can be reached at pagosacowboy@gmail.com

What makes and keeps a friend?



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The Olmsted Connection

By Barbara Aiken

Folks travel from afar to take in the magnificent landscapes of Frederick Law Olmsted (1822-1903), but few come to Annapolis to see the fruits of his vision. Those familiar with Olmsted conjure up images of his grand designs such as the palatial grounds at Biltmore Estate in Asheville, N.C., the garden gem of New York City's Central Park, the sophisticated Capitol grounds in Washington, D.C., and the final and largest jewel in Olmsted's "Emerald Necklace," Franklin Park in Boston. The "Emerald Necklace" is the name given to the parks connected with parkways and waterways designed by Olmsted in the area of Boston and Brookline. These are some of Olmsted's triumphs, but did you know that Olmsted created the vision that is Sudbrook Park, the first planned suburban residential community in North America? Sudbrook Park, northwest of Baltimore, showcases curvilinear roads and tree-filled spaces. Are you aware that his talents and those of his sons bore fruit in Anne Arundel County and Annapolis, as well as Baltimore?

Olmsted was the catalyst of landscape architecture. At the age of 28, he was greatly influenced by the pastoral vistas he saw when visiting England and Europe. The influence of his travels is clearly visible in the design of the many parks, universities, residential areas and estates he laid out over a long career. That quixotic view continued when in 1895 the reins were handed over to his stepson John Charles Olmsted (1852-1920) and his son Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr. (1870-1957). The Olmsted Brothers Landscape Architects carried on the senior Olmsted's work and innovation.

Anne Arundel County is graced with three residential neighborhoods planned by Olmsted Brothers at Annapolis Roads, Gibson Island and the Wardour community in West Annapolis. Wardour, named by Elizabeth Giddings for Wardour Castle in Wiltshire, England, and the birthplace of Anne Arundel, wife of Cecil Calvert, the second Lord Baltimore, is a community with a sense of calm and quietude. It is resplendent with trees and possesses a rolling landscape suited to the designs of the Olmsted brothers.

In 1907 Elizabeth Giddings, owner of the land that is now Wardour, consulted with the junior Olmsted to plan out a natural design for this newly envisioned residential community. She had first consulted with

George T. Melvin, who designed Murray Hill, but his plan of rectangular, "cookie cutter" lots did not fit her dream for the land she loved so much. Her picture for Wardour embodied lots of an acre in size or larger, unpaved streets and access to those lots via land and water. Miss Giddings did not sense a need for sidewalks and today Wardour has none within its bounds, although the streets are now paved.

Elizabeth Giddings' vision, with the assistance and foresight of Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., lives on today. Wardour possesses fine old trees such as Southern magnolia, sweet gum, tulip tree, American beech and so many more that provide a leafy canopy of shade for Summer strolls. During the Winter these trees, some evergreen and some deciduous, fill the sky with interesting shapes and gnarled branches providing patterns to entertain the eye. Miss Giddings was interested in preserving these soulful giants and with Olmsted's guidance, she realized her dream.

The lay of the land remains rolling and rural in nature, providing a calmness within the city. You may have visited Wardour during the Historic Annapolis Foundation's Annapolis by Candlelight Tour in 2007 or the Anne Arundel County House and Garden Pilgrimage in 2013. If so, you know firsthand what a delightful and tranquil design emanated from the artistic mind of the younger Olmsted, with the nudging of Miss Giddings.

Visit West Annapolis and take in the charm and the small village feel of the area. Annapolis Street is lined with a kaleidoscope of seductive shops and boutiques in which you will surely find a treasure to carry home. Have a coffee, sit awhile and take in the placid visage that is West Annapolis, and then enjoy a walk and experience the collaborative vision of the Olmsted

brothers and Giddings, which is showcased in the residential community of Wardour. It has been almost 100 years since Giddings contacted Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., to ask for his help. So come out to discover the Olmsted connection among all the historical wonders that Annapolis has to offer.

Barbara has a connection to Wardour: Her husband's great-grandmother knew Frederick Law Olmsted, Sr. Barbara can be reached at barbara.s.aiken@gmail.com



Any regrets on what you haven't done? If you can read this, there's still time.

ELECTRIC VERSUS MANUAL TOOTHBRUSHES

By Wooddell & Passaro Dental Group

Are you wondering if a high-tech electric toothbrush is a better option for your oral health than a standard, manual toothbrush? Most experts believe that the toothbrush that you choose will directly affect your ability to remove plaque, but both manual and electric toothbrushes can be effective options. If you are debating between the two, it is important that you get the facts on the pros and cons.

In an increasingly technological world, it should really come as no surprise that technical advances have also come to how we care for our teeth. Electric toothbrushes are becoming increasingly popular for many reasons. First, electric toothbrushes are easy to use, and research has indicated that this option will do a better job at removing stubborn plaque from the teeth.

They also include timers that can alert you to exactly how long you need to brush in order to get the best possible results. When you consider that electric toothbrushes require less work but provide better results, this can be an attractive option. With all of the great benefits of electric toothbrushes, you may be wondering why everyone doesn't choose them.

However, there are a few shortcomings that you should consider:

- An electric toothbrush will need to be charged prior to use, and in other cases, it could require frequent battery replacements
- Electric toothbrushes tend to be more expensive than manual toothbrushes, and considering everything from the initial cost of the battery replacements, the expenses of using these toothbrushes can quickly add up.
- It can be a hassle to transport your toothbrush when you travel, especially when you consider all of the needed accessories.

Likewise, if your brush needs to be plugged in to charge, and you are traveling somewhere without electricity, such as a camping trip, you won't be able to use your brush.

A manual toothbrush is the common variety that most of us think about when we consider brushing our teeth, and at each of your dental visits, you probably go home with a new one. The fact that these toothbrushes have been used for so



long speaks highly of their ability to keep the teeth clean, and there are numerous benefits associated with these brushes:

- When using the right brushing technique, you'll be able to keep your teeth clean. Manual toothbrushes are one of the main defenses for good dental hygiene.
- Manual toothbrushes can allow for better customization. You can choose brushes with small heads to accommodate your small mouth, or you can choose a soft-bristled brush to deal with sensitivity. You can also choose colorful brushes that might appeal to your child in order to establish good oral hygiene practices at an early age.
- Manual toothbrushes are easy to travel with, and they are relatively inexpensive. If you leave your toothbrush at home, you'll be able to pick up a replacement easily even when on the road.

However, there are a couple of negatives associated with using a manual toothbrush. These brushes don't have timers, so you'll need to keep track of how long you have been brushing to ensure that you keep brushing for at least two minutes. Some people believe that manual brushes come with additional work, including that you may not be applying the right amount of pressure and using the right brushing technique.

While choosing the right toothbrush is certainly important for your oral health, it is important to remember that a toothbrush can only do so much. Other factors like brushing technique, the length of time that you spend brushing and the frequency with which you brush are also crucial.

Dr. Woody Wooddell and Dr. Joe Passaro opened the doors to their dental practice in Davidsonville in 1981. In addition to caring for their patients' dental health by offering general dentistry services, Drs. Wooddell and Passaro provide expert restorative and esthetic dental solutions. Visit their website at www.wp dentalgroup.com or call 410.956.5555 for more information.

Bay Bytes

If you've ever been interested in taking a class in woodworking, basket weaving, music, blacksmithing, dance or any of a number of other creative crafts, classes are offered throughout the year in western North Carolina. Log onto www.FolkSchool.org for information.

Establishing a Meadow

By Neil Moran

Despite their importance the number of wildflower meadows in the Chesapeake Bay area has declined. You can reverse this trend by establishing a meadow in your yard that will attract native butterflies and pollinators, reducing in the bargain the time you spend with the lawn mower.

Planting a meadow isn't as simple as tossing wildflower seeds over a large area and walking away. You'll have to prepare the area much like you do to plant a vegetable garden or flowerbed. Starting out small will keep you from feeling overwhelmed. You can also look for a landscaper in the area who will design and install a meadow for you.

There are a couple of things to consider before turning an area of your lawn into a meadow: where to find native seed or plants and how to eliminate the existing turf.

Preparing the Site

There are at least three ways to remove turf and prepare a site for planting wildflower seed or plugs: 1) Remove the soil with a sod cutter 2) Kill the existing vegetation with a nonselective herbicide or 3) Plow or rototill the area to be planted.

The Sod Cutter Method

A sod cutter will effectively remove the sod. This cutter can be of the manual type that will give you quite a workout, not to mention shortness of breath and a sore back, or the power type that can be acquired from a rental store. Providing the soil doesn't need amending, it can then be shallow cultivated with a rototiller in preparation for seeding or planting.

Applying a Nonselective Herbicide

I know suggesting a herbicide to remove the existing vegetation runs contrary to establishing a native meadow that will attract butterflies and beneficial insects. However, when you see how difficult it can be to eliminate the existing vegetation, you may have a change of heart. Further, a single dose of herbicide in all likelihood will inflict minimal harm to the environment, assuming you follow the instructions on the herbicide label.

Herbicides should be applied when it is at least 60 degrees and dry. It will take on average about 10 days to kill the existing vegetation with a herbicide, after which time you can either cultivate the area and seed, as detailed below, or plant the plugs and then mulch around the plants with four inches of bark, straw or pine needle mulch.

A Season of Cultivation

Another effective way to prepare a meadow planting is to simply cultivate the area for an entire season, which will effectively kill off the existing vegetation and provide loose soil for planting. This method will also bring weed seeds to the surface, which, I promise will eventually sprout and try to sabotage your efforts.

If you resort to this method of weed eradication, it is suggested you start plowing in the Spring and then plow and disk or cultivate with a tiller every two weeks to eliminate all roots. Two weeks later switch to shallow cultivation to eliminate emerging seedlings from those seeds that have been churned up to the surface by cultivation. Cultivate in this way right up until Fall when you can actually start planting. Otherwise, wait until Spring to sow the seed directly into the ground.

Farmers use a combination of methods whereby they apply a herbicide on a warm sunny day in early Fall, plow and disk a few times, and then plant in the Spring.

Establishing a Seed Bed

The seeding of native plants is best done by hand, since the fluffy petals in some native seed will clog most mechanical seed spreaders. Having said this, there is a special type of no-drill seed planter for native plants, so check with you local soil conservation district to see if they have one.

