



*I believe the second half of one's life is meant to be better than the first half.
The first half is finding out how you do it. And the second half is enjoying it. – Frances Lear*

Leslie Says Goodbye

By Leslie Jackson

It is with great resignation that I will be leaving Bellingham At Home. I am not only leaving BAH, but also Bellingham. I will be moving to the North Shore of Oahu, Hawai'i. For several years I have wanted to relocate there for my health. I have lived in the Pacific Northwest for the last 54 years and I am very ready for a change of scenery and the sun. It is a decision that feels very right to me and opportunities seem to be falling into place that support my choice.

Bellingham At Home has been a wonderful and nurturing place for me. I have deeply enjoyed and learned from all of you. I have loved getting to know all of the members through service requests, office visits, and social activities. You are a group of forward thinking and ambitious people and I have gained invaluable inspiration from you all. Not until I started at BAH did I understand the beauty and power of volunteerism; I had never before seen such vast generosity and enthusiasm of spirit. I can only hope to be as gracious and devoted as the giving souls of Bellingham At Home.

I am grateful for the opportunity to have been BAH's Program Manager and I hope I have made a difference to the organization that will help carry it through to the bright future I know lies ahead.

Much love and respect to ALL of you. I will keep in touch.

Aloha,
Leslie

Leslie is leaving Bellingham At Home after 10 months as our first Program Manager. We are grateful for her enthusiastic support of our mission and all she has done to enhance our organization. Under her direction the office has taken on much of the work that was previously handled by our overworked volunteers. She has improved our communications and given us the continuity often lacking in an all-volunteer organization. We will miss her! We wish her the best for her "retirement" to Hawai'i. Mahalo, Leslie!



Good-News Flash: We have a new Program Manager in place! Colleen Harper joined us during Leslie's last week and is having a chance to get started with learning the job. Welcome, Colleen!

Don't Miss the May Member Forum

Our next Member Forum is scheduled for Wednesday, May 16, 1-2:30 pm, BSAC room 16. All members are invited to meet the new BAH program manager and to participate in the conversation, which will include a discussion of the new member fee schedule and payment options, updates on Neighborhood Clusters and Health Advocacy, and a free-wheeling exchange on the difference between “service” and “assistance”.

We've Got a Table at the Farmers Market—Pull up a Chair

It's Farmers Market season and this year BAH is part of the fun. We'll have a table set up on five dates:

Saturday market downtown:

May 19, July 14

Wednesday market in Fairhaven on the village green:

June 13, July 25, August 15

We're still looking for a few more volunteers—members or nonmembers—to sit and talk with interested browsers. Please call the office if you'd like to help share the BAH story with the community.

On Being Both Old and New

By Angela Mercy

I get a lot of protests when I refer to myself as old, even though I'm in my seventh decade. The protests arise from misperceptions of what it means to be old. It isn't negative. It's a simple statement of fact. Being old simply means that one is in the later stages of life. It means one has lived more years than they have remaining.

If anything, realizing there's less time left than one has already lived makes the time remaining even more precious. It's a great time to look at life with new eyes, to ask the question, “What is most important to me in the time that remains?” There are so many possibilities.

I am excited to be old. It is, for me, still a relatively new life stage. Many of us ‘olders’ have a great deal of freedom as we are no longer caring for children or aging parents, no longer required to earn a living, and maybe most important of all, no longer so concerned about what other people think. Physically, we may not be as vibrant as we once were, but lots of us have energy, enthusiasm, curiosity, and a plenty of heart left to give.

This is not to deny that old age also comes with significant challenges. Aging brings with it varying degrees of physical and mental decline. As the final life stage, it requires us to look toward our own death and to live through the deaths of loved ones.

On the other hand, research shows that having a positive perception of aging has many concrete benefits. According to Mather Lifeways Institute on Aging, older adults with a positive outlook live an average of 7.5 years longer, engage in more preventive healthy behaviors, make more friends and enjoy social support, and generally have a greater sense of well-being.

