An empowered death: Taking control of the end of life

By Constance Garcia-Barrio

Death, like superb wine, claims a starring role at some dinners these days. Death dinners, where people meet over fabulous food to talk about dying, help guests ditch the taboo around discussing life’s final transition. More than 100,000 such dinners have taken place in 30 countries, according to deathoverdinner.org, a website that points out the benefits of having the sometimes-tough conversation.

Death dinners can ease our fears and nudge us toward the positive outlook of Elizabeth Kubler-Ross. “I’ve told my children that when I die to release balloons in the sky to celebrate that I graduated,” the late psychiatrist and author of “Death and Dying” wrote. “For me, death is a graduation.”

Fate and our genes may leave us vulnerable, but we can make choices that allow us to have a positive and empowered experience of death. Philadelphians have access to many resources and possibilities that let us shape the end of life into what we want it to be.

Life Choices

Today’s senior community centers

By Marcia Z. Siegal

With sophisticated fitness centers and wellness programs, computer and Zumba classes, intergenerational collaborations, and a focus on active living, today’s senior community centers are a far cry from the centers previous generations were accustomed to.

National Senior Center Month, observed in September, provides an opportunity to celebrate the vibrant programming featured at senior centers supported by Philadelphia Corporation for Aging (PCA), which is engaging members ranging from baby boomers to centenarians.

Computer savvy – and safe

Computer class teacher Kwaku Boateng strides into the back room at Lutheran Settlement House (LSH) Senior Center, 1340 Frankford Ave. in North Central Philadelphia, where students await the weekly class with anticipation.

“Get ready for a lot of laughs,” said student Teresa Shank. “We always have fun here.” The 59-year-old has learned to use email, do internet searches, play computer games, share photos electronically, and create a Facebook account to share posts with family and friends.

Boateng begins by warning his students about spam, or unsolicited email that may contain dangerous links. “When you go in your email, make sure you clean up your inbox,” he said to his students. “We all know what spam is. It’s not meat that comes in a blue can. I’m talking about bad email. Delete it. Don’t open it.”

Next, students learn how to use the calendar application to create, edit and delete appointments and events. In subsequent lessons, Boateng promised, they would learn how to...
Socialization benefits seniors’ health

The negative effects of loneliness and social isolation have been widely reported in recent years. Loneliness is on par with obesity, lack of exercise and smoking as a risk factor for illness and early death, according to the journal Heart. On the other hand, researchers are increasingly finding that socialization may have positive impacts on health.

While the two terms are sometimes used interchangeably, it is important to note a distinction between isolation and loneliness. Social isolation is an objective state that occurs when a person does not have regular contact with a large group of people. Loneliness, meanwhile, is a subjective experience of distress or discomfort about not having enough social interaction. A person can be socially isolated and not feel lonely. Alternatively, an individual with a large social network may experience loneliness.

Older adults are more likely to be socially isolated than the general population. Social networks naturally get smaller later in life as friends and family grow apart, move away or pass on. With this increase in social isolation comes an increase in loneliness, and the negative effects that come with it. More than 40 percent of seniors experience loneliness on a regular basis, according to a study from the University of California, San Francisco.

Loneliness can raise the level of stress hormones in the body, increase inflammation and lead to a decrease in brain function. A recent study published in The Journal of Neurology, Neurosurgery and Psychiatry found that participants who reported feeling lonely were more likely to develop dementia than those who lived alone but were not lonely.

A similar study in the American Journal of Public Health showed that older women who maintained large social networks reduced their risk of dementia and delayed or prevented cognitive impairment. In fact, women with large social networks were 26 percent less likely to develop dementia than those with smaller social networks. In the study, women who had daily contact with friends and family at their risk of dementia by nearly 50 percent.

While researchers are not entirely sure of the science behind socialization and improved brain health, many hypothesize that social interactions, like mental exercises, limit the amount of time that brains remain unfocused, leading to a reduction in cognitive impairment.

Social networks often foster other healthy behaviors, including exercise. Walking groups and dance classes are examples of healthy social networks that can also improve physical health.

There are resources available for seniors who are socially isolated and seeking a more active social life. More than two dozen PCA-funded senior community centers throughout Philadelphia offer activities including classes and shared meals to encourage socialization among older adults. You can find a senior center in your community by visiting PCACares.org/senior-centers. For those who have trouble leaving home, communicating over the phone or online can be very helpful in combatting loneliness. AARP offers online tutorials on using computers, smartphones and social media to connect with others. Visit aarptek.aarp.org/social-media for details.
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Life Choices

Having the retirement you want

By Sally Friedman

Some go kicking and screaming. Some go jubilantly and gratefully.

"Retirement." The word inspires dueling emotions, and when it crops up, those emotions can run high. People's take on retirement can be as varied as how they see themselves, their lives and their natures. And inevitably, the burning question arises: "When is the right time?"

The issues associated with retirement are weighty; for some, they are overwhelming. They include concerns about money, health and health insurance, quality of life, and emotional adjustments.

And yes, that same "R word" makes us question, "So what next?"

Of course, there are experts to help, friends to offer guidance, families to care and a thing loosely called "instinct" that may also be a strong factor in helping us get the retirement we want.

Exploring the future can be daunting, but retirement is more than just an abstract concept for many who are at or near what is generally regarded as "retirement age" – which, based on American culture and tradition, seems to hover around 65. Obviously, though, one size does not fit all.

Read on to learn what retirees and the experts who advise them have to say about the how, the when, the preparation and the experience itself.

An enduring passion

Stephen King (no relation to the author) was only 16 when he graduated from high school in Brooklyn, New York. He loved learning and went on to graduate from the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania, then responded to the draft of the era and served in the United States Army in Korea.

Education lured him back to the classroom, but this time as a teacher.

"It was important to me to do something that had meaning, and teaching did," said King, who spent his teaching career at Overbrook High School in Philadelphia from 1964 through 1991. "I taught American history, American government and economics and also became a department head," he said. "Despite the challenges, I really enjoyed what I did."

Burnout never caused the dedicated teacher, who led his students into a better understanding of their country through special projects, to say "Enough."

After he retired from teaching in 1991, King tested the waters of the insurance industry, becoming a licensed independent insurance broker – a field he had begun exploring during his after-school hours and summers.

At 73, he sold the insurance business he had created to his partner, taking some time off to travel with his wife, enjoy his grandchildren and continue his passion for tennis.

But King was not yet ready to stop working. His love of educating people led him to yet another career in insurance, this time specializing in the senior health market, with its complex issues, as a certified independent agent representing national companies offering long-term care and Medicare plans.