Mix the seed with sand, peat moss or vermiculite to make it a little easier to distribute. Be sure to thoroughly distribute the seed in the seedbed.

Weed control is going to be an issue no matter what method you use to establish native plants. It will be fairly easy to mulch around plugs or mature plants that are spaced up to a foot apart. However, with seeding you will need to manually pull or better yet, cut the weeds at the crown. This avoids disturbing the soil where more weeds will sprout as they pop up between your seeded wildflowers. This little ritual will need to be performed until the plants start to establish themselves in two to three years.

Planting potted plants

Plant potted (perennial) native plants in the early Spring or Fall of the year. If you plant during the Summer, be sure to provide at least one inch of water per week to help establish healthy native plants. Prepare a spot for native plants like you would any other perennial. In most cases, native plants do well in loose soil rich in organic matter, although they will also do well in some stubborn

sand and clay soil. Generally speaking, they do best in the soil they're accustomed to in their native habitat.

Mature, native plants are planted like any other perennial plant. That is, dig a hole slightly wider and deeper than the size of the root ball. Always provide an initial "watering in" of any perennial plants by pouring water right in the hole you've dug before backfilling the hole.

Group several native plants of the same species together in a flower bed to help make them stand out and look natural. Massing them together will also attract butterflies, pollinating insects and perhaps even a hummingbird or two. I like to group at least three plants together of the same type in a flowerbed, but there is no limit to how many you can mass together. As with any perennial plants, you can color-coordinate your flowers and mix in plants with a coarse texture and contrast them with plants with a fine texture. For instance, try combining plants such as Joe-pye Weed (*Eupatorium maculatum*), which has a coarse texture, with a fine-textured grass, such as Little Blue Stem (*Schizachyrium scoparium*).

Don't be surprised if the native plants in your perennial bed do better than their domestic counterparts, even with no additional watering or feeding. There is no need to pamper native plants with fertilizers or run up the water bill once they're established.

Planting a wildflower meadow is a considerable investment of time and energy. However, the rewards are great when you can sit in the quiet of the garden and enjoy the wildlife flitting and buzzing around your native wildflower meadow.

the rewards are great when you can sit in the quiet of the garden and enjoy the wildlife flitting and buzzing around your native wildflower meadow

The Maryland Department of Natural Resources has an excellent website that includes all of the plants suitable for the Chesapeake Bay area, as well as more tips on planting a meadow: www.dnr.state.md.us/wildlife/Habitat/WildAcres/wawildflowers.asp

Source for wildflower seed:

Seedland (seedland.com)

American Meadows (Americanmeadows.com)

Neil is a horticulturist and blogs at www.NorthCountryGardening.com



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HOARDING DISORDER:

By Dr. Jim David

A close friend of ours desperately needs to relocate, but is stymied because her spouse cannot bring himself to discard any of his countless possessions. Another acquaintance cannot pass by his spouse in their home because her possessions only allow for very narrow paths through her overwhelming clutter. They live in a “one-way street” world.

We knew very little about hoarding disorder until 1993 when Randy Frost, a psychology professor at Smith College, authored the first systematic study. In 2013, with the publication of the American Psychiatric Association’s Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition, hoarding became an official separate diagnostic category for the first time.

How prevalent is it? While no multinational studies exist, surveys in our country and Europe estimate that between 2 percent to 6 percent of people are hoarders. At the high end, this translates to 15 to 18 million people in the U.S. Older adults, ages 55-94, have hoarding symptoms at almost three times the rate of younger adults ages 34-44. Hoarding disorder occurs regardless of age, sex or economic level.

Many of us suffer from some degree of disorganization and a desire to retain possessions because we believe we will need or use them someday or that they have sentimental value. But we keep them stored away in our attic or basement where they don’t interfere with our daily lives. Plus, we generally subscribe to the notion that we need to throw out a lot of “our stuff.”

On the other hand, people diagnosed with hoarding disorder must meet these criteria:

- Persistent, enduring difficulty in discarding possessions regardless of their value. Most commonly saved items are reading materials, clothing and mail, but virtually any item can be saved. Fear of losing important information or sentimental attachments are frequent.
- Purposeful accumulation with acute, emotional distress when faced with any pressure to discard the items. They say, “This is much too precious or important to throw out!”
- The accumulated items are so voluminous that they fill up living areas so that their intended use is not possible. Kitchen countertops, bathtubs, tables, chairs, beds, etc., are unusable because they are filled with clutter.
- The extreme difficulty of the thought of discarding the accumulated possessions impairs relations with others and creates an unsafe environment -- risk of fire, disease, etc. Basically, nothing changes unless outside authorities such as social services, sanitation or fire authorities become involved.

Psychiatric conditions can be evaluated as having four levels of severity, nonclinical or normal, mild, moderate or severe.

In other words, most of us frail, fragile human beings will at some time in our lives have varying levels of psychiatric disturbance.

With hoarding disorder, three important distinctions are made:

1. With good or fair insight, the person recognizes and is able to admit that the hoarding-related beliefs and behaviors are problematic.
2. With poor insight, the person is mostly convinced that the hoarding is not problematic despite incontrovertible evidence to the contrary.
3. Absent insight and with delusional beliefs. The person is absolutely convinced that the hoarding is not a problem despite visual evidence. This level of hoarding was recently illustrated in “The Flashbacks” feature by Patrick M. Reynolds in the comics section of *The Washington Post*. It reported the incredible saga of Homer and Langley Collyer who literally hoarded themselves to death in their mansion in the Queens borough of New York City.

Another major specification of hoarding disorder is excessive acquisition. Approximately 80 to 90 percent of those with the disorder also suffer from excessive buying combined with accumulating free items such as printed materials and items discarded by others. I compulsively acquire business cards, travel literature and health literature. I do eventually discard these things, at least some of it. (My wife might not agree!)

Approximately 75 percent of individuals with hoarding disorder will also have a mood or anxiety disorder such as major depressive disorder, social anxiety or generalized anxiety disorder. They suffer from indecisiveness, avoidance, procrastination and difficulty in organizing tasks. Those who hoard inanimate objects may also engage in animal hoarding involving such large numbers of animals as to preclude providing minimum standards of nutrition, sanitation and veterinary care. The assistance of public health authorities is generally needed to intervene in correcting maltreatment of the animals. Without adequate psychological treatment, animal hoarders will quickly replace the animals taken away from them.

Treatment occurs infrequently because many hoarders do not view their hoarding as a problem and few mental health providers have training in this arena. When treatment does occur, it is generally due to insistence from a friend, family member or health officials.

Cognitive-behavior therapy (CBT) is commonly used in combination with psychotropic medication. Meditation or mindfulness training has also become increasingly popular in assisting to identify the root causes. For more information visit hoarding disorder at the Mayo Clinic website. Also, if you simply wish to de-clutter your home, visit www.organizedhome.com They will get you started.

Dr. Jim David is a practicing psychotherapist in Silver Spring who adheres to positivity in all areas of life. Visit his website at www.askdrdavidnow.com or email at james519@comcast.net

Burials On Family Land

By Ryan Helfenbein

In the 1989 movie "The Burbs," Ray (Tom Hanks) and his buddy Art explore a neighbor's yard when they hear this new family might be a bit on the morbid side. During this film, after it is learned that a local townsman (Walter) disappeared, there is a scene where Art finds a bone in this out-of-the-ordinary family's backyard and leans into Ray saying, "Ray, there's no doubt anymore. This is real ... They're burying them in their backyard. Ray - This is Walter!" This movie is one of many that paint a chilling picture of burying people on family property. But it also brings up a question: Can it be done? Could a cemetery be created on my private property? And better yet, could "Walter" be buried in a backyard?

The political and fast answer is possibly. According to the Cemetery Oversight Committee of Maryland, there are no current regulations regarding burial on private land. It is, however, required that the local county government and department of zoning be contacted for approval of location and that it be noted on land records. This process also involves the county health department to be sure the site is not harmful in any way. It would also be wise to go through your local neighborhood association too. A way to look at this approval process is actually similar to that of putting a shed on your property, with the addition of a public notice to make your neighbors aware of your newly invited guest(s). If approval is granted by the local government, the land owners must then report the new cemetery (no matter the size) to the Maryland Cemetery Oversight Committee for recording purposes. As long as the cemetery sites are not for sale, then the private cemetery can operate outside of the committee's direct supervision and therefore no fees are required.

The question is not so much can it be done, but what is done if the owners of that land sell the property in the future?

If the owner of that land sells the property and does not stipulate in the property records that the family of the recently departed can visit the grounds, then there could be a trespassing violation, as that property is not public. As a practical matter, most of the time when property is

sold, the previous owner relocates the graves to a public cemetery nearby. This is actually quite common when developers purchase farmland to develop. The excavation crew comes along to level the earth and, "Voila," they stumble onto a small cemetery from generations ago. Typically the site work comes to a halt and the local undertaker is contacted to step in for the relocation process. There is a bit of an expense to this relocation process called "disinterment and reinterment," including the purchase of new graves and site preparation, extensive paperwork and documentation, essential sign-offs by county officials and detailed public announcements. But usually the individuals are moved to a more permanent place of rest in a nearby cemetery with no concerns. It is often just time that is a factor.

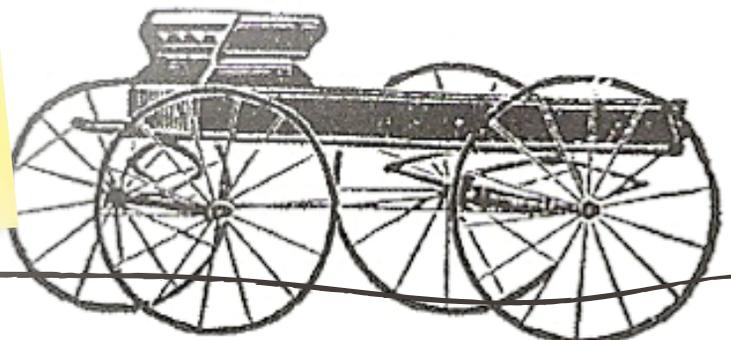
Let's look at a real-life example of this. Many years ago a nearby family I grew up with lost their two sons very suddenly. The parents decided to create a small cemetery on their family farm where the sons would be laid to rest to provide a private setting for the parents to grieve. Fast forward. The family was in a position to sell the property and move out of state. This in turn left behind the question of what to do with the two sons. Well, that's where undertakers stepped in to help. We actually relocated them into a traditional cemetery in the same town. Their markers, vaults and memorabilia all went with them to the new sites, replicating what was on the private land, providing a truly final resting place.

