

INSPIRED

55+ lifestyle magazine

SEPT / OCT 2024



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MOUNTAIN HIGH**

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Cover | Miranda Esmonde-White

This Canadian fitness expert has helped millions of people become more flexible and reduce pain.

Photo courtesy Miranda Esmonde-White

resources

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Damoy Hut at Dorian Bay, Antarctica
Photo by Jeff Britnell

THRIVE BEYOND 55

by BARBARA RISTO



Perseverance

Every issue I publish has stories about people who defy the odds, who come back from the brink of despair or disaster and keep on going.

As Laurie Mueller mentions in her column, some of that defiance and resilience comes with age and experience. But much of it comes from character.

Whether learned from a parent or friend, or drawn from inner resourcefulness, perseverance is a quality that not only overcomes adversity, but it dulls the sting of criticism.

It's the quality that author John Thomson explores in his profile of literary champion, Alma Lee. It's also evident in the grit and determination that drove our featured personality, Miranda Esmonde-White, to put it all on the line to make a difference in the fitness industry.

Life isn't always easy. Sometimes you have to take a step back, shed some tears, or reach out to a friend who provides a safe space to vent. Sometimes you just have to hold the pain and frustration inside, wrap your own arms around yourself, and tell yourself everything will be okay. There are even times when wisdom and truth require you take a different course.

Life often demands that we be uncompromising in the

pursuit of our goals — holding the criticism from others at bay and even quieting the critical voices inside our own heads.

How often do we tolerate others pressing their hostile emotions and biased thoughts upon us, disrupting our peace and stifling our creativity?

How often do we allow our own negative emotions and unruly thoughts to drown out our desires, our yearning to do or be something? The “enemy” is often not some external entity, but a deeply engrained covert operative, waiting inside our own minds, ready to pounce like an assassin and destroy our determination to forge ahead.

I often catch myself hesitating to act, as if I need a magical permission slip before I can move forward. When I finally realize the only barrier standing in my way is myself, I can't help but marvel at the deceitfulness of my own mind, which tries to control, limit, and divert me from my intended path.

So what's the remedy? How do we stop these mental combatants from controlling our future, shattering our peace and rendering us ineffective? The key, I think, is in acknowledging that we hold the ultimate power.

Thoughts and emotions are fleeting, often mere stale byproduct of past experiences. These shadowy forces lurk, ever ready to jump into action. When given free rein, they can create havoc in our emotional landscape.

But simple observation can reveal their presence and send them scuttling back to the recesses from where they came. Taking a moment to differentiate between what is now and what is the past can set you free. When you uncouple yourself from past regrets and failures, you realize you have an empty canvas on which to paint your future.

If we want to create a better world, we have an obligation to hold ourselves to higher standards — to resist threats, greed and divisiveness. To challenge the negativity of our minds.

I believe it's our obligation to repair fences, build bigger tents, and level the playing field so everyone has a chance to make the most of the opportunities available. And just to be clear — pursuing an opportunity is very different from being an opportunist. We must make that distinction.

While the world may sometimes appear like it is spiralling out of control, I am still optimistic that the majority of people support the betterment of all.

This issue offers stories of everyday people who made it a mission to keep going in the face of adversity, who see the accumulation of years of experience as a blessing.

This is why I love publishing this magazine. I'm constantly inspired by people who overcome the negativity of the world and the hesitation of their own mind — and do it anyway.

So, don't give up! The world needs your story! |

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MAKEOVER MAGIC

by BARBARA RISTO

Caede Pungente-Sivunen was one of three applicants chosen for a makeover at our March INSPIRED 55+ Lifestyle Show, and she gave the experience a resounding thumbs up.

“I was very impressed with all the stylists,” says Caede. “The positivity and support were phenomenal!”

Caede was guided through the process and introduced to the products used by all the stylists, from clothing to hair, makeup, and even nails.

While each stylist nudged her toward a change, they also respected her lifestyle and comfort level with each adjustment.

“I had mentally prepared myself for a huge change, thinking drastic cut and colour. Hana [the hairstylist] was so respectful and experienced. It was obvious by the questions she was asking: What is your usual routine in the morning? What kind of products do you use? What kind of colour would you gravitate towards, and how much hair are you willing to have cut off?”

Caede admits she’s “pretty much a wash-and-go kinda gal.” “I don’t use any styling products except for a round brush and mini blow dryer to tame my cowlick bangs. Being a menopausal woman, I also like the option of being able to put my hair up. I said I was open to a change in colour and length, and that she was the expert! After all, our hair does grow back out.”

Hana chose a colour that Caede absolutely loved! “Ironically, I had been trying to create it over 15 years of home hennas to try and cover my grey.”

Hana also chose a style somewhat similar to a layered look Caede had in the past but added more layers and extended the depth of her bangs.

And the reviews?

“My dad, at 84 years, gave me a squeeze and said, ‘Keep the colour.’ A past roommate said, ‘You look 20 years younger.’ My 80-year-old Osteofit instructor said I look like a teenager. My neighbour told me twice how good my hair looks, and a friend who is very particular about her own look gave me the final stamp of approval, saying how natural the colour looks on me with my fair skin tone.”

Hana Akai of Akai Hair Salon opted for a hair colour called Shades EQ Color Gloss, applying a medium brown with a hint of red to create natural-looking highlights and a brilliant shine.

This demi-permanent solution promises gentle fading over 20 washes, ensuring a seamless transition without noticeable regrowth lines. The haircut was tailored to Caede’s curls, bringing her hair to shoulder length and incorporating layers to accentuate bounce and volume. Addressing thinness in her bangs, Hana added more hair for a fuller, more youthful look that celebrates Caede’s natural beauty while infusing her look with renewed vibrancy and dimension.

Our makeover stylist, Gina Lavertu, gave Caede a deep-cleansing facial with Nezza’s Naturals organic skincare focused on cleansing, exfoliation, and hydration. Her nails were coloured with OPI’s “What’s Your Poinsettia.”

