Toni Sanchez-Murphy is true to her Philosophy of Life:

Esse quam videri. To be what you seem. To be as one seems, to be authentic. To live each day true to self and in the present. To find happiness right here, right now. To find the beauty around you and in you. To accept others. To spread kindness locally and globally.

She is a 24-year resident of Rochester Hills and before that of Pontiac for 17 years and before that a Detroiter for 32 years. Toni sadly and excitedly says she recently “retired” from her career and “rewired” her passion for helping others.

Toni began as a Vocational Counselor, then Bilingual High School Counselor, followed by School Psychologist, and department head in Pontiac school’s Office of Special Services. She retired from the Pontiac school system after 44 years of helping youth and from 39 years in private clinical practice. She has now “rewired” to the Older Person’s Commission and opened her heart to OPC members for Life & Wellness Coaching.

After graduating from Detroit's Western High School, Toni received several degrees from Wayne State: Psychology and Sociology double major, Masters in Clinical Psychology, Teaching Credential, Counseling Credential, and School Psychology Certification.

Toni and husband Brian Murphy, have a daughter and son-in-law in Royal Oak and a son and daughter-in-law along with three grandchildren in California. Brian is a retired Oakland University professor of English and film, a novelist, and local lecturer. They are long-time supporters of Michigan arts, the Michigan Opera Theatre, Detroit Symphony, Detroit Institute of Arts, Detroit Library, Detroit Historical Society, and Belle Isle Conservatory.

Toni is a 2012 Ms. Senior Michigan and has been a large part of the organization since then. For the past two years she has served as President/CEO of the Ms. Senior Michigan Board of Directors.

In 2011 she was looking for a nice afternoon outing that she and her then 89-year-old mother could enjoy. Entering a pageant had not appeared on her “Bucket List” until after they attended a Ms. Senior Michigan Pageant Luncheon. As she and her mother watched the diverse senior women on stage, she thought “I can do this… I want to be a part of this!” Toni began the application process, was chosen as the 2012 Ms. Senior Michigan Queen, and then represented the State of Michigan at the national pageant.

Toni says, “I like supporting senior women to grow in their artful skills bringing happiness to others. The Ms. Senior Michigan organization is a symbol to senior women that their intelligence, their talents, and their grace is important; and senior women are important to other generations.” During her reign, the Queen appears at community events, is a motivational speaker for women, and entertains residents in senior centers. She works to improve quality of life.
Adjusting to change and our emotions
By Maryann Blodgett Wilshere

As I interviewed Honored Senior Toni Sanchez-Murphy and how she helps people with selfcare through counseling, I was reminded of a circumstance 29 years ago when our family was separated for seven months by a job transfer and of what felt like time “lost,” the changes, and the roller-coasters of emotions. I knew this was “minor” relative to military service or serious illness yet the feelings were real.

We are all having a wide-range of emotions during your and my time these past months. We have missed people and missed anticipated events and plans, and, as some seniors have said, it’s a feeling of loss of living time.

Toni reminded me how important it is for us to express and acknowledge our own feelings of disappointment, fears, unwanted and uncertain change, loss of connection, and perhaps guilt for grieving our losses when so many are suffering much more than ourselves—and, she reminded me that each person’s list is unique. When expressed and shared, impact of feelings and emotions is reduced.

Do we bury our feelings, keep them to ourselves, be strong in adversity or do we express emotions? Do we volley between loss and gratitude for what we have? Emotions—these are our own terms, our life.

My good friend those many years ago told me my emotions are my emotions and not to dismiss them but to acknowledge them, and share them with trusted friends in safe situations—then they are not banging around in my head and my body and stuck overwhelming everything else.

Expressed feelings and emotions (manifested consciously and also subconsciously) all have value. They are part of me. They have a place in my life at that moment. A place I can return to but more importantly feelings and emotions are a place from which my life branches. Emotions that come from what’s being missed, but, without guilt, they bring gratitude for all that I have.

I recently read an article by Dr. Lori Gottlieb who is a therapist, journalist, and speaker. In our lives as we begin a new year, I think it is an important point she makes:

“Just because the date has changed on the calendar, doesn’t mean that internally you’ve recalibrated.”

A good reminder for all of us to meet ourselves, and meet others, right where we are and to give ourselves credit for coming through 2020 with resiliency and flexibility and for doing so with the swirling emotions—one day at a time.

To do so we really aren’t losing time, we are spending time differently accompanied by each of our feelings.

———

Vintage Views is a quarterly publication with a circulation of over 4,000, distributed to seniors, advertisers, and locations throughout the community. OPC provides a full spectrum of social, health and wellness, and educational programs including Meals on Wheels, hot lunches, transportation, adult day services, and travel.

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NEWS UPDATE FROM THE “POLKA DOT PRESS”

By Alyson Denyer

For those of our dear readers who enjoyed News from the “Polka Dot Press” (the ARRA article) in our winter 2020 issue and have been holding their breath waiting to hear if Senate Bill S.892 passed—I am happy to report that it did indeed!

On November 12, 2020, the Rosie the Riveter Congressional Gold Medal Act finally passed in the Senate. The House Bill H.R.1773 had already passed.

Although it will not be awarded individually, it is an award to be proud of. And proud we are, my friends, proud we are!

Mae Krier and other Rosies along with the daughters and sons of Rosies (Rosebuds and Rivets) were persistent in getting support for Senate Bill S.892. The Congressional Gold Medal will collectively be awarded to “Rosie the Riveters” in honor of women who held employment or volunteered to support the war effort during World War II.

The medal recognizes their contributions to the United States and the inspiration they have provided to ensuing generations, and will be displayed at the National Museum of American History. It will be made available for display at other locations associated with Rosie the Riveter.

Calling Writers and Poets

Do you enjoy sharing stories? Fiction? Non-fiction?
We are always looking for articles and poems about hobbies, people, places, and interesting experiences.

Don’t think you can “write”…most of us didn’t.

Do you like to proofread or want to learn how to do layouts?

Vintage Views is the place for you…

Our very own quarterly OPC newspaper written “By, For, and About” seniors.

For information, contact Maryann Wilshere or Karen Lemon (Co-Editors)
Email the Vintage Views office: v@OPCseniorcenter.org

We look forward to hearing from you!

Since the American Revolution, Congress has commissioned gold medals as its highest expression of national appreciation for distinguished achievements and contributions by individuals or institutions. The Medal of Honor is the nation's highest award for military valor.▼

HONORING ‘ROSIE THE RIVETER’,
“Mae Krier, a Rosie the Riveter, discusses the years long effort to bring a CONGRESSIONAL GOLD MEDAL to women who helped win WWII”.

Source: PBS39 News Report
By Bob Winkel

Regular walkers this past fall in the Rochester Park started to notice an increasing amount of nightly damage to young trees and saplings along the shoreline of Paint Creek. At first it was just a few small trees here and there but the number and size of the downed trees have grown much more numerous.

The damaged trees all have characteristic marks of the beaver—the “pencil point” stubs and piles of gnawed wood chips leave no doubt about the cause. By rough count currently, there appears to be nearly 70 saplings and trees that have been downed by the industrious creatures. The downed trees range from roughly 3” to about 8” in diameter.

Park employees are about at their wit’s end in trying to put a stop to the damage. They have put out humane traps but, so far, without results. Because so many people frequent and enjoy the park, the employees’ tools are limited. The area near the humane traps have warning signs to keep people clear. More aggressive methods like claw traps or shooting cannot be used. Even cameras are a contentious issue. Meanwhile, there is great concern for the expensive vegetation that was planted along the Paint Creek a few years ago. Interestingly, a number of citizens have indicated that, perhaps, nature should be left to take its own course.