Now I wouldn't rush out to your next neighborhood homeowners meeting screaming that you are looking into putting a cemetery in your backyard anytime soon. But if it is something you are interested in considering, know that there is a good chance it can be approved if a large amount of private land is available. All in all, be sure to get to know your neighbors well, no matter how odd they may seem. As Ray and Art learned, one never can be too sure if a "Walter" isn't resting peacefully out back!

Ryan, owner, supervising mortician and preplanning counselor at Lasting Tributes on Bestgate Road in Annapolis, offers solutions to high-cost funerals. He can be reached at 410.897.4852 or Ryan@LastingTributesFuneralCare.com

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LIVING DELIBERATELY

By *Kater Leatherman*

Thoreau may have gone to the woods to live deliberately, but that's not practical for most of us. However, right here, right now -- in the next breath -- you can choose to live more thoughtfully. This requires focused attention so that you can apply yourself to living well.

Living deliberately can feel a little like remodeling your inner life. You move away from being a spectator who watches from the sidelines. You learn to live inside of your life, fully engaged. You notice what inspires you, then identify what isn't working and remove those pesky obstacles.

Writer Joan Erikson believes that life is about making the most of your "dash," the punctuation mark between your date of birth and death. There's no control over when we are born or when we die, but we are solely responsible for what happens in between.

Coming alive -- the feeling that goes with living deliberately -- begins at the end of your comfort zone. It won't be easy to leave those well worn "ruts," expose your blind spots and face your challenges, but here's the alternative: you miss 100 percent of the shots you don't take. Welcome to the world of discovering what makes you think, react and feel the way you do.

Let's begin with how well you take care of yourself. Move your body everyday. Appreciate it, respect its intelligence, feed it with more whole foods. Eating well doesn't have to be done perfectly, which robs the joy from life anyway, but why not, on a daily basis, strive to make 80 percent of the foods you consume healthy ones? Deliberate eating means consuming foods that energize you, that make you feel good, that support your ability to get out there and affect the world in a more positive way.

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Check any of these sites for unclaimed money that is possibly owed to you. Unclaimed tax refunds at IRS.gov unclaimed pensions at <http://search.pbgc.gov/mp/> or any of the following TreasuryHunt.gov MissingMoney.com or Unclaimed.org

Do you live with credit card debt? If so, you are probably spending more than you have, maybe for things you don't really need. One way to stop the bleeding is to pay cash and get rid of all but one or two cards. Remove waste from your life. Become more aware of the relevant and the irrelevant. The higher goal of spiritual living is not to amass a wealth of stuff, but to wake up and create room for what really matters.

How about your work life? Frederick Buechner, the theologian, says that vocation is "the place where your deep gladness meets the world's deep need." While you may not have meaningful work right now, is it at least an acceptable means to an end? If not, find a passion and spend your down time pursuing it so that you feel like you are thriving instead of surviving.

Then there's the human nemesis: time. You don't find time to do the things you want to do. Either you take time for it or you don't get it. No more excuses that you don't have enough. Every person on this planet has the exact same number of hours each day, the same number that are given to those who are able to accomplish four times as much as most of us.

As far as relationships go, here's my acronym: L.O.V.E. -- Live Open, Value Everyone. The idea is to be open in your mind and heart to see the value in every person. Why? Because they are either teaching you something that needs to be learned or triggering something that needs to surface, heal and be released. Whether you like it or not, everyone is guiding you toward enlightenment, if you take a moment to contemplate the idea.

Life is a journey that must be traveled no matter how difficult the road. If Thoreau were alive, he would probably tell you to take it one choice at a time. Notice how you go about performing daily actions so you can change old, outdated patterns. It is the direct experiencing of everything that happens in the present moment that provides the key to a life lived more deliberately.

Kater is a home rejuvenator and organizer, home stager, yoga teacher and self-published author. Visit her website at www.katerleatherman.com or email katerleatherman@gmail.com

Be strong. You never know who you're inspiring.

So You Want To Be Alone?

10 Possible Hideouts

By Penelope Folsom

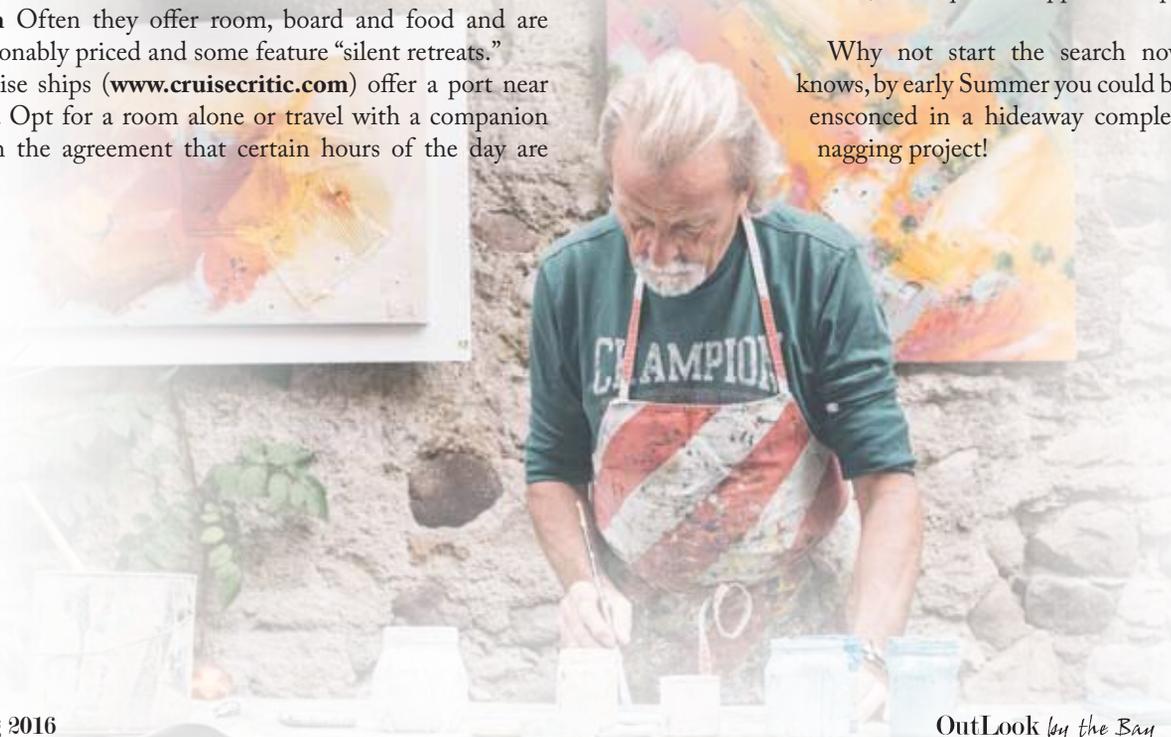
There are occasions when many of us think how wonderful it would be if we could have just a few uninterrupted hours. It would give us the time to complete that task that we've been meaning to get to, such as finishing an art project or typing our memoir, starting something new or completing something on our "to do" list. Maybe just taking time to catch our breath and get away from the hustle and bustle of life. There are places available worldwide, and it takes a bit of research, but here are a few of the more practical suggestions:

1. Your friend's boat. Anchor or tie up in a local harbor or nearby quiet cove and let the captain dinghy to shore, leaving you the much-needed uninterrupted time.
2. Take a long ride on Amtrak (www.amtrak.com). Passenger cars now feature drop down tables (similar to those found in airplanes) as well as plug-ins for your electronics. Also featured are club cars and a business class, which can be quieter, or opt for a suite where you can close the door and really be alone. Trains go up and down the coast as well as transcontinental, giving you as much time to yourself as you'd like.
3. Try artist residencies (<http://thewritelife.com/writing-residencies/>). These offer as much quiet time as you'd like as well as the possibility of socializing with other artists or writers if that's what you'd like.
4. Monasteries can be found at www.RetreatFinder.com. Often they offer room, board and food and are reasonably priced and some feature "silent retreats."
5. Cruise ships (www.cruisecritic.com) offer a port near you. Opt for a room alone or travel with a companion with the agreement that certain hours of the day are

yours alone to hole up in a quiet corner with an endless ocean view. The cooking and cleaning is left to the professionals, and there's room service.

6. Try that unused room in your home. It could be the guest room or the living room where no one dares to tread. Instead of just heating and cleaning it, why not set up a desk in front of a window to begin your project. It can be off limits to others.
7. Cabins are available, but it might take a bit of research to find them. The National Park Service has 42 artist-in-residence programs. It's necessary to apply for space. Log onto www.nps.gov/getinvolved/artist-in-residence.html for details.
8. There are many resorts within easy driving distance, such as nearby Bedford Springs (<http://visitbedfordcounty.com/springs/>), or for a wide selection log onto www.HomeAway.com. Travel alone or with your significant other with the agreement that you each have a designated time out so you can work on your project. Most resorts have quiet corners tucked away – ask at the desk. Or, put out the "Do Not Disturb" sign and hunker down in your room.
9. It may be as simple as heading to a park bench, picnic table or the beach. Choose wherever you're most comfortable. Bring along your reclining beach chair and a thermos of a hot or cold treat and start your project.
10. For a real adventure, and if you have time to apply, there's also Yaddo in New York (www.Yaddo.com) and MacDowell Colony in New Hampshire (www.macdowellcolony.org/about.html), Millay Colony for the Arts (MillayConlony.org), Omi International Arts Center (OmiArtsCenter.org) and Wildacres Retreat (wildacres.org), as well as others that are often free for the artist or writer, but require an application process.

Why not start the search now? Who knows, by early Summer you could be happily ensconced in a hideaway completing that nagging project!



COMING HOME

By Rev. Dr. Amy Richter

There are lots of people I meet who are “coming back” to religion after a long absence. They may have roots in the congregation I serve, or come from a different denomination. But often they mention a desire to “come home,” or reconnect with something they once held dear from their past but lost or left; they want to explore as a mature adult something they never really connected with, to see if there’s something to it for them now. For some, their exploration of a faith community and a conversation with a priest is a chance to do something for themselves, now that their children have grown. Others mention a life experience or circumstance that makes them more aware of their mortality and has given them a desire to explore what gives life meaning, what comes after this life, how to move forward now in a way that matters. For me and my colleagues these conversations are a gift. There is no time in this life when it’s too late to talk about what the holy One may be doing in one’s life. Here are a few thoughts about how to explore coming home.