And lo and behold, he was back to a form of teaching – a passion he clearly had not left behind – as he explained policy options to clients.

"In teaching, you need to be prepared with lesson plans," King said. "You need to know how to impart information to others so that they understand it and master it." And in his "retirement" life, King began doing that again – and with the same zest.

"Talking before a classroom group in an interesting way is not that different from talking to a client and making sure that 'student' is truly understanding," he said.

At 84, King is balancing work that is at once old and new – and enjoying it fully. He noted that he can set aside time to spend with his wife, Essie, whom he met as a pen pal during the Korean War.

"To some extent, I can control my own schedule, I’m helping people, and I’m doing what I loved to do in a different way," he said.

"Life is good."

The right choice

Attorney Marge Janoski can pinpoint the precise moment when she knew it was her time to retire. It wasn’t because of job burnout from her long, meaningful years as a senior attorney for Community Legal Services in Philadelphia, which she still found satisfying after 44 years.

"It was actually when I learned that my daughter and son-in-law were going to become parents," she said. "I just knew that I wanted to be more than just a proud grandmother. I wanted to become a truly meaningful part of my grandchild’s life, and at the same time give my daughter and son-in-law true support during their career-building years."

• continued on page 9
Life Choices

‘Seniorpreneur’ embraces gig economy in retirement

By Maggie Davenport

I decided to take a new approach to employment in mid-life. This alternate approach was fueled by a vagabond aura that has been part of me for as long as I can remember. And my new approach has a multitude of positives – particularly as I age. I have always been fairly “location independent,” meaning that I do not feel restricted to working in one area. I rent my home, so I am not bound to one place by a mortgage. The opportunities and advantages available to me are limited only by imagination and a little nerve. Location independence can be considered a lifestyle, and as such, it is easy to live your passions while pursuing goals and making a living.

Thanks to the millennial generation – who, in my humble opinion, heavily resemble their mature predecessors (we baby boomers) – I am part of a burgeoning cohort of workers who make up the “gig economy.” In my day, they called it “piecework.” But the concept is the same: working several part-time or side jobs instead of one full-time job.

I believe that joining this gig economy workforce at the mid-point of my lifecycle makes me a “seniorpreneur,” or an older person who seeks new business opportunities.

I earned my master’s in social work and worked almost exclusively with youth for 20 years. In 2000, when I was 46, I realized that the one-on-one aspect of social work was not fulfilling to me anymore. I thought a career change would bring me the professional fulfillment that I sought. I liked the “bigger picture” aspect of working in public health and began to pursue my Ph.D. in that field from the University of Cincinnati. But I dropped out after two years when I became disillusioned with my studies.

I decided to take early retirement and begin collecting Social Security at 60. That’s when my “seniorpreneurship” venture really took hold. For the past several years, I’ve supplemented my income in a variety of ways. I became certified in many different areas – including fitness, which has allowed me to teach exercise classes at L.A. Fitness for the past 10 years. Drawing on my professional experience, I transferred my skills to other areas that interested me. I have been a consultant for a science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) program for children 6-12; written copy for presentations; and taken the occasional “gig” as home organizer, which is code for “downsizing and decluttering.”

In addition to meeting a variety of stimulating people and going to exciting places, this approach to work has allowed me to spend more time with my family. I am the middle child of seven siblings, ages 57 to 70. I am grateful for the opportunity afforded by this gig-based freedom to spend more time with my siblings while we are all independent and in relatively good health.

Recently I was able to help one sister during her hip replacement recovery. I also was able to travel to my hometown of Cornelia, Georgia, where my youngest sister had just relocated to our family home – with lots of boxes and memories. Since she had provided and orchestrated care for our mother for many years, allowing her to age at home, I was honored to help her in this small way.

Thanks to what I call an elevated awareness that I believe comes with mindful aging, I was able to assess my wanderlust qualities and skills, assign them monetary value and actually get paid for them. Using this new way of approaching income generation and finding a way to become part of this movement, I have found new inspiration for and use of skills whose time I thought had passed. Remember: There’s always a chance; you just have to take it!

Maggie Davenport, 64, lives in Germantown. She is an active member of the Sierra Club and volunteers her time to help causes that benefit the environment, housing and health.

Critics’ Corner

‘The Sense of an Ending’ is a senior’s coming-of-age tale

By M.L. Polak

Can you have a coming-of-age film if the protagonist is already in his ’60s? “The Sense of an Ending” shows that you can. This 2017 film is a subtly nuanced, yet gripping adaptation of British author Julian Barnes’ acclaimed 2011 novel by the same title. Directed by Ritesh Batra (“The Lunchbox”), the film stars Oscar-winning actor Jim Broadbent (“Iris”), who makes for an unlikely hero.

Broadbent’s character, Tony Webster, is best friends with his lawyer ex-wife, Margaret; brusque with the mailman; and detached from his pregnant lesbian daughter, Susie, who gives him a smartphone to “bring him into the 21st century.”

Tony runs a boutique camera shop and is placidly content with the present until he suddenly receives word of a small inheritance from the mother of a college chum. It is then that his solo life changes dramatically. He plunges back into his past and begins to re-examine half-forgotten events – a mean letter he wrote, a profound romantic betrayal, and the suicide of his best friend. The true meanings behind these partly suppressed memories of early manhood are unearthed, which provides insight into the gradual numbing that has gotten him by in life.

Shuttling between past and present, the film explores the dramatic landscape of Tony’s student years, the formidable camera-toting young woman he later realizes was his first love, the woman’s strangely flirtatious mother (played by Emily Mortimer) and the rest of the slightly odd aristocratic clan who seemed to embrace Tony in unison.

The film shifts again as the search for a friend’s diary and small sum of money leads to the pursuit of Tony’s peculiar, paradoxically unattainable legacy. Tony reconnects with his past love over tea, learning more than he has bargained for, in encounters with the leathery, stolid Veronica Ford (played by Charlotte Rampling). Thus catalyzed, Tony thaws profoundly and emerges from his self-contained emotional glacier.

This ultimately sweet and gentle film about loss, memory, first romances and lost loves finally achieves closure, reassuring us that even the forgotten parts of our life stories surely have value and impact upon whom we have become.

M.L. Polak writes, edits, draws cartoons and gardens in Philadelphia.

Crossword puzzle solution

(See page 23 for clues.)
Grandma’s Recipe Box

Milestones staff share their cherished grandmothers’ recipes

In honor of Grandparents Day on Sunday, Sept. 9, Milestones staff members are proud to share the following recipes from their maternal grandmothers with readers.