Before winter, two beaver sightings were reported and an early-morning park walker reported seeing one swimming upstream to the scene of the “crime.” Another sighting by a park employee occurred when he saw a dog standing on point, intently watching a deep section of the creek near the park’s maintenance building. On closer inspection a beaver was spotted, but it was not possible to reach it or do anything to stop it. Throughout the year, weather permitting, park patrons are taking advantage of the walking paths but, lately, more and more walkers are on the lookout for the culprits and their damage. Almost every week newly decimated young trees are seen along the edge of the Paint Creek, the result of the “eager” beavers.

Mystery revolves around the missing trees: what has happened to them? Most of the saplings disappeared, as have the branches from the larger downed trees. However, no obvious beaver lodges or dams have appeared within the park boundaries. It seems likely that the creatures were taking the materials down river with the current but a search of the Paint Creek over towards the library did not reveal any of the missing saplings and branches. Research indicates that the animals mostly operate along a half-mile stretch of a river or stream.

Online write-ups about beavers indicate that they can digest cellulose, and they especially like the layer just under the bark of a tree. A number of the larger downed trees not only have had all the branches removed (used to make the lodge for the beaver colony) but also have had all their bark stripped off and the underlying layer stripped bare.

Stay tuned to this latest story of wildlife “busy” at work in our city. And, regardless of your viewpoint in this latest people vs. animal story, go over to the park and see the beaver colony signs for yourself. Anyone need any free woodchips?

Interesting facts about beavers and consequences.

Ecologists call beavers "ecosystem engineers" because these animals physically alter habitats by cutting down trees, building dams, digging canals and building lodges. In doing so, beavers change the distribution and abundance of many other animals and plants, mostly by indirect interactions.

Beavers don’t hibernate in the winter but usually stay in their lodges where they have stored food. In addition to feeding on the cambium layer (just under the bark) of woody plants, they also feed on a variety of aquatic and upland vegetation. Beavers prefer woody foods from willow, birch, maple, alder, cherry and poplar trees, although they can and will feed on the leaves, twigs and bark of most species of woody plants.

The beavers can down a tree in about half of an hour. Notice the bark stripped off and the trap.

Photo credit: Bob Winkel
There are many reasons why we have been living in Rochester Hills for over forty years and are still here! If I had to pick a single one, perhaps it would be because of the thrill of often seeing deer leaping through our backyard. They often pause to nibble on our foliage.

Deer probably run through our yard every day. We sometimes see a single one or up to fifteen deer a few times a week. The thrill never gets old. We call to whomever is in the house "Deer off the deck, heading south" or wherever the deer are and are moving toward. We dash there, often grabbing a cell phone to capture even more awed memories. Their route is out from a large woods, past our house to a creek, and back again. They can be seen any time of the day but early morning and dusk seem to be their favorite times to be in the neighborhood.

Once I bought a bunch of red geraniums and placed them on a white wrought iron flower cart in the backyard. It was worth the effort and too beautiful! You see what’s coming, right? The next morning all the flowers were missing. On the grass were a few petals and overturned flower pots. The deer thought I had set out a salad bar for them. They also like our hostas, hibiscus, burning bush leaves, Stella D’Oro, daylilies, and more geraniums as close to the house as the front porch.

There are a few commercial sprays that can be applied to tasty plants after a rain to ward off deer. A neighbor saves his hair clippings after a visit to a barber shop to deter the deer. There are ways to mark territory so deer avoid the area. Some deer-repelling plants with strong aromas include lavender, catmint, garlic or chives. Thorny roses sometimes discourage snacking on nearby plants…but deer also find roses to be a wonderful snack. There are laws prohibiting intentionally feeding and baiting deer in certain circumstances.

Decades ago we began an up north vacation putting the first mileage ever on our brand new lease car. At dusk my husband, three young sons, and our dog were the only ones in sight on the road. “Oh look, there’s a deer!” We were watching that deer that had run across in front of us into the woods. BAM another deer crashed into the driver’s side door denting the door beyond use. My husband’s quick thinking maneuvered the car safely to the side of the road. We were happy to see the second deer disappear into the woods; it must have had a migraine! In relating this story later, people asked if we notified the DNR, thinking they might help the deer. Frankly, we were thinking how fortunate we were not to flip over in the ditch and that none of us were hurt. For the rest of our vacation my husband had to climb in and out the passenger’s side door! That got old faaast!

Remember, if you see one deer, there is often another deer or more close by. A doe will often have two fawns, both spring and fall. Sometimes you see a fawn alone…assume mom is nearby watching over her Bambi.▼

With the population of people and population of deer in our area and across much of Michigan, there are often signs posted in deer-frequented areas to warn motorists. Motorists may see “Deer Crash Area” signs or a yellow diamond shaped sign with black border and a jumping deer. You may even see where some people couldn’t resist placing a red dot on the deer’s nose.

As beautiful as they are, there are several diseases deer can carry that humans can catch. I keep the phone number for the Oakland County Road Commission on my calendar and have often phoned them to pick up a dead deer along the road; deer are the only animals they will pick up and only on county roads. One deer died in a backyard after being hit by a car, the homeowner and a friend put the deer on a tarp and dragged it to the county road in front of his home before calling in the location.

Deer can run in front of a car or into the side of a car causing terrible damage to the vehicle; a terrifying experience for a driver and passengers. Veering to avoid hitting a deer can involve other vehicles. Everyone has a deer crash story to tell.

One gal was driving at night on M-59 when a deer totaled her car. She was terrified when her airbag went off and emitted a burning type odor; she thought her car was on fire! Fortunately, no other cars were at the site.

Photo credit: Roger Waid from their kitchen window.
**Worms**  
By Nancy Knitter

A walk after a heavy spring rain would make me squeamish. I had to sidestep the wiggly worms that were flooded out of their burrows in the grass. As a little girl, I was afraid of anything that wiggled, crawled, flew, or had long legs. Dad was an avid fisherman and on his days off as a city streetcar conductor, he would head out to one of the many lakes near home in Milwaukee. He only used bamboo cane poles and picked his own nightcrawlers from the lawn after he soaked it to nudge the little crawlers to the surface.

My dad had 12 brothers and his first two children were boys. Lo and behold I came along eight years after the last boy. Of course, he was thrilled but not too sure how to entertain a girl. He did the same things with me that he did with my brothers. He took me to ballgames and wrestling matches—and fishing which of course included those wiggly things!

Mom was glad to get me out from under her feet now and then. Hesitant as I was about fishing, she often had to encourage me to go with Dad. He would tie the bamboo fishing poles to the side of the 1939 Continental Flyer along with his pail of worms. We rented a boat and spent several hours fishing. I refused to put the worms on the hook by myself, so he had to interrupt his own fishing to take care of my line quite frequently since I seemed to lose the worm by the nibbling fish.

He decided that I needed to get friendly with the worms, so he started a small worm farm in our backyard that I helped him tend. For our fishing trips I was required to pick some out. He convinced me that fish didn’t feel pain when they were put on a hook. Pretty soon I was also going out at night to pick the big, juicy nightcrawlers out of the lawn!

My older brothers loved to tease me by dangling a worm in my face. At first I would run away screaming until I showed them—bravely picking up a nightcrawler and dangling it in their faces. I wondered if they had to bait their own hooks when they fished with Dad. They said they brought their own bait and never had to pester Dad. However, I learned that Mom would always pack them a spare hot dog that they used for bait when she packed the fishing lunches.

I enjoyed our fishing excursions and catching a blue gill or two. Then there was my other challenge of taking the fish off the hook. Mom always sent along a pair of old gloves for that chore. Worms...big, juicy, wiggly. Hoorah for worms who help with composting, enriching the soil, and fondly for catching fish. I’m hooked.

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**Insomnia Recipe**  
By Hans Koseck

An expert offered this remedy for not being able to fall asleep: *Count slowly backward by threes from 300. When you arrive at zero you should be close to dozing off.*

I tried it. I must not have been fully alert, because I ended up in the negative, at minus one. It didn’t work for me. So I started again at 300. This time I ended up more positive, at plus one, but still not at zero.