Try worship first. Before you make an appointment to talk with a minister, try out a worship service. Attending worship will give you a sense of what the community believes, whether this is a faith community with whom you want to spend time, and if it seems like a place in which you will be both comforted and challenged to grow. This will give you some information or questions you may wish to explore with the minister. Worship is supposed to be about something much bigger than ourselves, so we’re not put off by questions like, “Why did you do that?” or “I didn’t understand the significance of ...” You may feel a little lost at first. That’s OK. There won’t be a test at the end, and if someone offers to help you find your way because you look like you need it, that’s a good sign of a friendly community. You’re allowed to

ask for help from the people near you too. Maybe you’ll find a seasoned participant to guide you. Maybe you’ll find a fellow explorer.

Expect to learn some new things. Whether you belonged to a faith community as a child or have attended a few weddings or funerals, faith and religion are big topics. We talk about having a “child-like faith,” but that’s different than a “childish” faith. There’s a lot to learn. Maybe now is the time to take a class and discover some things you never knew and get to discuss some fascinating topics with others. Come as you are; expect to be changed.

Get involved. Like a lot of things in life, the more you get involved, the more meaningful an experience is. Whether it’s taking a class, volunteering to help with a project, attending a time for prayer in addition to the main weekly service or getting involved in a discussion group, you will find more richness the more you allow yourself to participate.

Be patient. Faith communities may be suffused with the holy, have high callings to be places set apart, respond to a high call, and try to live up to high standards, but they’re still filled with flawed people. That’s sort of the point. We’re all on a journey and because there’s no qualifying exam to get in, you’re going to find people who are wonderful and annoying, thoughtful and shortsighted, inspiring and tired. If you have found a community in which you think the holy may be calling to you, it’s far more growth-enhancing to learn holy disciplines of patience, endurance, forgiveness, understanding and sympathy, than it is to leave the first time someone misunderstands you or doesn’t remember your name.

It’s OK to cry in worship. A lot of people do it. We connect with something, a hymn, a memory, an intense feeling and tears come. The seating in many houses of worship is oriented toward the front. Others most likely can’t see you, but you also can’t see that others get teary too. It’s fine. We’re made to feel things, and sometimes tears are what give us the clue that we are actually connecting with something much bigger than ourselves. Don’t be afraid or embarrassed. We’re all in this together, no matter when you arrive.

The Rev. Dr. Richter is the rector of St. Anne’s Church in Annapolis and can be reached at arichter@stannes-annapolis.org



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CHART YOUR COURSE:

How IRA Distributions Can Affect the Taxability of Social Security Income

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 readers. Individuals with legal concerns should consult with an attorney for advice regarding their specific circumstances.

By Jessica L. Estes

With tax season in full swing, this can be a stressful time of year, especially if you have to write a check to Uncle Sam. It can be even worse for those on fixed incomes, so I thought it would be helpful to discuss how Individual Retirement Arrangement (IRA) distributions can affect your Social Security. And with this knowledge, I hope you can devise a strategy to increase your income, but not your tax liability.

First, it is important to understand how your income is taxed. Generally, pensions, tax-deferred accounts and annuities will be taxed at your ordinary income rate -- the highest tax bracket. Profits from the sale of investments and personal property, e.g., mutual funds, stocks, bonds, real estate, etc., on the other hand, will be taxed at the capital gains rates. The capital gains rate depends on how long you have owned the investment. Long-term capital gains apply to investments held for longer than one year and usually, will be taxed up to 15 percent, depending on your tax bracket. Short-term capital gains apply to investments held for one year or less and will be taxed at your ordinary income rate.

Social Security income is different. A portion of your Social Security benefits may be taxable if one-half of your Social Security net benefits (found in Box 5 of Form SSA-1099) plus all your other income exceeds the base amount of \$25,000 if single, or \$32,000 if married filing jointly. In that case, up to 50 percent of your Social Security net benefits may be taxable. However, if one-half of your Social Security net benefits plus all your other income exceeds \$34,000 if single, or \$44,000 if married filing jointly, then as much as 85% of your Social Security net benefits could be taxable.

Moreover, because IRA distributions are considered "other income" for purposes of determining how much, if any, of your Social Security is taxable, it is essential to know basic IRA distribution rules and how they are related:

- IRA distributions may be taken without penalty after age 59 1/2.
- IRA distributions must be

taken beginning at age 70 1/2. Required minimum distributions (RMDs) are based on the value of the account at the end of the preceding calendar year and are calculated by dividing the year-end value by a distribution period from the Internal Revenue Service's "Uniform Lifetime Table." Suffice it to say that each year as your distribution period decreases, your RMDs will likely increase.

- IRA distributions in excess of the RMD will not be penalized, but will be subject to income taxes.

So, what does all of this mean? Let's look at an example:

Example: As a single person, you have Social Security totaling \$24,000 and the only other income you have is a RMD of \$8,000. One-half of your Social Security plus your other income totals \$20,000, so none of your Social Security is taxable. Additionally, none of your \$8,000 RMD will be taxable because you have a personal exemption of \$4,000 and your standard deduction of \$6,300. As such, you could have taken an additional \$2,300 distribution from the IRA and not paid taxes on it.

Conversely, let us assume you have Social Security totaling \$16,000 and other income, including an IRA withdrawal of \$8,000, totaling \$25,000. Because of that \$8,000 IRA withdrawal, as much as 50 percent of your Social Security benefits could be taxable. If you are in the 15 percent tax bracket, you could end up paying \$1,200 in taxes on the Social Security and another \$1,200 in taxes on the IRA. Whereas, if you had not taken the \$8,000, then none of the Social Security would have been taxable.

Because your distribution period is decreasing each year, over time your RMD will increase and eventually, your Social Security income may be taxable, possibly up to 85 percent of it.

As illustrated above, this could have a doubling effect on your taxes.

So, it is critical to evaluate your distribution strategy both prior to and after retirement to maximize your benefits while eliminating unnecessary taxes, especially since more and more people are relying on Social Security and their IRAs to get them through retirement.

Jessica L. Estes is an elder law and estate-planning attorney at Byrd & Byrd, LLC in Bowie. She can be reached at 301.464.7448 or on the website at byrdandbyrd.com

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THE FOREST AWAKENS, THE TRAIL BECKONS

By Phil Ferrara

Far, far away in the deep, dark reaches of outer space, a tiny star races through the galaxy of the Milky Way. It is just one of billions of celestial bodies on its inexorable journey through the universe. That star we call the sun.

As it travels through space at tens of thousands of miles per hour, it is accompanied by eight planets that orbit that sun at vast distances of millions of miles away. One of these is teeming with life in many forms, and we call that planet Earth.

As our Earth rotates around the sun in its yearlong orbit, it follows an elliptical path and does so with a fixed tilt to its axis. That tilt helps to give us our four seasons here in the mid-Atlantic region of the United States.

Our sun is the source of all the light and heat energy that sustains the life forms on Earth. This time of the year we are now approaching a position in Earth's orbit around the sun when that life-giving energy is increasing for us locally. Life forms are beginning to reawaken from their long Winter sleep.

Quiet mornings are now broken by the sounds of songbirds calling. High overhead, one hears the loud honking of migrating geese. The forest wall displays a reddish-green tinge as the leaf buds burst open. The smell of fresh new meadow grass and Spring flowers wafts across the land. Small animals emerge from their Winter hibernation, the air fills with the sounds of their dancing through the leaves.

Spring has arrived and the call of the wild beckons eager hikers and outdoor enthusiasts. Hiking trails abound throughout the Chesapeake Bay region, and hundreds of trailheads await your arrival.

These recommendations are favorite, recent hikes of the Piedmont Trekkers hiking group. But before we begin, all hikers are cautioned to know your limits of endurance. Be certain to wear proper clothing for the day's weather and sturdy footwear at all times. Hiking poles are important to use for stability and wonderful for aerobic training. Never hike in large parks without a map, and carry a phone and whistle for your safety. Water and a snack are important to add to your pack. Here are a few places for you to enjoy:

1 Destination: Rock Creek Regional Park, Lake Needwood, 6700 Needwood Road, Derwood

Description: Seven miles of trail wind around the 75-acre lake's shore and over the hills and ravines that surround the lake.

Scenic views of the lake and birdlife are nearly constant during a hike. A large, well-constructed beaver dam and hut will be found at the mid-point of the east shoreline along the Needwood Trail.

Directions: Take the I-495 D.C. beltway to Exit 29. Turn north on University Boulevard and proceed about 3 miles to Georgia Avenue. Turn right, northbound, and proceed about 5 miles to a left onto Norbeck Road/MD Route 28. Immediately turn right onto Muncaster Mill Road/MD Route 115. Go about 2 miles to a left turn onto Avery Road, and then right onto Needwood Lake Circle to enter the park. Follow signs for the boat ramp parking area. www.montgomeryparks.org/PPSD/ParkTrails/trails_MAPS/rock_creek.shtm

2 Destination: The Glendening Preserve at Jug Bay Wetlands Sanctuary, Wrighton Road, Lothian

Description: This hike is a picturesque and level one. Five miles of trails wind through pine forests along the left bank of the Patuxent River. There are frequent views of the river and marshes along the trail in this upriver portion of the Jug Bay Wildlife Sanctuary. A boardwalk extends 150 yards out into the marsh that you will be able to walk out on.

Directions: Route 301 to Route 4 east, exit at Plummer Lane, go 1/4 mile and turn right on Wrighton Road, go 1/2 mile to entrance on the right. www.jugbay.org

3 Destination: Gunpowder Falls State Park, Wildland and Sweathouse trails section.

Description: The recommended hike is a five-mile section of this heavily forested park along and above the banks of the Big Gunpowder Falls River. The trail goes upriver through a tunnel under Route 1 and follows the river, as well as going up and down the hills on the river's north side. There are heavy pine stands and a pawpaw tree area with several picturesque streams flowing down to the main river.