For makeup, Gina used e.l.f.’s Halo Glow Liquid Filter in the shade Fair and e.l.f.’s Instant Lift Brow Pencil in Blonde to shape and define Caede’s eyebrows. A neutral-coloured eyeshadow was applied over the upper lid with a dab of blush in



Photo: Regina Akhankina, Couture Photography

the outer crease. To make her eyes pop, Annabelle brown eyeliner was used on the upper lash line, with e.l.f.’s Volumizing Mascara in black added. For the cheeks, e.l.f.’s Camo Liquid Blush in Perfect Peach was used. Caede’s lips were lined with Annabelle’s Lip Liner in Buff and finished with e.l.f.’s Glow Reviver Lip Oil in the shade Rose Envy.



All the makeup used was supplied by INSPIRED Magazine, and each model took the products home with them.

Each model was also outfitted by Blue Sky Clothing Company. Our great thanks to Chris, manager of the Victoria store, and to Marilyn Cobban, owner of the company, for their great assistance and generosity. |



MIRANDA ESMOND A Fitness Expert's Qu

by JENNIFER HARTLEY

Fitness guru Miranda Esmond-White thrives on helping people heal and live without pain. It is her mission in life.

In fact, this best-selling author of five fitness books has been preaching the gospel of movement for over 30 years.

If you have participated in a class of “Classical Stretch,” the #1 fitness show on PBS that has been on air since 1999, then you have experienced Miranda’s brand of wellness.

Between Classical Stretch’s 300+ episodes, her award-winning docuseries, Aging Backwards® and Forever Painless and her Essentrics video fitness program, she has helped millions of people. (By contrast, Jane Fonda -- one of Miranda’s personal heroes – only made 22 videos.) Big name athletes Miranda has impacted include the Montreal Canadiens, multiple Olympians, Cirque de Soleil cast members and countless celebrities.

Most importantly, she has empowered people of all ages and abilities.

“Our bodies are designed to be pain-free through our lives, but to achieve that, we have to move.”

“Our bodies are designed to be pain-free through our lives,” she says, “but to achieve that, we have to move.”

Miranda’s own extraordinary journey is living proof.

It all started with ballet. She left home at 10 to attend the National Ballet School in Toronto.

“I was the first student to go from grade 5 to 12 and graduate from the school. I loved it. I am an artist so that was the perfect place for me to land.”

Being away from home as a child was hard but under the tutelage of Betty Oliphant (legendary ballerina and principal of the school) her mind and creativity blossomed.

“Every week I was introduced to great dancers; we were constantly at the ballet, opera, symphony, at museums and all the art galleries. My life was spent immersed in the arts and it opened up a whole world.”

She grew up with other artists like ballet legend Karen Kain.

After three years as a member of the National Ballet Company, she moved to London, UK to expand her horizons and search for the meaning of life, a quest she felt from a young age.

“I was succeeding in the ballet world but knew something was profoundly missing in my life. On my return to Canada, I fell in love with a musician and moved to Montreal.”

That relationship didn’t last, but from it came her daughter Sahra, who is now her business partner.

“Those early years as a mother were difficult ones. For a decade and a half, I was in survival mode. I had to support us,

NDE-WHITE: Quest for Truth and Meaning in Life

I had to feed us and I just needed to take care of my daughter. I made ragdolls so I could stay home. I made thousands of ragdolls in that apartment and ended up selling them to places like The Bay and Woolco.”

That led to new opportunities.

“I met the president of Hasbro Toys, who liked me (said I was a go-getter) and hired me as Hasbro’s Canadian national sales and marketing manager. Those were profitable years, but I was on the road two weeks a month.”

As a single mom she needed to be near home and Sahra’s school. So, she left Hasbro and offered fitness classes in a local church basement.

“I couldn’t believe how they took off. I had plans to change the world,” she jokes.

And she did.

She opened a dance and aerobics studio for fitness classes that evolved into teaching fitness instructors themselves, many of whom knew nothing about fitness.

“I started writing textbooks for instructors to understand the science behind movement.”

However, when she was approximately 38, she suffered constant, chronic back pain.

“I had a standing appointment to see the chiropractor three times a week so I wouldn’t be crippled. It was just awful. At the same time my students were noticing their muscles were bulky from aerobics and weights and a lot of people were having knee pain.”

Health Canada reports an estimated one in five Canadians (across the lifespan), live with chronic pain, many of whom report it affects their daily life. It will come as no secret that it is more common as we age, with approximately one in three people over 65 experiencing chronic pain.

Miranda realized there was a way to help alleviate that pain.

“We were all searching for a work-



New York Times and Globe and Mail best-selling author Miranda Esmonde-White has been preaching the gospel of movement for over 30 years.

*Her books include *Aging Backwards*, *Forever Painless* and her recent 2023, *The Miracle of Flexibility*,*

*Photos courtesy
Miranda Esmonde-White
Photographer: Leslie Woods*

INSPIRED PODCAST

Long-time broadcasters Michael Forbes and Lisa Marshall, known as “Forbes and Marshall,” now real estate agents, bring their signature banter to bear in their podcast collaboration with INSPIRED Magazine.

Check out this month’s interview with Miranda Esmonde-White at www.seniorlivingmag.com/podcast



out that was a bit gentler on the body. I incorporated the movements used by the chiropractor into a gentle stretching program which helped relieve my back pain as well as others pain. Much to my surprise people's knee and hip pain dissipated as they lost a minimum of one pant size. I was off and running in furthering the creation of Classical Stretch."

The gentle movements and beautiful music in Classical Stretch convinced PBS to sign. However, not before a wrinkle appeared.

Weeks before she was to start filming

the series, Miranda received a breast cancer diagnosis. With the support, encouragement, and love of her daughter, Miranda, in her customary will to help others and bountiful enthusiasm, developed a workout video specific for breast cancer survivors which is still available free of charge on her Essentrics website.

Today, both Classical Stretch and Essentrics are globally recognized as science-based fitness techniques for healing and age-reversing for all levels and ages.