So, I got out of bed, sat at my desk with paper and pencil and started subtracting and writing. Well, that turned out to be a very laborious and tiring endeavor and I had the bright idea to use the calculator.

Why didn’t I think about that before? I must have been too tired. It was so much faster this way. The new read-outs appeared so quickly in the window. In no time I ended up already in the double-digits. Then it happened: it read 288. Oh, shoot! The system had tricked me to start again, all the way back to the beginning.

Tired and disgusted... I quit and went to bed. Was that the whole idea behind the theory?

My wife solved the problem the next day. At the difference readout 96, I must have hit the times key instead of the minus key. Easy for her to figure it out, she knows integral calculus and spherical trigonometry.

Besides, I had been very tired. I guess she was right. It made sense. I don’t really care. But I’m not going to try that sleep remedy again. As physically tired as I was, all of my determination really woke up my brain!
MY FIRST GRADE TEACHER

By Adam Thiny

October 1, 1944! The Red Army swept through our Balkan village, paving the way for the incoming victors. Being of a different ethnic group, the new rulers found no use for us. They confiscated our property, evicted us from our homes, and freighted us to an incarceration center. After over two years of confinement we fled to Austria.

Towards the end of September 1947, my mother, my sister Käthe (age 11), and I (age 9) arrived in Tamsweg, a town located in the Austrian state of Salzburg. Second cousin Greti (age 11), her mother and grandmother had preceded us here by three months. The six of us were the only refugees in town. To earn our daily bread, the adults labored on farms as did the children. But now, we children would once again attend school.

Except for having attended Kindergarten back home in our Balkan village, I had no other education. I could neither read nor write. For the last three school years, education for people like us, the defeated, had been denied. During our time of incarceration my mind had stagnated, hovering on the brink of dormancy.

Here in Tamsweg, barely four months past my ninth birthday, I started the first grade. My classmates were no older than six. It became quite apparent that by me being three years older, and of course much bigger than my peers, I did not belong there. But regardless, thanks to my dedicated teacher I would finally learn to read and write words that would constitute a major part of my life.

She was a brunette, in her early twenties, and viewed through my young eyes rather pretty. The students addressed her as Fräulein (Miss) Ernst. Having just recently graduated from the University, I believe this was her first teaching assignment, and coincidentally (Miss) Ernst. Having just recently graduated from the University, I believe this was her first teaching assignment, and coincidentally, I also reminded her of how she had stated at fourteen years earlier. I also reminded her of how she had stated at fourteen years earlier.

Being the biggest kid in class, Fräulein Ernst assigned me to a seat in the last row, which I considered somewhat demeaning. I did not complain, but feverishly concentrated on learning those ABCs. I intended to become her best student and win that coveted year end prize that went with it. Unfortunately, it didn’t turn out that way. At the end of the school year she informed me that I was her best student. But due to my age advantage she had been forbidden to acknowledge that feat. Yes, I was disappointed, but then she did have a lot of good points.

I remember Fräulein Ernst as a caring teacher. She never failed to hand out presents to the students on their Namenstag (name day). It was customary to celebrate a person’s first name there instead of observing one’s birthday. The gifts were typically related to learning: writing booklets, coloring pencils, and erasers. She surprised me with a portable slate chalk board—I was the only kid in class who did not own one. Those may have been diminutive gifts, but they were truly appreciated by the children, especially the poor who could not afford to buy them, like me.

No doubt, Käthe, Greti, and I were the poorest kids in Tamsweg. We had arrived there with nothing more than the worn-out clothing draping our bodies. In fact, my sister Käthe was voted the poorest kid in school. This honor, perhaps somewhat embarrassing, entitled her to some special perks. After sending a brief life story of herself, with a photo, to a school in Pennsylvania, USA, she received a package containing various items, including dresses. United States of America, maybe someday!

During October of 1948, right after having started the second grade with Fräulein Ernst, all six of us refugees left Tamsweg, migrating to an Austrian refugee camp inhabited by 5,000 people like us, outcasts from the Balkans. Three years later, in the fall of 1951, we all immigrated to America.

August 1961, thirteen years after having left Tamsweg, I returned, visiting my uncle, his wife, and my two Austrian born cousins. One day my cousin handed me a note from Fräulein Ernst—yes, she was still a Miss. She requested that I meet her at the town café. Naturally, I could not refuse a date with my first grade teacher.

While sipping coffee and devouring an apple strudel inside the café, I casually mentioned my uncomplimentary seating assignment fourteen years earlier. I also reminded her of how she had stated at the end of the school year that I was her best student, but due to my advanced age she was not permitted to acknowledge that achievement. I can’t recall her reply, but do remember her chuckle. For the record, on this day she insisted on picking up the café tab. An exceptional lady, a giving person she still was. Following a few hours of reminiscing, we exited the café. After exchanging our “Auf Wiedersehens” (good-byes), we parted. Fräulein Ernst turned right while I turned left. Our trails would never cross again . . . only in memories.

The 800 year old village of Tamsweg anchors the eastern part of an oblong valley. At an elevation of 3,000 feet it is one of the coldest areas in Austria. Rolling farm fields, sprouting meadows, medieval castles, and spiraling church steeples embellish this alpine wonderland. The 1982 Walt Disney movie, The Mysterious Stranger, was filmed in one of those castles. All through my years, this has remained as one of my favorite places, my Shangri-La.

Photo credit: Adam Thiny (1961)
By Bill Mihalic

In the response to Covid, just three precautionary measures—social distancing, suspension of large group gatherings, and restrictions on travel—were enough to disrupt a major portion of our pre-Covid lifestyles. 

Reality sinks in

It didn’t take long to realize the extent, experience the impact, and feel the pain of disruption. In addition to frustration and disappointment from simply not being able to do things we did a few short months before, we were suddenly without the camaraderie, fun, and bonding those activities provided. Just as we can be desperately thirsty yet not understand the basics of dehydration, we might not have realized that our negative emotions were amplified—if not actually rooted in—specific unfulfilled needs.

Maslow makes a point

In 1943 Abraham Maslow identified specific innate human needs and suggested every human has an inherent drive to satisfy those needs in a specific order based on prioritization of importance and progression of attainment, which he referred to as a “hierarchy” and portrayed it as a pyramid. Fulfillment of “Basic Needs” such as food, warmth and safety is necessary, but not sufficient. Once those physical needs are assured, people focus on “Psychological Needs” and “Self-Actualization.” Those two categories include things like friendships, prestige, and creative activities toward achieving one’s own full potential.

Although Maslow concluded that priorities can momentarily shift due to circumstances, he used the term “essential needs” because if they remain unfulfilled—or become unfulfilled—the impact is not limited to some frustration and a bit of disappointment; over time it can extend to physical illness as well as emotional issues such as stress, anxiety and depression.

It’s no surprise then that so many procedures, devices, apps and approaches (let’s call them “workarounds”) were implemented to maintain or regain some of our “old normal” lifestyles and partially satisfy some elements of Maslow’s hierarchy.

Dear Professor Maslow…

Unfortunately, the results of our zealous endeavors were a far cry from the cliché “instant gratification” we had all hoped for. Of course, some workarounds were fairly straightforward, relatively inexpensive, and easy to implement, but many required (and will continue to require) funding, training, compromise, inconvenience…and time. Even after a workaround was in place, the results were compromises. It was not a complete return our “old normal,” and even though we may have acknowledged that “Something is better than nothing,” we often added that the results were “Just not the same, not as good.”

...is it possible that the innate human drive to satisfy essential needs, which ensured survival and personal growth in the past, was actually somewhat counter-productive in shaping our response to the pandemic? ...Did that irrepressible drive to satisfy underlying needs, along with the natural approach of doing so by restoring elements of the “old normal,” lead to an emphasis on quick fixes and result in workarounds that were only partly effective?