Directions: Follow Baltimore Beltway to Exit 32 and take Route 1 northbound. Go about 5 miles, and just after crossing the Gunpowder River, the parking lot is on the right. www.stateparks.com/gunpowder_state_park_in_maryland.html

4 Destination: Soldiers Delight Natural Environmental Area

Description: The park contains the unusual serpentine grasslands of this special state reserve. The trail winds over grassland, open barrens, thick forest and past open pit chromite mines. Trail length for this hike is about 5 1/2 miles. Be sure to visit the visitor center's exhibits before beginning your trek to better understand the interesting history and geology of the park.

Directions: Take the Baltimore Beltway to Exit 18. Proceed west on MD 26 for 5 miles. Turn right onto Deer Park Road. Continue for 2 miles to the entrance road to the visitors' center parking lot on the left. www.dnr.state.md.us/wildlife/Publiclands/Natural_Areas/SoldiersDelight.asp

5 Destination: Seneca Creek State Park - Clopper Lake Trail

Description: The 5-mile circuit hike beginning at the visitor

center trailhead proceeds around Clopper Lake's shore. It offers nearly continuous views of the lake and its woodlands and fields. You'll see several bridges as well as shore views for wildlife.

Directions: From Washington, D.C., Beltway, take I-270 north toward Frederick. Take Exit 10, Clopper Road (Route 117). Turn right at the light at the bottom of the ramp. The park is approximately 2 miles on the left. Immediately after entering the park's gate, turn right into the visitor's center and park office.

Be sure to visit the visitor center office to obtain advice on the map for the various trails and trailheads. <http://dnr2.maryland.gov/publiclands/Pages/central/seneca.aspx>

The forests are awakening, and the trails are beckoning. Gather your gear and friends and enjoy the wonders of the great outdoors!

Phil (pferrara65@comcast.net) with good friends Dave and Warren, created the Piedmont Trekkers hiking group 10 years ago.



The poster features a dark background with a large, swirling red cloud on the left side. A silhouette of a person is shown falling or floating within the red cloud. The text is white and black, providing details about the opera performance.

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WHAT PLANTS CAN TEACH US

By Neil Moran

Humankind has explored the secrets of plants ever since a caveman saw a plant growing outside of his cave. We've discovered the culinary, medical, psychotropic and the practical uses of plants to make things like dyes and clothing.

However, we've largely ignored the life lessons that can be learned from plants. By their very nature they can show us the way to patience, love, hope, perseverance and even help guide us as we get older. At least that's the premise of Gina Mohammed's delightful little book, *Catnip and Kerosene Grass*.

Here are a few plants Mohammed talks about and the lessons she says they teach us about the world at large.

ISLAYA CACTUS

The Islaya cactus lives in very dry deserts near the Pacific Ocean. Years may pass with very little rain, but the plant survives off the scant mists that reach it from the ocean. Yet it survives and occasionally even blooms with bright, yellow flowers. Mohammed says we have something to learn from the Islaya cactus: to persevere, she says, when we experience our own drought of inspiration, ideas and hope. Like the scant mist that sustains this cactus, we need to look for the smallest of signs of hope when times are tough.

TREES OF THE FOREST

A mature forest represents generations of growth, change and adaptation. Left to their own devices, trees can overcome the worst calamities without our intervention.

For example, after a fire or being clear-cut by loggers, seedlings of jack pine, birch and aspen quickly emerge. In the years ahead pine, spruce and hemlock will rise above the forest undergrowth of ferns, mosses and the berries that offer food for wildlife.

You should take great pride in the contribution you've made to the generations that have followed you. Your solid advice, guidance and giving spirit will help the next generation of men and women grow strong and tall.

PARTRIDGE PEA

Out on the prairies there is a wildflower called the partridge pea. Though it has lovely bright yellow flowers, they are often hidden under foliage. It is also a sensitive plant; its leaves quickly fold when touched. Do you know people with these traits? They have a story to tell or a gift to give, but are reserved and shy. This person could be your grandchild or a neighbor. Perhaps if you take the time to listen to them they may well blossom.

BE KIND AND CAREFUL

Did you know that a plant can sense when it is being eaten? Scientists believe plants are capable of knowing when they are about to be munched on and raises its defenses accordingly. If we think about it, don't we put up our defenses when our life is being threatened or when we simply want to be careful walking across a busy street? Take a cue from nature and become aware of your surroundings and be careful.



KEROSENE GRASS

In the Australian outback there is a peculiar weed called kerosene grass, named for its extreme flammability when dry. An outback trick is to moisten its fruit in your mouth and then shove it part way into the sand. Immediately, it starts to swirl, burrowing the seed base into the ground. It does this by employing a clever method whereas stringy strands within the seed structure relax and unwind. This is an ingenious method of reseeding itself after a rain.

When our daily lives become very hectic do we sometimes work ourselves into a tizzy? When this happens let's be like kerosene grass, unwind from all that stress and regenerate.

LET'S LEARN TO WORK TOGETHER

Like Mohammed, Michael Pollan, author of *Botany of Desire*, moves beyond the obvious uses of plants and explores what you might call the "plant psychic." In a similar way to Mohammed, Pollan's thoughts on plants transcend conventional thinking. He postulates in his book that we're not the conquerors of the plant world like we think we are. In fact, plants actually manipulate us into propagating the species. In his book he writes about potatoes, apples and cannabis and shows that these plants do their best to draw attention to themselves so we'll not only keep growing them, but improve the species along the way. It seems to be working. Life lesson? Learn to let go, we're not always in charge.

Neil is a freelance writer. He blogs on topics related to gardening and horticulture at www.northcountrygardening.com

BASKET OF TREATS

By Penelope Folsom

Filling an Easter basket can be both fun and creative and it doesn't have to be all sugar-loaded treats. Why not fill that basket this year with something lasting such as:

- A gift card to a favorite store, restaurant, Amazon or iTunes.
- A year's subscription to a magazine.
- Natural soaps or small tubes of hand cream.
- A small potted plant.
- Jewelry such as plastic bracelets for kids or a bit of serious "bling" for an adult.
- Wooden spoons and interesting herbs and spices.
- Tickets to a movie, play or exhibition.

- Seed packets for flowers or vegetables. For kids pumpkin seeds.
- Paperback or small novelty books.
- Blank notebooks.
- Any type of ball -- even adults can enjoy a game of catch.
- A pack of mechanical pencils, pens or markers.
- Small jigsaw puzzles.
- Bubbles are fun for anyone
- Age-appropriate crossword puzzles.
- Games such as "Bananas" or any card game.
- Art supplies for the budding artist.

Any of these items can be combined in a nest of straw and tucked into an interesting basket. Or try something different: a beach pail for a child or a colorful watering can for the gardener or even a straw hat filled with decorative colored grass.



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DISCOVERING THE CANADIAN ROCKIES

By Ellen Moyer

Still undecided about where to go and what to do for time away from Chesapeake country? Consider the Canadian Rockies for a change. But don't visit them as the advertising suggests, discover them! And there is a lot to discover.

If your interest is history, Canmore, a new Nordic Winter sports center on the edge of Canada's national parks, is a recycled railroad and coal-mining town with lots of stories to tell about early life in these mountains.

For the vigorous: outdoor sports, hiking, horse riding, rafting, canoeing, fishing and biking abound in the Rocky Mountain paradise of Alberta, Canada, west of Calgary, the home of the Calgary Stampede and rodeo in July.

Banff and Jasper National Parks are UNESCO World Heritage Sites. Defined by *National Geographic* as one of the world's top 10 scenic travel routes, it's not to be missed. Villages

of Banff, Louise and Jasper are clustered in the center of the park where the mountains are close up and personal. Sometimes they are twisted and others are like a cork in a bottle, which are clues to the powerful forces that lifted these bundles of rock toward the sky. Here is a place of wonder to discover the makings of planet Earth.

It is also a place to relax and restore your weary bones. Natural hot springs of water at 104 degrees dot the area. Banff, Canada's first national park, began its life as a special place when three railway workers stumbled onto the thermal hot springs in 1883. Banff Upper Hot Springs is an affordable place to soak away the strains of hiking, horse riding, biking or shopping in the village. Spas complete with massage and special alocs are abundant in the park areas.

The three villages are home to luxury lodges and historic hotels. Banff Springs and Chateau Lake Louise tower upward to the surrounding mountains. Lake Louise, a diamond in the wilderness, is a glaciated lake of brilliant blue nestled in the towering peaks of Jasper, the largest of the Rocky Mountain parks. Here you can experience a skywalk 1,000 feet above the glacier ice fields below. Prefer terra firma? Easy hiking trails are well marked.

Be aware, much of the lodging is expensive. But campgrounds on the edge of ancient glaciated lakes are abundant. Log cabins with wood-burning stone fireplaces near outdoor hot pools are available to complete your outdoor wilderness experience.

The Canadian Rockies are a horse of a different color than our sea-level Bay country and more spectacular, in my view, than our Glacier National Park. So if you are looking for a change, a new experience, new things to discover, venture north to one of the most scenic areas on planet Earth. For more information, log onto **Travelalberta.com**

Ellen, a former mayor of Annapolis, can be reached at EllenMoyer@yahoo.com

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Hit the Road for the Many Benefits of Walking

By Leah Lancione

It's not earthshattering news that exercise is good for your health. For decades, health experts have been prompting people to get up and exercise at least 30 minutes a day. For seniors, the choice to exercise regularly can improve and prolong your life. Committing to an exercise regime doesn't mean you have to become a gym rat. Just lace up some sneakers and go; walk around your neighborhood, to a friend's house and back, around the mall or anywhere!

A recent report from the Lifestyle Interventions and Independence for Elders (LIFE) clinical trial, published in a 2014 *Journal of the American Medical Association*, confirms that seniors can remain healthy, stave off disability and improve mobility by walking.

Citing the LIFE trial, Howard LeWine, M.D., chief medical editor of Harvard Health Publications (www.health.harvard.edu/blog/walking-exercise-helps-seniors-stay-mobile-independent-201405287173) reports that starting an exercise program at any age will be beneficial. One of the goals for the participants in the trial was to get at least 150 minutes per week of walking. That equates to a little over 20 minutes every day or almost 40 minutes every other day. Can do, right?

Besides being cheap and simple, why is walking so beneficial to our health? Countless fitness books are devoted to the topic of walking with each touting its advantages from weight loss, to strengthening bones or preventing health conditions and more. So let's explore some of the benefits.