"Ironically, I realized that creating a genuinely safe, healing program was the

dream I had been aiming at all my life. I succeeded in discovering what I had been looking for. It may have taken 30 difficult, poverty-stricken years. But I found it."

Miranda is not someone who is motivated by money.

"I know I am very fortunate now, but success and money are not important to me. I've made a lot of decisions based on what I feel and a lot of them have been very bad for my finances - which did not make sense to practical people."

"Following your heart can be a very expensive thing to do," says Miranda, but knowing the impact she is having on people drives her forward.

She says the best compliment she has ever received is, "You changed my life."

Her biggest surprise has been her own personal growth.

"My parents had convinced me that I was a little slow, which left me with zero self-esteem. They believed girls were only capable of marrying."

Developing her program and receiving a great deal of academic recognition taught Miranda that she is smart and capable of overcoming enormous challenges and obstacles.

Today, there is a peace about her.

The woman who spent her life searching for the meaning of life has become a believer of deep inner faith in life itself.

"Life is an adventure full of joy. I am excited about every single day."

(With maybe a pastry or dessert thrown in there - her one vice.)

She doesn't have much spare time - "What is that anyway?" - yet she is a voracious reader of biographies. "They hugely influence me because seeing what people do in their real lives inspires me. Their life paths are not straight. Seeing their obstacles as they go through life and become what they become or are becoming has always been fascinating and motivating for me."

When she was 45, Miranda thought she'd be "an old lady at 55 and retiring". In fact, she just turned 75 and she is busier than ever.

"My brain is on fire. I am like a 20-year-old. I am so productive. Working with Essentrics, life is exciting and so much fun."

"Don't let any age define you. Define yourself. Simone de Beauvoir said that, and it is one thing I live by." |



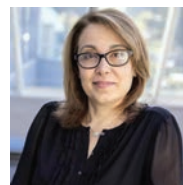
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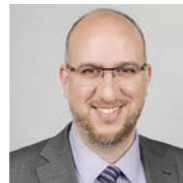
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ALMA LEE: BC'S Indominatable Writers' Champion

by JOHN THOMSON

Feisty, driven, and uncompromising, octogenarian Alma Lee exemplifies the adage “no surrender.”

Recipient of the YWCA Women of Distinction Award, an honorary doctorate from Simon Fraser University and a member of the Order of Canada, Alma's perhaps best known as the co-founder of the Vancouver Writers Festival, an on-going annual extravaganza that introduces thousands of readers to novelists, poets, and essayists. Ancillary programs such as workshops and readings continue throughout the year.

It was no easy feat. It took Alma and her co-creator ten years of lobbying, cajoling and pleading to bring the festival to fruition. But it was worth it. As its first artistic director, a position she held for 17 years, Alma brought international recognition and prestige to Vancouver and the arts community. She still serves as a consultant when needed.

“I won't back down,” she says unapologetically. “People call me stubborn. I prefer to call it determined.”

Born to an Edinburgh bagpipe maker who loved to read, Alma would accompany her father to the library every Friday where he scoured the shelves and she investigated the children's section. It's here that she developed a deep love of reading but as much as she would have loved to pursue a career in the arts, convention dictated she learn a trade and get married. Wed at 19, she emigrated to Canada in 1967 with her husband and two sons and found work in Toronto as a secretary which, she says, included lying for the boss.

“All I know is that it jarred me. I was brought up in a pretty strict Presbyterian house and lying was not the thing. So, I

put on my coat, walked into his office, told him I was leaving and that I wasn't coming back.”

The feisty newcomer resigned on a matter of principle, but it had real consequences.

“I got home. I cried a lot. I took a pad and wrote down all the things I was really good at and all the things I really



“People who are compelled to write will always write and people who are compelled to tell stories will always tell stories.”

loved. What came out? Literary agent. That's what my notes said. I thought how the hell do you get to do that?”

Circumstance introduced her to novelist Margaret Atwood and disaster turned into opportunity.

“She told me I had to go to lots of parties and get a job in a publishing house. I said going to parties was not so hard but the second thing was harder.”

She did, in fact, get a job at a publishing house as the general manager of Toronto's House of Anansi which was carving out a name for itself, aggress-

sively publishing and promoting notable Canadian authors such as Marian Engel, Alice Munro, and Farley Mowatt.

One of them, novelist Graham Gibson, approached her and asked if she would help him organize a writers' conference to discuss forming a professional union.

“I was nervous,” she says. “I had never done this kind of thing before,”

but undeterred, she jumped in, Rolodex in hand, and brought 100 writers to Toronto to create the Writers' Union of Canada.

Today the Union represents over 2,700 members addressing things like fees, royalties, promotion and a topic that's especially relevant these days, artificial intelligence.

Alma remembers one of her first jobs was to negotiate a standard minimum contract with publisher Jack McLelland.

“That was one of the scariest things I ever did in my life,” she says. “He was a “heavy” and powerful. But I believed in what I was doing, and I figured he should too because he was a publisher.”

She secured the contract.

Alma helmed the Union for its first eight years as its founding executive director. Creating the Writers Trust of Canada, a charitable organization which supports writers through grants and awards followed.

In 1984, now divorced and with two teens in tow, she moved to Vancouver where she co-created the Vancouver International Writers Festival simply because, as she says, “there was a need for one.”

Again, Alma drew upon her organizational and social skills, working the phones, cajoling her friends and raising funds. She admits there were times when she thought the task was insurmountable.

“I would go to the office, put my head

on the desk and cry and say, ‘What am I doing?’ I kept going because I knew it was a good idea. When I asked Tiff (Timothy) Findley to be the first writer in our program and he enthusiastically agreed, I knew we were going to be fine. I knew if he said yes, we were on the right track.”

She says her key attribute is persistence. Being organized, focused and good with people also helps.

“I’ve never been called irascible,” she says. “I’ve been called indomitable. I’m relatively patient but when I lose

it, I lose it, which I’m ashamed of. I wouldn’t want to be on the other side of my wrath.”