Looking forward

Now there may be diminished enthusiasm (and consequently less effort) for cranking up the ol’ workaround generator to max power. Many people, based on their 2020 experience, now seem to expect that any workaround, no matter how carefully developed, will fall short of matching the results in the “old normal.” Additionally, some organizations question whether workarounds that are perfect in other settings could be applied effectively in their own particular situation, such as a corporate culture based on face-to-face interaction or a worship community based on gathering together. Possibly the biggest deterrent to a continued and accelerated program to develop workarounds is the perceived “time factor.” The concern is that the timeline for development, implementation, and return on investment could extend beyond the end of Covid restrictions and precautions. Consequently there seems to be a widespread shift of focus to “life after Covid.” Musings about “The first thing I’m going to do…” are moving from dreams to plans, and the most frequently asked questions have shifted from “how can we…” to “when can we…” People are almost giddy in anticipation of traveling, holding family gatherings, conducting business in person, and so forth.

The senior factor

Not so fast, Grasshopper! Some seniors have been struggling with those same limitations for many, many years because of medical conditions, the need to care for a spouse, loss of mobility, or the need for at-home conveniences that might not be available in public venues or cannot be accessed with dignity.

Their situation is not the temporary shift of priorities to address more basic needs (and temporarily “soldier through” the frustration and disappointment with an optimistic grin-and-bear-it attitude). Instead, their limitations lead to long-term or permanent deprivation of essential needs, with the inherent risk of serious physical and emotional consequences. For them, Maslow’s solid granite pyramid of fulfilled needs has been replaced by a wedge of swiss cheese.

Maslow’s essential elements are not just what we innately need, but two of those elements—“Self-esteem” and “Feeling of accomplishment”—relate to how we fulfill those needs. Having died suddenly at the relatively young age of 62, however, Maslow may not have realized how intensely most seniors—because of circumstance or preference—tend to fulfill their needs with a high degree of independence.

In fact, many of those imperfect workarounds of 2020 are perfect examples of alternatives that help seniors enjoy life to the fullest. OPC stepped up to the challenge with a drive thru picnic, drive thru Christmas party, Zoom-based classes and entertainment, and a shift to outdoor venues. Were they just like the OPC events of years past? Not at all, but they were fun, memorable, senior-bonding activities. OPC displayed role-model leadership and showed the community what’s possible.

Workarounds that help seniors can be a tremendous benefit to many other segments of society:

- Assistance for disabled people of all ages.
- Disaster preparedness.
- Employee satisfaction and retention. (80% of the people working from home during the pandemic want to continue working from home.)
- Business opportunities. (Products and services that facilitate a higher quality of life for seniors—and, enhanced lifestyles for everyone—can be financially quite rewarding. Just ask Jeff Bezos.)

Even though the term “workaround” might imply a MacGyver-type improvisation (but now with a how-to video on YouTube), it’s probably an apt description for what we did to get by in 2020. But, going forward, we need measures that will be considered “solutions” or, better yet, “improvements.”

It’s not a question of whether seniors prefer the old normal or a new normal. Seniors need a “Better Normal.” ▼
Lessons, Wisdom, Advice, Reflection from Life. What are yours?

By Maryann Blodgett Wilshere

Greetings Readers, I recently read a wonderful article about “Life Advice” also known as “Elder Wisdom.” I’m not so sure that I like that term “Elder,” as I am part of the older generation, but I think I do! Elders, or seniors if preferred, have much to be proud of. Elders in societies past have been respected and sought out for their wisdom.

The Definition of Life Lesson is: “Noun. Something instructive or valuable about life or principles for living.” These are lessons we each have learned through living—the turning points, choices, decisions, values, principles, and the people in our life.

Life lessons can occur in any area. Although we learn many things each day, we don’t always learn something that we realize will affect our behavior for the rest of our lives. This separates a life lesson from everything else we learn. It can be something that we feel profoundly changed by. Life lessons can serve to help us understand ourselves better. More than reminiscing…

A few lessons from life...

**WISDOM** — When given the opportunity to write about life lessons, albeit wisdom gained from aging, my first thought was: Wisdom?? That's for people in their 70s, 80s or even 90s! But wait, that's me now.

So perhaps realizing who and where we are is wisdom. Perhaps wisdom is realizing our decisions, whether good or not, right or wrong, are part of our life design. Perhaps a degree of acceptance, a change in expectation, and gratitude for what we have, is wisdom. Perhaps the satisfaction that we have done the best we could (and can) do is wisdom.

I can't pretend to know even some of the answers. Perhaps, therein, lies a kernel of wisdom. —*Lynson Denyer*

**A THINKING BOOK FOR GRANDCHILDREN** — When I was fifteen, I decided I wanted to learn “how to think.” so I read *The Art of Thinking* by Ernest Dimnet. I do remember how he stressed metaphors, the ability to make associations or relationships between various ideas. By doing this, your thinking becomes less fragmented and carried more meaning.

Creativity is also helped by the fusion of ideas. I once spoke with a doctor who knew an engineer who was studying to become a dentist; the doctor commented the man might create an instrument that would advance dentistry by seeing the whole picture. Putting two ideas together could start a new business. Some lines of women’s purses are now made with hand-painted art. They are beautiful and unique.

I have to thank a University of Michigan English professor for encouraging my interest in both science and religion. I can’t say how influential this book has been to me, but I do know that I try to combine history, science, and religion in my poetry. It not only took putting together two ideas, but having two people in the process. It does take a village! —*Brenda Seabright*

**THE UNEXPECTED PATH**

Have you gone down a path didn’t know you would be on
But started to realize this when someone was gone?

Decisions had to be made that were not always popular
And understanding choices would reach near and far.

Everyone depended upon what you would decide
Including the one that lay at the bedside.

These were troubling times and very pointed
But someone had to be the one anointed.

To see things were carried out with utmost dignity
Was a commentary expected by friends and family.

The most one can do when these things happen
Is follow your instincts and all that you can fathom.

If we are righteous and really care
Outcomes will ultimately be fair.

Stay faithful to responsibilities handed to you.

Make the best of it and always be true.

—*Michael Flannery*

**MISUNDERSTANDINGS** — My husband and I wanted to get rid of items we no longer loved, used, needed or wanted. Our adult son, living elsewhere, said we could sell the weights he left in our walk-out basement. It almost killed us to get the weights up a hill to our garage. There was no way we would have strangers in our basement out of respect for the virus.

So I placed an ad for the weights on a popular free site. The first of five immediate responses read: “My wife and I noticed your ad for free weights and wondered if they were still available.” My first thought was to not dignify this contact with a response and a few unkind words popped into my head.

However, I replied to him: “Weights are not free but priced by the pair. Read further in the ad.” His response: “Sorry about the misunderstanding. When I said free weights, we meant dumbbell weights as opposed to machine.”

He came to purchase the “free” weights and we all had a good laugh over this! —*Jean Waid*

Some ideas of what to include:

- **Lesson**
  - **When**
  - **How you learned it**
  - **Why it was or became important in your life**
  - **Why you value it**
  - **How did you use it at times in your life**
  - **Did you share it with another**
  - **Did it ripple through your life or through another’s life**

“Ah hh I ponder. Yes, it is proud “Elder Wisdom.”
How are Seniors Adapting?

By Karen M. Lemon

The coronavirus has turned everyone’s lives upside down; social interactions and restrictions have made life more complicated. For seniors, a high risk group, facing loneliness and prolonged isolation has been difficult. The fact that we are all going through this together can be a little consoling. One answer to isolation is technology. This can is a blessing or a curse for this demographic.

For many, the crisis motivated seniors to learn or expand their use of technology. It was time to retire the old excuses and learn new tricks. Many seniors have embraced the new lifestyle and gained a greater appreciation for the new ways of making connections.