Walk to Lose Weight

According to the Mayo Clinic (www.mayoclinic.org), "If you add 30 minutes of brisk walking to your daily routine, you could burn about 150 more calories a day." Of course, the quicker your pace or longer you walk, the more calories you'll burn -- just don't overdo it and put yourself at risk for injury. Coupled with a healthy diet, a vigorous daily walking routine could lead to a trimmer waistline for sure. Just do an Internet search on "walking for weight loss program" and a host of printable plans will appear. Choose the one that best fits your goals and or fitness level.

Walk to Strengthen Your Bones

The National Institute of Health (NIH) Osteoporosis and Related Bone Disease National Resource Center reports the best kind of exercise for strengthening bones is the "weight-bearing kind," like walking, that "force you to work against

gravity." The Melio Guide, an online health resource founded by physiotherapist Margaret Martin, who has also authored books on safe exercise, cites NIH abstracts on the topic of exercise and bone health that purport "walking has been shown to reduce your hip fracture risk by as much as 40 percent."

The Arthritis Foundation concurs, referring to studies that show walking can prevent the loss of bone mass. In particular, a "Brigham and Women's Hospital, Boston, study of post-menopausal women found that 30 minutes of walking each day reduced their risk of hip fractures by 40 percent." (www.arthritis.org)

Prevent Health Conditions

The Arthritis Foundation also presents research findings from the University of Michigan Medical School and the Veterans Administration Ann Arbor Healthcare System that reveal "those who exercise regularly in their 50s and 60s are 35 percent less likely to die over the next eight years than their nonwalking counterparts. That number shoots up to 45 percent less likely for those who have underlying health conditions." These remarkable findings are consistent with the health experts' claims that regular walking at a good pace can preclude conditions like high blood pressure, type II diabetes and heart disease.

Elevate Your Mood

Positive physical effects aside, walking habitually can also make you feel better about yourself and improve your mood all together. Don't believe it? Well, WebMD (www.webmd.com) holds that "improved self-esteem is a key psychological benefit of regular physical activity. When you exercise, your body releases chemicals called endorphins. These endorphins interact with the receptors in your brain that reduce your perception of pain." Can you believe that? So, even if your joints ache at times or you don't feel you have enough energy to get up for a walk, the chemicals in your brain will make your body *actually* feel better afterward. If you resist the urge to stay on the couch continually and instead hit the pavement for walks, your body and mind *will* reap the benefits.

Just remember before you start any exercise regimen to consult your doctor if you have any pre-existing conditions. Also, start off on the right foot (literally) by choosing proper walking shoes.

IT'S SPRING- TIME TO MAKE SOME CHANGES

By Penelope Folsom

Spring might just be the best time of year. Now, before the heat and casualness of the Summer set in, why not let Spring invigorate you to examine things around you that could use a nudge to get you back on track. Here are 10 suggestions that could well put you on the road to being fit, organized, energized and maybe even help to ward off some of the signs of advancing years:

Socialize: Get out there and meet others. There are people who may well enjoy sharing one of your interests or hobbies. Why not have fun doing it with others, be it museum visits, bike rides, photography or walking, or whatever you enjoy. Why not join others in their special interest? Many recent studies have pointed out the benefits of older people being more social.

Choose Your Foods Carefully: Marketing is everything to food purveyors. You're a discerning adult, so choose your foods with a critical eye. You know what's good for you and what isn't – it's time to institute that sound judgment.

Stay Tuned: There is so much going on, so many opportunities, so much still to learn and be part of. Keep up. Try to stay abreast of new technology and new ways to communicate. If you need help with the latest technology, find a 10-year-old – they're a wealth of up-to-date information. If that doesn't work, there are tutorials available on UTube on just about any subject you can think of.

Diet Supplements: This means, if you have vitamins for a specific purpose, take them! They're not doing you any good getting stale sitting on the kitchen shelf. You bought them for a reason. Why aren't you taking them?

Keep Moving: Now more than ever physical activity should be part of life. It has been proven to be a life-extender. Find a favorite activity such as golf, pickle ball, walking, tennis or your own special brand of exercise. Encourage a few friends to join you. It's more fun as a group.

Give Up Bad Habits: This can mean too much TV, sleeping too many hours, food that you know you shouldn't be eating, smoking and even driving too fast. Give it up now and find a fun activity to replace it.

Volunteer: There are more than 400 volunteer opportunities in Anne Arundel County alone. Why not become part of the growing group of seniors who are enjoying work with others. Log onto www.aacvc.org for Anne Arundel County or <http://volunteer.maryland.gov> for opportunities in the surrounding area.

Take Care of Paperwork: You know what that is. A will, a power of attorney and an advance health care directive. And while you're busy with that, it might be a great time to plan the arrangements for your final act. You've been meaning to do it -- well then, do it. There's a great feeling of relief once it's taken care of and all the paperwork is in place. It's going to have to be done someday so why not now?

Clean up and Scale Down: It's time. You've spent a lifetime acquiring all that stuff. Now spend a few days donating it or passing it on to family members. This can include clothing, furniture, appliances and all that techno equipment that you think you'll use again. The Salvation Army is a worthwhile drop site and The Vietnam Veterans of America will come to your home to pick up. Log onto www.vvmaryland.org/householdgoods.htm These are just two of the organizations that would be happy to take your stuff.

Plan a Trip: This can be fun. Where have you always wanted to visit? Maybe after completing the above "Clean up and Scale Down" list, reward yourself with an adventure either locally or off to some exotic place that's on your bucket list. If not now, when?



Why not let go of what you can't change.



Dear Vicki,
This political season seems, if possible, even nastier than in previous years. An acquaintance I see socially is as bad as the talking heads on television: She lives to argue about politics. Unfortunately, I can't just turn her off when I've had enough! While I consider myself well informed, we do not share the same views and I'm not a good debater, even if I wished to argue with her, which I don't. How can I handle this obnoxious behavior without losing my cool?

Dear Vicki,
There is so much bad news in the world and it really gets me down. How do I stay positive in the face of so much negativity?

TALKING HEADS

Apparently, your acquaintance never attended the "Great Aunt Daisy" school of manners. My Great Aunt Daisy was a gracious lady who taught me that people who were brought up well never foisted their political or religious views on others. In fact, she insisted that we be sensitive and circumspect in such discussions, even with family members or our closest friends. More is the pity that we cannot send a whole lot of folks from both political parties to the same school today!

With round-the-clock news and a seemingly never-ending election season, the tendency to be insufferable about these matters in social situations is on the rise. We watch political commentators on television slugging it out on a regular basis. Still, this is no license to adopt the same behavior within our social or family circles. It simply does not make for harmonious relationships and can be downright rude.

For these situations, learn to become adept at changing the subject. When your talking head gets on a roll, smile and issue a reply about something totally different—such as the weather. Don't wait for her to wind down as you inwardly seethe. When she comes up for air, begin talking about a neutral topic: Summer vacations, that funny thing your grandson said, or whatever comes into your head. Don't worry about finding a neat transition from politics to a new subject. Just cut her off and jump right in. Either she will get the message and find a new person to offend, or she will ask you what's up with the change of subject. If it's the latter, explain that you do not discuss politics in social situations. If she persists, politely excuse yourself.

For those of you with strong political beliefs who believe it is your duty to convert others, think again. It is never acceptable to shove your opinions onto someone else. Doing so is rude and is also an ineffective means of persuasion. Instead of torturing friends and family, channel your passion into donating time or money for your cause, write letters to the editor and gently feel out others to find kindred spirits who enjoy the banter. If you find other willing partners, feel free to have at it and pontificate away. Just leave the rest of us poor souls in peace. Please!

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

STAYING POSITIVE

Start by filtering out some of the bad news. A steady stream of television, radio and Internet news can definitely affect our outlook. Limit your exposure to updates on current events to once or twice daily. Unless you hold an important position as a world leader, that is quite enough to stay informed.

Compose a list of questions to ground you and set the tone for your day. Jot them on an index card to keep in your wallet. When you feel discouraged or overwhelmed, review them to revive your spirits. Here are some suggestions to borrow or tweak:

- *Am I OK right here and right now?* Take a quick inventory. Are you warm, healthy and have plenty of food and water? Rejoice!
- *What has made me smile lately?* A clear, blue sky after a spell of rainy days? The news that a dear friend became a grandmother? Notice and remember.
- *How can I make someone else's day a bit brighter?* Complimenting a cashier on her colorful sweater or penning a thank-you note improves your own spirits and uplifts others.
- *What can I learn today?* Try a new route to work, look up a word in the dictionary and use it in a sentence, explore Pinterest, or learn a new shortcut on your smartphone.
- *What am I grateful for?* Count your blessings.
- *How can I make tomorrow a better day?* Plan something that helps you look forward to tomorrow.



Easter Basket Treats for Kids

By Neil Moran

Here are a couple of garden gift ideas for your grandkids or their parents that would be great to tuck into their Easter baskets. These products feature a clever way to get today's kids interested in gardening.

Plant a Lollipop?

How about VeggiePOPS. This looks like a lollipop and even has the colored wrappings on each different VeggiePOP. But don't eat it! Inside there are three to four seeds of easy-to-grow vegetables and a little seed starting mix and nutrients to get it off to a good start. VeggiePOPS comes with online instructions and a full-scale teacher's curriculum, call Bloomers Island, to help youngsters (and adults) learn more about gardening and achieve gardening success. They also sell VeggiePOTS, growing containers made from recycled plastic bottles, which you can use to start the seeds in. The EarthBox kit, which has been around a while now and sells for about \$55, will also work well for growing the vegetables. These are designed to get kids interested in gardening and not see it as a chore, according to Cynthia Wylie, the founder and CEO.

"Our whole goal was to make gardening as fun and as easy as possible," Wylie says. VeggiePOPS come in six different "flavors," including Swiss chard, carrots, radishes, cherry tomatoes, Summer squash and bush beans.

Wylie says this is the first generation of kids with a life expectancy less than the previous generation. She thinks this is due, in part, to diet and kids having a more sedentary lifestyle as a result of playing video games and such. Gardening will not only get the kids on their feet, they'll get eating better.

"Less than one-third of kids eat more than one serving of vegetables a day," Wylie says. She says that they have found kids will eat vegetables they grow themselves. Parents are very excited about this, which is also driving sales of the product.

"It's a taste of gardening," says Wylie. "And invariably what happens is there are a couple of kids in every class that become obsessed with it and those are the kids that you want to encourage, they're the ones that are going to be the agriculture majors of tomorrow."

