



Rituals Connect Our Lives

By Gina Belton

Lightness and dark, candles lighting up the darkness in our lives. This little musing drifted up to my mind's eye as I was folding laundry with a popular Netflix show warbling in the background.

A habit I picked up to distract me from the tedium of the task, each episode tumbled into successive episodes while I folded and stacked. Then two different narratives focusing on the same set of candlesticks captured my attention.

In one story, the long-married couple and their adult children packed up the family home after the parents' divorce was finalized. Before they all separated in four directions, their father asked to light the Shabbat candles one more time. A ritual that once brought them together as a family, connected with other families around the world through space and time, became a ceremony to honor the ending of all of their family rituals.

An episode or two later, these same candlesticks set the stage for the father's beginning in his new life with a new partner, not of the same tradition. The dinner table was set with food and dishes sparkling in a new light as his new partner lit the

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'Tis the Season

For the 31st Year, Tubas for Christmas

By Fred Tempas

What makes a couple of dozen ordinary Humboldt citizens pick up their tubas and brave the cold and rain to play Christmas songs?

Most musicians are friendly enough and tend to get along with each other, but those of us who play instruments in the tuba family (including sousaphones, baritones and euphoniums) actively seek each other out.

We are gregarious folk, and we tend to be lonely as the only tuba player in an orchestra, or only one of a couple in a band. Tubaists crave the camaraderie of a large ensemble. TubaChristmas gives us that.

Begun in 1974 in New York City, TubaChristmas groups have spread worldwide. Groups as small as eight musicians and as large as 500 bring joy to the Christmas season.

Every TubaChristmas ensemble uses the same music, so musicians can travel the country and be a welcome participant anywhere.

For the 31st year, Humboldt's TubaChristmas opens this holiday season on the first Saturday in December (the 7th), 1 p.m. at the Eureka Old Town Gazebo, and 3 p.m. at the McKinleyville Shopping Center, near Safeway.

—
Fred Tempas, 66, of Arcata, Humboldt's TubaChristmas founding conductor and coordinator for 31 years, discovered the tuba in high school, and they've been pals ever since.



OOM-PAH-PAH — Phil Sams of Ferndale toots with the Humboldt TubaChristmas band, a holiday tradition here since 1988. Mark Larson photo.

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HUMBOLDT SENIOR RESOURCE CENTER

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Good Food

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Climate Overreaction

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TEDtalks: Solstice

By Ted Pease

At this time of year when the afternoon sun is low and the days are short and chilly, it's hard not to think of time passing. With that fading light comes thoughts of the year fading, and all the time and experiences of the past 12 months behind us.

The winter solstice marks the most abbreviated day of the year in terms of daylight, and the longest and darkest night of the year, a good time to join with family and friends. People have celebrated the solstice — Dec. 21 — for centuries because it marks the beginning of the return of the sun, when days start to get a little longer, day by day.

“Yule” comes from the Norse “Jul,” which means wheel, so however dark the winter solstice, it represents the turning of the planet. As part of the Roman winter solstice celebrations, Emperor Aurelian declared Dec. 25 the birth day of the “Invincible Sun.”

Whatever traditions you observe at the end of the year and the beginning of the next one — the 12 days of Christmas, the seven days of Kwanzaa, eight days of Hannukah, or solitary communing in the redwoods or on a beach with a dog — it is a time both of joy and gratitude, and a season to reflect on endings and beginnings.

This is one reason why December is so packed with traditions that have such great power in our lives. When you get to be my age, all the ghosts of Decembers Past contribute a load of gravitas to the season, memories of past gatherings and celebrations with people dear to me, now scattered or gone.

We asked Senior News readers and contributors to share some of their memories of the season that still make them smile.

Like Peter Jermyn's clear memory of reindeer tracks on the snowy roof of his family's rural Pennsylvania home (page 18). Or the enduring stink of unwashed sheep that takes Sheila Donnelly and her daughter, Mary Beth, back to school pageants in rural Minnesota in 1984 (page 4).

Jan Ostrom's family still tells the story of the recording Aunt Bertie Belle and her son Billy sent from Santa Monica Pier in 1942 (page 8). And then there's the year the Christmas tree fell on Mark Larson's dad (page 4).

These are more than just memories, says Gina Belton. They represent rituals that connect our lives with each other and with the past, with people who are with us, and who are far away in time and distance (page 1). These rituals are not just habits that we repeat each year, but traditions and memories that give us continuity.

So we celebrate the darkest days of the year with you, knowing that it's the personal rituals of the season that give our lives meaning, and keep our days merry and bright.

All the best wishes for a happy, healthy season and a hopeful new year to you from all your friends at Senior News and the Humboldt Senior Resource Center.

Ted Pease is chief elf at Senior News.

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A Disaster Wakeup Call

By Ted Pease

PG&E's planned power outages in October left many in Humboldt County and across California angry at the utility company, but they also served as a wakeup call.

PG&E designed the rolling blackouts to avoid more catastrophic wildfires like the one that destroyed the town of Paradise and killed 85 people almost exactly a year ago.

For many in Humboldt, especially seniors living alone, October's outages were a real challenge. Agencies like Humboldt Senior Resource Center (HSRC) and the Area 1 Agency on Aging (A1AA) scrambled to contact participants who needed oxygen, medications, and basics like light, food and heat.

The first outage, though it lasted less than 30 hours, was especially hard on seniors, said Claudia Padilla of HSRC's Multipurpose Senior Services Program (MSSP), which provides care management for more than 100 participants.

Some homebound seniors needed oxygen, or flashlights and blankets. For those who depend on frozen Home Delivered Meals, it was a long wait without microwaves to heat them. "Even for those of our folks who didn't need anything, they were glad that we called and checked on them," Padilla said.

"I think everyone's a little better prepared for the next one," she said.

Many Humboldters took it all in stride.

"We had a delightful picnic" when the blackout fell on the day of her regular monthly dinner with six friends, said Ann King of Eureka.

King and her friends "refused to let power company shenanigans" get in

the way of their gathering.

Not everyone was so upbeat. "I just sat wrapped in a blanket and seethed," said Patty Holbrook of Eureka.

Penny Whitehead of Rio Dell agreed. "I saw no humor in the first Lights Out at all," she said. But the second time, "people seemed kinder, and took others' needs to heart."

Whitehead was sitting in her kitchen by lantern when a friend knocked. "He was making his rounds to see who might need help, asking if I needed him to recharge the freezer with his portable generator."

Humboldt County Supervisor Virginia Bass says she learned a lot during the blackouts.

"First off, I learned just how NOT prepared I was," she emailed. "By the second time, I was better prepared, but still have a long way to go. If I am not prepared for these power outages then I REALLY am not prepared for a large earthquake."

"The hardest part for me was that many people were angry at their local lawmakers because we 'let' the shut-offs happen," Bass said. "We were frustrated and impacted like everyone else."

Communication and accurate information are perhaps the most essential resource during disasters. The Humboldt County Office of Emergency Services sends updates via text and phone. Sign up at humboldt.gov.org/2014/emergency-notifications.

Radio stations like KINS (106.3 FM) and KHUM (104.7 FM) also did a good job sharing information during the outages.

Ted Pease of Trinidad bought a generator when the first outage hit to keep his fish freezer cold.

Life Without PG&E

By Doug Vieyra

I heard about the PG&E blackout about a week after it had happened.

I live off-grid in eastern Humboldt, and was working in the woods when a neighboring cowboy rode by and, in the exchange of pleasantries, he happened to mention that he had heard that townfolk had suffered the loss of electricity and had experienced a number of inconveniences.

"Hunh, you don't say," said I.

While the world outside our remote world "went black," our off-grid world in the wilderness remained unchanged and unaffected by the loss of PG&E service. We both smiled as we went about our business of living simply with the bare basics of a comfortable lifestyle, unaffected and untainted by the joys of the modern world.

Later, by the time I had made it into Eureka, I learned that there had

actually been two PG&E outages, which I thought was a good thing, as it helped emphasize to people the importance of being prepared for any number of emergencies.

Emergency preparedness is a very easy thing to do, and all public agencies (even PG&E) have printed guidelines and suggestions of what and how to achieve the basics of self-sufficiency at very low cost.

We all should work toward preparing for self-sufficiency in times of emergencies. Doing so will offer not only more comfort and ease of living during an emergency, but also provides a significant peace of mind, both before and during an emergency.

—
Doug Vieyra, 76, lives off the grid in the eastern Humboldt County hills of Lone Star Junction, Iaqua.



OFF THE GRID — From his perch in the hills of eastern Humboldt, Doug Vieyra shrugs at news of electrical outages. David Bai photo.

The Sheepy Stink of a Minnesota Christmas Past

By Sheila Donnelly

In 1984 in rural Minnesota, I was nine months pregnant with my fifth child. My other children were Dan, 8, Mary Beth, 7, Bridget, 5, and Molly, 2.

The Christmas play at St. Isidore's Catholic School was two days away, and I didn't have my children's costumes made. Danny and Mary Beth were cast as sheep, and Bridget as a star.

It had been 20 below zero for two weeks. Our car wouldn't start and I hadn't been able to get to town, 20 miles away, for supplies to make my sheep and star costumes. So I decided to use what I had on hand at our farm.

This is how Mary Beth remembers it:

Most moms bought their kids' costumes at the store. But not my mom — she would sew all of our costumes by hand. I think she did this because we didn't have any money, and also

because she was trying to be creative and use whatever she had around the farm that was "different."