Undaunted, many have called upon her guidance whether it’s to serve as book prize juror or to help them launch their own literary events.

“I’m not afraid to ask people for money,” she says. “I just raised \$160,000 for the Carol Shields Prize.”

She does, however, acknowledge two disappointments. First, a crime writers festival failed to materialize and second, an ambitious plan to make Vancouver

a designated UNESCO World City of Literature got mired in bureaucracy. Nevertheless, she says pursuing a goal gives her life structure.

“I like making a contribution, I like being part of a community and since I’ve retired, I’ve become part of another community. I’m now very involved in my local seniors’ centre and one of the things I’ve done there – I can’t help myself – is to establish a writers’ reading program where I bring in writers to read and talk to members.”

She also supports Music on Main – Alma was its founding President – a grass roots organization dedicated to bringing classical and contemporary concerts to neighbourhood venues throughout the city. Why restrict quality music to the concert hall, the organization asks.

Alma’s a regular concert-goer, but she still has time to visit two adult children and two adult grandchildren. She is also writing her first novel about a Scottish farm family in the 1950’s, not exactly autobiographical, she says, but based, in part, on her earlier experiences.

Still keenly aware of trends and issues, she knows the big publishing houses have culled their roster of mid-level artists, concentrating on bestsellers and “the next big thing,” making it difficult for artists to sustain a professional career.

She knows copyright is an ongoing issue and, like her peers, laments the ease at how “educational institutions are putting stuff through the copying machines and never even think to pay the writers.”

She’s been told bookstores are closing or amalgamating and there’s no appetite for reading. Dire news but ever the writer’s champion, she’s not distraught.

“I don’t think it’s doom and gloom,” she says. “I think storytelling is a very fundamental part of civility and civilization. It’s how we know what’s going on. How we interact with people is by telling them stories and listening to their stories.”

“I think people who are compelled to write will always write and people who are compelled to tell stories will always tell stories and whether they verbally tell those stories or write them down is kind of irrelevant.”

Like I say, no surrender. |

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TREKKING IN MAGICAL NEPAL

by KATE ROBERTSON



“*Ja’aum, ja’um,*” says our lead guide Bir Singh, the Nepali equivalent for “ready, let’s go!” Our group of nine pick up our day packs and excitedly pass through the Pasang Lhamu Gate, built to honour the first female sherpa to summit Everest, for our first steps on the Everest Trail.

I’m on an eight-day trek with World Expeditions, hiking from Lukla (2,860 m), to just above Pangboche (4,032 m), a distance of 17 kilometres. This distance could easily be done in a day or two in the Canadian mountains, but in high altitude destinations, the ascent is slower to allow for acclimatization.

Trekking guidelines recommend avoiding an ascent to a new sleeping elevation of greater than 2,750 metres in one day and ascending at a rate not greater than 500 metres per night once above 3,000. Our first overnight, after a 2.5-hour hike, is at the World Expeditions eco-camp at Ghat (2,530 m) which is actually lower in elevation than our starting point at Lukla.

The 30-minute flight that morning from Ramechhap to Lukla was spectacular, offering a birds-eye view of the arid Eastern Himalayas from a thunderously loud, tiny 12-seater plane skimming just above the mountain tops.

The runway at Lukla, which strangely slopes upward, makes landing interesting. This is the first airstrip built by Sir Edmund Hillary and friends to service the Everest region when he began his work of building schools and hospitals for the Sherpa people.

There are still no roads up here, only access by small commercial planes, helicopters or via the trekking trails. I’m mentally preparing myself for the remoteness.

I arrived off the plane in Kathmandu two days before with a heavy chest and cough, so I’m not feeling in tip-top shape to embarking on such an adventure.

Fortunately, the next day on the way to Monjo my health doesn’t detract from the exotic experience. The trail is edged with small villages made up of immaculate stone buildings adorned with bright shutters and colourful flower boxes, and friendly smiling locals.

A member in our group comments that since a previous visit, there are now many more greenhouses, where the locals are growing their own fresh food, a favourite of which is mustard greens. Many trail-side fields are cultivated with another staple, potatoes. These local ingredients show up often in the delicious, ample meals we are treated to each night at camp, along with Nepali dishes like *momos* (dumplings) and *dal bhat* (lentil curry).

The next morning, when I prepare to leave camp as the soft early sun lights up the surrounding snowy peaks, I receive a *khada* (prayer) scarf from the camp custodian, a custom to wish upon the receiver a safe journey. None of this gives appropriate foreshadowing for the shortness of breath that is to come for me that day.

On the trail from Monjo to Namche several suspension bridges take us back and forth across the Dudh Khosi river and are fun to take playful, bouncy steps across. My group often has to wait for herds of mules or long-horned yakows (a cross between yak and cow) wearing tinkling bells and carrying loads of supplies to cross before we pass.

It’s immediately after we navigate the longest suspension bridge on the trail that the steep switchback section to Namche begins, and our group splits – a faster group, and our group at the rear that would sometimes have to stop every few metres to catch our breath. I start to realize that, with the added compli-

cation of a chest cold, this is going to be much harder than I'd expected.

Uphill from Namche, known as the gateway to the high Himalayas, there are fewer villages and the landscape becomes more rugged. Today we also cross into Sagarmatha National Park, known for its dramatic mountains, including Everest, the world's highest peak at 8,848 metres above sea level. The park was created in 1976 to protect the area and, in 1979, it also became a UNESCO World Heritage site, to protect its extraordinary scenery and wildlife.