Milestones editor Alicia M. Colombo’s 98-year-old grandmother, Jennie Crudele, is an avid baker and chef. One of her beloved recipes is chocolate chip biscotti (pronounced “biz-cut”). Biscotti, which originated in Italy, is a crisp, rectangular cookie. Grandma Jennie’s variety contains mini chocolate chips, instead of the traditional nuts.

Chocolate chip biscotti

Ingredients:
3 extra large eggs
1 tsp. of vanilla
1 cup sugar
¼ cup vegetable oil
3 cups flour
2 tsp. baking powder
½ bag mini chocolate chips
Cinnamon and sugar, to taste

Directions:
Beat eggs, then add sugar, vanilla and oil. Mix well, with a mixer or by hand. Add flour, baking powder and chocolate chips. Mix again until all ingredients are incorporated.

Line cookie sheets with parchment paper and then arrange dough on cookie sheet in the shape of small loaf. This recipe should make six small loaves.

Sprinkle a mixture of sugar and cinnamon on top of loaves. Bake at 350 degrees for 10-15 minutes or until light brown. Cut loaves into slices to form cookies.

Italian wedding soup

Ingredients:
1 whole chicken
1 pound of meatloaf mix (beef, pork and veal)
1 box acini di pepe pasta (or substitute orzo)
2 14 oz. cans of chicken broth
2 large carrots (chopped into small pieces)
2 bunches of escarole (washed, strained and chopped into small pieces)

Directions:
In a large pot, bring water to a boil (enough to cover whole chicken).
Reduce heat and cook chicken for 2 hours.

While the chicken cooks, ball meatloaf mix into small meatballs (about the size of a gumball or slightly larger).
Remove chicken, let cool, then remove skin and bones. Reserve water.

Add chicken broth. Add in deboned chicken, escarole, pasta, carrots and small meatballs. Simmer for two hours, until pasta is cooked and escarole is tender.

Milestones writer Michael Hanisco’s grandmother, Josephine DiFeo, died before he was born. But her legacy lives on in her hearty recipe for Italian wedding soup that has been passed down through generations. The soup gets its name from the Italian phrase “minestra maritata” (“married soup”), which is a reference to the flavor produced by the combination or “marriage” of green vegetables and meat. While modern versions of the soup regularly contain only one meat, this recipe contains both chicken and small meatballs. The soup is cooked slowly for several hours and is meant to be enjoyed at large family gatherings. Mangia!

Calico beans

Ingredients:
½ lb. bacon, diced
½ lb. ground beef
1 cup chopped onion
½ cup ketchup
½ cup brown sugar
½ cup white sugar
1 tsp. salt
1 tsp. dry mustard
2 tsp. vinegar
1 can each of kidney, butter, and green beans
1 can pork and beans

Directions:
Fry and drain the bacon and ground beef. Brown the onion separately, then add it to the meat.

In a bowl, mix ketchup, sugars, salt, mustard and vinegar. Drain and add the beans. Combine all ingredients in a casserole dish. Bake at 350 for 30-40 minutes.

Abbey Porter, who oversees production of Milestones, shares her grandmother’s recipe for calico beans, or bean casserole. Mary Jane Fenton, who Porter calls “Yangee,” is now 101. “This dish was a staple of my childhood,” Porter says. “In keeping with my grandmother’s giving nature, she found this dish an excellent one to share with others.” Sugar can be reduced to taste in this colorful and easy one-dish meal.
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In honor of National Senior Center Month in September, we’re launching a new occasional series, Senior Center Spotlight, in which we’ll shine a light on each of the PCA-funded senior community centers around Philadelphia. While the centers all provide activities, education and social opportunities for seniors, each one embodies a unique personality and focus – as you’ll read.

By Michael Hanisco

In Togetherness is key at Southwest Senior Center: ‘Everyone’s welcome’

Southwest Senior Center members (left to right) Loraine Overton, Theresa Sams and Barbara Morris enjoy each other’s company before lunch. The members meet regularly for socialization and recreation.

“We try to encourage inclusion,” she said. “Every religion, sexual orientation, and culture is welcome here.”

The theme of inclusion is reflected in the center’s membership and programming. Southwest Senior Center serves a diverse community, with seniors representing the local African-American, Caribbean, South American and Asian populations.

The center is also home to an LGBT support group, which was started by Linda Marucci, center counselor. The group is primarily made up of members who have LGBT adult children and/or grandchildren. They meet weekly to discuss concerns, challenges and ways to change outdated perceptions of LGBT people.

Vernice Bond has two very close friends in the LGBT community. She attends the support group at the center every Wednesday along with a core group of about six others. She says she knows of at least one familiar
There were some raised eyebrows from well-meaning friends who wondered whether this accomplished and respected lawyer would find herself—well, a bit bored by spending several days a week in the company of a baby.

“I know they meant well, but I knew with certainty that this was the right choice for me,” Janoski said.

A single mother herself, the grandmother also recognized the mighty need for that “village” it takes to care for children, and she was determined to be a deeply involved villager.

Her granddaughter is 2 now, and the current childcare arrangement also includes some hours at day care so that grandma also gets a break.

And those doubters?

The arrangement is working beautifully.

“My life so enriched by this wonderful little girl, and retirement has been the right choice for me,” Janoski said. “In a very special way, this is truly my time to do what I really want to do. I think I’m a very lucky woman.”

By the numbers

Financial security is another touchstone for a happy retirement. Anxieties about money should be handled before the decision to retire, and often, the help of an expert can save would-be retirees from panic attacks because of the lack of a financial road map.


“Of course, every single client and case is different from any other,” he said, but there are some commonalities.

“I have a special interest in older clients,” said Levy, who is both an attorney and a certified public accountant. “I’ve definitely tried to encourage our older clients not to be intimidated by technology, but rather to use it as a vital tool.”

He is adamant about making sure that his clients, no matter their assets, understand basics like Social Security and health insurance. He recommends visiting USA.gov for information on topics that might seem mysterious, including money and credit related to the U.S. Government.

Levy also emphasized that dedicated wealth managers seek to help clients at all income levels to reach their financial goals. “Using a professional can actually help people to save money,” he said. Often, the more wealth someone has, the greater the risk and worry about preserving resources without expert help.

Levy also suggests that the professional meet with the client regularly, ideally at least every six months, face to face.

“There’s something important about connecting personally and regularly that makes the process work better on both sides,” he said.