My siblings and I attended a small Catholic school six miles from our farm. Every year, from kindergarten through eighth grade, I needed a costume for the annual Christmas play.

So I had to be a sheep. Sounds easy and harmless enough, especially since we raised sheep, lots of them, and had a lot of real wool lying around.

The sheep were sheared each spring, and the shearer would take the wool away. So we didn't have any fresh wool, but there were some bags of old wool in one of the sheds. Mom was keeping some of it to make into felt one day — she had grand ambitions.

We had two paddles with metal spikes on them, used to pull and

untangle the wool. Mostly, though, we kids chased each other with the paddles.

So what was my Christmas sheep costume made out of? Old wool, of course. And not just a little old wool — head to toe, untreated old wool. It smelled terrible, like old sheep. I was so embarrassed to go to school in this costume.

We also grew corn, so we had corncobs lying around, which Mom incorporated into Danny's costume to make horns (he was a ram).

I don't remember the songs we sang or what we had to do in the play. All I remember is having to show up at school in a costume that stank like an old sheep.

My youngest sister, Theresa, was born the day after Christmas.

—
Sheila Donnelly, 63, of Manila, and her daughter, Mary Beth Donnelly, 42, of Minneapolis can still catch a whiff of stinky old wool at the holidays.



SHEEP IN COSTUME — The author's husband, Tom Donnelly, with a few woolly friends on the family farm in rural Minnesota in 1984. Photo courtesy of Sheila Donnelly.

The Day the Christmas Tree Fell on Dad

*T'was a few days after Christmas and everyone in the house
Was a little stir-crazy, including the cat and probably the mouse.
Blizzards had kept us house-bound us for a week and we hoped for an end —
But don't look now, "It's snowing again!"*

*That sad observation went on and on
As our sanity, snowbound, got up, left and was gone.
The entire household — Dad, Mom, sister and me —
"Please stop snowing!" That was our plea.*

*Just days after Christmas, after our lunch, I was reclining on the old couch,
Quietly reading, since talking to others would result in "Ouch!"*

*Looking up from my book, I saw the tree starting to lean precariously in its stand,
And I spent some time silently pondering where it might land.
Especially since there was Dad, on the floor next to the tree, comfortably asleep.
And then with a crash and a clatter, AND a prodigious leap...*

The Christmas tree fell on Dad on a long winter day that was all bad.

—
**Mark Larson, 72, of Arcata grew up on the plains of South Dakota.
This was written shortly after Christmas 1968.**

ASK THE DOCTOR**Fighting Insomnia***By Jennifer Heidmann, M.D.*

Poor sleep is a frustrating problem. There are potential causes, and self-reports of sleep duration and quality can be difficult to verify. Up to 10% of U.S. adults meet clinical criteria for a diagnosis of insomnia, which can be acute (short-term, related to some more obvious cause) or chronic.

How do physicians diagnose insomnia? It can be helpful for people to keep a diary of their sleep patterns, what they do before trying to sleep, and what they experience during the night. This should include medications, such as sleeping pills (prescribed or over the counter), food intake, caffeine and alcohol use.

For people who might have evidence of sleep apnea or restless legs, a sleep study may be in order, but this not helpful for general insomnia. Sometimes laboratory tests might be helpful (thyroid function or iron levels for instance). Identifying stressors in life is important when trying to understand any health concern. And identifying sources of sleep interruption (a snoring partner, an uncomfortable mattress) might help pinpoint a cause.

Most times with chronic insomnia, physicians cannot find a specific cause. It is tempting to turn to sedating medications to help people sleep. However, we know that these medications have a myriad of adverse effects, and their risks increase as people age. "Sleeping pills" can increase confusion, cause odd behaviors (like sleep-eating

and sleep-walking), increase risk of falls, become addictive and hard to stop, lead to withdrawal if stopped abruptly, and over time may cause problems with memory and cognition.

Benadryl is a favorite over-the-counter sleep remedy, and can have all of the side-effects listed above. As a physician, I would recommend no one use Benadryl to sleep, especially over the age of 65 or if you have any medical issues.

Medications for insomnia are one of the most prescribed medications in our country. This is even though they do not work very well and have numerous side effects. And even though they can be quite expensive. Studies show that sleeping pills in general may add less than 35 minutes to nightly sleep on average, and improve time to falling asleep by 8-20 minutes.

Cognitive behavioral therapy has been shown to be helpful for insomnia. The upside is there are no adverse side effects. The downside is it can be hard to find a therapist who does cognitive behavioral therapy and has an opening. It is worth a try, though, and this is one of the leading recommendations of insomnia treatment by the American College of Physicians.

Some aspects of cognitive behavioral therapy can be done without a specialist, like identifying and reducing stimuli that may hinder sleep (and making a concrete plan to manage this), and restricting sleep during hours other than usual

Continued on Page 19**9 Tips for Better Sleep**

As Dr. Jennifer Heidmann (at left) says, sleep can be frustratingly elusive, and there really are no good answers to insomnia. Here are some tips:

1. Regular sleep schedule: Go to bed and get up at the same times every day.

2. No alcohol, caffeine or nicotine: Caffeine's effects can last more than 24 hours, and alcohol's sedative effects wear off in a few hours, producing restlessness.

3. No naps: Afternoon naps may seem nice, but they can interfere with your body's sleep schedule.

4. Get regular exercise, but not right before bedtime.

5. Sleep and sex: Bed is for those two things only. You may read yourself to sleep, but avoid any other activities. The blue light from e-readers, cell phones, computers and even TV can repress melatonin, the sleep hormone.

6. No late-night snacks. Stop eating and drinking at least three hours before bedtime.

7. No stress! To head off the mental noise that yoga instructors call "monkey brain," take time around dinner-time to identify worries, and put all that aside before bed.

8. Meditation, not medication. Look online or try classes in meditation, including breathing exercises and audio meditation routines (try Calm.com) that you can listen to through your cell phone. Sleeping pills offer only short-term relief.

9. Cognitive behavioral therapy is the American College of Physicians' "first-line treatment for chronic insomnia." Ask your doctor about it.

—Ted Pease

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HEAVENS TO BETSY

BY BETSY GOODSPEED

One More Day

Bernadette fell asleep in her chair, as an insurance salesman called on her to discuss her current plan. After a few minutes she said, "You aren't my regular life insurance agent."

He explained, "I regret to say that he died. He asked me to make sure that your wishes were carried out. My name is Alan."

Bernadette said, "I thought insurance agents just took your money and gave it to your kids after you checked out."

He told her, "I figure that people only do what's ex-

pected of them until it comes down to the wire. Then they say, 'Hold on, there's a hundred things I didn't think about.' For instance, if I said you had one more day, what would you do?"

She admitted, "I don't think one day would be enough."

Alan said, "I have a small confession to make. Your ailing agent turned your case over to me because he could see that you wouldn't be here much longer."

She scolded him, "That's a small confession? I'm asleep, right? Maybe I'll put my life in order when I wake up."

Alan replied, "Actually, dreaming is your natural state. When you wake up you'll know that this could be your last day, and it will probably be your busiest."

Bernadette made a list, and when Alan returned, he said, "You han-

dled that so well that you've been given one more day. It won't be as busy because you've done the important things. You might even have time to prepare the person who'll inherit your energy."

She asked, "Are you saying that each new day will be my last until I've done all I can, or that I'm ready to start living because of preparing to die? Hang on a minute: what was that about leaving my energy to someone?"

Alan confided, "I wasn't allowed

"...this could be your last day, and probably your busiest."

to mention this before, but you can choose the person

who'll inherit your living energy. That's the kind that changes things."

Bernadette laughed with joy. "Wow! You're an angel. How much time do I have to decide that?"

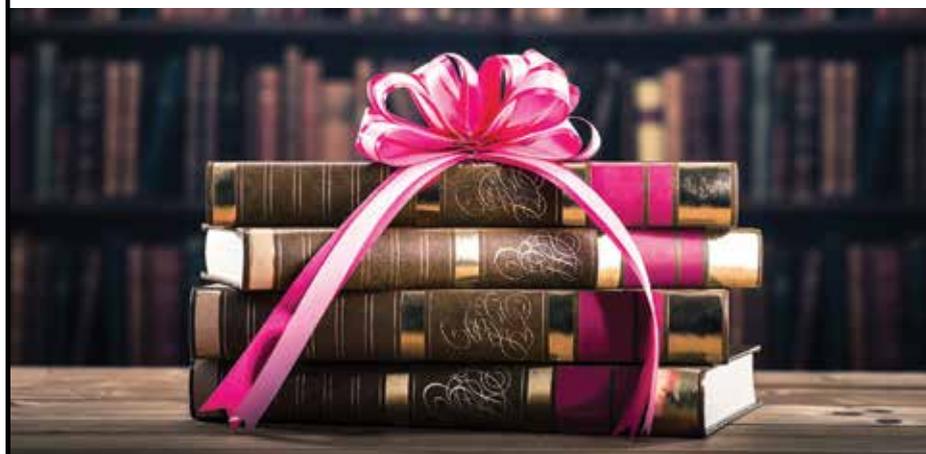
He replied, "Think about who needs it most, or who would best use it."

That took thought. But after listing those who were the most needy, Bernadette decided that her living energy should go to a lively great-grandson who might change the world.