Some seniors had ventured out into the smartphone market and learned email, texting, and FaceTime. Then there were the seniors who were forced to learn computers while they still worked. The problem with on-the-job computers was they were primitive (let’s stop to reminisce about green screens and the large blinking cursor) with huge screens and sluggish, simplistic software. Today’s computers and personal devices can be daunting—such as tablets, face-to-face gadgets, and the abundance of new software.

It’s time to sink or swim, or call the kids or grandchildren. If ever there was a time to learn how to FaceTime, GotoMeeting, or Zoom, it is during this Covid-19 time period. Have you seen the commercial where a son is trying to have a video call with his dad and explains that he should take the phone away from his ear and hold it like a mirror. Then dad moves it in front of his face but the son sees Dad’s chin? His son asks, “Is that how you hold a mirror?”

Learning has setbacks, but with practice it gets easier. I consider myself pretty good on a computer, yet on many a Zoom session I have been wildly waved at by fellow callers—trying to signal to me I’m on mute!

Zooming or facetimeing with family and friends is a great way to stay connected. Even many health and medical providers have begun to offer telemedicine calls to replace in person medical visits. Signing up for a Zoom class to learn something new is a great way to connect with new people who share interests, and to make new friends!

Everyone needs to be engaged with the outside world, through virtual visits with family and friends, social clubs, and fitness classes. It’s simply human nature, human being needs.

OPC offers many opportunities: fitness classes, book clubs, language sessions, ask the lawyer and doctor, just to name a few. Thankfully, we have the OPC here in Rochester.

On page 11, read how the OPC adapted to changing needs through innovative changes to program offerings and building operations in accordance with CDC guidelines and state of Michigan regulations while continuing to serve and provide for community seniors.
OPC, Always Here For You!

By Karen M. Lemon

This past December on a Facebook page called Navigate Home™ Renee Cortright posted a video letting the public know how the OPC has been managing since spring of 2020 when the doors temporarily closed due to the Covid-19 virus.

So many people in the United States and around the world have been traumatized by Covid-19 consequences: the virus running rampant, the economy faltering, businesses laying off workers, many small businesses failing, food lines, and loss of residences. But worst of all is the loss of family and friends to Covid-19. The OPC, that provides essential services for physical and mental health of seniors, was not spared in the volley of rules and regulations coming from the CDC regarding the virus nor from the State’s Executive Orders.

How would such an important civic partner as the OPC (Older Persons’ Commission) adjust to the dramatic events facing their organization that serves seniors in the three communities of Rochester, Rochester Hills, and Oakland Township? In March of 2020 the doors were closed as part of a statewide directive but the facility was “open” for essential services. How did they manage? It was with aptitude, resolve, creative solutions, and determination to continue their mission to the service of their seniors and with help of many. That’s how!

They knew Meals on Wheels would absolutely need to continue for those who were homebound and those who didn’t want to leave their homes. With the help of many dedicated volunteers, the OPC was able to deliver to the increasing number of seniors in need and still provide the all-important wellness checks. The congregate meals which were previously served in the dining room needed to be packaged to get to the seniors by an alternative method—a problem addressed and solved! Along with the food programs, Gleaners, Focus Hope, and Commodity Foods, the OPC was able to deliver over 10,000 pounds of food to those in need.

Another concern was keeping the transportation buses on the road. While the exact number of buses varied, they have always kept up with the needs of the seniors and disabled citizens who have come to rely on the transportation services of the OPC.

Seniors were worried with fears of the unknown and the constantly changing information about the virus. The OPC began reaching out with telephone reassurance checks and inquiries if anything was needed, making over 12,000 calls...simply connecting. The OPC also continues to provide information referral support through the Senior Resources Department helping seniors and their caregivers.

To help with isolation and loss of activities, the incredible staff of the OPC began providing Zoom classes and the classes and programs were “off and running!” A quick review of the monthly newsletter keeps proving how the staff adapts and provides, as they always have, many opportunities to ease the losses and isolation by retaining vitally important social connections. During the warmer months, there was “under the tent” outdoor programming such as arts, music, and physical activity classes. Many classes continue through virtual programming to adapt for the usual 900 people per day walking through the doors of the OPC. Classes are taped and posted on YouTube under “Older Person’s Commission.”

Renee made it abundantly clear that all of this could only have happened with the commitment and support of community partners: Kiwanis, Rotary Club, Boy and Girl Scouts, students from Rochester Community Schools, and so many others who recognized the importance for seniors and their families. These groups have given their time and energy to assist the OPC in meeting the needs of seniors.

Her words rang true when she said of community organizations, volunteers, and support that “we are better together.” ▼
100th Anniversary Women's Right to Vote
By Karen M. Lemon

August 18, 2020, was the 100th year anniversary of women getting the right to vote. I never questioned my right to vote as a woman, taking it for granted. I recently began reading an online newsletter with a variety of articles. Because of this 100th anniversary, many of the articles focused on women obtaining the right to vote. I never before truly understood how it took so long and why it did. It should be a citizen’s right, all citizens.

WHY DID IT TAKE SO LONG?

Let’s look back… In the 1840s women’s groups organized in opposition to abolition, until concerns over negative social issues facing women changed their focus to improving women’s rights. This culminated in 1848 with a convention in Seneca Falls, New York. Although only 300 people attended, they passed a resolution to improve women’s lives. When the topic of women having the right to vote came up at the convention, it faced serious pushback, and barely passed; the idea of casting political votes was foreign to most women.

White suffragists, later known as suffragettes, chose not to include women of color in their organizations. Hence, this disenfranchised, impoverished population was forced to form groups of it’s own. The process was slow on both sides, and the various women’s groups had different strategies to achieve their shared goal.

It took twenty years after the Seneca Falls convention for the crusade to gain momentum only to have the Civil War and the intensifying racial division stall their accomplishments. With the Civil War, President Lincoln’s assassination, the ensuing political atmosphere of reconstructionists, and Jim Crow laws to contend with, the suffragists understood their cause would be postponed. After the war, the women’s groups were told by the white abolitionist Wendell Phillips that it was the time to fight for male Negroes’ rights, the women’s movement was told to stand down.

Constitutional Amendments 14th, 15th and 19th

After the Civil War there was a move to formalize African Americans’ rights. The 14th Amendment (1868) guaranteed African Americans citizenship rights and promised that the federal government would enforce “equal protection of the laws.” The 15th Amendment (1870) states “The rights of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of race, color or previous condition of servitude.”

How much easier would women’s rights have been if only they had added the word “sex” into these two amendments.

Eight years later in 1878, a simple twenty-eight-word constitutional amendment was brought before Congress. Although it did not pass, it read as follows, .

“The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex.”

A NEW CENTURY

In 1913, Alice Paul and Lucy Burns planned a huge event for the day before Woodrow Wilson was inaugurated. Five thousand women marched toward the White House. The thousands of male onlookers shouted obscenities and threw fruit and vegetables at the marchers. This rally had no real effect on Woodrow Wilson’s attitude—the war in Europe was on his agenda, and in the minds of many Americans.

Still trying to convince Congress to take up the amendment in early spring of 1917, Alice Paul tried a new approach. To wage a concerted campaign of non-violent civil disobedience, the attention of the White House and by extension President Woodrow Wilson became their primary focus. Activists, wearing suffragettes’ tricolor sashes and holding banners, began picketing along the White House fence line. Action came quickly. In April 1917, just days before the United States entered World War I, the “Anthony Amendment,” that was introduced in 1878, was reintroduced in the Senate. It still did not pass and so the picketing continued.