VeggiePOPS sell for \$3.99 each or \$20 for a package of six. You can find out more and the learning curriculum, which includes a poster that you and your grandchild can use to track the growth of your vegetables, at bloomersisland.com

Plant a Pencil?

Here is a product that is intended to get kids interested in gardening and to start thinking about conserving natural resources. It's called the Sprout Pencil. It's a lead-free, eco-friendly pencil made of biodegradable Ticonderoga cedar. Contained in the top capsule are seeds for different vegetables, herbs and flowers. When the pencil is down to a nub, the capsule is removed and planted. There are more than a dozen different Sprout Pencils, including colored pencils for drawing that contain seed for growing herbs, vegetables and flowers.

The idea for the Sprout Pencil originated at MIT, where students were looking to create a sustainable product for children. The MIT students formed a company centered on their invention and then sold it to an investor in Denmark. The rest, as they say, is history. They now sell more than 450,000 of the pencils per month both here and abroad.

"For every tree that is used to make a Sprout Pencil, we plant another one," says Ed Goldman, who is in charge of North American sales for Sprout World, the parent company. "The nice thing about the Sprout Pencil is they don't end up in landfills like other writing utensils."

Sprout World also sells what it calls Tiny Gardens, which are shallow containers made from recycled cardboard. Instead of a potting type soil, the Tiny Gardens contain a fibrous hemp mat, which is used to start the seeds of basil, broccoli, cress, radish and sunflower.

You can also grow microgreens in the Tiny Gardens. Microgreens became popular in the 1980s among chefs in California. Micro-greens are small plants, which you harvest as soon as they have developed their first set of true leaves. The stem is longer than normal, because micro-greens are grown for a short, intensive period, during which the stems strive for sunlight.

All of these products, including the Sprout Pencil, can be ordered at Amazon.com. Check for them also in your local garden center. They've been featured on CNN and the Today Show, so they could end up in a store near you. You can also go to Sproutworld.com for more information about their products and to find a store.

Neil is a horticulturist and blogs at www.northcountrygardening.com

Did you know that 95 percent of what we worry about never happens.

Special Place by the Bay: Blackwater NWR

By Henry S. Parker

One of the most stunning natural areas east of the Mississippi is closer than you might think. Only 90 minutes from Annapolis, the Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge sprawls across 27,000 acres of ponds, inlets, marshes, fields and forests on Maryland's Eastern Shore. If you've never visited, you owe yourself a trip. If you've been before, by all means go again. However frequently you explore this watery world, you'll always discover something wondrous and new.

Here are just a few reasons to visit:

- One-third of Maryland's tidal wetlands lie within refuge borders.
- More than 250 bird species live in the refuge, for at least part of the year. Of these, 85 breed there.
- Blackwater is a key stopover on the Atlantic Flyway for migratory birds, including the peregrine falcon.
- It hosts the largest East Coast breeding population of bald eagles north of Florida.
- The refuge is home to a wide variety of mammals, including bats, otters, white-tailed and Sika deer, red fox, muskrats and the Delmarva Peninsula fox squirrel.
- The area around Blackwater is steeped in fascinating human history.

A Storied Past

Managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the refuge was established as a waterfowl sanctuary in 1933. Long before, the area was home to the Nause-Waiwash tribe of Nanticoke Indians. The tribe's descendants, now numbering some 250 Native Americans, have restored an ancestral longhouse a half-mile from the refuge and make annual pilgrimages to the region.

Over the years the lands that now comprise the refuge were used for trapping, farming and forestry.

The area around Blackwater has an illustrious civil rights history. The heroic Harriet Tubman, who helped more than 300 slaves escape on the Underground Railroad, was born and raised in nearby Bucktown. The refuge itself is believed to have been a hiding place for fleeing slaves awaiting their ride to freedom. You can explore this important chapter in American history by traveling along part of the Harriet Tubman Underground Railway Byway, a 125-mile scenic drive that has been designated an All-American Road. Along the route you can visit the 25,000-acre Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad National Monument that includes part of the Blackwater lands, and the Harriet Tubman Museum and Educational Center in nearby Cambridge. The Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad State Park, adjacent to the refuge, will open in 2017.

A Vital Present

Today, the Blackwater NWR is a critically important habitat for an impressive variety of birds, plants and animals that thrive in diverse and protected environments that include fresh and brackish-water marshes; shallow waters, mud flats, fields and

coniferous and deciduous woodlands. Visitors can traverse this potpourri of natural wonders using multiple means. Car drivers, motor cyclists, bicyclists and walkers can navigate Wildlife Drive, a flat, four and one-half mile paved road that meanders through the refuge. Interpretive hiking trails thread through forests and old fields and stretch along watery vistas. Kayakers and canoeists can take advantage of 20 miles of marked paddling routes. Motorized boats are permitted in the refuge's waters from April 1 through Sept. 30. Fishing and crabbing is allowed from boats and state-owned bridges, but not from the refuge shoreline.

A Challenged Future

For all its beauty and interest, the Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge is an ephemeral environment. Every year more than 300 acres of marshland erode, creating open water where aquatic vegetation once thrived. Since its establishment Blackwater has lost over 5,000 acres of natural wetlands. The changing landscape is eliminating important habitats and threatening the future of some of the refuge's iconic species, including the federally endangered Delmarva fox squirrel.

Erosion is due to several factors: rising sea levels from global climate change; the past introduction of nutria, an exotic invasive muskrat-like mammal that consumes wetland plants; and flocks of resident Canada geese that uproot native vegetation. A USDA management project has successfully eliminated nutria from the refuge. Biologists are working to reduce geese populations. And several marsh restoration projects are underway.

In the end, there is no holding back the rising seas. But nature is adjusting and the marshes are migrating. As the elevated sea level inundates wetlands vegetation, it also intrudes on bordering ground. New marsh grasses emerge where loblolly pines once stood. Nature taketh away and nature giveth back.

As these natural changes spill out of the refuge, biologists and conservationists recognize that saving the wetlands will require coordinated measures to protect areas bordering the refuge, encourage the spread of marsh grasses, acquire new land, and better manage wetlands in their current locations. *Blackwater 2100*, prepared by The Conservation Fund and the National Audubon Society, lays out a long-term strategy to accomplish these goals.

If You Go

The refuge and its impressive visitor center are open year-round, for a small fee. For details see the Blackwater NWR brochure available at www.fws.gov/refuge/Blackwater

Enjoy your visit!

Henry is an adjunct associate professor at Georgetown University. He can be reached at hspshp@gmail.com

Photo credit: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. <http://www.fws.gov/refuge/Blackwater/>

Spring Cleaning Time!

How do you decide what's to recycle, throw out or give away?

By Leah Lancione

It's Spring cleaning time, which means not only is it time to dust the cobwebs, clean the windows and scrub the blinds, this is the time to declutter your house by sorting through closets, drawers and storage to see what items you can toss, recycle or donate. So how do you decide what gets pitched and what will get a new home? The following are a few tips to help you declutter systematically.

A good method is to go room by room with three garbage bags or boxes and bins. Label them: Trash, Recycle and Charity.

Erin Doland of the website www.unclutterer.com and author of *Unclutter Your Life in One Week* and the recently published *Never too Busy to Cure Clutter*, says it's important to ask yourself some important questions before you haul your unwanted items to the closest Goodwill or dump. "Would someone pay money to buy this?" If you think someone would pay money for it, then it's usually of good enough quality to donate to charity. However, if an item is chipped, torn, stained or damaged in any way, you should usually trash or recycle the item, Doland says. So, a good rule of thumb is if it's not good enough for you or your family, it's probably not good enough for anyone else.

However, if you have items that can be repurposed or recycled, check your county's list of acceptable recyclables and either put it on the curb for the weekly pickup or arrange for special removal. Another place to consult is the Environmental Protection Agency (www.epa.gov/recycle/how-do-i-recycle-common-recyclables) for a list of acceptable recyclables. Items like newspapers, shoeboxes and old magazines are a no-brainer. Batteries, insecticides, paint cans or car oil, on the other hand, may need special attention.

Room 1: The Kitchen

Go through your cabinets and drawers looking for utensils that aren't being used (maybe even plastic forks, knives and spoons collected from hotel stays or takeout), any bakeware that may be scratched or outdated, dishes that are chipped, or even cooking gadgets that haven't been used in a year. Decide whether these items should be trashed or donated.

Next, go through your refrigerator and (gulp) pantry to throw away any expired goods—boxed, packaged or canned—as well as spices that are too old for use. Visit www.eatbydate.com/other/how-long-do-spices-last/ for a list of how long spices last beyond their sell by date.

Lastly, go through vitamins and dietary supplements and discard those which have expired. Though they don't go bad or become toxic, vitamins do lose their potency over time. So, if

they're way beyond their "best-if-used-by" dates, you're better off replacing them with something that's fresh and beneficial.

The Bathroom

In the bathroom, dispose of old or unwanted toiletries by inspecting all makeup, skincare creams or lotions, and utensils such as brushes, sponges, applicators and mirrors. Also, if you have any superfluous towels or washcloths, contact local animal shelters to see if they'll accept donations. Makeup utensils, packaging and cosmetic bags can all be recycled along with cosmetic containers. Makeup itself definitely should be pitched after a period of time.

This is a timetable for use, according to Ecolife.com:

- Lipstick and lip liner: 2 years
- Lip gloss: 18-24 months
- Mascara and liquid eyeliner: 3-6 months
- Concealer, cream eyeshadow, blush, or foundation: 12-18 months
- Nail polish: 1 year
- Blush, bronzer, eyeliner and powdered eye shadow and foundation: 2 years

The Bedroom

In the bedroom, go through all closets and drawers to sort through clothing. Immediately toss stained or torn garments, old panty hose and unmatched socks. As Spring and Summer are approaching, use this as an opportunity to get rid of cold weather garments that are tattered, weather-beaten or that you just don't wear. Make room for any new warm weather items you've purchased by purging anything you haven't worn in a year.

If you have a desk or an area where you keep important financial records, receipts or documents, shred anything that contains private information and then put it in the recycle bin. Note, the IRS recommends keeping receipts for tax purposes for three years after you file returns. Generally the same applies for retail or customer receipts and bank statements.

Probably close by is the linen closet. Don't forget to see if you have any blankets that can be donated to homeless or animal shelters.