The decision gave her a sudden burst of energy. Then she realized that her living energy was being replenished because of her new insurance plan.

Betsy Goodspeed, 93, generates energy with her music and writing in Eureka.

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My Notebook Indulgence

By *Patty Holbrook*

The advertising industry has played a major role in our holiday rituals. Holiday shopping prompts appear before Halloween. Pre-lit Christmas trees sprout up in stores like mushrooms after a rain.

Jolly strains of “Frosty the Snowman” melt through the tinny speakers in the malls. The dire warning, *Only xxx days before Christmas!*, creates ripples of dread as if we face a root canal. We check our bank account: How much can we shell out this year?

Another marketing slogan, *Beat the Holiday Rush!*, has led to the creation of Black Friday. Before dawn on the day after Thanksgiving, hordes of shoppers, shivering in the cold, line up along the sidewalks outside dark department stores. Once the doors open, the crowds surge through like a tsunami, grabbing bargains, sometimes coming to blows over that last pair of Air Jordans or a bargain-priced iPad.

Jewelry stores ramp up their advertising, exhibiting sparkling jewelry nestled among pine cones and fake snow. DeBeers outshines them all with their elegant slogan, “Diamonds are Forever.”

New Year’s scenes depict gorgeous women garbed in sequined dresses and rhinestone stilettos on the arms of handsome tuxedo’d men, toasting

each other with crystal flutes of Moët & Chandon as they climb into waiting limousines. Advertisers show us how New Year’s Eve is celebrated by people of taste and refinement.

I celebrate each new year by buying a notebook. Not just an Avery cheapo, but a fine leatherette, loose-leaf binder filled with pastel, neon and gridded papers and sturdy dividers labeled with various subjects I intend to learn about in the coming year.

A shrink might see this ritual is an attempt to organize my life, but so far it hasn’t. During 2020, I plan to fill those pages with pithy observations and ideas for my Great American Novel, which I started years ago. But all too soon, exuberance wanes, diversions divert, and the notebook is laid aside, forgotten.

Through the years, my collection of these notebooks has grown, stockpiled on my closet shelf. Since one friend has a walk-in closet stacked floor-to-ceiling with shoes in neatly labeled plastic boxes, and another friend has 100+ sweaters in hers, I consider my annual purchase of a notebook a modest indulgence.

—
Patty Holbrook paints, plays piano and fills her notebooks in Eureka while resisting the battering of holiday advertising.

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- . . . drugstores make the sick walk all the way to the back of the store to get their prescriptions while healthy people can buy cigarettes at the front?
- . . . we buy hot dogs in packages of 10 and buns in packages of eight?
- . . . there isn’t mouse-flavored cat food?
- . . . they’re called apartments when they are all stuck together?



PAINTING THE OCEAN

BY MARGARET KELLERMANN

Be Kind, Be Kind

Every December, we hear songs about how great it is to gather around the fire and hug our families while sipping cocoa. I'm not talking about hearing ancient carols sung by serious young children dressed as lambs. I'm talking about sales-centric jingles.

If you were a Martian dropped into America between Black Friday and Boxing Day, you might think we were a nation of 300 million Von Trapp Family Singers.

The truth is, nobody's family situation is as sublime as

the holiday jingles claim. It's hard enough for a standard-issue family to deal with the idyllic melodies, since the words differ so widely from the actual product, but it causes particular pain for those who are apart from their loved ones.

As an older single person whose family units live far away, I stay sane each December by giving to others who are in more need than myself. Still, somewhere between wrapping treats for at-risk teens and serving Christmas dinner at St. Vincent de Paul, I've sometimes missed giving what people really need from me: compassionate listening.

Recently, I woke up to the idea that I haven't been kind to a certain loved one who has so often confounded my understanding. I realized that I'm not someone who is — how do I phrase this? — always right.

"Someday it will begin to hap-

pen again on earth," the poet Hafiz wrote, that couples will "get down on their knees" and ask, "My darling, how can I be more kind?"

This season, I would love to say, in effect, "I'm sorry. I was too filled up with my own requests to know you wanted me to listen."

Songwriter Frank Turner has a song for that: "Be More Kind," that goes, "Between things that can and can't be said, we've stopped

talking to each other, and there's something wrong with that... You should

know you're not alone."

TV icon Mister Rogers, when asked his secret to success, listed three things: "Be kind. Be kind. Be kind."

During some holiday seasons, my kids and grandkids and I do circle back 'round. We hug and tell stories, and I'm grateful each time. One of them coined a cool nickname for me accidentally, and it stuck. Months ago, at a reunion, I heard one grandson whisper to his mom, "Grammargaret's really old, Mama, but she's funny."

If you close your eyes and tilt your head sideways, you can see that's as kind as it gets.

Margaret Kellermann gives art lessons for all ages in Ferndale's venerable venue, The Old Steeple. Visit ferndalemusiccompany.com/lessons.

"Grammargaret's really old, Mama, but she's funny."

Billy & Bertie's Special Delivery

By Jan Ostrom

Every Christmas that I can remember, my cousins and I have begged my aunts to tell the story of Christmas Eve, 1942.

The postman had delivered an envelope marked "Do Not Bend - Special Delivery - Media Recording" to my Grandma's house in a small town in Oklahoma.

The family gathered in Grandma's living room around a small pine tree covered in homemade decorations of foil stars and strings of glittered popcorn. A white paper-maché dove nested on the stubby top. One of the aunts put the thin plastic record on the player.

A woman's cheery voice filled the room. "Hi, Ma and everyone.

It's me and Billy. We're at the Santa Monica Pier, celebrating Billy's 11th birthday. There are sailors everywhere."

Tinny, melancholy carousel music seeped into the background.

"I haven't heard from Howard, Billy didn't even get a card. Me and Billy are fine. We don't care."

My Aunt Bertie Belle suffered numerous disappointments in her life. She lost her husband Howard during the War — he ran off with a secretary at his aircraft job. I knew Billy cared, but he didn't talk about it.

"The weather is terrible here — 85, bright and sunny. No snow, no rain, little teensy lights on skinny, dusty palm trees. And blackouts all the time. They call that Christmas!"

"Hi Grandma," Billy bleated. "I

miss you!"

My other three aunts, uncles and my grandmother, a stooped, gray-haired matriarch, sat in silence. The seat next to Grandma, where Grandpa had been for the last 50 years, was empty.

"Billy, sing for them," his mother commanded, and Billy quavered, "I'm dreaming of a white Christmas, just like the ones I used to know . . ." before starting to cry.

"Oh Ma, remember when we went to the woods and got our tree with Dad back on the farm?" Then Bertie Belle was crying, too. More memories and sniffing.

"Well, our time is up and we just wanted to say Merry..."

Then sudden sounds of shuffling, a bang, and Billy shouting, "Ow, ow!" The record ended with Bertie Belle's irritated voice clearly and loudly saying, "Oh shit, Billy, we've ruined it!"

All eyes went to Grandma, a sternly religious woman. Curse words were never, ever spoken around her. In the quiet, Grandma lifted her head, smiled through tears and said, "I don't believe I've ever heard Billy sing so well."

From that year on, every Christmas, wherever we are, someone asks for the story, and we lift a glass to the strong tie that is family love, and say, "Shit, Billy, we've ruined it."

Jan Ostrom, 73, a retired film and television professor, relives holiday memories and toasts her Aunt Bertie Belle and cousin Billy in Eureka.



Aunt Bertie Belle, 1970

Christmas on Both Sides of the Berlin Wall, 1963

By Dave Rosso

I was working at the BMW plant in Munich, Germany, when President John F. Kennedy was assassinated on Nov. 22, 1963. Kennedy's "Ich bin ein Berliner" speech was one reason I wanted to visit Berlin, which JFK referred to as "a defended island of freedom."

So, on Monday, Dec. 23, 1963, I boarded a bus in Munich for a 358-mile trip to spend Christmas in Berlin.

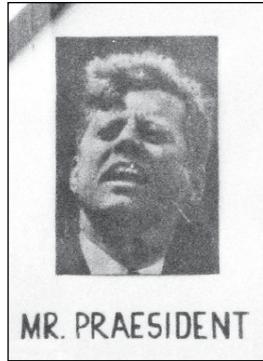
I asked my way to the *Studentenheim* — a youth hostel — where I got a room.

The next day, I toured West Berlin and the west side of the Berlin Wall. A sign erected high over the Wall reached out to the East Berliners: "Die Freie Berliner Press Meldet," or, "In Berlin the free press reports."

Under that was another sign wishing all, including those in East Berlin, "*Frohe Weihnacht und ein besseres Neues Jahr*" (Merry Christmas and a better New Year).

On Christmas Day, I crossed into East Berlin.

Aside from one rebuilt neighborhood, most of the city was empty. Bombed ruins were everywhere, very dirty, extremely quiet. A strange atmosphere. The most people I saw all day were at the Bahnhof — the railway station — as relatives and friends greeted each other for the first



A poster of JFK at Checkpoint Charlie at the Berlin Wall in 1963. Dave Rosso

time in years.

Everywhere I saw magazines and travel posters for Russia, Vietnam, Korea and Hungary. Propaganda pictures showed New York City slums. One showed a man in filthy, ragged clothing slumped in a gutter. The caption said something to the effect that this is America.

I saw signs saying, "For freedom and socialism our way is right," and

"Die Republik braucht alle — alle brauchen die Republik!" or "The Republic needs all — all need the Republic."