I appreciate the medical training that Bir Singh has, and that night I start to take altitude sickness medication, with the hopes that it will help the cough and shortness of breath problems. Although I didn't suffer some of the overnight



PAGE 9 | Kate with a view of Everest
 TOP | Kate receiving a prayer scarf
 BOTTOM LEFT | Prayer flags on a bridge
 BOTTOM RIGHT | Yaks on the trail



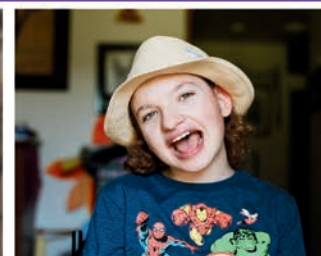
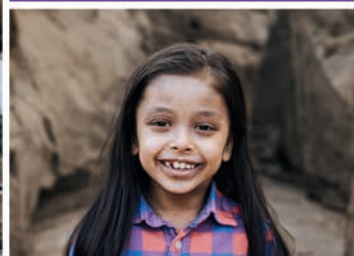
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altitude maladies that others did, the next morning my breathing and cough are no better, so I choose to take the shortcut to our next eco-camp at Kyangjuma.

Despite my cough, the ascent to Khangjuma is a highlight day, with the villages giving way to remoteness and vistas of the high Himalayas becoming more and more amazing.

As I ascend, behind a magnificent stupa I get my first clear glimpse of Everest and its neighbouring peaks, Lhotse and Ama Dablam. I'm left absolutely stunned, and even as a Canadian who lives in a gorgeous mountain range, seeing the highest peak in the world is magical.

Nepal's main religion is Hinduism but the principal religion in Sagarmatha is Buddhism.

Religious relics like stupas (or *chortens* as they are called here, the Tibetan word) are numerous, as well as *mani* stones, inscribed with the six-syllable prayer mantra, which are placed in significant places at entrances to villages and alongside trails and rivers.

Prayer flags are blowing in the wind around every corner, as are prayer wheels, which devotees spin to accumulate wisdom and good karma as they pass by.

The higher altitude is bad for my cough, and the next morning it's worse. Rather than joining the group for the last day of ascent to the camp above Pangboche at 4,000 metres, I opt to head back down to the lodge at Namche for a rest day. The group will pick me up on their way back.

Although I know this is the right thing to do for my health, I'm sorry I'm going to miss the visit to the monastery at Tengboche, re-built with the assistance of Sir Hillary after it was destroyed by fire in 1989.

As we descend, our treks are longer, and in three days we're already down what took us five days to ascend. It's easier to descend in altitude, and there are less steep uphill sections. My lungs and cough start to feel better, and I feel more in the flow of the daily treks.

The Himalayas have long been symbolized in the literature as a sacred place.

When we return to Lukla and the flight out, I feel celebratory.

Making it as far as I did, despite being ill, was an accomplishment. |



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JUNGLE WOWS OF PALAU

by JANE CASSIE

When I was twelve years old, a harmless garter snake crossed my path and put me into panic mode. Now, more than half a century later, I still get the heebie-jeebies whenever I think of one. So after hearing that a one-eyed eel (close enough to a snake) may be lurking about in the nearby riverbed, I freeze in my tracks.

My husband and I are visiting Palau, an archipelago of 340 lush islands in the western Pacific in the southwest corner of Micronesia. And as well as checking out the amazing treasures that thrive beneath the waves, we explore a few above the pristine surface—the Ngardmau Waterfall being one of them.

As legend has it, the curtain of water that plummets 30 meters (100 ft) was created by this slimy-like creature. After falling into an endless sleep, he magically transformed into the river and his head became the waterfall. Whether fact or fiction, snake or eel, after listening to this mythical tid-bit, my skin begins to crawl.

“Fear not,” Jayvan reassures with a cheeky smile. “The only slithery thing you’ll cross today is the path.” We’d been prepped in what to bring on this hour-long trek that bisects Babeldaob’s jungle: Bug repellent, comfy shoes, bathing suit. How tricky could it be?

The walking sticks our Palauan guide doles out should have been my first clue.



Thank heavens for this trusty crutch. Like a third leg, it guides me down 375 stairs that cleave through the tangled flora. It serves as my staff while navigating streams, protruding roots and mucky mud holes. It also acts as my support when taking a breather – which happens regularly. But it’s not my rapid respiration that stops me in my tracks, it’s the sheer beauty.

Towering mahoganies, leafy papayas and feathery palms mesh with 1,200 plant species in this undisturbed Micronesian rainforest. The flourishing array canopies my route and cloaks the forever rolling terrain. In the distance, spilling out of Mother Nature’s plush overcoat, is our eventual destination point, Palau’s largest waterfall. And from these peek-a-boo views, it looks more serene than serpent-like.

But after yesterday’s Jungle Boat Cruise, there’s one thing we know – this tropical wonderland is home to the living. Prior to launching off on this reality ride, my husband’s t-shirt became a hang-out for a friendly fruit bat. While dining on the sumptuous Palauan buffet, we shared our picnic table with a curious wide-eyed monkey. And when plying the lush mangrove-flanked tributary, we were greeted by a jaw-gaping crocodile. Yes, he was hungry – but fortunately not for our photographing fingers!

“No worries,” Jayvan says, taking me out of my dream state, “Aside from a few harmless snakes, Palau is people-friendly.”

I make like his shadow, after giving this comment some serious thought, and follow closely at his heels.

While accompanied en route by a cacophony of bird song, we cross tracks that take us to both the past and future. Railway ties, now choked by overgrowing flora were used by the Japanese during WWII when they mined the area for aluminum. Paralleling these rusty relics is a gleaming monorail that whisks non-hikers from the trailhead to the falls. A zip line provides adventure seekers with an even more thrilling way down.

But today, it’s all on foot. As we continue descending into the jungle thickets, I pray my legs don’t fail me now. After reaching a sign that says, “waterfall this way,” I realize my arms (and bathing suit) are going to get in on the action too.

Waiting before us is a thigh-deep riverbed and strung up to the adjacent shoreline is a flimsy guide wire.

“It’s a snap,” Jayvan says with a smirk. “Just hang onto the twine and go hand over hand.” His laissez-faire instructions for this tight rope act are accented by the thunderous roar of the nearby falls and though I’d rather be dipping into the infinity pool at our resort, I clutch onto this Tarzan-like lifeline and plunge in.