A new BAH interest group is forming to explore the gifts of age, to support members through its challenges and to nurture a positive perception of this time of life that is both old and new. Our next meeting on Thursday, May 10 from 3 to 5 pm at Angela Mercy and Nick Waslenko's home. The group is open to all members and volunteers; it is still a work in progress and will be shaped by the people who join. We'd love to have you! Call 360-603-0064 for our address and with any questions.

Save the Date of Our Annual Members Meeting in June

The 2nd Annual Members Meeting will be held on June 20, 2-4 pm, at the Squalicum Boathouse. We'll tell you more about it in the June newsletter, but watch your mail for a personal invitation.

A Celebration for Volunteers and Their Guests

If you volunteer for BAH in any capacity, please plan to join other Whatcom Council on Aging volunteers at a special dinner party in your honor on Friday, May 11, at 5:30 pm at the Senior Center. The evening will feature prime rib (vegetarian and gluten free options are available), dessert, and of course, a special toast. The dinner is free for volunteers, who are welcome to bring a guest for \$7.

Please RSVP at BSAC's front desk or call 360-733-4030, ext. 105.

New Members

We're delighted to report that we have added five new members to BAH:

- Louann Chapman
- Karin Clumpner
- Margarethe Allen
- Richard Vawter
- Wayne Deming

Welcome, all!

BAH Now Offers a Monthly Payment Plan

Bellingham At Home has made it even easier to become (and stay!) a member. Instead of a single lump sum at the time of joining or renewing, members who prefer to can make 12 monthly payments for no additional fee. So if you would otherwise pay \$400 once a year, you could pay \$33.33 a month instead in the form of a direct withdrawal from your checking account. Just let the office know if you would like to take advantage of this new option when it's time for you to pay your membership fee.

Walking and Hiking Are Good for You. Walking and Hiking with a Fun Group Is Even Better.

BSAC invites you to join the Button Walkabouts and Senior Trailblazers when they hit the trails every Tuesday and Thursday. It's not a formal commitment, just a chance to enjoy nature and other people—movers and shakers all!—at the same time. No need to sign up in advance.

The Button Walkabouts meet in the BSAC coffee bar to sign in and arrange carpooling on Tuesday and Thursday mornings. (There's a \$1 minimum donation to cover gas.) They leave at 9:45 am sharp and the walks, mostly on dirt trails, last approximately 90 minutes.

The Senior Trailblazers have two moderate-to-hard hikes each Thursday that range from 6-10 miles and one Tuesday hike from 4-6 miles, many of them in the Mount Baker Wilderness and surrounding areas. (Wear good hiking shoes or boots!) Hikers carpool and share the expense with drivers. A current schedule of hikes is available at the front desk or online at wccoa.org.



Health Advocacy in Action



At Woods Coffee, Judy Perry (right), a BAH health advocate note-taker, and Donna Klander, BAH member, talk over Judy's notes from Donna's doctor's appointment the day before. If you'd like to have a health advocate take notes at your next appointment, please call the office and we'll assign one of our cadre of note-takers to meet with you in advance to prepare. You can arrange for a ride too; we'll contact a different volunteer for that.

Stay in Touch!

As you know, the Neighborhood Cluster program, currently in its pilot phase, was a response to members' requests at our first annual meeting for closer connections. So it seemed like a good idea to remind the entire BAH community that there are at least four ways to communicate with other members, one to one or one to all.

The first way is through our online forums, which are a member service available on the BAH website once you log in. This is a good place to float an idea, share an experience, start a debate, or share news.

Next, there's our member directory, which gives you contact information for everyone who belongs to BAH. This service lets you quickly find the phone number or email of that nice member you were talking to the other week and wanted to invite on a walk.

In April we started a Letters to the Editor column in the newsletter and we would like to invite all of you to weigh in on whatever you've been stewing over, wondering about, wanting to share, or waiting for the right opportunity to talk about.

And finally, if you have something important for the entire membership to know in a hurry, you can always call or email the office and ask for it to be included in the next e-blast. Example: You have an extra ticket for a Mt. Baker Theater event and would like to give it to someone.