I stayed in East Berlin until it became too cold, and returned to the *Studentenheim*, where I attended a party with lots of people from many countries. One saw my copy of Harper Lee's "To Kill a Mockingbird," and asked me to read a chapter, which I did.

Construction of the Berlin Wall began Aug. 13, 1961. On Nov. 9, 1989, the Wall separating East and West Berlin came down, marking the reunification of Germany.

Forty-six years ago, I spent Christmas on both sides of the Wall. *Frohe Weihnacht und ein besseres Neues Jahr*.

—
Dave Rosso, 76, of Eureka is a veteran UPI newsman.

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AGING IS AN ART — BY JOHN HECKEL

Hello in There, Hello

I am sitting in Café Brio on a beautiful Saturday afternoon, waiting for the start of a meeting to finalize aspects of the Against the Wind festival, an anti-nuke/peace/climate change event I am helping organize.

There is music on in the background, Simon and Garfunkel.

Waiting, I watch the café's 20-somethings. I like to watch. I observe their listening. I wonder what their relationship is to that music. They can't actually believe this is their music, can they? Do they connect Simon and Garfunkel's "they've all gone to look for America" with their grandparents? With me?

Music is universal; it does not belong to anyone. Intellectually, I know that. Emotionally, however, Garfunkel is mine.

In the background, Simon and Garfunkel give way to Bob Dylan.

I think of my parents, and know that at a certain time in their lives, they no longer heard their own music (Sinatra, Martin, Como, Belafonte, etc.) at their local cafés. I associated that music with them and connected it with their life experiences. I remember knowing that it was their music, and in so doing, I acknowledged them.

But Peter, Paul and Mary spoke to me. They were not speaking to my parents. What does it mean that I am 73 years old and cannot ever remember a time when I did not hear my music — Dylan, Baez, Simon and Garfunkel, Leonard Cohen and the rest?

Dylan gives way to Cohen.

My music and I have aged together, and while I have grown old, the music, it seems, has not. The sight of these 20-somethings keeping a beat with their nodding heads to Dylan's "Knockin' on Heaven's Door" is measurably different than when I once listened to Frank Sinatra or Perry Como. That music was not my music, and it certainly was not being played in the local cafés I frequented.

I want to be recognized in the way I recognized my parents' generation, through their music. I exist.

"Hey," I want to say, "that's my music you're listening to, which is all right, as long as you recognize it's not yours, it's mine."

If they do that, they will acknowledge that I exist and that I am, unlike my music, getting older.

Cohen gives way to Prine (also 73):

Ya' know that old trees just grow stronger

And old rivers grow wilder ev'ry day

Old people just grow lonesome

*Waiting for someone to say,
"Hello in there, hello."*

—
John Heckel, a retired HSU theater and film professor with a doctorate in psychology, listens to the old songs and says hello in this column every month from Eureka.



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welcomes

Dr. Andrew Mohammed

Humboldt Medical Eye Associates is pleased to welcome Dr. Andrew Mohammed to our practice. A diplomate of the American Board of Ophthalmology, he has completed both a residency in ophthalmology at the Medical College of Virginia and fellowship training in glaucoma at the University of Pennsylvania's prestigious Scheie Eye Institute.

Dr. Mohammed practices comprehensive adult ophthalmology with a focus on cataracts, and feels fortunate to be able to make a difference in the lives of his patients by combining state-of-the-art training and technology with a caring, personalized approach. He loves the natural beauty of the north coast and feels lucky to live and practice here in Humboldt County. Outside of medicine, he enjoys fitness, ancient and military history, the outdoors, and exploring the world alongside his wife, Adriane.

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Food — A Delicious (& Healthy) HSRC Tradition

Food may be our single most common (and important!) tradition when it comes to the holidays.

From Charles Dickens' Christmas goose, fruitcake and chestnuts roasting on the fire, to Jewish *latkes* (potato pancakes), to *kolivo* (wheat and walnut pudding) in the Slavic states, to Korea's *tteokguk* (soup with rice cakes) — food defines the season.

That is certainly true at Humboldt Senior Resource Center (HSRC), where kitchen manager Tony DeLaurentis has planned a lineup of meals for the month of December that will take diners back to holidays past while satisfying appetites of the present.

"All these traditional meals we have planned for December will prompt good memories of past holidays," says Barbara Walser, HSRC director of Nutrition & Activities.

From beef lasagna at the Eureka Senior Dining Center (Monday, Dec. 2), or chicken cacciatore (Tuesday, Dec. 17) — reflecting DeLaurentis' Italian tradition — to pot roast (Thursday, Dec. 12), stuffed cabbage (Thursday, Dec. 26) and meat loaf (Monday, Dec. 30, Eureka only), the kitchen staff is serving "hot-button meals — they bring back nothing but happy memories," Walser said.

At all three Senior Dining Centers

in Fortuna, Eureka and Arcata, this year's HSRC Holiday Meal (Wednesday, Dec. 18) of baked ham and candied yams is a longstanding tradition. Last year, the kitchen served more than 500 holiday feasts.

"This is what we've done for years," DeLaurentis said. "Why would I want to change it?"

The communal experience of good food and good company is an important function of HSRC's Senior Dining Centers, Walser said, especially important at the holidays.

And for those who qualify, CalFresh can help prepare healthy seasonal favorites at home as well.

The amount of

CalFresh benefits varies depending on income, household size and expenses and other factors, ranging from \$16 to as much as \$194 per month for use in local grocery stores, farmers' markets and with other food providers.

To apply for CalFresh benefits, go online to GetCalFresh.org, call 877-410-8809, or go to the Humboldt County Department of Health & Human Services office at 929 Koster St. in Eureka. Agencies including Humboldt Senior Resource Center, Food For People and Open Door clinics can also assist with applications.

—Ted Pease



"The worst gift is a fruitcake. There is only one fruitcake in the entire world, and people keep sending it to each other."

—Johnny Carson (1925-2005), TV host



SHARING THE LOVE — Dave Smith (left) and Lee Dennis of McCrea Subaru pitched in to help serve Thanksgiving meals to a full house at the HSRC Eureka Senior Dining Center. Each year, McCrea Subaru partners with HSRC in the annual Subaru Share the Love Event, in which each sale of a new Subaru through Jan. 2 benefits the Home Delivered Meals program. Ted Pease photo.



Purchase or lease a new Subaru from Nov. 14, 2019 - Jan. 2, 2020 through their annual Share the Love Event and you can support homebound seniors in McKinleyville, Arcata, Eureka & Fortuna.

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DECEMBER SENIOR CENTER ACTIVITIES

Humboldt Senior Resource Center in Eureka

An HSRC Senior Dining Center

1910 California Street

Call Tasha at 443-9747 x1228

Lunch: Monday-Friday at 11:30 a.m.

HSRC will be closed Tuesday & Wednesday, December 24 & 25

Every Weekday

9:00-1:00	Library
9:00-3:00	Senior Service Office
11:30-12:15	Lunch (See menu below)
12:00-3:00	Billiards

Mondays

9:30-10:30	Karate with Jerry Bunch
10:00-1:00	Mahjong
11:00-12:00	Tai Chi for Better Balance w/Sandi
1:15-2:00	S.A.I.L. w/Muriel
2:10-3:10	FABS/S.A.I.L. w/Beth & Lois
2:30-4:00	Memoir Writing Class

Tuesdays

10:00-11:00	Harry's Bingo (<i>not Dec. 3</i>)
12:15-2:15	Pinochle
2:10-3:10	FABS/S.A.I.L. w/Beth & Lois
3:30-4:30	Tai Chi for Balance & Arthritis Practice Group

Dec. 3 10:30-11:30 Dine & Dance w/Ray, Dave & Lois

Dec. 19 11:30-2:00 Foster Grandparents Program

Dec. 19 6:00-9:00 Stamp Club

Dec. 24 **Closed** For Christmas Eve Holiday

Dec. 31 11:30-12:15 New Year's Eve Celebration Lunch

Thursdays

10:00-11:00	Grocery Bingo: Bring 1 grocery item
10:00-11:30	Intermediate French
2:10-3:10	FABS/S.A.I.L. w/Beth & Lois
3:30-4:30	Laughter Yoga

Dec. 5 & 19 10:00-12:00 Genealogy Group

Fridays

9:00-10:00	Falun Dafa
10:00-11:00	Beginning Tai Chi Movements
11:00-12:00	Beginning Yoga
1:00-4:00	Bridge Games

Dec. 6 11:00 Dale Winget performs

Dec. 20 10:30-12:15 Cozy Pajama Day
Wear your coziest to welcome winter

Dec. 27 10:30-11:30 Accordionaires perform

Dec. 27 11:30-12:15 Birthday Celebration

Saturdays

Dec. 7 5:00	Sassy Seniors: Adel's • Eureka
Dec. 21 Noon	Nooners: Kristina's • Eureka

Fortuna Senior Dining Center

An HSRC Senior Dining Center

Mountain View Village, 2130 Smith Lane

Call Launa at 725-6245

Lunch: Tuesday-Friday at 12:00 p.m.

Closed Tuesday & Wednesday, December 24 & 25

Tuesdays

12:00	Lunch (See menu below.)
Dec. 24 Closed	For Christmas Eve Holiday
Dec. 31 12:00	New Year's Eve Celebration Lunch

Wednesdays

12:00	Lunch
5:00-8:00 pm	Bingo

Dec. 4 10:30 Music with Bill, Corena & John

Dec. 4 11 National Cookie Day-
Cookie Exchange. Bring cookies.