And should those meetings take place at the client’s kitchen table? Levy’s answer: “Whenever possible. It’s the place where most of us feel comfortable.”

Sally Friedman has written for the New York Times and other publications.
Finding the right home provided comfort, empowerment

By Marjorie Conn

In 1994, at 51, I was finally in a position where I could stop renting and buy a place of my own. After being divorced for 10 years and living in Bradford in northwestern Pennsylvania, I wanted to move closer to Chester County, where I grew up. I had this vision that homes cost too much and didn’t even think of looking into buying. I thought a house cost $100,000 at that time, which was way more than I could afford.

One day, on a whim, I went to an open house and realized that I really could afford to buy my own home. But I had no idea of how to go about the search, so I found a real estate broker, a nice older woman, to help me find a place that suited my needs.

I had been diagnosed at 45 with spinocerebellar atrophy, an untreatable, progressive neurological disease. Think of it as Parkinson’s disease or multiple sclerosis with no medication to treat it. Before starting my life situation.

My broker took me to see many places. But none of them were satisfactory for what I thought might be needed to meet my future needs. I rejected one home because there were a few steps to the front door. Stairs were already posing difficulties when my hands were full and I couldn’t hold onto the railing. Another home was quickly scratched off the list because it would require a slight uphill walk to the bus stop, which I might have needed to access if I had to give up driving. Still another had deteriorating exterior walls that would probably need to be addressed in the future. I didn’t want to deal with major repairs when I was 80-plus. Finally, again on a whim, my broker stopped at a high-rise building in Roxborough and inquired whether any units were for sale.

The answer was yes. I was attracted by the convenience of a trash chute and a laundry room on each floor. The swimming pool, where I could sit in the sun after I could no longer get into the water, was another highlight. Out front, a stop for a bus going between City Hall at one end and a big mall at the other was my idea of heaven. I had found my forever home: a one-bedroom condo on the sixth floor at DuPont Towers.

That was 28 years ago. I am now 75. I use a walker and can’t do stairs. The balance problems related to my condition mean I can trip over nothing. Now, most of all, I am thankful to have an elevator to take me to and from ground level in my building.

I appreciate many of the things that led me to choose this place and have found other things to like. The rooms are small enough that when I start to fall, I can usually catch myself on furniture or the walls. I have a gorgeous view of Wissahickon Valley Park outside of my windows. I love having someone else to assure that I have heat, the roof doesn’t leak and snow is shoveled.

All this time later, some of my needs are what I anticipated and some are different. I’ve had to make more adaptions, such as having grab bars installed in the shower. My increased fatigue and poor balance makes getting on and off public buses difficult, so I now use SEPTA Shared Ride/CCT Connect as my main mode of transportation. The stairs to the pool pose problems, as I anticipated they eventually would. But management and concerned neighbors have created a beautiful haven in the side yard where I can sit under a tress and listen to the birds or read a good book.

I may need additional help in the future but hope I can find it and remain in my little nest until I need to be wheeled out on a gurney.

Marjorie Conn, 75, was a social worker for children for 30 years until she retired. She has been a member of Center at Journey’s Way for 15 years, where she enjoys the Enhance Fitness exercise classes and book club. She has two grown sons and three grandchildren, 18 months to 17.

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**Monday, September 3**

**4**

National Senior Center Month

**Healthy Aging Month**

**Tuesday, September 4**

**NYTWH** The Life of and Audrey Whyt in
Raid Strokes. Screening of film about American artist. 7 p.m. Philadelphia

**Wednesday, September 5**

Rod Haskin Program. Welcome the Jewish New Year. 10:30 a.m. to 1:45 p.m. Kimmel Center. 215-683-7300.

**Thursday, September 6**

First Friday Genealogy: Ancestral bag discussion group with occasional speakers. Open to anyone with an interest in family history. 12-2 p.m. Independence Library. 215-645-3533.

**Friday, September 7**

Groen Books Fall Festival. Oldies music, food, face painting & more. Fun for the entire family. Noon to 4 p.m. St. Raymond’s Church. 215-242-7300.

**Saturday, September 8**

Claymore Sculpture & Glassing

Claymore Sculpture & Glassing, 11 a.m.-3 p.m. Callaway Center
Home Senior Center. 215-426-8605. (Continues through Sep 23)


**Sunday, September 9**

Grandparents Day

Rosh Hashanah

**Sunday, September 16**

Global Guide Tour: Middle East Galleries. Tour of artifacts led by interpreters in cultures. 2-3 p.m. Penn Museum. 215-689-4000. $9.


**Sunday, September 23**

Bach Fest. Performances of instrumental works J.S. Bach. 6:30-9:30 p.m. Delaware Academy. 360-473-2150.

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Meetings scheduled about upcoming changes to health care in Pennsylvania

Free education and education sessions about Community HealthChoices, a state managed-care plan, will be conducted by the Department of Human Services. Pennsylvania Medicaid and Pharmaceutical Services in Philadelphia will conduct the meetings for Medicare-Medicaid eligible members, which will continue through January 2019. More than 30 sessions will be held at convenient, accessible locations within Philadelphia through Oct. 19. Translation and other needs will be accommodated and should be shared at the time of registration. For a schedule or to register, go to planpacs.org or call 1-888-725-4600.

**Statewide**

Community HealthChoices will begin for Southeastern Pennsylvania Community HealthChoices, Community HealthChoices, on January 1. The first round of meetings will be held at convenient, accessible locations within Philadelphia through Oct. 19. Translation and other needs will be accommodated and should be shared at the time of registration. For a schedule or to register, go to planpacs.org or call 1-888-725-4600.

**Saturday, September 8**

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use their smartphones (mobile phones that have multiple functions similar to those of a desktop or laptop computer).

“I have a passion for teaching seniors,” he said. “They are so eager to learn.”

**Nutrition and health**

A nutritious lunch has been a core program of senior centers since their inception. At LSH senior center, located in the city’s Fishtown section, nutrition is especially important. The center’s Hungry 2 Healthy program includes a food pantry with nonperishable items; bi-weekly distribution of fresh produce and other perishable items from Philabundance; monthly distribution of the Share Food Program’s food boxes for seniors; and nutrition presentations, healthy cooking demonstrations, and personalized nutritional consultations by nutrion specialist Candice Li. The center’s nearby urban garden yields fresh fruits and vegetables for members’ home use.