So reach out and touch someone today!

Membership Matters

Spotlight on Marilyn Burlingame

Marilyn has just returned from Paris and there is still excitement in her voice as she talks about the trip, her first back to the city where she went to middle school as an army brat.



Marilyn in Paris!

"I went with my sister and because we had lived there, there were a couple of museums we really wanted to see but other than that we just wanted to walk around the city and that's what we did—we walked everywhere. It was lovely. Temperatures were in the 70s, which was unusual for Paris at this time of year, and we had such fun people watching in the Luxembourg Gardens: there were people in fur coats and parkas and also sleeveless dresses and short shorts—nobody knew how to dress."

A highlight for Marilyn, a former English major and current hard-core reader, was a trip to the landmark Shakespeare & Company book store, where she snagged a copy of Ali Smith's novel *Autumn* with the store's stamp in the front—a treasure on both counts. (Watch for her review of the book in our June issue.)

Reading is one of the things Marilyn is passionate about. The other is hiking. She and her son and her sister go car camping in the summer and do day hikes. And last year she took a Road Scholars trip to the Grand Canyon for a week of hiking.

"I keep meaning to join the Senior Trailblazers at BSAC and now that they've added hikes on Tuesdays I'm going to do that. Before they were only hiking on Thursdays and on Thursday evening I folk dance, so that seemed like a bit much."

Marilyn's husband, Gary, who died two years ago, was the real folk dancer in the family, something Marilyn found out when they first started dating.

"I had recently tried out some folk dancing with the Mountaineers hiking club in Seattle, so I suggested that we go there together. It was a little embarrassing when I found out that the Mountaineers was on a pretty low rung in the folk dancing world whereas Gary had been part of a performing group in LA. He was really good, which I never was, but it's fun—I like the music and it's great exercise, so I went with him occasionally. At Gary's memorial service, a bunch of people from the folk dance groups showed up and I was so moved by that that I decided to get back into it and now it's a group of friends."

Gary was also a foster parent through the Children's Home Society, which was quite unusual at the time.

"You know what was great about foster parenting? It came with a counselor, a person who came out every two weeks and really helped me as a newlywed to know what to do with this kid in this family I'd moved into. She told me things like 'You don't do any of the discipline, that's Gary's role.'"

It must have been good advice. The couple adopted a son in Bellingham ("It was a great place to raise a kid—there's so much to do here that doesn't cost very much") and both boys still live in the area.

Marilyn had what would be an unusual career these days, in that she worked in the same industry from start to finish. She worked for Ma Bell back when Bell Telephone *was* the phone industry, designing training materials, mostly for customer service, for Pacific Northwest Bell in Seattle and then, when she and Gary moved up to here in 1992, for a Bell vendor.

"I worked for an industry consultant, doing the same kind of work, but it was more interesting because I got to travel around for Bell Canada and do some training for the outside plant; I learned about how you design telephone wires so they will stand up to ice in the Canadian winter."

So what does she think of phone company customer service today? Don't ask.

Marilyn put in a lot of hours in BAH's first year and still does some volunteer driving. She's also about to resume tutoring for the Whatcom Literacy Council again, something she had cut back on when Gary died.

Sometimes, however, Marilyn, who is a contented introvert, goes into what she calls "a healthy hermit mode," when she just withdraws. Happily for us, these episodes are only intermittent.

Do you have someone you'd like us to profile? Please contact Lauren Phillips at 360- 714-0054.

From the Science Desk **Is Meditation the Answer to Cognitive Decline?**

In a study endorsed by the Dalai Lama, individuals who regularly meditate were followed over seven years. The authors conclude that meditation can enhance mental abilities and protect against age-related cognitive decline.