Dec. 18 12:00 Holiday Luncheon

Dec. 25 **Closed** For Christmas Holiday

Thursdays

12:00	Lunch
-------	-------

Dec. 12, 19 & 26 12:00-2:00
Caregiver Support Group
United Methodist Church
Fireplace Room
922 N Street
For info call 443-9747

Fridays

12:00	Lunch
Dec. 20 11:00	Hot Chocolate Bar & Sing-a-long

Arcata Community Center

An HSRC Senior Dining Center

321 Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Parkway

Call Vanessa at 825-2027

Lunch: Tuesday-Friday at 11:30 a.m.

Closed Tuesday & Wednesday, December 24 & 25

Mondays

Dec. 9 & 23 11:00-12:00	Silver Quills Writing Group
-------------------------	-----------------------------

Tuesdays

9:00-11:00	Katie's Krafters
10:00-10:50	Senior Aqua Time-HealthSport \$5 fee (<i>prior registration required</i>)
11:00	Bread distribution
11:30-12:15	Lunch (See menu at left)
12:30-2:00	Bead Jewelry Class

Dec. 3 10:00-11:00 Blood Pressure Check

Dec. 3 & 17 10:00-11:00 Caregiver Support Group
Mad River Community Hosp.
Minkler Education Room
3800 Janes Road, Arcata
For info call 443-9747

Dec. 24 **Closed** For Christmas Eve Holiday

Dec. 31 11:30-12:15 New Year's Eve Celebration Lunch

Dec. 31 2:00 Arcata Marsh Slow Walk

Wednesdays

11:00	Bread distribution
11:15-12:15	Tai Chi with Kathy (advanced)
11:30-12:15	Lunch (See menu at left)
12:30 - 1:30	Tai Chi with Kathy (beginning)

Dec. 11 10:00-11:00 Site Council

Dec. 18 12:00-1:00 Holiday Luncheon

Dec. 18 10:30-11:15 The Old Gold Band

Dec. 25 **Closed** For Christmas Holiday

Thursdays

9:00-10:00	Tai Chi w/Tim
9:00-11:00	Katie's Krafters
10:00-10:50	Senior Swim hour-HealthSport \$5 fee (<i>prior registration required</i>)
11:30-12:15	Lunch (See menu at left)
12:30-2:30	Bridge

Dec. 5 10:30-11:30 PJ's Musical Group

Dec. 19 10:15-11:15 Swing 'n' Sway Trio

Dec. 19 10:30-11:00 Commodities Distribution

Fridays

10:00-11:30	Ping Pong with Pete
11:30-12:15	Lunch (See menu at left)

Dec. 13 & 27 10:30-11:30 John Humphrey on the Piano

Dec. 20 10:15-11:15 Music with the Half Notes

Dec. 27 11:30-12:15 Birthday Celebration

Wednesdays

10:00-11:00	Bunco
1:15-2:00	S.A.I.L. w/Muriel
1:30-3:30	Intermediate Line Dancing
2:10-3:10	FABS/S.A.I.L. w/Beth & Lois

Dec. 4 & 18 1:00-2:00 Caregiver Support Group
Adult Day Health & Alzheimer's
Services Library, 2nd floor, Bldg. B
1901 California St., Eureka

Dec. 4 10:30-11:30 National Cookie Day-Cookie ex
change. Bring cookies to share.

Dec. 11 11:00-11:30 LeAnne Morini performs

Dec. 11 11:30-12:15 Emblem Club serves lunch

Dec. 18 10:00-11:30 Commodities distribution

Dec. 18 11:00-12:00 Bob Ebenstein performs

Dec. 18 11:30-12:15 Holiday Celebration Lunch

Dec. 25 **Closed** For Christmas Holiday

December 2019

SENIOR DINING CENTER MENU



FIRST WEEK

- Dec. 2 **Eureka only:** Beef Lasagna
- Dec. 3 **Shepherd's Pie**
- Dec. 4 **Chicken Cacciatore**
- Dec. 5 **Clam Chowder**
- Dec. 6 **Black Bean & Chicken Casserole**

SECOND WEEK

- Dec. 9 **Eureka only:** Creamy Chicken & Veggies
- Dec. 10 **Stuffed Baked Potato**
- Dec. 11 **Chef Salad**
- Dec. 12 **Pot Roast & Gravy**
- Dec. 13 **Lemon Herb Fish**

People 60+ are invited:
\$3.50 suggested donation.
\$6.00 for those under 60.

No senior 60 or older will be denied a meal if unable to donate.

*Low-fat or nonfat milk served with each meal.
A vegetarian alternative is available by reservation daily.*

Call for Reservations.....
Arcata • 825-2027 Eureka • 443-9747 Fortuna • 725-6245

THIRD WEEK

- Dec. 16 **Eureka only:** Shepherd's Pie
- Dec. 17 **Chicken Cacciatore**
- Dec. 18 **Holiday Meal:** Baked Ham, Candied Yams, Green Beans, Dinner Roll & Apple Pie

FOURTH WEEK

- Dec. 23 **Eureka only:** Ham & Bean Soup
- Dec. 24 **All HSRC Sites closed for the Holidays**
- Dec. 25 **All HSRC Sites closed for the Holidays**
- Dec. 26 **Stuffed Cabbage**
- Dec. 27 **Tomato Basil Baked Fish** *Birthday Cake*

FIFTH WEEK

- Dec. 30 **Eureka only:** Meatloaf
- Dec. 31 **Holiday Meal:** Chicken Cordon Bleu

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Crossword Puzzle
on page 22



DECEMBER SENIOR CENTER ACTIVITIES

McKinleyville Senior Center

Azalea Hall • 1620 Pickett Road
Open Monday-Friday 9 a.m. - 4 p.m.
mckinleyvillecsd.com
azaleahall@att.net • 839-0191

Closed December 23 to January 10, 2020
for building maintenance

Mondays
8:30-9:30 Tai Chi
9:00-12:00 Computers (call for availability
—\$1 donation)
10:00-11:30 Writing Workshop
10:30 HighSteppers at Knox Cove
11:00-12:00 Yoga - (Bring mat & blanket)
1:00-4:00 Party Bridge
6:30-8:00 pm Art
Dec. 2 10-11:30 Genealogy
Dec. 9 10:30-12:00 2019 Christmas Party
For the Low Vision Workshop contact Doug at
839-0588 or dougrose@suddenlink.net

Tuesdays
9:00-11:00 TOPS
9:30-10:30 S.A.I.L. Class
10:40-11:40 Stretching
12:30-3:30 BINGO
1:00-2:00 Exercise

Wednesdays
8:30-9:30 Tai Chi
9:00-12:00 Computers (call for availability
—\$1 donation)
10:00-11:00 Line Dancing
10:00-12:00 Needlework
11:00-12:00 Yoga - (Bring mat & blanket)
10:30 High Steppers (Meet at Knox
Cove Trail)
1:00-4:00 Pinochle
Dec. 18 Board Meeting
Dec. 4 & 18 3:00-5:00 Caregiver Support Group
Timber Ridge at McKinleyville
Private Dining Room,
1400 Nursery Way.
For info call 443-9747

Thursdays
9:30-10:30 S.A.I.L. Class
10:30-12:00 Pinochle Lessons
10:40-11:40 Stretching
12:30-3:30 BINGO

Fridays
8:30-9:30 Tai Chi
10:00-11:30 Grief Support Group
10:30 High Steppers (Meet at Knox
Cove Trail)
1:00-4:00 Pinochle

Saturday 2:00-4:00 Art of Origami - OLLI

Rio Dell

Every Mon, Wed & Fri
11:30-12:30 Senior Exercise Class
Chamber of Commerce Bldg.
406 Wildwood Avenue

Fortuna Senior Center

MGC is at 2280 Newburg Road
fortunasenior.org
admin@fortunasenior.org • 726-9203
Mon-Fri 10:00-12:00 & by appointment

Mondays
River Walk 8:30 Walking
MGC 9:00 Tai Chi
11:00 Line Dancing
3:30 Ukulele Group
5:00 S.A.I.L. Class
Dec. 2 1:45 Book Club
Rio Dell/Scotia Chamber of Commerce
11:30-12:30 Exercise Group
Tuesdays
Rohner Park 8:30 Walking
MGC 1:30 Senior Stitches
2:00 Seated Tai Chi
3:00 Recorder Group
Wednesdays
River Walk 8:30 Walking
Fortuna
Dec. 4 12:00 Senior Lunch Bunch
Call Chris 725-2020 or Carol 725-2931
Rio Dell/Scotia Chamber of Commerce
11:30-12:30 Exercise Group
MGC 1:00 Tai Chi
5:00 S.A.I.L. Exercise
Thursdays
Rohner Park 8:30 Walking
3:00 Bocce Ball
MGC 9:00 Cards
9:30 Yoga (donation suggested)
1:00 MahJong
2:00 Seated Tai Chi

United Methodist Church
Dec. 12, 19 & 26
12:00-2:00 Caregiver Support Group
Fireplace Room
922 N Street, Fortuna
For info call 443-9747

Fridays
MGC 9:00 Cards & Games
2:00 Scrabble Group
Fortuna 9:00 Hiking (Call 725-7953)
9:00 Biking (Call 725-1229)

Rio Dell/Scotia Chamber of Commerce
11:30-12:30 Exercise Group
United Methodist Church
Dec. 27 7:30 pm Fortuna Camera Club

Saturday
MGC
Dec. 21 11:00-12:00 Christmas-themed Potluck

Sunday
MGC
Dec. 15 4:00 Bingo
Fortuna No Open Mic

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More Meal Deliveries

By Janet Ruprecht

Retired firefighter Rusty Goodlive spent 27 years saving homes and lives. Now he volunteers to deliver meals to the homebound elderly every Wednesday.