The “Silent Sentinels” as they were called by the newspapers continued patrol of the White House. The women maintained their picketing, without speaking a word six days a week, for two years. Nearly 2,000 of the women were harassed, arrested, and unjustly treated by local and United States authorities including torture and abuse inflicted on them before and during the November 14, 1917, “Night of Terror.” Nearly 500 women were arrested and 168 served jail time. Eventually, the horrible treatment of the women turned the sympathies in favor of the suffragette cause. The 19th Amendment finally was adopted by both houses of Congress on June 4, 1919. With one hurdle accomplished, the women now needed to obtain the two-thirds approval of the 48 states. In the end, it all came down to Tennessee. The state senate voted to ratify, the house of representatives was headed for a tie. A young representative, Harry Burn, was about to cast the tie-breaking vote—against ratification. What changed his mind? Well, his mother of course! After having a conversation with her, he gave a “yea” to the proposal. Two-thirds of states had approved the 19th Amendment to the Constitution!

The amendment as written, stated all women would have the right to vote. Sadly, that was not reality. States would block women of color from their right to vote for the next 50 years. Each state and political party believed in their reasons for blocking certain groups from voting. The persistence of the suffragettes to get the vote for women is an example of the determination, passion, resolve, integrity, and grit needed to obtain social change.

Never underestimate the influence of a mother.▼
Musical journey of concerts and coffee houses
Memories of Folk and Pop concerts of the 60s and 70s

By Michael Flannery

I thought it worthwhile to revisit a few of the many concerts attended in the 1960s and 1970s, especially as they related to the folk/pop genre during the American folk music revival phenomenon. It was an exciting time for those who like myself thoroughly enjoyed folk music. The following provides some stories and a glimpse of the performances attended and titles of some of the memorable songs that captured America back then.

Peter, Paul, and Mary - I attended my first concert as a freshman at Western Michigan University in 1963. The WMU auditorium venue was packed with excited college students, but I recall that you could hear a pin drop throughout the evening as the music was intense and exhilarating. Songs included Bob Dylan’s “Blowing in the Wind”; Peter, Paul and Mary’s “Go Tell it on the Mountain”; Woody Guthrie’s “This Land is Your Land”; Peter Yarrow’s “Puff the Magic Dragon”; and Pete Seeger’s “If I had a Hammer” and “Where Have All the Flowers Gone.” What a night!

The New Christy Minstrels - Again, I had the good fortune to attend another concert there. This time by The New Christy Minstrels, a now legendary Grammy-winning group. You might recall some of their hits: “500 Miles,” “O Shenandoah,” “Big Rock Candy Mountain,” and “Green, Green.”

The Freudian Slip East Coffee House - When my wife and I were first married, we lived in an upstairs flat near Gratiot and Outer Drive by City Airport. When we had the opportunity, we would drive down Gratiot to Freudian Slip East where local folk musicians performed. They included Bob Posch singer/songwriter and comedian, Ron Cohen singer/songwriter, and Josh White Jr. singer/songwriter and guitarist. All of these artists are still performing today. It was a great venue to enjoy terrific folk music at that time.

The Raven Gallery Coffee House - This location provided a place for many folk musicians to perform. It changed locations over the years: first on James Couzens, then off of Woodward in Birmingham, and lastly in Southfield (eventually the home of Sweet Lorraine restaurant). The Raven Gallery was owned and operated by Herb Cohen. It served coffee, French fries, and cigarettes but not alcohol. The Raven Gallery catered to local talent such as Josh White Jr., Sonny Terry, and Brownie McGhee but also showcased major musicians of the folk era including The Kingston Trio, Chuck Mitchell, Odetta, Steve Goodman, and Richie Havens.

One of the first shows we attended was at the James Couzens location where we saw The Kingston Trio. Remember “Tom Dooley” or “The Green Back Dollar?” Do you remember—“The story of a man named Charley…went to ride on the MTA.” —Well, did he ever return? Never did. “... He may ride forever ‘neath the streets of Boston and he’s the man who never returned.” A terrific show!

The 1967 Detroit Race Riots and the Raven Gallery - On Sunday evening July 23, 1967, my wife and I drove up from the east side to the Raven Gallery to attend the performance of talented African American folk singer Josh White Jr., a Grammy Award-nominated recording artist. His father, Josh White Sr., was a blues legend. Josh White Jr.’s performance had just started when owner Herb Cohen stepped up to the mic and announced that there was a riot going on in Detroit and that Josh White Jr. had agreed to continue to play but anyone in the audience who wanted to leave would get a full refund. Not one person in the audience left; we continued to enjoy the music. I recall upon leaving the Raven Gallery that evening and driving down Southfield Road to the John Lodge over to I 94 to the east side, the sight of all of the fires ablaze up from the expressways. We will never forget that evening in many ways.

Harry Chapin - We were big fans of the great Harry Chapin (Cats in the Cradle, Taxi, Circle, Mail Order Annie fame) in the 1970s. Harry Chapin would always play at Pine Knob when he came to the Detroit area, and after his concerts he would head up hill to the lawn and play for those who would remain. Back then, I don’t think there was a curfew, but if so it didn’t matter to Harry. He was a champion for world hunger and often times would give proceeds from his concerts to support world hunger.

Joan Baez and David Gates (Bread) - One lucky day I was contacted by a friend of mine who had extra tickets at Meadowbrook to see Joan Baez (“Diamonds and Rust” and “The Night They Drove Old Dixie Down”) and David Gates, front man and co-lead guitarist for the group Bread. Oh, it was a wonderful evening! The artists played their own songs and then returned for memorable duet of songs. Joan Baez is a singer, songwriter, musician, and lifelong political and social activist. Her folk music often included songs of protest and social injustice. She was involved in the 1963 March on Washington for civil rights. She and other folk singers made famous Pete Seeger’s song “We Shall Overcome.” Joan Baez was inducted in the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 2017.

David Gates is an American singer-songwriter, guitarist, musician, and producer whose song list includes the hits “Baby I’m a Want You,” “It Don’t Matter to Me,” and “Guitar Man.”

Other Concerts - There have been so many memorable concerts that we have attended over the years primarily at Meadow Brook, Pine Knob (DTE Energy Theatre), the Palace of Auburn Hills, and the Macomb Center, in addition to the folk concerts attended in the 1960s and 1970s.

We were very lucky to have seen and heard and appreciated all of these wonderful artists. I hope my reflection has brought back many of your own memories of concerts, songs heard, times singing along, and recordings worn out. ▼
**Palindrome Lady**

Palindrome lady, your hair curly and light, with attitude gleeful and bright: you’re palindrome lady. Lady Palindrome, you’re bright and gleeful attitude with light and curly hair—you’re Lady Palindrome.

*Sam Seabright*

**Springtime**

The ice is still on the lake
Is it springtime or is this a mistake
The days are longer now and much brighter
And the winds are blowing much lighter

The redwing blackbirds are back
With the slow reduction in the snowpack
The ice fishermen are moving off the thinning ice
And the garages are emptying out of the winter mice

Sidewalks no longer need shoveling
Another sign that spring is coming
The clouds in the sky are being replenished by the sun
The harbinger of warmer days to come

We look forward to the new season
Leaves on trees and flowers in bloom the reason
Soon school will be out
And busses no longer on a familiar route

Baseball spring training is now ongoing
And pitchers and catchers seen throwing
Lawn chairs are being taken outside
Shortly will be found pool side

The rental cottages will soon be available
To travelers willing and able
Birdies will not only be in the trees
But on golf courses after great shots off tees

Springtime is once again upon us
A season that’s worth all the awesomeness

*Michael Flannery*

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**Bleak Mid-winter**

Raven’s wing, raven’s eye
ebony limbs search charcoal skies
furrowed rows of hoarfrost lie
near faded barns
in bleak mid-winter.

Hours are pensive, minutes sigh;
creatures store their warmth inside
all sense of time is lost as days slip by
and wait for spring
in bleak midwinter.