In addition, nurse Ayesha Pride is at LSH senior center four days a week to consult with individuals on health issues and provide informational sessions for members on topics such as heart health and diabetes. Pride also is alert to issues that may lurk below the surface. For example, one member came to her because she was having trouble managing her medications. Eventually, Pride was able to elicit the fact that the woman had never learned to read and could not understand the directions on her medicine bottles. “I worked with the counselor here to connect her to a literacy tutor,” the nurse said. “An important aspect of my job is to build trust.”

Center Director Meg Finley said services like Pride’s are highly beneficial to members. “Our goal is to help people thrive in the community,” she said.

**An array of arts**

Located at 509 S. Broad St. near many of the city’s performance venues, Philadelphia Senior Center – Avenue of the Arts (PSC – Arts) is well-known for its array of creative activities. Among them are stained glass, painting, jewelry-making and tap-dancing classes; the “Best Day of My Life So Far” storytelling and writing group; a robust chorus; and an intergenerational drama class. The latter draws students from the World Communications Charter School across the street to write and act in plays with the seniors under the direction of instructor Denise Worthman. On occasion, performances of the finished plays have been staged at professional theaters on the Avenue of the Arts.

Through a merger two years ago, the center became home to the PSC – Arts Branch of the Asian Pacific Resource Center (formerly the PSC – Coffee Cup Branch on S. 10th Street). That merger further broadened PSC – Arts’ cultural diversity, since more Chinese- and other Asian-born seniors now come to the 509 S. Broad St. site. It also resulted in a new arts class there: Chinese calligraphy. Asian Pacific Resource Center member Xiang Jin, renowned for his expertise in this ancient art, volunteers to teach the class.

“ Everywhere you go, members are volunteering to teach at the center,” said PSC – Arts manager Julie Nelson. “We couldn’t afford to offer as many activities as we do without our volunteers.”

Luvenia Black, 96, leads “mind aerobics” sessions, among her other volunteer activities. Senior centers increasingly emphasize both physical and brain fitness as crucial aspects to aging well. Mind aerobics challenges and “exercises” the brain. “I give people things to read and ask questions about. We do puzzles and play brain games,” Black explained.

Black says she’s proof that mind aerobics and the other PSC – Arts activities she enjoys help her to maximize her strengths. “I just had my medical check-up, and it went well,” she said. “My doctor told me, ‘Whatever you’re doing, keep on doing it.’”

**Fitness and fun**

“Once people get through the door and see the kind of activities we’re having, the myths about senior centers fall away,” said Julia Diggs, program manager at West Philadelphia Senior Community Center (WPSCC), 1016 N. 41st St. “They can go to our state-of-the-art fitness center and work with a personal trainer, enjoy parties and computer classes, create art and go on trips. Last December, we took four buses to the African-American Museum in Washington, D.C. Forty-three members have signed up for a trip to Hawaii ... We’re always thinking of creative things to do.”

In addition to its regular weekday hours, the center is open Saturday mornings for computer and exercise classes and Wednesday evenings for line dancing.
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-Ricardo

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**Remembering the Holocaust – and educating future generations**

By Barbara Sherf

Anti-Semitism in the United States is on the rise at an alarming rate. The Anti-Defamation League reports that anti-Semitic incidents in the U.S. surged 57 percent in 2017, the largest yearly increase since the Jewish civil rights group began collecting data in 1979.

In addition, a poll by the Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany found that two-thirds of American Millennials ages 18-34 could not identify Auschwitz, a network of concentration and extermination camps built and operated by Nazi Germany in occupied Poland during World War II.

Philadelphia native and longtime educator of Jewish history and culture Rhonda Fink-Whitman is working to educate and raise awareness of the Holocaust among children and young adults.

“Holocaust survivors are living history and giving eyewitness testimony to what happened in Nazi-occupied Europe,” Fink-Whitman said. “Most of them are in their 80s and 90s, and we have to take advantage of this [knowledge] while we can. I can’t reiterate enough that the clock is ticking.”

The mission is deeply personal for Fink-Whitman, 54, who is the daughter of a Holocaust survivor. Knowing that her aging mother was still suffering scars left by the Holocaust some 70 years later, she decided to go to Germany to visit the concentration camps in 2007 with her family. While there, she started journaling and made her way inside the world’s largest Nazi archive in an attempt to discover the truth about what happened to her mother during WWII.

Following a long day at Auschwitz, Fink-Whitman and her family went back to the hotel room but were too depressed to eat. Everyone but Fink-Whitman fell asleep.

“I sat down and started writing in my journal about how Auschwitz made me feel,” she said. “I used my journal to pen my first screenplay, which I then shopped around Hollywood, and made her way inside the world’s largest Nazi archive in an attempt to discover the truth about what happened to her mother during WWII.

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Holocaust

has reported that 93 percent of schools now provide age-appropriate education about the Holocaust and have promised to work with the other seven percent to get them on board as well.

Fink-Whitman has also helped Michigan, Rhode Island and Kentucky to pass similar education bills. Only nine states have such legislation in place, and her mission is to seek more co-sponsors for House Resolution 276, a Congressional resolution encouraging all 50 states to mandate Holocaust education.

Her book is now used in schools around the country and is recommended for use in curricula by both the Pennsylvania and New Jersey departments of education.

“I met with Bensalem High School students who read the book for class and shared with me how they saw themselves in the characters and how the story related to their lives in terms of bullying issues and becoming more tolerant,” Fink-Whitman said. “They said that it inspired them to be ‘upstanders’ instead of ‘bystanders.’ I want to be an example for them, that one person can make a difference.”

To view “The Mandate Video,” purchase or read an excerpt from “94 Maidens,” view Fink-Whitman’s speaking schedule, or download a free teacher’s guide, go to 94Maidens.com.

Author, speaker and writer Barbara Sherf tells the stories of businesses and individuals.

Center spotlight

relationship that was saved as a direct result of the group discussions. The group has been so successful that they have been invited to other senior centers in the city as a model for starting similar groups.

“I just wish people were more understanding,” Bond said. “Life would be so much easier, but I guess life isn’t always easy.” She has “learned a lot about people” since making friends in the LGBT community.

A large number of women at Southwest Senior Center are involved in the Supportive Older Women’s Network (SOWN), which meets once a week. Every meeting begins with each member expressing how she’s feeling that day before branching into a group discussion on a pre-determined topic. What is said in the group stays in the group, a rule that helps to build a feeling of trust.

“A lot of seniors, especially older women, think they’re the only ones going through what they’re going through,” said Barbara Morris, who became active in SOWN almost immediately after her first visit to the center three years ago. “But you’re not alone. We’re all in this together.”