Within minutes we’re safely across and beneath the fabulous falls. The raging froth funnels through a narrow gorge and from its steep precipice plummets to where we stand in the white-water pool. Mesmerized by its magnificence, we silently watch this spectacle of nature -unblemished, untarnished, and unspoiled.

And, thankfully, uninhabited by any one-eyed eels. |



ACROSS | Hungry jaw-gaping croc

TOP | 75 steps cleave through the tangled flora

MIDDLE | Near the waterfall's white-water pool

BOTTOM | Our resort's infinity pool is a wonderful respite after a day of adventure





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ANTARCTICA: Expedition Cruising Outside the Pale of Civilization

by JETT & KATHRYN BRITNELL



Throughout human history, Antarctica has been the ultimate unexplored territory in polar exploration.

Renowned explorer Sir Ernest Shackleton perfectly captured the allure of Antarctica when he said, “Indeed, the stark polar lands grip the hearts of those who have been there in a manner that can hardly be understood by people who never got outside the pale of civilization.”

Antarctica’s breathtaking beauty and desolation continue to attract adventurous voyagers from around the world.

People come to witness the grandeur of the snow-shrouded topography, imposing glaciers, and massive icebergs along its rugged coastline, as well as to experience the rich diversity of wildlife, including whales, seals, seabirds, and iconic penguins.

Today, people can experience Antarctica in relative luxury aboard state-of-the-art, ice-strengthened, small expedition ships. Our recent expedition to the 7th continent was aboard Aurora Expeditions’ purpose-built vessel, the *MV Sylvia Earle*. The ship is sturdily equipped with nautical stabilizing technology, advanced navigational aids, and sophisticated maritime weather forecasting.

Its onboard amenities include a lecture

room, science centre, library, mudroom, gym, sauna, jacuzzis, sun deck, two dining rooms, and bars and lounges.

Expedition cruises on small ships offer a unique experience compared to larger cruise ships in several ways.

First, small expedition ships are specifically designed to explore remote areas that larger vessels cannot reach.

They also have a greater choice of landing sites, as they can enter smaller harbours in compliance with regulations set by the International Association of Antarctic Tour Operators (IAATO).

It’s important to note that shore landings from vessels in Antarctica are restricted to 100 people ashore at any one time. As a result, larger cruise ships with 200 or more passengers must stagger their landing parties. Vessels transporting more than 500 passengers onboard are not allowed to land passengers in Antarctic waters.

Smaller vessels like the *MV Sylvia Earle* carry an average of 100 passengers on Antarctic expeditions, thus offering a more intimate onboard atmosphere, and providing more opportunities to get to know your fellow passengers. This is particularly beneficial for solo travellers.

Antarctica has been at the top of our travel list for a while. Many people view

crossing the infamous Drake Passage, an 800-kilometre open ocean voyage over two days where the Atlantic, Pacific, and Southern Oceans meet, as a momentous experience.

This stretch of ocean is known for being the most dangerous ocean passage in the world, with two distinct conditions: the rough “Drake Shake,” featuring large, heaving waves as high as 12 metres, and the “Drake Lake,” which offers a relatively calm experience in comparison.

Modern small expedition ships utilize navigational technology to chart a more suitable course and avoid extreme weather, making the notorious crossing easier for passengers.

While we were cruising along the Antarctic Peninsula, we were amazed by the number of huge, towering, weather-carved icebergs. Shaped by wind and worn down by the powerful Southern Ocean, Antarctica’s imposing iceberg armadas were truly captivating.

Many were enormous and even more impressive than we had ever expected.

Incredible, artistic forms of floating ice are created through a process called “calving” when they break off from the coastal edges of either tidewater glaciers or ice shelves. Almost all icebergs in the

Southern Hemisphere break off from Antarctica's landmass.

On March 19, 2024, at 10:06 a.m., we crossed the Antarctic Circle, located at 66°33' latitude south. Although there is no formal maritime ceremony to mark this occasion, reaching this point is a rare achievement for world adventurers. Mimosa cocktails were served, and photos taken for posterity as we listened to a speech delivered by expedition crew member and historian, Dr. Ben Maddison, who eloquently addressed the significance of our location. Truly, a memorable moment in our journey.

Before making our first shore landing, we received a detailed briefing on Antarctica's biosecurity regulations, which are quite extensive.

All outerwear, boots, backpacks, and camera bags were meticulously vacuumed to ensure no traces of anything could be left behind on shore.

BELOW | Citizen Science Zodiac cruise

BOTTOM LEFT | Crabeater seal

BOTTOM RIGHT | Gentoo penguins



Even an errant Kleenex tissue flying out of a pocket is not permissible. It is essential to give all wildlife a wide berth, and guests must adhere to any designated routes marked by the expedition team.

Moreover, guests should be prepared for unexpected changes to the planned itinerary due to fluctuating weather, sea conditions, or sudden closures of landing sites.

Antarctica is devoid of land-based mammals, but it hosts a diverse range of marine wildlife, seabirds, albatross, and invertebrates such as krill, which play a fundamental role in the Antarctic food web.

Penguins are the most iconic inhabitants of the region, and there are numerous scattered colonies across Antarctica, posing a challenge for research scientists to accurately count them all.

Regular sightings of eight different whale species are common, as well as encounters with various seals.

The Southern Ocean's undersea realm supports over 70 species including squid, cephalopods, crabs, sea stars, sea cucumbers, sea urchins, mussels, sponges, and corals. Approaching wildlife on shore closer than five meters, including with cameras or other equipment, is not allowed to avoid causing distress to the animals. The best way to observe wildlife during shore visits is to move quietly and slowly.

During our trip, we had the unique opportunity to visit several abandoned research stations when shore conditions allowed. While many of these stations were established under the auspices of conducting scientific research, the establishment of

these huts was also made by countries to stake territorial claims.

Today, many of these turn-of-the-century buildings are preserved and maintained as museums, with their kitchen shelves still stocked with tins of canned goods and other remnants from their previous occupants. All of them provide a fascinating glimpse into past expeditions and documented work from former scientific research missions.