Living Room

Throughout the rest of the house, determine if any furniture or accent pieces are worthy of being donated. If you want to declutter and downsize your living space, find new homes for items in good condition. Also, if dusting all your knickknacks has become a major chore, it's time to set them free. See if any friends

Life just gives you time and space. It's up to you to fill it.

or family members are interested in your furniture or decorative pieces first, and, if not, think about selling them on Craigslist or eBay.

The website **Freecycle.com** also offers similar services where folks offer to find good use for your unwanted merchandise. One man's trash is another man's treasure, right?

Electronics

Spring cleaning also means getting rid of unwanted electronic devices. Instead of hanging on to that old VCR, outdated gaming device, cell phone or computer parts, head to the county recycling center. For example, the Anne Arundel County Recycling center accepts residents' unwanted electronics. The County Waste Management department website (www.aacounty.org/DPW/WasteManagement/electronics.cfm) also lists local companies that will take and recycle old computer monitors and TVs.

Books

People often find it hard to get rid of old books, but if they are missing covers or

have water-damaged pages, it's best to throw them away. However, if your books, even old textbooks, are in good condition (or are still relevant, in the case of textbooks), consider donating them to charity such as B.I.G. **big-books.org** for resale or try dropping them off at your local library for the book-giveaway bin.

Another idea is to jump on the "book crossing" bandwagon and set your book free into "the wild" for others to enjoy. According to Wikipedia, "book crossing" is defined as "the practice of leaving a book in a public place to be picked up and read by others, who then do likewise." The online club was founded in an effort to "make the whole world a library." The founders started this "society" of book sharers in April of 2001. Wikipedia also reveals that as of August 2015, there were "over 1,400,000 members and over 11,000,000 books traveling through 132 countries." For more information, visit **bookcrossing.com** or check out the Facebook page for details on how to get started.

You might just find this annual Spring cleaning as cathartic -- even therapeutic -- as you declutter your home.

Bay Bytes

Looking for some old-time fun? Log onto www.Archive.org/details/oldtimeradio where you will get to listen to reruns of your old favorites such as Dragnet or Jack Benny.



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A photograph of a white coffee cup with a floral pattern on a matching saucer, set on a white tray. The tray is decorated with pink and white flowers and green leaves. The background is softly blurred, showing more of the tray and some light-colored objects.

BOOKS:

Old, New and Obscure

FOR SHE IS THE TREE OF LIFE: GRANDMOTHERS THROUGH THE EYES OF WOMEN WRITERS

Edited by Valerie Kack-Brice
Conari Press, Berkeley, California (1994)

Everyone has grandmothers. Some we may never meet, some we live with, and some are a very important part of our lives. "For She is the Tree of Life" touches on all of these grandmothers plus some we might not think of.

The authors range from famous poets such as Maya Angelou, actresses such as Ethel Barrymore, and many professors, teachers, nurses, women from foreign countries and just ordinary people that want to remember their grandmother.

The essays, poems and memoirs range from a few lines to several pages. The book is divided into five sections: The Cut of Her Cloth, Food for Thought, No Time Like the Present, A Word to the Wise and A Stitch in Time. Each section contains from nine to 13 tributes to grandmothers.

At the end of the book there is a section for the reader to contemplate and possibly use. It is called "Bone of My Bones: A Grandmother Workshop." It is a place to remember your grandmother, grieve or prepare for her passing. Many of the writers in this book were hesitant or frightened by the idea of putting their thoughts or memories down on paper. The word grandmother brings up so many feelings and emotions that you may find it hard to get started with this very worthwhile exercise. You might find out, as I did, that many memories that you may have thought were long gone will come back as you start writing. Give it a try.

There are topic questions to help one get started, such as "Write about a significant event that happened to your grandmother. Write prose or poetry. If you don't know the details, make them up. This idea was suggested by Maya Angelou. Don't think of it as an assignment; don't worry about punctuation or grammar. Just get down your thoughts. You can always go back and edit your writing if you want to make it more readable.

I hope you enjoy reading these moving tributes as written by women of all ages and nationalities. *For She is the Tree of Life* makes a great gift for grandmothers or prospective grandmothers.

~ Peggy Kiefer

BROOKLYN

By Colm Toibin
Simon and Shuster, Inc. New York (2009)

Now that *Brooklyn* has achieved international recognition due to the movie that stars an Oscar-nominated lead character, this well written and understated novel will probably attract many readers and book club discussions.

The movie follows the novel very closely with the exception of the ending. The author, Colm Toibin, likes to "leave the reader guessing how it will end." But the movie actually shows a very moving and emotional ending, which appeals to most moviegoers.

Eilis Lacey is a 20-year-old naive young woman who has lived quietly in the Irish town of Enniscorthy, Ireland, with her rather demanding mother and her beautiful and charismatic sister in the lean years following World War II. Since she cannot find any gainful employment save a part-time job in a grocery store, her sister, Rose, introduces her to an American Catholic priest who is visiting his old home in Ireland from New York City. Here

When you get up in the morning – tell yourself I can do this!

is where Eilis' life changes. Father Flood suggests she emigrate to Brooklyn (which is just like Ireland, he tells her). He can arrange a job in a department store and a room in a boarding house run by an Irish woman. She is persuaded to go, against her wishes, by her mother and sister. Eilis is not one to "rock the boat" or make any unpleasant decisions, but she is off on an ocean steamer to America.

After a very rough trip across the Atlantic, which Toibin describes in vivid detail, her life in Brooklyn is lonely and depressing. She is homesick and sorry she ever left Ireland. There are some very interesting young women in her boarding house that make for heated dinner time discussions.

Circumstances change as Eilis goes to night school to become a bookkeeper, and at a dance arranged by the priest, meets a young Italian plumber named Tony. After a slow, reluctant start, Eilis falls for the charming Tony and her life improves in her new country.

Of course, some calamity interrupts this bliss and when bad news arrives from Ireland Eilis must return, but not before marrying Tony in a secret ceremony. When in her old hometown, Eilis has a relationship with a pub owner who is very interested in her and she begins to doubt her love for Tony.

You will need to read the book or see the movie to see how this plays out.

Toibin, has an understated style of writing, which makes for a soothing read. It is interesting how he has such an understanding of 1950s Brooklyn as he has only visited the city a few times.

I found this novel hard to put down and was always anxious to get back to it. It has no violence, murders, mayhem or people being blown up! It is just a well-written love story of a shy, socially inept young Irish girl who comes to Brooklyn, N.Y., and transforms her life.

~ Peggy Kiefer

SISTERS OF SHILOH

By Kathy and Becky Hepinstall

Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, New York (2015)

Sisters is an historical novel that, at its core, is a love story. However, this love story is anything but ordinary. This is a tale of the unshakeable bond between sisters. Set in the backdrop of the Civil War, Libby and Josephine have their loyalty tested when one sets out to avenge her husband's death.

Libby, fixated by a need to even the score, joins the Stonewall Brigade to kill one Yankee for every year of Arden's lost life. Josephine, fiercely protective of her sister, enlists as well. Through the sisters' transformation into Joseph and Thomas, Libby becomes more and more consumed by hate while Josephine begins to fall in love with a fellow soldier. The intensity of their inner struggles is palpable. Motivated by opposing passions to brave and survive bloody battles, enduring lonely nights huddling around campfires near starving, or shivering in tents on sleepless nights—all the while having to hide their true identities—illustrates the sheer strength of the human will. As the reader becomes more engrossed in the plot and the sisters' individual plights, it is clear the battles they endure extend beyond the battlefield.

Sisters of Shiloh is presented with graceful language, vivid description and interwoven with meticulously

accurate historical accounts and details.

Deeply authentic character depictions and a gripping narrative take the reader on a journey with these sisters as they experience the complexities of love, the anguish and torment of grief, the iniquitousness of war, the self-destructiveness of hate and ultimately the unwavering loyalty between sisters. Available in paperback March 29, *Sisters of Shiloh* was named "2015 Bonus Book of the Year" by The Pulpwood Queen Book Club.

~ Leah Lancione

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EARLY SPRING QUIZ-ACROSTIC

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

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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.

NEW!
Quiz-Acrostics Book 2, published by Puzzleworm is now available at amazon.com
 Sheila can be reached at acrostics@aol.com or visit her web site: www.quiz-acrostics.com

- A. Whiff
- B. Remnant
- C. "There is _____ in Mudville..." (2 wds.)
- D. Part of the larynx
- E. Hall-of-Fame pitcher (2 wds.)
- F. Artificial
- G. Westmoreland's conflict (2 wds.)
- H. Type of trust account
- I. Author, *The Great American Novel*, about baseball's Patriot League
- J. Blitz
- K. Frigid
- L. Oakland A's (2 wds.)
- M. Connect
- N. High and tight pitch
- O. Excited about social networking?
- P. Mickey Mantle or Pete Rose, e.g. (2 wds.)
- Q. Lovable Sesame Street resident
- R. The Bambino (2 wds.)
- S. Skillful at sports
- T. They leap on the 10th Day of Christmas
- U. Dough
- V. Dancer Verdon in *Damn Yankees*
- W. Bow's partner
- X. Batting average of .200 (2 wds.)
- Y. Winged female who holds an atom

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

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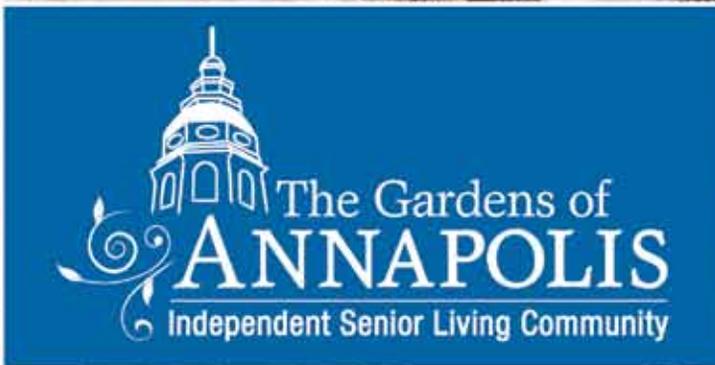
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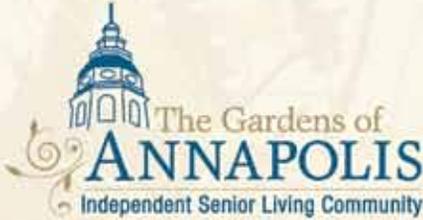
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