Cunningham wants to challenge outdated perceptions of what a senior center can be. Baby boomers want something different from past generations, she said. Computer classes at the center, which run September through June, are always well attended. The center also has an active drama club, a busy gym, a choir and a gardening club. The gardeners grow vegetables on-site and host nutritional cooking demonstrations.

Leona Jones said she had always been a plant person but never thought she could grow vegetables in the city until she learned how at Southwest Senior Center. At 70, she is a daily visitor to the center and now grows tomatoes, peppers and squash on her deck at home. She’s quick to show off pictures of her latest harvest on her smartphone.

Lorraine Overton first started coming to Southwest Senior Center to work out after retiring. Though she still works out three times a week, she has gotten much more involved in the center and with other members over the past 19 years. She now enjoys meeting new people through art classes and choir. “All of [the programming] creates fellowship and togetherness,” Overton said.

Indeed, the theme of togetherness is on full display at Southwest Senior Center, and not just on the blackboard.

“There is always a helping hand and a caring voice here,” said Barbara Morris. “It’s not just like a family. It is a family.”

In addition to being funded by PCA, Southwest Senior Center also is managed by the agency.

Michael Hanisco is multimedia communications specialist at Philadelphia Corporation for Aging (PCA).
Musings on bags, past and present

By Frank Burd

Today, all the kids have backpacks as they go to and from school. When I was young, we didn’t use backpacks. We carried our books.

The girls carried their books in two hands in front of them. The boys tucked the books under one arm. Many books fell to the street until someone came out with a thin rubber strap with a clip.

Of course, there were some kids who had briefcases. They were the richer kids. I didn’t have one. I can’t remember how we kept out books from getting wet when it rained. Well, even if they did get wet, they rarely got damaged because we were required to cover our books. Most of us used brown paper bags, but the richer kids bought covers for a nickel that had the names of colleges printed on them.

The boys were lucky. We had pants with lots of pockets and could put wallets and other possessions in them. The girls wore skirts or dresses that didn’t have pockets. They carried purses. We didn’t call them purses; we called them pocketbooks. Those girls sure did have their hands full.

In high school, we didn’t have to carry all our books back and forth every day. But then, in college, I had to carry a heavier load of books. We all bought attaché cases – that’s what they were called. They were made of plastic, and we could carry them at our side with one hand.

Now, everyone has a backpack. Not only do my kids have backpacks, but I have them as well. I have two. There is the regular backpack in which I carry the odds and ends of the day. The backpack allows my hands to be free. It’s wonderful. For so many younger people, wearing a backpack helps them carry and stare at the phone in their hands as they sit on the train or walk through the streets. For me, it is so I can carry my camera in my hands and snap pictures to document my life in the 21st century.

In the 60s, when I traveled through Europe on trains or just hitched, I had a pack on my back. It was called a rucksack. In it was everything I needed for a month in Europe. Hard to believe it, but I carried my clothes, my toiletries, and my notebooks and books. One iPad can replace a lot of paper today.

The other backpack I use now is for when I want to carry my laptop, my various cables, my camera, and papers I may need while I am out. I see so many people walking on a daily basis with heavy packs on their back and am sure that they will be in a chiropractor’s office when they older. They will also have arthritis in their fingers from the intensity with which they use their digits to text and play games on their cellular phones.

There are other bags. I see paper and plastic ones when I go to the supermarket. Some markets are trying to encourage the shopper to bring their own fabric bags so as not to waste natural resources. Those little double plastic bags that the cashier put the food in are bad for the environment. They are good for picking up dog messes (for those who do). But they are littered everywhere. I even see them hanging from trees like Christmas ornaments – ugly ones.

I am trying to simplify and to carry less these days. But I don’t want to leave my essentials behind. The cell phone has helped a lot, since I needn’t carry my camera everywhere now. The new phones take great pictures. I’ve also bought an iPad.

The iPad is smaller than a laptop, much lighter, and fits into another bag of mine – a handbag. That bag is brown leather, and I bought it in a thrift shop for my daughter. But she wasn’t interested, and it sat around for a few years. It has a handle and a strap to put on the shoulder. I tried it out one day. In it, I could carry a paper pad, some pens, a book or magazine, and my iPad. A friend who saw it referred to my handbag by a new name. She called it a “man bag,” indicating that many men were using them. I’ve come a long way.

Frank Burd is a writer of fiction, plays, history and poetry when he’s not photographing.
Ask the Expert

Transitioning from institutional to home living

QUESTION:
I have a relative who went into a nursing home but now wants to live at home again. Are services available to assist with her transition from institutional to independent living? (Anonymous)

ANSWER:

The Nursing Home Transition (NHT) program assists individuals with the move from a long-term care facility back to independent living. The program, which is offered by Philadelphia Corporation for Aging (PCA), is designed to help individuals who are facing barriers to such a transition, such as a lack of housing, and cannot be safely discharged into the community through the normal discharge process of the facility.

When a resident of a long-term care facility expresses interest in transitioning back to living at home, the facility provides a list of NHT coordination agencies for the resident to select from. PCA is one agency that works with NHT program participants 60 and older. PCA assigns a transition coordinator who partners with the facility’s social worker to assess the participant’s needs and develops a discharge plan.

The person’s eligibility for transition services is determined on an individual basis through a collaborative effort that can include the participant, nursing facility staff, the NHT coordinator and others. The team works closely with the individual and other community agencies to plan for and support the person’s return to the community. This support may include help in finding and establishing housing, modifying a current home to make it accessible, connection to services such as adult day centers or home health care, and training for independent living. Participants may be eligible for a variety of home- and community-based services following the transition back to community living. The transition coordinator collaborates with community-based services such as the Living Independently for Elders (LIFE), Options, Aging Waiver and PCA Domiciliary Care programs, to provide the ongoing support needed.

For more information about the NHT program, contact the nursing home where the interested individual lives. For information or referral: PCA Helpline at 215-765-9040 or pcaCares.org.

Sean Outen is assistant director of Long Term Care Options at Philadelphia Corporation for Aging (PCA).

It’s your turn!

Send Milestones your questions about aging-related issues. We will print select questions – along with answers from experts at Philadelphia Corporation for Aging (PCA) – in upcoming issues. Submit your name, address, phone number and question to: milestonesnews@pcaCares.org or:

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✓ Farmer’s market
✓ Walk the dog
✓ Get vaccines

That’s right: adults need vaccines too. So ask your doctor what shots you need to stay healthy and active as you get older.
Empowered death
• continued from page 1

Writing it down

Developing a plan puts you in the driver’s seat in matters big and small, notes professional organizer Rie Brosco, 63, of Philadelphia, founder of RieOrganize!, a company whose services include end-of-life planning. “A written plan speaks for you when you can no longer speak for yourself,” Brosco says.