“Need doesn’t get any more basic than food,” he said.

Goodlive identified a second need filled by his work with Humboldt Senior Resource Center’s (HSRC) Home Delivered Meals (HDM) program. “Some people really enjoy the human contact,” he said. “I try to make it as valuable as possible by calling clients by name, looking them in the eye, and wishing them well.”

HSRC is working to reduce the waiting list of seniors wishing to receive Home Delivered Meals. One new route is being added, and oth-



‘LET’S DO IT’ — Volunteer Rusty Goodlive loads up Home Delivered Meals for Eureka seniors. Janet Ruprecht photo.

ers are being realigned; new people are enrolling, and new deliveries are expected to begin in January.

This means that Goodlive’s route in Eureka is about to get bigger. “Let’s do it,” he said. “I’m ready.”

HSRC could use your help. The Nutrition Program is underfunded, but HSRC leadership is determined to restore services that were cut six years ago — because no senior should be hungry and alone.

The Eureka Senior Dining Center recently reinstated lunch five days a week. Fundraising is under way to help sustain this level of service, and new resources are being sought to expand other nutrition programs.

“With the help of this generous and compassionate community,” said Barbara Walser, director of Nutrition & Activities, “we can extend Home Delivered Meals routes and determine the possibility of bringing Monday lunches back to the other dining centers.”

Charitable gifts make great holiday presents. Donations can be made in the name of someone you’d like to honor or memorialize.

Dec. 3 is Giving Tuesday, the international day of charitable giving at the beginning of the holiday season. To make an online gift that will help provide local seniors with meals throughout the year, please consider becoming a monthly donor to HSRC.

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Janet Ruprecht is HSRC’s development coordinator.

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LIVE VIGOROUSLY

BY JOAN RAINWATER-GISH

Grief & Exercise

This is the season that often brings joy and sadness — joy in remembering Christmas past, and sadness in Christmas present.

This season marks the third Christmas without our grandson, Derek, who died in a car crash at the age of 26.

During his too-brief life, our family developed many traditions for every holiday. I know one of Derek's favorites was decorating

Christmas cookies at Grandma's house. His cookies were always piled high with frosting and sprinkles, which had to give him a sugar rush all through December. Each year I thought he would outgrow it, but, instead, when he got older, he invited his girlfriend(s) to join in.

We embrace our traditions because they give us joy and sustain us as a family. We still gather for cookie-making, as we have in Christmas seasons past, while feeling the hole that exists in Christmas present where Derek should be.

So I know that holidays can be extremely difficult when one has experienced a loss. It could be the death of a loved one, the loss of a pet, or a divorce. And any significant loss can trigger a grieving process.

I agree with grief expert Allison Gilbert, who says, "What grief takes away — energy, joy, focus — exercise can give back. The death of a loved one involves so many emotional drains, exercise allows you to

come into a space where you can focus on yourself, and helps decrease the pulls on one's energy. It restores some of your buoyancy."

Part of the reason why exercise can make you feel better is its impact on the brain. Exercise increases blood flow to the brain, allowing it to function better almost immediately. It also triggers the release of endorphins, which improves mood. Exercise can also improve the quality of one's sleep,

"...make the holidays better."

which is important in healing the mind and body, and keeps one from going down the "rabbit hole."

Recognizing and acting upon a desire for movement is key for anyone looking at exercise as an outlet for grief. It doesn't matter what you choose to do, but pick an exercise you enjoy — dancing, swimming, weight lifting, yoga, tai chi or something else.

For me, it's walking. Getting outside in the fresh air, among people, and enjoying the changes in the season charges my being, removes stress, builds resilience and makes me happy.

It helps me get through the sadness so I can focus on the joy.

Give exercise a try. I know it can make the holidays better.

Joan Rainwater-Gish, 77, of Eureka, is a personal trainer and senior group fitness instructor. You'll see her out walking briskly this holiday season. Contact: jrainwatergish@gmail.com.



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HOW RITUALS CONNECT OUR LIVES . . . From Page 1

candles with care. It was touching to note the depth and lightness of the embrace from these humble candlesticks — stepping stones — illuminating one life experience to the next.

As I stood folding the hand towels, tender memories of my own family and personal rituals bubbled up. I felt their reassuring warmth.

Renowned mythologist Joseph Campbell reminds us that rituals are everyday enactments of myth, personal and collective narratives that demonstrate when we participate in rituals, we are also participating in these stories. This puts us in contact with the deep wisdom of our psyches, individual and collective, he says — our consciousness being “re-minded” of wisdom that lives in our daily lives and relationships.

Across cultures, rituals can provide us with reassurance of wisdom known throughout the ages, ordering the complexity, beauty and richness of our being human together.

A quip by a well-known spiritual teacher — “If you think you are en-

lightened, go and spend a week with your family!” — reminds me that rituals are not always experienced as supportive, especially at this time of year. Sometimes a ritual will devolve into empty habit, felt as rigid and oppressive instead of joyful and inclusive.

The upside is that we can create our own rituals, or renew our intention to celebrate the way we always have.

Rituals are not habits. Rituals are conscious and intentional, not the distant warbling of a Netflix show distracting us from our lives. At this time of year, some of us participate in ancient rituals honoring what is sacred to us, the shifts in the season, or even welcoming the quiet of the pregnant darkness that is winter.

The ritual of honoring endings reminds us to be fully alive in the present moment. Together.

Gina Belton, Ph.D., of Arcata practices Existential Medicine and teaches Humanist Existential Psychology at Saybrook University.



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Dad's Big Heart

By C. Peter Jermyn

Usually it's the kids who get most excited by Christmas traditions, but in my childhood household in rural southeastern Pennsylvania, it was my father who reigned as king of enthusiasm. He had a firm grip on the holiday hysteria until Dec. 24, but then it was all-out frenzy.

Somewhere in his past, my dad got the notion that it wasn't proper to install decorations or an ornamented tree until Christmas Day. He rejected the social notion of starting after Thanksgiving, and believed in the magic created by the sudden appearance of St. Nicholas with all the trimmings out of the dark night as the apex experience of wonder.

By this I mean that he hid the tree (usually under a tarp out behind the barn) and the ornaments up in the attic (in a dark corner behind the chimney). Before the children were tucked in on Christmas Eve, we placed the ritual plate of cookies and glass of milk on the kitchen table, along with a carrot or two for the reindeer. And then while we slept, somehow the jolly saint produced a fully trimmed tree, a pile of gifts, cookie crumbs and some nibbled carrot remnants.

At some point I approached the age of reasoning, and a skeptical voice of doubt spoke to me as we left the candlelight carol service at the church and emerged into the black night.

On that night, snow flurries had started while we were singing "Silent

Night," and a scheme was hatching in my father's imagination. The snow continued all night, piling up on the landscape, so we woke to a fresh clear blue Christmas morning with a trackless whiteness over everything.

Yes, Santa had arrived and all this bounty. As evidence of the Christmas miracle, my father led us back upstairs to my sister's bedroom, which looked out on the porch roof.

"Look! He must have landed here. There's sled marks, boot prints and hoof prints! The deer must have been standing here waiting while he was inside."

That experience created such an indelible imprint on me that I can still see the tracks on the snowy roof in my mind today. And even though I saw two deer legs hanging in the barn that year at the end of hunting season, I'm still not sure how the whole thing happened.

I've sometimes wondered what motivated my father's holiday enthusiasm. Maybe it compensated for some lack in his childhood, or maybe it was just his own desire to experience the miracle. But whatever the cause, I know it was a big heart that created childhood memories for our family.

—
C. Peter Jermyn, 70, will be looking for reindeer prints outside his home in Bayside.

"One morning I shot an elephant in my pajamas. How he got in my pajamas I'll never know."

—Groucho Marx (1890-1977), comedian

December

Community Calendar

ASK THE DOCTOR . . . From Page 5

bedtime. Talk therapy may help with managing the anxiety and fears that naturally develop when sleep is poor, finding techniques to help the brain reframe and better control responses to difficulty sleeping.

Alcohol is not a good solution to insomnia. It may quicken time to falling asleep, but sleep quality is poor, and nighttime awakening is common (not to mention the general health risks involved with alcohol intake). The combination of alcohol and sleeping pills can be deadly.

We do not have enough science to know the effect of THC or CBD on sleep disorders. It is known that chronic users of marijuana can have significant and persistent problems with sleep when they stop using (which is a sign of withdrawal from

a substance on which someone has become physiologically dependent).

I wish I had an easy answer to insomnia. It is a common complaint, and can affect well-being in many ways. I do encourage people to discuss with their doctors ideas for managing the stress of insomnia, and consider cognitive behavioral therapies as a first-line treatment.

Dr. Jennifer Heidmann is medical director and primary care provider at Redwood Coast PACE (443-9747). This column should not be taken as medical advice. Ask your medical provider if you have health questions. Send comments to seniornewseditor@humsenior.org.