*Alyson Denyer*

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**The Bottom of the Hill**

Meet me tonight at the bottom of the hill
Meet me there if you want a thrill
Be my baby tonight
And I will make it alright

Be with me forever past the light of day
Throughout every hour you will stay

Love me with all your might
And I will walk with you through the bright moonlight

Come with me to the land not forgotten
To the bottom of the hill that made it all happen

*Michael Flannery*

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**Spring Feast**

Four and twenty bluejays
eating from a pie plate,
four and dozen deer go by
munching apples when they wait.

Two and twenty robins
in the crabapple tree,
starlings, juncos, chickadees
on a feeding spree.

If you feed them they will come,
winter stores were scarce—
everyone is hungry now
because their meals are sparse.

Frozen worms and buried seeds,
no wonder they go south.

We built our homes upon their land
so it behooves us, lend a hand.

Sam Seabright

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**Palindrome Forever**

The Big Bang:
infinite power unleashed
an intelligent energy that creates
as gravity produces centers,
centers that become self-aware
and humanity appears.

Then supernatural humanity appears,
a concentration of self-awareness
as gravity continues to center,
intelligent energy continues to create,
as infinite spiritual power is unleashed:
the Second Big Bang.

*Brenda Seabright*
Poetry Collection

**She Was Twenty-One and I Was Twenty**

She was twenty-one and I was twenty
Young to be wed and start a family
We married in Lent but on the side altar
And vowed our love for each other would never falter
We grew up pretty fast as you can imagine
Not much time for fun and relaxation
There was no honeymoon as we had to work the next day
But we were so much in love it didn’t seem to matter anyway
We took the kids to church each Sunday
And spent vacations and holidays with friends and family
We worked hard for the next thirty-five years
But still found time to explore new frontiers
She and I reminisce about the good and bad and unforeseen
That made us laugh, brought us to tears, and in between
We look back at all the times—hard to count there were so many
Yet we remember from when she was twenty-one and I was twenty...

*Mi**chael Flannery

**The Bridge**

Grandfather built the bridge
made of strong wood beams and planks,
a footbridge across the creek.
We oiled it every spring
and it stayed a lifetime.
It was raised on concrete piers,
two steps on and four steps off,
leading us onto the street
to catch a bus or walk to town
or go to worlds unknown.
The bridge was anchored
by a thick steel cable, oiled and
rooted deep in the earth,
ready for the spring floods;
but the churning water
never got that high.
Others were washed away,
but ours held tight.

*Sam Seabright

Book Review

**OPC January Book Club Selection**

**The Life We Bury**

By Allen Eskens

Reviewed by Karen M. Lemon

In this fiction and suspense novel, Eskens uncovers the mystery surrounding a young girl’s murder in 1980, while he interviews her convicted murderer. The book is set in Eskens’ native Minnesota in the year 2010.

The first character introduced to the reader is Joe Talbert who is a college student at the local university. He is behind on an English class assignment for which he is to write a brief biography of a senior citizen. Without any family he wanted to interview, he decides to go to a local senior living facility to find his subject. At the facility Joe meets Carl Iverson, a senior with only months to live; Carl has been medically paroled to the nursing home from prison, having been convicted of rape and murder. As Joe interviews Carl, he has trouble reconciling the convicted criminal and the Vietnam soldier who was awarded two Purple Hearts. Joe begins to investigate Carl’s experiences in Vietnam and the court records from the murder case. Things do not add up and together with Lila, Joe’s neighbor to whom he has long been attracted, they begin to research the inconsistencies. Meanwhile, Carl’s time is running out. Joe and Lila try to track down the people from the murder case, people who do not want to be found and with good reason.

What will they find and will it be in time to tell Carl what they uncovered?

Join the OPC Book Club!

It meets virtually (Zoom) on the last Wednesday of each month at 2:30 p.m. Register in advance by referring to the OPC website under “Virtual Programs” for current and the upcoming month or go to the monthly OPC Newsletter’s class and activity listing. After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the meeting.

Look in our quarterly *Vintage Views* for Book Reviews of OPC Book Club selections. If you would like to write a review of an upcoming, or recent favorite, book club selection, please submit to v@opcseniorcenter.org.
Proponents of the decimal system suggested dividing the day/night days needed more divisions besides morning and afternoon. Asleep; but nights had to be taken into consideration. However, and winter. Nights were secondary because most everybody was this cycle a year and then broke it down into two seasons, summer and postmeridian. The first vowel that about half, every time, double.

Progressively, during the following thousands of years, millions of times have been added to those. They all fit into a broad band: untimely, timeless, full-time, time-and-again, and even triple-time. Within these limits we have half-time, three-quarter-time, double-time, and part-time, also each time, in time, on time, and out of time. And sometimes there are plurals. In mathematics, times can even be multiplied. They all result in every time and all times. They encompass all the different times, the good and the bad and the indifferent ones. “O tempora, o mores!” said Cicero. What’s this world coming to?

Now, at this point in our time, we are constantly aware of only the approximate time in which we currently find ourselves and of the exact time at which something happened. We are at any time surrounded, exposed, and attached to a variety of time pieces. It became necessary in new societies to give time more names and numbers. Scientists discovered that there were about 365 days and 364 nights in a concrete repetitious cycle. They named this cycle a year and then broke it down into two seasons, summer and winter. Nights were secondary because most everybody was asleep; but nights had to be taken into consideration. However, days needed more divisions besides morning and afternoon.

Proponents of the decimal system suggested dividing the day/night phenomenon from sunrise to sunset into ten hours of a hundred minutes each. They had looked at their fingers and toes and the count of tens seemed to make a lot of sense. “Tens make Sense” became their slogan. It seemed to be logical and ideal for clock makers. They would have no problem writing ten hours on the face of the clock. Establishing the ten-hour period would have given a person only about three and a half hours of sleep per night. Those scientists also proposed to divide the cycle from spring to spring into ten months. The months would have 36 days alternated with 37.

That could have worked had it not been for the weeks. Abiding by the decimal system, a week would have consisted of less than four, but more than three days and nobody ever would have been sure when it was Sunday. The decimalists lost the battle. The three hours of sleep was probably the defeating factor.

Then there was the problem of trying to squeeze twenty-four numbers on the face of a clock, but there is only enough room to list half of the hours of the day on it. But that’s what happened and, therefore, sometimes it’s tough to know whether it is A.M. or P.M. The naturalists decided to divide the daily cycle into a dozen light hours and a dozen dark hours. Dozens made sense. A dozen eggs, a dozen donuts. “We delve in twelve” was their slogan. The official start of the day, called zero hour, however, gave them headaches. The arrival of zero varied. Sometimes the sun rose at minus three, sometimes at plus two. They decided to place the start of the cycle in the middle of the dark where nobody could keep track of the fluctuations between pitch-dark and gray. They called the area midnight, zero hours.

But since zero is nothing and they had to put something on the clock, they substituted the concrete half-day number twelve, the numeral one followed by the two, I and II in the Roman fashion. They didn’t like the looks of III, it looked like three and that didn’t belong there. They counted and realized that ten and two also equal twelve; they decided on using XII on the top of the clock. That’s where it all started, from then on.

Finally we had control over time. Clocks kept track of it. Big and small hands narrowed it down to minutes. A third hand, called secondhand, was added for more precision. We designated the times as on the clock and as time became more precious and quick we shortened it to o’clock. But we only call it o’clock when the big hand is way up on top, as high as it will go, 24 times a day. (A minute later we don’t say it’s twelve oh one o’clock; no more oh clock, only oh one.)

I read the current time at the right bottom corner of my computer monitor: 2:03 P.M. I read it aloud as two oh three P.M. (In regard to time, we say oh instead of zero or null.) We read the numbers of minutes starting with oh only up to nine (five oh seven). Starting at ten, we don’t say oh anymore, we say five ten.

More increments and smaller denominations of time became necessary. Hands on the clock couldn’t keep up with the innovations. They had to run like circular saws and centrifuges. That’s when it became obligatory to invent digital clocks. Now people, horses and cars can win or lose races by hundredths of one second. That, of course, is still too slow for some of us, and we invented nanoseconds and picoseconds.