The trip itself also invited us to contribute to scientific research, by offering opportunities to be a part of citizen science projects with data and sample collection expeditions, of which we happily partook.

Unspoiled, untamed, and peacefully quiet, Antarctica is unlike any other place on Earth. Its enormity is impossible to fully grasp. This white, otherworldly continent undeniably left its mark on our hearts. It was here that we journeyed outside the pale of civilization and Antarctica exceeded our wildest expectations. |

Aurora Expeditions offers all-inclusive small-ship expeditions to Antarctica with a strong commitment to sustainable travel. For more information, visit aurora-expeditions.com

Jett and Kathryn Britnell are underwater, wildlife and expedition photographers, internationally published writers, explorers, scuba divers and public speakers. Both are Fellows of the Royal Canadian Geographical Society, The Explorers Club and IAATO Antarctic Ambassadors. Jett serves as Chapter Chair for The Explorers Club's Canadian Chapter.



ROCKY MOUNTAIN HIGH

by RICHARD ARTHUR

“Music makes pictures and often tells stories. All of it magic and all of it true,” sang John Deuschendorf Jr in the introduction to a concert album that captured the hearts of folk and country fans around the world in the 70’s.

Better known as John Denver, this singer’s genuine and wilderness-pure music still resonates today, as much around the campfire as in the concert halls.

During his career, John Denver had five number-one albums in Canada, including his platinum-selling *Greatest Hits* and the gold-selling *An Evening with John Denver*.

He also had six number-one singles including “Annie’s Song,” “Back Home Again” and “Thank God I’m a Country Boy.” But, of course, John will be most remembered for his classic “Take Me Home, Country Roads”.

After his chart-topping decades, Denver worked extensively for humanitarian, science and environmental causes. These included his own environmental group Plant-

It 2020, and award-winning contributions to the NASA “Citizens In Space” program.

John Denver met an untimely end in 1997 when his experimental aircraft crashed in California.

Canadian musician Rick Worrall, 68, has been a fan since seeing John Denver live in 1975 at the CNE in Toronto.

That concert featured a full symphony and Rick was struck with the potential for orchestration that Denver’s songs presented.

Rick’s own musical career took him elsewhere for many years -- but when Rick filled in on lead vocals in 2017 with the Okanagan Symphony’s Elton John production, the experience (which he loved) germinated the idea to create a show celebrating John Denver’s music and the beautiful orchestration featured in the album *An Evening with John Denver*.

Rick and his brother Steve Worrall wanted to bring these songs to life and give them the lush orchestration they deserved.

Rick and Steve are longtime stalwarts of Canadian music, having been signed to both ATTIC and Spy/A&M records. Together they have released six albums and played and toured with the likes of Tom Cochrane, Sue Medley, Kim Stockwood and Colin Linden.

However, Rick and his bandmates ran into a challenge. The original John Denver scores and parts were not available. John’s management company had gotten rid of them after his passing.

After some searching Rick tracked down celebrated conductor and composer Lee Holdridge. Lee has scored numerous films, written operas, and worked with world-renowned artists such as Barbra



ABOVE | The iconic John Denver
Photo courtesy Lee Holdridge

RIGHT TOP | Lee Holdridge and Rick Worrall discuss editing
Photo : Glenna Turnbull Photography

RIGHT BOTTOM | Rocky Mountain High
Photo courtesy Rick Worrall

Streisand, Stevie Wonder and Brian May.

Lee had scored and conducted John’s famed live album as well as recorded material. Rick was worried Lee would see him as a crazy Canadian and not respond. However, according to Lee, “I could sense that he was serious and passionate about this, so I listened to him.”

Turns out, Lee had met John Denver in 1971 when John played guitar on one of his own tracks that Lee was working on. Subsequently, when John needed an orchestral arrangement on his recordings, he brought in Lee.

Their collaboration continued for years after that serendipitous meeting, with Lee telling John, “Your songs are going to live into the future and become part of the fabric of the culture.”

With this belief, Lee had kept the full scores in paper manuscript.

Through collaboration with Rick Worrall, they were able to digitize the original scores and recreate the parts required for the John Denver production.

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“We now have done over 80 songs and, in a sense, rescued the entire library,” says Lee. “Thanks to Rick for doing that and making it possible for us to go and perform these works, we’re keeping John’s legacy alive.”

“John’s music represented a message of hope at a time when we were more willing to address the world’s problems in a constructive way,” says Rick. “We need more John Denver today!”

Fans are now able to experience John Denver’s music in its full glory, with a broad musical palette of talented players and singers, in an exuberant live performance.

For Rick, the goal is not to dress up like John Denver and do a typical tribute — rather, to recreate the rich musical atmosphere of those orchestrated concerts John Denver was loved for, to truly showcase the songs.

Rick and Steve Worrall bring with them a Canadian all-star band including Sean Bray (guitar), Scott Grant (drums and percussion), Brian McMahon (bass), Chris Stevens (banjo), Susan Aylard (fiddle and violin), Neville Bowman (piano) and Delphine Litke (vocals) as well as many other featured musicians.

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FOREVER FIT by EVE LEES

Pollution and the Exerciser

Regular physical activity promises many health benefits. However, caution is needed when exercising outdoors, particularly if you live in a larger city. Pollution and allergens (like pollen) can restrict lung function and oxygen delivery in outdoor exercisers. And this isn't just a concern for those with breathing difficulties. Pollutants and airborne allergens can negatively affect anyone's health and physical performance.

Pollutants can affect your physical performance in several ways: Oxygen transport to the working muscles is restricted, causing quicker fatigue, muscle tightness, and cramping in some individuals. Headaches, dizziness or nausea can also be symptoms of increased pollutant intake. Coughing, chest tightness, and shortness of breath may also be experienced. Pollutants and allergens can trigger severe bronchoconstriction in those with asthma or EIA.

Carbon monoxide exposure from heavy vehicle traffic can raise the carboxy-hemoglobin levels in a nonsmoker to that of a smoker. Vigorous or high-intensity exercise speeds the breathing rate, which increases the pollutants absorbed. Pregnant women, asthmatics, those with heart disease, the elderly and young children are the most susceptible. They should remain indoors when pollution levels are high.