Pre-planning brings peace of mind and gets some tasks out of the way. “Kathy, a client in her 60s who had a terminal cancer, arranged for a party to be held after her death where guests went through the house and chose the mementos they wanted,” Brosco says. “It was a healing experience for her family and friends.”

Deciding about possessions while you still can lifts a burden from your family’s shoulders and often avoids fights. “You can photograph an item and write the name of the intended recipient on the back,” says Brosco, who helps clients find good homes for everything from pets to stair gliders, which go to the Philadelphia Elevator Union to be serviced and passed on to veterans. “It gives you peace of mind.”

Express your desires to help you have the end of life you want. “A Center City woman in her 90s had a few months to live,” Brosco says. “She loved cashmere. We went through her wardrobe and replaced every garment that we could with one of cashmere. She fulfilled that wish for her last months.”

Financial educator David Ramsey of Brentwood, Tennessee, suggests taking a proactive stance by creating a “legacy drawer.” The drawer should contain all the passwords and documents your family will need after you’ve died. By doing so, you take the reins, put things in order and feel more at peace, Ramsey says.

We also have the power to pass along intangibles to family members as death approaches through an ethical will – or Zava’ah, in Hebrew. “Rabbits and Jewish laypeople write this document, which states ethical and spiritual values,” says Rabbi David Levin, 63, of Wynnewood. Levin launched Conversations for Life and Legacy in 2017, a service where one can make an audio or video recording instead of a written document as a gift for family and friends. “I begin by asking, ‘What’s the one thing you would say to your loved ones if you had a chance?’” says Levin, who works with people of all faiths. “It’s an opportunity to review your life and create deeper bonds in existing relationships. I often see a level of contentment after people make the recording.”

Quick tip: Keeping memories alive
You may want to ask your family and friends to put together a memory box or memory book for you. It could contain letters, photographs, or your favorite music. The book or box would be at hand for moments when you felt alone.

Some terminally ill people opt for a foretaste of the end with a living wake or funeral. The living wake, which often takes place in the sick person’s home while he or she lies in a coffin, encourages people to come up to the coffin one by one and express their feelings about the sick person while he or she can still hear them.

‘A good death’

We can’t always control our illness, but we can have an impact on how our lives end through our election of hospice care. “Hospice is the Cadillac of health care service,” says Lori Bishop, 57, vice president of palliative and advanced care for the National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization. “It’s holistic,” Bishop says. “It includes not only physicians and nurses, but chaplains, social workers, bereavement counselors and trained volunteers. You draw on a rich network. Medicare pays for this comprehensive benefit, including medication and equipment.”

You call the shots by taking two crucial steps, says Bishop, who arranged for hospice care for her parents. “A good death means different things to different people,” she says. “You have to let hospice know what you would like so services can be tailored to your wishes. The second point is to choose a hospice carefully. I encourage people to shop a bit. Ask questions. For example, some hospices offer alternative therapies like massage.” See caringinfo.org for a worksheet to help you choose a hospice.

Barbara Carr, a certified health education specialist and administrative manager for Einstein Hospice & Palliative Care, raises another point. “If your health care network has a hospice, consider using that one,” Carr says. “That allows your medical information to be accessed relatively quickly and may shorten the time it takes to get the process started. If your health care network doesn’t have a hospice, they’ll at least know what hospices they’re associated with.”

Pain tops the list of concerns for many at the end of life. “Most people fear the process of dying more than the event itself,” Bishop says. “Sometimes we can’t eliminate pain 100 percent; however, patients have a choice … Patients may sacrifice being alert in order to have less discomfort. Then again, you may decide that you want to be alert in spite of the pain. It’s an individual choice.”

You may also choose to have a death doula, or death midwife, assist in the dying process. “Doula’ comes from Greek and means a woman who serves,” says Patty Burgess, 62, of Bensalem, a certified end-of-life specialist and president of Possibility of Doing Death Differently, which trains death doulas. “Doulas are trained in non-medical, emotional, physical and spiritual supportive care,” says Burgess, who has worked in hospice and palliative care for 19 years. “I encourage people to plan their support early because it reduces stress. It may be the first time family caregivers have attended a death, and they may be overwhelmed or fearful. An-end of life doula can support and walk the family through what to expect and help their loved one. In addition, a doula can help reframe the death experience from one of only sadness to comfort, meaning and connection. End-of-life-doulas should listen well and be clear about services and fees.”

Finally, don’t limit yourself unnecessarily at life’s end. “Even if someone is given a terminal diagnosis, sexual activity and loving touch may help them transition more peacefully, if the medical provider says that sexual activity is safe,” says Lenore Jefford, a licensed professional counselor and therapist certified by the American Association of Sexuality Educators, Counselors and Therapists, who has a practice in Mount Airy. “Physical touch and affection are great ways to help a sick or dying person feel cared for.”

Native Philadelphian Constance Garcia-Barrio writes about many topics, including black history.

A continuing conversation

The Death Café is held the last Monday of each month – except on holidays – at Barnes and Noble, 1805 Walnut St. It is part of a global movement to provide a forum where participants can discuss death freely. The next meeting is slated for Monday, Oct. 29, 6:45-8:15 p.m. For information: meetup.com/Death-Cafe-Philadelphia.

Videos on YouTube:
• “The Only Reason We’re Alive” – a sweet, sad three-minute cartoon-poem about an aged couple
• “Hospice” – a 56-minute discussion about hospice care
• “My Mushroom Burial Suit” – an eight-minute video about one approach to green burials

The Conversation Project helps you to discuss your wishes for end-of-life care. It features a starter kit about breaking the ice and segments about how to talk with your doctor. For information: theconversationproject.org/starter-kits.

My Gift of Grace: a Conversation Game for Living and Dying Well is a “surprisingly fun game about the end of life that families around the world are using.” It comes with 47 question cards. Question 15, for example, is “What music do you want to be listening to on the last day alive?” The game costs $24.95. For information: mygiftofgrace.com/about-the-game.

Celebrate National Senior Center Month in September!

Philadelphia has a diverse and robust network of senior community centers that are located in every section of the city. These centers offer a wide range of classes and clubs in which you can pursue your passion or explore new possibilities.