Blessing of the Fleet

Join Trinidad fishermen, their families and friends for the 24th annual Blessing of the Fleet from the Memorial Overlook above Trinidad Harbor, Thanksgiving Day, Thursday, Nov. 28, 10 a.m.

Genealogical Society

The Redwood Genealogical Society will meet on Wednesday, Dec. 4, 11:30 a.m., at the Sushi Boat Restaurant in Fortuna. Lunch (optional) is \$9. Ben Shepherd will speak on "The History of Willow Brook."

Light Up a Life

Hospice Humboldt will host two candle-lighting ceremonies at 4 and 6 p.m. on Wednesday, Dec. 4. Bring a photo or memento of someone you miss and light a candle of remembrance for them. Reflections, music and light refreshments. 3327 Timber Falls Court, Eureka. 707-267-9811.

Indian Craft Fair

United Indian Health Services will hold its 19th annual American Indian Winter Arts & Crafts Fair at Potawot Health Village, off Janes Road in Arcata, Saturday, Dec. 7, from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Clarke Gun Vault

The Clarke Museum on E Street in Old Town reopens its historic firearms collection in a former bank vault during Arts Alive! on Saturday, Dec. 7, 6-9 p.m., when the Museum also hosts local home brewers and distillers, and the Eureka Visitor Center will host a holiday choir in the lobby.

Heritage Society

The Eureka Heritage Society's first Vintage Holiday Boutique will be Thursday, Dec. 12, 3 p.m.-9 p.m., at the Annie B. Ryan House, 1000 F St., Eureka. Vintage handmade items, gift baskets, wreaths, mulling spices, pillows, candles, Christmas stockings and ornaments, baked goodies and more.

Animal Shelter Open House

The Humboldt County Animal Shelter, 980 Lycoming Ave., McKinleyville, holds its 15th annual holiday Open House, a raffle and silent auction fundraiser to support the Emergency Medical Fund. Saturday, Dec. 14, noon-4 p.m. Donations still being accepted. Call 707-840-9132.

McKinleyville Holiday Music

The McKinleyville Community Choir will perform three free concerts this holiday season: Sunday, Dec. 8, 3 p.m. at Azalea Hall, 1620 Pickett Road, McKinleyville; Sunday, Dec. 15, 3 p.m. at the Arcata Playhouse, 1251 9th St., Arcata; and Sunday, Dec. 23, 3 p.m. at Trinidad Town Hall.

Tease the Season

SCRAP Humboldt holds a holiday fundraiser burlesque benefit show featuring the VaVaVoom Burlesque Vixens at The Booth Brewing Co., 123 W. 3rd St., Eureka, on Friday, Dec. 6. Happy Hour and silent auction at 7 p.m., and the performance featuring creative reuse holiday performances starts at 8 p.m. Ages 21 and older. Tickets at Wildberries and Eventbrite.com. Info: 707-822-2452.



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50-Year-Old 'Charlie Brown' Tree Still Means Christmas

By Donna B. Ulrich

Christmas is a time to remember and make traditions. If you love Christmas like I do, memories flow like eggnog on a cold winter's eve.

Could it be decorating the tree and hanging the ornament your daughter, now a teacher in some far-away city, made in third grade? Or driving through pre-LED light extravaganzas in neighborhoods, each trying to out-do each other?

Maybe a carol sparks your mind and takes you back to good times? For me, "A Christmas Song" by Nat King Cole, or "Oh, Holy Night" by Hawaiian crooner Willie K always bring me joy.

Maybe the sounds of Christmas bring back memories for you. When we were very young, my family went to Grandma's house in Fairfield, California. All it took on Christmas Eve was a phone call from Auntie and Uncle down the lane, saying we had better get to bed — they'd already heard Santa at their house.

Suddenly, bells were ringing in the yard, and we rushed to bed. We found out much later that it was my dad with an antique set of real sleigh bells urging us to sleep.

Could it be the old movies that move us? "White Christmas," "It's a Wonderful Life," "Rudolf the Red-Nosed Reindeer." The current made-for-TV movies, sappy and predictable, just don't cut it.

In my family, we faithfully watched that good ol' standard, "A Charlie Brown Christmas." We would gather around the television and see Chuck pick up the same pathetic tree and find delight in the wonderful Dave Brubeck soundtrack.

My mother was always coming home with new decorations, so when she brought home a small (fake) flocked tree atop a wind-up music box that played "Silent Night" as it turned, we all loved it, and dubbed it The Charlie Brown Christmas Tree.

Little did we know that it would survive, the epitome of Charlie's sad little tree, and become a family heirloom.

I am now the keeper of The Tree, and each Christmas, my twin sister and I, and sometimes my brother and his family, get together and laugh over this object that holds so many memories.

The Tree is over 50 years old now; its color has faded, and most of the fragile glass ornaments have broken off. But it still plays "Silent Night." It still means Christmas. And it is forever beautiful to me.

Merry Christmas, Charlie Brown.

—
Donna Ulrich celebrates Christmases past, present and future in Trinidad.



WORN, BUT WELL LOVED — Donna Ulrich and her 'Charlie Brown' tree. Ted Pease photo.



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Letters to the Editor

The Annual Tree Hunt

To the Editor:

I read in Senior News your request for Christmas traditions that families remember through the seasons.

I cherish memories from my early life on a cattle ranch in Newhall — Orcutt Ranch, in Southern California. The hills were forested with oak and spruce, and before the holidays we went into the spruce thicket to cut our tree for the ranchhouse. It was such a difficult decision to pick the right one among all the sizes and needles. Each one seemed to say, “Pick me.”

My brother, from the L.A. Fire Department, checked smaller trees to see if they could manage to grow and reach the sun.

Our last outdoor Christmas spruce will long be remembered, as my Mom passed on that year. I'll always remember the enjoyment of those outings with her as we searched for holly for our holiday decorations.

Margaret Werren, Eureka

PG&E's Blackouts

To the Editor:

No one who has lived very long on the North Coast is too surprised when the lights go out. Our family has been here for almost 40 years, and I remember winters when it seemed like the power was out about once a week, or every time the wind blew a tree down between Crescent City and Willets, or there was a mudslide somewhere.

It was no big deal.

Electrical service has gotten a lot better around here since then, so maybe that's why everyone was running around like Chicken Little when the power went out a few weeks ago.

What was different was that it was PG&E that knocked out power this time, not a storm or an act of God. The new reality seems to be that PG&E can't run its own system, which is so old and rickety that it sets off wildfires that kill people every time the wind blows.

If PG&E can't provide dependable service, then someone who can should take over.

Carla Fontaine, Eureka

Letters Policy: Senior News welcomes letters to the editor. To be considered for publication, letters should be received by the 12th of the month, must not exceed 300 words, and may be edited for space. Submissions must include the writer's full name, mailing address, phone number and e-mail address. Senior News reserves the right to reject any letter. The same requirements apply to those interested in submitting longer commentary columns (up to 400 words). E-mail tpease@humsenior.org or mail to Senior News, 1910 California St., Eureka, CA 95501.

OPINION

Counterpoint: Lighten Up!

By Dennis Scales

In the October 2019 issue of Senior News, Ellen Taylor's depressing submission ["Please Don't Pave Paradise"] and editor Ted Pease's TEDtalks ["Go Catch a Snake"] caught my attention.

Pease gave good advice for healthier lifestyles by enjoying the out of doors and the spectacular redwoods in Humboldt County. He touched on the new religion of climate change and the desperate prediction of sea level rise, and noted the possibility that Highway 101 could be under water by 2050. I assure your readers who may be alarmed that *IF* Humboldt Bay starts to overlap 101, action will be taken by CalTrans to mitigate the problem.

Be aware that other opinions about 101 being covered with sea water are explained by the land subsiding or sinking from tectonic plate movements and the lack of maintenance of dikes and levees due to onerous California environmental regulations.

In contrast to Pease's editorial, Ms. Taylor offers no hope for humans inhabiting the planet. Every worldwide negative event is in her article: floods, fires, whales, pollinating insects, hurricanes, less kelp, fewer bugs. She writes, "Humans have made a mistake. Our only chance is to walk back the current path of our evolution."

Both statements are impossible to achieve.

The constant drumbeat of doom and gloom from climate change alarmists always lacks any solutions. Should the Senior News cease publication to save the trees? Should the electricity to Ms. Taylor's house be eliminated? Her internet shut down? Her cell phone disabled? Would any of those actions have any impact? Probably not.

All the problems we face by living in Humboldt County are solvable by calmly examining the issue and implementing the best cost-effective solutions. One of those was presented at a Sierra Club meeting I attended last year. The only way to affect carbon dioxide emissions was to move as close as possible to 100% electrification of our homes, businesses, automobiles and trucks. The electricity could only be reliably provided by nuclear power plants. Hundreds of those plants would need to be built in the United States as quickly as possible. As we know, none of that is occurring.

The United States and our people aren't the problem regarding worldwide problems. Let's have more positive stories in the future, Senior News!

Dennis Scales *lives in Fortuna.*

“Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.”