As we age, our cognitive ability slowly slides. The resulting deficits can impact reasoning, memory, and processing speed, among other things. It can also affect our ability to concentrate and focus. Since people in the United States are now living longer lives, researchers are keen to find ways to keep our brains healthy and alert for longer and meditation is one of the ways that has shown promise. For instance, meditation is believed to boost a range of cognitive abilities, such as mental clarity, stability, and creativity, while increasing the length of time that someone can hold their focus. Importantly, meditation is easy to practice at home, relatively cost-effective, and unlikely to cause side effects.

But can meditation's benefits endure over longer periods of time?

To fill this gap in our understanding, scientists from the University of California Davis Center for Mind and Brain followed a group of 60 people who attended a meditation course consisting of two meditation retreats seven years ago. The participants were assessed before, during, and just after the retreats; they were then followed-up at six months, 18 months, and at the seven-year mark. By the end of the study, 40 subjects were still involved, all of whom reported that they continued to use meditation in some form for an average of one hour per day.

Right after the retreat, the participants were compared with a control group and demonstrated improvements in general psychological well-being, the ability to cope with stress, and maintaining attention. Seven years later, the gains in attention were still present to some degree — particularly among older group members who practiced meditation the most often. These people did not show the expected levels of age-related decline in sustained attention.



The authors conclude, "These findings provide initial, yet provocative, evidence that continued meditation practice may be associated with a moderation of age-related decline in attentional components known to be sensitive to aging... with the potential to alter longitudinal trajectories of cognitive change across a person's life."

As the meditation-based benefits appeared to plateau immediately after the retreats, lead author Anthony Zanesco believes that this might inform us about how much influence meditation can have. Perhaps the ceiling was reached in this relatively short intervention. It is certainly too soon to conclude that meditation was responsible for the benefits demonstrated.

For example, someone who attends a meditation retreat and continues to meditate is likely to have other lifestyle differences, such as a more healthful diet.

So although this is the largest and longest study of its kind, more work will need to be done before promoting meditation practice as an intervention for cognitive aging. Stay tuned.

This article was adapted from Tim Newman's article of the same name in the April 8 edition of *Medical News Online*.

Here's a link to the full study in the *Journal of Cognitive Enhancement*: <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s41465-018-0068-1>.

May Birthdays

Joan Bird

Myron Fink

Caryl Hinckley

Cat E. McIntyre

George Oliver



Members: If you'd rather this newsletter didn't show your name when it's your birthday month, please let the office know.

Update on the LC Fundraising Challenge

We asked you to help us take advantage of the LC's offer to match all donations through July 1 and BAH members are stepping up. With \$2,470 donated so far, we are well on our way to meeting the LC's initial contribution of \$3,000. And we still have two more months in the challenge! Way to go, BAH people—let's maintain the momentum!

WANTED:

- A good volunteer photographer to take pictures of people and events for the BAH newsletter, website, and Facebook page. No professional credentials required!
- More office volunteers for regular morning or afternoon shifts.

Please call, email, or stop by the office if you're interested.

Letters to the Editor

Staying Informed about Local Politics

John Lawler wrote last time asking for suggestions about how to keep on top of local politics. I'm a member of Bellingham City Club and we're all about local issues, including politics. The City Club is a non-partisan civic organization that fosters dialogue and debate on important issues facing our community. We meet for lunch on the fourth Wednesday of the month at 11:30, with programs running from 12:20 to 1:30 pm; at election time, candidates for county and city offices come to speak.

Also, each Washington senator and congressperson has a website, which I think you'll find full of information.

Caroline Balzer
BAH Member

We encourage members to weigh in on this or any topic of general interest. Please send letters to kate.birr@bellinghamathome.org or by regular mail to Your Village Voice, Room 14, 315 Halleck St., Bellingham, WA 98225.

Bellingham At Home Contact Information

Location: Bellingham Senior Activity Center, Room 14, 315 Halleck Street, Bellingham, WA 98225

Phone: 360 746-3462 E-mail: info@bellinghamathome.org

Website: <http://BellinghamAtHome.org>

Bellingham At Home is a program of the Whatcom Council on Aging, which is a 501(c)(3) organization, and a member of the Village to Village Network.