However, we still like to be o’clock. It’s a pity and reality now that we can never announce the actual time anymore... because, by the time we say the word or words, it’s already later. We can only state what time it was. But we can still predict what time it will be. Should time ever end, we already hear people say, “Time after time.” So, we are safe.
The Story of the Railway Express Agency

By Bob Winkel

Before there was UPS or FedEx or DHL, that shipped goods by truck to customers around the country, there were other options available to our grandfathers and great grandfathers. Historians tell us that the earliest package delivery services started in the early 1800s and were basically courier services with riders on horseback or delivered by stagecoach. Some of these are well known and include Wells Fargo & Co. and the Butterfield Overland Mail Co.

By the late 1800s a large number of “Express” freight services had sprung up all over the United States. They relied heavily on the railroads and their own wagons to transport packages for their customers. However, most of the Express services did not rely on freight trains and boxcars for their shipments. Instead, they shipped most of their parcels in the baggage cars of passenger trains. This resulted in faster deliveries for their customers. Of course, they charged a premium for this fast turnaround. But even into the early 1900s, the United States Postal Service did not have a “parcel service”, so there was minimal competition.

The various shipping agencies around the country would vie to sign agreements with one or more of the regional railroads. They carved out and strongly defended their turf. But things became increasingly difficult during the 1900s. In 1906 the federal government changed the regulations and classified the express services as “common carriers”, which meant they were subject to Interstate Commerce rules and rates. In 1913 the United States Postal Service started their Parcel Post. Express shippers complained about the unfairness of competing with the USPS, which could operate at a loss.

By 1914 there were only a handful of independent interstate express companies still in business. The biggest were: Adams Express, American Express, Southern Express, and Wells Fargo. And things were about to get even more difficult. When the United States became involved in WWI, the volume of shipments then rose dramatically, causing serious problems for the railroads and the shipping agents.

In 1917 President Wilson ordered the takeover of the railroads by the government. Then, in 1918, the existing express companies were also taken over by the government and combined into the American Railway Express (AREX) Corporation. These moves were done to overcome the problems of congestion, delays, and lack of cooperation among both the railroads and the shipping companies.

The government eventually released their control of AREX and a group of 89 of larger Class 1 railroads took control of a new company in 1929. They renamed it the Railway Express Agency (REA). They had exclusive rights to carry express shipments on United States railroads. At its peak, the REA operated 22,000 agencies across the country, mostly at railroad stations.

Most shipments were handled by baggage cars, or “messenger cars”, which had an REA employee riding in the car for security. However, the larger stations might receive sealed cars that were set out on sidings to be unloaded. Or, for faraway destinations, a sealed car would be passed along various railroads until it reached its destination. Then it would be opened, sorted, and reloaded for final destinations.

Due to rate increases, the business remained profitable into the 1950s. This was partly because REA began to concentrate on express refrigerator service after 1940. They handled shipments of perishables including fresh fruits and berries, vegetables, cans of milk and cream, and fresh seafood. To do this, the REA owned and maintained a fleet of refrigerator cars (reefers) for these loads.

Before modern refrigeration, these cars were fitted with bunkers that were packed with ice to keep the contents cold. These refrigerator cars were either at the head end of a passenger train or as part of special all-refrigerator trains that often traveled at one and a half to two times faster than even the passenger trains. But, by the mid-to late-1950s, business began to decline dramatically owing to competition from refrigerated motor trucks.

The demise of REA was a long, slow, painful story that involved a number of factors. Decline of passenger train traffic and overall rail express volume was linked to federal investment in the interstate highway system after WWII that allowed trucks and other vehicles more flexibility in transporting goods across the United States. In 1959, REA negotiated a new contract, allowing it to use any mode of transportation. It also acquired rights to allow continued service by truck freight after passenger trains were discontinued. REA unsuccessfully attempted to enter the piggyback and container business. Another blow came when the Civil Aeronautics Board terminated REA's exclusive agreement with airlines for air express.

By 1965 many of REA’s refrigerator cars, stripped of refrigeration equipment, were being leased as bulk mail carriers, while others were relegated to work in train service. To be more solvent, thousands of smaller REA offices were closed, but revenue still steadily declined. By 1963 the company was beginning to operate at a loss, even with the new railroad contracts. The company held on for another decade but declared bankruptcy in 1975.

The days of the green REA delivery trucks were over.
Oil is Everywhere! I can’t picture life without it.

By Sam Seabright

I was watching a TV program that discussed how the COVID-19 vaccine needs to be kept at extremely low temperatures. Dry ice is used; it is frozen carbon dioxide, made from ethanol distilled from petroleum oil. That made me wonder what other products might be made from oil. Most people think that oil is used only for gasoline or heating oil, but actually it is made into many products we use in daily modern life. Oil is refined into polymers and molded into objects, spun into fabrics or distilled into liquids.

If you have a wood floor, the polyurethane coating is made from oil. Linoleum (oleum means oil) and vinyl flooring are also made from oil. Your wall-to-wall carpet is literally wall-to-wall plastic, made from oil.

What other plastics might be found in your home? Let’s go through a home and note all the things made of plastic: We communicate using plastic—your pen and your computer mouse. Your toothbrush, hair brush and comb are plastic. Eyeglass lenses are plastic, not glass; as of course are plastic contact lenses. Your television has plastic parts. Many containers for liquids and powders are plastic. Many kitchen appliances and utensils are made with plastic parts. There are several types of plastics used for food packaging and storage. Your shoes—the soles, uppers, eyelets—are made of plastic materials. Your sweater may be derived from plastic if made of polyester or nylon—the materials that afford the stretch in active wear and durability in outerwear. Everything made of plastic is made from oil!

One of the most important—and ubiquitous—uses of plastics is for electrical insulation. Without this insulation, wires would short out, and there could be no electric lights, appliances, tools or machines. In the past, wire insulation was made of paper (it burns!), asbestos, mica or porcelain, none of which are now practical.

Your car is a wonderland of oil-based products including the paint, upholstery, bumpers, seals, lamp lenses, tires, and electrical parts. And don’t forget antifreeze, lubricants, and, yes, gasoline. The ink used to print the manual and newspapers is oil based. Even electric cars need many plastic parts, not the least being electrical insulation.

Outdoors, asphalt pavement and roof shingles are made from oil. Porch furniture, vinyl siding, hoses, and signs are plastic. Fertilizers and insecticides are distilled from oil. Refrigerants are distilled from oil. Your refrigerator, freezer, and air conditioning depend on refrigerants to preserve food or maintain comfort. Many coatings are made from oil, including paints, stains, and solvents. Glues and waxes (crayons) are oil-based.

Look in the medicine cabinet. Besides all the plastic bottles and tubes, you may have aspirin and other medicines derived from oil. Petroleum jelly is made from oil, which is the basis of many ointments. You might have bandages, cortisone, hand lotion, deodorant, lip balm, hair dye, lipstick, and glycerin—all made from oil.

Now picture your life without all of these products.... It would be like feudal times: candles made of sheep tallow, whale oil lamps, fur clothing, and unpreserved foods. We’d have containers made of clay, wood, or animal skins. No cars as we know them... back to horses and buggies; and we would need more sheep and cows!
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Are you feeling lonely? Turns out, you’re not alone!

If you’re lonely and becoming more isolated because you’re lonely, you can break the cycle. Here are some tips:

1. **Recognize loneliness for what it is.** Identify the feeling and name it.
2. **Volunteer.** Find an organization whose mission you believe in.
3. **Open yourself up to relationships.** You can combat loneliness by finding true friends, but you can only do that if you make yourself available.
4. **Stay positive.** Lonely people often expect rejection and maintain a negative mindset. Learn how to expect the best.

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