—United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Crossword Puzzle**Spilled Milk** by Ross Trudeau, *Edited by David Steinburg***ACROSS**

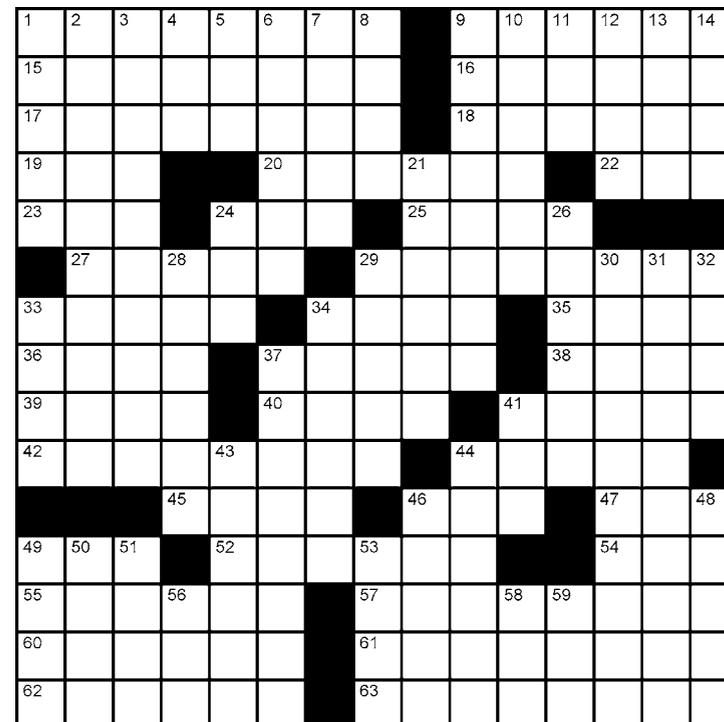
- 1 Livestock hazard
 9 Lure into crime
 15 Snake that can weigh more than 550 lbs.
 16 Shrinks in fear
 17 One with a growth mindset?
 18 Total stud
 19 Chicago airport code
 20 Comes in
 22 Parlor pic
 23 "My Gal ____" (Rita Hayworth musical)
 24 Word before "Kapital" or "Boot"
 25 Irritable sort
 27 "Holy smokes!"
 29 Wave crest
 33 A student's blemish
 34 "Scat, cat!"
 35 ____ assembly required
 36 Reason to roll out a tarp
 37 Control a bumper car
 38 Annoying person
 39 Visibly excited
 40 Look after
 41 Volkswagen model
 42 Long workday, say
 44 You may adjust its tuners for tunes
 45 A single time
 46 Clump of gum, e.g.

- 47 Mom-and-____
 49 Score 100% on
 52 Frowny faces
 54 Gaza grp.
 55 Black sheep's cry, in rhyme
 57 Call with a programmed number
 60 Matriculate
 61 Completely absorbed by, as a good book
 62 Structural support over an opening
 63 Devices that draw or inject

DOWN

- 1 Nigeria's largest city
 2 Raging violently
 3 *He sought courage in Oz
 4 Repetitive condition, briefly
 5 "____ is me!"
 6 Group of nine
 7 Perfect places
 8 It might hit the bull's-eye
 9 *Hands-on environmental activist
 10 Acknowledges silently
 11 Only number that can be typed with a keyboard's top row
 12 \$35, for Park Place
 13 Diva's chance to shine
 14 (Over here!)
 21 Came back through a tunnel, perhaps

- 24 Afro and dreads
 26 Outdid
 28 Rarin' to go
 29 "____ a good time for you?"
 30 Largely apocryphal rural pastime demonstrated in each starred answer?
 31 "Did they leave without me?"
 32 Org. that helped publicize
 33 Spoiled sort
 34 Boom box, e.g.
 37 *Textured home surface
 41 Quick punch
 43 At a reduced cost
 44 Team list
 46 Viscous and sticky
 48 Certain shirts
 49 Cain's brother
 50 "Pretty please?"
 51 Work hard for
 53 Clumps of gum
 56 CAPTCHA failer (hopefully)
 58 Maker of Orange You a Rock Star? nail polish
 59 Uproar



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ROAD TRIP, PART 3

Crash Ends South American Road Trip for Arcata Biker

By Rus Krause

Editor's Note: *As intrepid motorcyclist Rus Krause of Arcata was finishing up his third report for Senior News, 10,000+ miles into his epic trip with Argentine Emilio Bolé to the southern tip of South America, the worst happened. Well, not the worst, since Rus is able to tell about it.*

“This morning, Nov. 9, my plans suddenly changed,” he wrote from his hospital bed. “Leaving Trujillo, Peru, I went down in a patch of oil and slid right into an oncoming semi truck.

“If the trailer hadn’t had steel guards between the front and rear wheels, I wouldn’t be writing this. As it is, I have a broken motorcycle, a broken collarbone, broken rib, and a broken foot.

“My trip is over, except to figure out how to return home with my injuries.”

Rus flew home to Humboldt on Nov. 13, and is grappling with insurance and healing. Here’s Rus’s pre-crash report:

Hello to everyone in beautiful Humboldt County! Since we last wrote from Costa Rica, we’ve finally crossed into South America. I’m writing now from Peru, nearly 10,000 miles on the odometer since leaving Arcata on Sept. 7.

As I mentioned last issue, you can’t drive to South America — you have to cross from Panama to Colombia by air or sea.

We chose the *Stahlratte*, an old, steel-hulled sailing ship owned by a German foundation. The four-day passage was one of the highlights of our trip.

We were joined by 15 other motorcyclists from all over the world. The bikes were craned aboard, strapped down along the gunnels and covered, and we all had comfortable berths below deck.

We stopped for a day by some small islands in the Panamanian San Blas archipelago for swimming in the warm, crystal blue water, then motored by night toward Colombia with sails up to catch what little wind there was, the

chug-chug of the ancient diesel engine lulling us to sleep.

Arriving in Cartagena, Colombia, we found a different world — hundreds of street sellers hawking every possible thing, from bottles of water to their own bodies for an hour. Santa Marta and Medellin, Colombia, were the same: everyone had something to sell even if it had no value.

Colombia is stunningly beautiful once you leave the cities: emerald-green forested mountains, raging rivers, dramatic vistas everywhere you look.

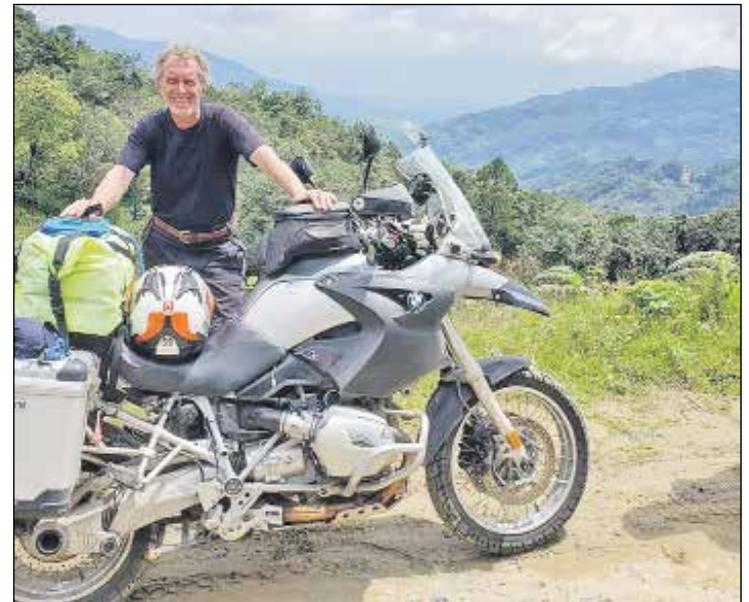
I got a new tire and oil change in Medellin, and was invited to a big motorcycle rally the next day, where I made new friends and saw 163 beautiful motorbikes.

Crossing into Ecuador, the landscape changed immediately to more intensive farming and pasturelands, with fields that climbed high up the mountainsides. Ecuador gave us huge dramatic vistas, cooler temperatures, and the historic city of Cuenca, perhaps the most beautiful city I’ve ever seen.

The *Viejitos Viajeros* (Traveling Oldies) are riding separately now. Emilio is an expert rider, and I’m only a good rider. I can’t keep up with him, and he can’t slow down for me. We get together in the evenings and share a room if we arrive in the same town at night.

Emilio is determined to reach Ushuaia, the Argentinian resort town on the southernmost tip of Tierra del Fuego. But I’m feeling the pull of home after more than two months on the road. I’m arranging to fly back, bike and all, from either Santiago, Chile, or Buenos Aires, Argentina.

Rus Krause, 72, of Arcata reports that he is healing well, and happy to be home. He hopes to return to Peru to finish his trip to the bottom of South America. Meanwhile, Emilio Bolé, 74, motors on solo, and will report on his travels next month.



ON THE ROAD AGAIN — During their travels along a muddy jungle road in Colombia, Emilio Bolé’s motorcycle slid out from under him. Emilio (at right in top photo) was unhurt, but he and Rus Krause (at left above) needed help from a new local friend, Chucho (middle), to get the 600-pound machine out of the ditch. The second photo shows Rus during drier days, in the hills of Colombia a few weeks before his trip-ending crash. Photos by Rus Krause and Emilio Volé.

You Can Be in Senior News

- **JANUARY:** As we head into 2020, it's time for a clear-eyed look at "New Beginnings." How do you bring a new year into focus, or start on a new path in your life?
- **FEBRUARY:** We get to pick our friends, which is what makes them so special. Send your story ideas for the "Old Friends" issue to editor Ted Pease at tpease@humsenior.org or call 707-443-9747, x1226.

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