Weather conditions also play a part in air quality. When warm winds blow into a valley or low-land areas, warm air is trapped under cooler air. Vehicle exhaust also becomes trapped, and ground-level ozone or smog is created when it reacts with sunlight. As hot, dry weather continues, air quality worsens.

GENERAL TIPS FOR OUTDOOR EXERCISERS. Outdoor exercisers in the city, such as cyclists and joggers, can avoid unnecessary exposure to pollutants and allergens like pollen by exercising early morning or the evening. Irritants are not at peak levels at these times. Check for air pollution and allergen levels online, in newspapers or television reports. Sensitive

individuals should exercise indoors when the levels are high.

Avoid heavy traffic areas, particularly on tree-lined streets, if you must exercise outdoors during peak pollution times (like midday). Trees can trap carbon monoxide. Instead, run, walk or cycle in open, wind-swept areas.

TIPS FOR SWIMMERS. Swimmers using indoor pools may be exposed to large amounts of trapped chlorine gas, triggering asthma symptoms. The harder and longer you swim, the more chemicals you inhale or absorb through the skin. Check that your local pool is well-ventilated, or swim in an outdoor pool. Chlorine dissipates in the open air.

SUGGESTIONS FOR PEOPLE WITH ASTHMA. For those with exercise-induced asthma (EIA), choose an activity in a warm, humid environment. Swimming outdoors is ideal. Highly strenuous activities or exercising in cold weather will provoke EIA. When exercising in the cold, cover the mouth to limit intake of cold air and pollutants (use your COVID mask!). Avoid excessive mouth breathing. Breathing through the nose will warm, filter and humidify air intake. Do at least a 5–10-minute warm-up before your activity and follow the workout with a 10-minute cooldown. Talk to a doctor, pharmacist or dietician about medications or nutritional supplements to reduce allergy or asthma symptoms.

CAUTIONS FOR GOLFERS. Golf courses can use large amounts of pesticides (ask them if you are concerned). Health officials recommend washing your feet and changing socks after playing. If you wear your everyday footwear (athletic shoes) to golf, remove those shoes before entering your home. Avoid touching your hands to your mouth. Handling the golf ball or sprayed grasses and plants can pass toxins into the mouth. Those highly sensitive to chemicals shouldn't eat or drink while golfing. And a final tip – avoid chewing on your golf tee. |

Eve Lees has been active in the health & fitness industry since 1979. Currently, she is a Freelance Health Writer for several publications and speaks to business and private groups on various health topics. www.artnews-healthnews.com



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LIVING ON PURPOSE

by LAURIE MUELLER

Grateful For Being Older

As is my custom in September – I wish you a Happy New Year.

With grandchildren and, in my case, a great granddaughter (grade two already!), it's the time to go back to school.

September is also when we start to put away our summer clothes, really appreciate the last days of our summer gardens, and think about the activities we will participate in over the next ten months.

And then October... October 1 has been designated by the United Nations to recognize the contributions of older persons and examine the issues that affect their lives.

With Thanksgiving Day only two weeks later, on October 14 in Canada, there is cause to celebrate both events with gratitude and thanksgiving.

Like many Canadians, my background is both settler and indigenous. I am a mixture of many, and proud of it. I am also an older person. I am grateful for all of that.

According to Ralph Milton, in his book *Well Aged*, old age doesn't start until you're 80. At 67 he still thought of himself as middle-aged.

I know that I have the mindset of someone middle-aged and sometimes even that of a teenager! Perhaps we are a combination of all the ages we have ever been?

We improve with age, don't you agree?

We have a greater acceptance of ourselves and of others at this age. And while we may sometimes focus on what we forget – Dang! Where did I put my glasses? What is that person's name? – many of us decide to learn a new skill and off we go to take a course or pull it up online.

We don't lose our ability to learn – we just learn in another way, building upon our knowledge and experiences. I am grateful for these honed abilities.

I asked a few of my Facebook friends to share with me why they are happy attaining the age they are.

Kathryn G, Winnipeg, said, "My elderly mother is going through health issues. I recently turned 65 and started receiving OAS. This has given me the financial cushion to look after her. At her assisted living facility, I have commented that being able to look after an elderly parent is an honour many do not get to experience."

Valerie G, Victoria, said, "I love being older. (And perhaps a little wiser!) I'm grateful every day for having been able to care for my parents when I was in my 60's myself. I'm grateful for still having my 'marbles' as I turn 80 and still being able to write! I'm grateful that my husband is still beside me after 55 years of marriage. I'm grateful for my adorable grandsons and being able to watch them



grow up. Having the privilege of being 'old' is a gift for me - and you may quote me on that!" (Indeed, I did!)

Mame M., Kelowna, simply replied, "You know my favorite saying. 'I love my life.'"

Maureen M., Courtenay, wrote, "Life starts at 60. I feel free and confident to do whatever I want. Life is good. Now why does it take so long to figure things out?"

Jean H., Burnaby, wrote, "One of the benefits of being older is that you have so many good memories of what has happened in your life. I have tried to capture some of them in my scrapbooks and can share them with my family."

Often we rush through our lives without taking the time to reflect on all the things that give it meaning...like enjoying a soulful conversation with a friend over coffee, discovering an uplifting podcast, living in a safe community, or cherishing those we love.

Let's be grateful for where we are, what we have been given, what we have learned and above all what we have been blessed with.

Happy New Year and thank you for being such great readers with whom I can share my older ideas!

PS. I asked my husband what he thought of being older and he replied, "I don't think about it actually."

I do love this man I've been married to for 27 years this September! Happy Anniversary, darling!

Laurie Mueller, M.ED is retired and living in Victoria with her husband, Helmuth. Her book *The Ultimate Guide on What to do When Someone You Love Dies* is available on Amazon. More about Laurie can be found at www.lauriemconsulting.com or on Facebook.

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