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Clip this COUPON and redeem for lunch at any site listed on this page. Offer for first-time visitor or guest only. Advance reservations and proof of age (60-plus) required. Please call the site to register. Expires October 31, 2018.

NORTH CENTRAL PHILADELPHIA
CHCS – Norris Square Senior Community Center
2121 N. Howard St. 19122
215-427-2741

*CHCS – St. Anne’s Senior Community Center
2507 E. Cumberland St. 19125
215-429-2772

King Olde Adult Center
2100 W. Cecil B. Moore Ave. 19121
215-688-2716

Lutheran Settlement House Senior Center
1340 Frankenford Ave., 19125
215-420-6619

Mann Olde Adult Center
3201 N. 5th St. 19140
215-688-9844

Northern Living Center (formerly North Broad Street Center)
Temporary location: 1036 N. Lawrence St., 19123
215-978-1300

*On Lok House
219 N. 10th St. 19107
215-599-3016

Philadelphia Senior Center – Allegheny Branch
1900 W. Allegheny Ave. 19132
267-286-1455

NORTHWEST PHILADELPHIA
The Center at Journey’s Way
403 Rector St. 19128
215-487-1750

Center in the Park
5818 Germantown Ave. 19144
215-848-7722

*PHA Emlen Arms Satellite
6733 Emlen St. 19119
215-684-5992

West Oak Lane Senior Center
7210-18 Ogontz Ave. 19138
215-685-3511

*PHA Emlen Arms Satellite
6733 Emlen St. 19119
215-684-5992

West Philadelphia Senior Community Center
101626 N. 41st St. 19104
215-386-0379

*CHCS – Star Harbor Senior Community Center
4700 Springfield Ave. 19143
215-726-4768

Southwest Senior Center
6916 Elmwood Ave. 19142
215-937-1880

*Northeast Olde Adult Center
2101 Easton Ave. 19133
215-429-8100

*Indicates satellite meal center. Hours and programming may be limited. Call for details.

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Suddenly solo: A guide for the perplexed

By M.L. Polak

When my dear friend Carol was precipitously widowed after four decades as part of an extraordinarily intertwined couple, not only was she overwhelmed by grief, but she realized that with all her years of being happily married, she had never lived alone or taken care of the myriad details of running a house on her own. The obligations and responsibilities of a newly solo lifestyle were alien to her, and somewhat daunting.

Carol’s plight started me thinking. Just suppose you’re older and you become suddenly single – you’re living alone after a breakup or perhaps after your partner’s death. If you’re not prepared for the change in your status, the aftermath can make your life a living hell, especially if your partner took care of … well, everything.

I’m exactly Carol’s opposite. Unlike her, I’ve been single and on my own for four decades. Nevertheless, there are always challenges. Recently, I replaced my DVD player and had to set the new one up. Of course, I initially encountered inner resistance. Oh no! More useless complexity to fill my head with. As a single woman, wouldn’t I really rather have a man with the “electronics gene” do it?

Alas, no such animal around these parts. And so, in this 21st century of ours, a single woman must be prepared to do it all – for survival’s sake. I’ve discovered that certain practices make this venture easier – such as getting more organized, doing better planning, and even doing minor “fixes” yourself when possible. And then, for emergencies, developing a team of reliable, honest, trustworthy home-repair specialists – carpenter, plumber, electrician, handyman. Learn to speak “repair-ese” without being intimidated. Be sure to obtain yearly service contracts for keeping up your furnace, getting its filter changed seasonally, and so on.

A big step in becoming comfortable going solo is making restaurant reservations for yourself, becoming comfortable eating dinner alone if necessary, then asking for the check. And paying for it. Ouch!

Finances can be a nightmare, from checkbook balancing to paying taxes. Keep current, and pay utility bills on time. Save receipts. Don’t get behind. Let an accountant or financial advisor do your annual taxes, but make sure the fee is reasonable.

Sometimes health care is another realm of the unknown if you’re not accustomed to being on your own. Get informed about Medicare, Medicaid, Social Security, assisted living, living wills, palliative care and other options for the elderly. Make sure you have a will, a living will, and a designated power of attorney. All by yourself.

And so you’ll read the manuals. You’ll make the mistakes. And then you’ll correct them. No one blames you if the soufflé falls. No one complains if dinner is late or if there is no dinner at all. No one questions your choice of music. No one pooh-poohs your primitive sound system. No one is furious about crumbs in bed. No one minds if the cat sneaks under the covers.

You know what it’s really like to take out your own trash week after week, even in 100-degree weather? Haul all those huge garbage cans and festering Hefty bags and stacks of used newspapers and containers of empty bottles to the curb by yourself, sometimes in the dark? Better get used to it! And be sure you have folks to confide in when you feel overloaded. As my once-and-future therapist says, “Welcome to the world.”

M.L. Polak writes, edits, draws cartoons and gardens in Philadelphia.
Don’s Column

A veteran’s musings

By Don Harrison

Little did I realize, as a young GI many eons ago, that years later, in my dotage, I’d owe so much to a federal agency. In fact, I doubt whether I was aware that the Veterans Administration (VA) even existed.

But since I’ve been sidelined by a massive stroke, the VA has been invaluable. Thanks to the VA, our house has been refitted, “sitter” services have enabled my wife to continue working and shopping, and VA nurses and other personnel have provided support in many ways.

Yes, the VA has attracted critics (I guess it comes with the territory), but I’m not one of them.

A war story

If there was a VA, or its equivalent, during World War I, I doubt whether my dad was aware of it. He was in the American Expeditionary Forces (AEF) in France until shrapnel in a thigh ended his military career.

Later, after he’d married and started a family, I’d implore him, “Tell me about the war, Dad,” but he’d reply that war was wrong and shouldn’t be glorified.

He made one exception; he loved to tell this story:

When he was being borne on a stretcher through the Argonne Forest on his way to have his wounds tended to, an enemy sniper shot a watch off his wrist.

“It was a good watch, too,” he’d grumble. “It was a good watch, too,” he’d grumble. Little did I realize, as a young GI many eons ago, that years since, there has been a string of wars around the world over – and it’s ongoing.

This is civilization?

September Song

September is when everything picks up again — at work, in school, everywhere. It’s when the political scene heats up, when shoppers harbor thoughts of the oncoming holidays, when summer fades into memory.

It’s time, in short, to get with it.

And speaking of summer, what happened to it? Seasons come and go, more quickly as we come and go.

Milestones Editor Emeritus Don Harrison served as deputy editor of the Daily News opinion pages and as an assistant managing editor and city editor of the Philadelphia Bulletin.

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