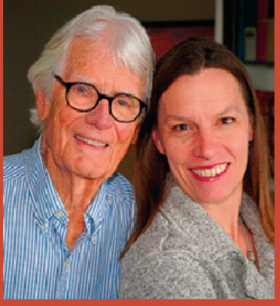


HEALTH CORNER



Reflecting on Mothers and Fathers

By Diana Gifford

We don't choose the starting line. The family and life circumstances into which we are born is happenstance. Reading "Straight Life: The Story of Art Pepper," a book described as 'sheer horror' and the 'saddest autobiography ever written', I'm reminded of my more fortunate start. Pepper was a jazz musician, born to a runaway, 14-year-old mother – drunk, violent, and mostly absent. It gets worse – a lot worse.

Pepper's extraordinary musical talent might have lifted him out of bad trouble. But it was not to be. It's got me thinking about how the people closest us, in particular our mothers and our fathers, often set the stage for our lives.

I am in the large club of people who believe they have the best parents in the world. My father, Ken Walker, wrote this column under the name W. Gifford-Jones, MD for 50 years, and readers will appreciate the good fortune my brothers and I feel. But what about our mother, a less well-known figure?

When asked if she has any 'wise words' to share, she, in turn, reflects on her own parents. "I was blessed to have landed on this planet with many advocates before me who used 'wise words.' I did not appreciate them at the time and sometimes balked at their strictures, but eventually I learned that what they offered me, sometimes wordlessly, always by example, would provide a benefit I ought not to ignore.

"My father, a corporate executive, became known by colleagues for his 'integrity', a word meaning strong moral principles. As a girl, I watched his behaviour, at home and in business. In time, I understood what that word meant. And I loved its strength and simplicity, as well as my father. I tried to emulate him.

"Similarly, the word I would learn to apply to my mother was 'rectitude', correct behaviour or thinking. I saw that that made for a happy marriage. It was not easy to measure up to her standard, but she was insistent.

"Those two words, thankfully, set me off on the right path. And I soon learned another word that was unexpected at the time. I set off for university in 1951, long before Women's Lib. But I landed at a women's college which was established to offer women 'self-sufficiency'. Its motto was Non Administrari Sed Administrare. I learned during those four years to be true to myself, and to establish independence of thought and behaviour, against all odds.

"Then came along one Ken Walker. It was not long before he showed me the meaning of 'compassion'. I watched him over many years exhibit absolute devotion to each and every of his patients, in his office practice and in surgery. I worried about his own health. When he suffered intense criticism by colleagues and society in general for his forward medical thinking, he taught me another word, 'tolerance'. This one I found very difficult at times, but he remained astute, and I could not argue.

"There are enough 'wise words' to go around. Like 'truth' and 'virtue' and more. The world would be a better place if we used any and all of these words. They are so simple but so hard to find today.

"This is my contribution to 'wise words'. May it end with the word 'health', which blesses me at 93, and I wish it to all."

I can only say, "Thank you, Mom," and "Thank you, Dad." How tragic that some are born less lucky. But when encountering them, it's an opportunity to reflect, and hopefully, an inspiration to be a better person and make the world a better place.

This column offers opinions on health and wellness, not personal medical advice. Visit www.docgiff.com to learn more. For comments, diana@docgiff.com. Follow on Instagram [@diana_gifford_jones](https://www.instagram.com/diana_gifford_jones)

Ontario Launches Pothole Prevention and Repair Program

The Ontario government is investing \$10 million to make roads safer by preventing accidents and damage that can occur from potholes. Under the new Pothole Prevention and Repair Program, municipalities with populations of up to 10,000 people can apply for funding to support critical road maintenance and pothole repair. The program is part of the government's work to protect Ontario by making record investments in infrastructure that will keep communities safe, keep workers on the job and support economic growth.

"This funding will help small municipalities repair potholes before they cause costly vehicle damage, helping families to travel safely and businesses to keep goods moving," said Prabmeet Sarkaria, Minister of Transportation. "In addition to this important program, our government is investing nearly \$30 billion to build, repair and expand highways, roads and bridges across Ontario, connecting more communities to jobs, housing and economic opportunities."

The Pothole Prevention and Repair Program is designed to support smaller communities that do not have the same capacity or funding base as larger municipalities. Eligible municipalities can receive up to \$38,000 for projects. "This new program is a win for smaller municipalities across Ontario," said Ric Bresee, MPP for Hastings—Lennox and Addington. "By investing in local transportation infrastructure, we're helping communities protect and extend the life of their roads while keeping drivers safe and supporting economic growth. When we give municipalities the tools they need, we build a stronger Ontario for everyone." Applications for the Pothole Prevention and Repair Program are now open. Eligible municipalities can apply until December 12, 2025.

The Reducing Gridlock, Saving You Time Act, 2024, included a commitment by the Ontario government to consult with municipalities on the development of the Pothole Prevention and Repair program.

Based on Statistics Canada census data, 263 of Ontario's 444 municipalities – almost 60 per cent – are eligible for the Pothole Prevention and Repair program.

Ontario is investing nearly \$30 billion in highways, roads and bridges over the next 10 years.

"The Ontario Pothole Prevention and Repair Program will be valued by rural municipalities throughout the province because maintenance of country roads is a priority as we work together to ensure safe and strong communities."

- Lisa Thompson
Minister of Rural Affairs

"Clearway Construction strongly supports the Ontario government's new Pothole Prevention and Repair Program. By helping municipalities take a proactive approach to road maintenance, the program will reduce repair costs, prevent vehicle damage, and improve safety for all drivers. We're proud to support efforts that strengthen Ontario's infrastructure and keep our province moving forward."

- Anthony Di Battista
President, Clearway Construction

Ontario Investing \$180 Million to Boost Nursing in Long-Term Care

The Ontario government is delivering on its plan to protect the province's long-term care system by investing more than \$180 million to launch new programs that will attract and retain close to 8,000 highly-skilled nurses, enhancing the care residents receive.

"Our government is improving long-term care by training, hiring and retaining thousands of health-care workers," said Natalia Kusendova-Bashta, Minister of Long-Term Care. "As a registered nurse, I know how important bringing more nurses into Ontario's long-term care homes is to helping ensure residents receive the quality of care and quality of life they need and deserve."

In August, the Ontario government announced \$56.8 million to expand the number of nursing training and education seats at publicly assisted colleges and universities across the province, with the goal of training 2,200 additional nurses into the health-care system. Building on this work, Ontario is now launching a new suite of initiatives to bring more nurses to long-term care:

- Nursing Partnership for Learning, Employment, Development, Growth, and Experience (Nursing PLEDGE) – Ontario will invest \$110 million over three years to help homes establish nursing mentorship programs that will help people build careers and skills, supporting close to 4,000 mentors and their mentees by 2027-28.
- Jumpstart Opportunities in Nursing in Long-Term Care (JOIN LTC) – Ontario will invest \$70 million over three years in JOIN LTC, which allows eligible nurses who commit to working in long-term care for two years to receive an incentive of \$25,000, with an additional \$10,000 available for those who commit to a rural, remote or northern home, plus \$10,000 more to help with relocation costs. This program aims to bring 4,000 new nurses to long-term care by 2027-28.

Externship pilot program – Ontario is investing \$665,000 in 2026-27 in a pilot that will enable up to 40 nursing students to work at long-term care homes and gain valuable experience as they work towards graduation.

Building a strong, resilient long-term care workforce is one more way the government is ensuring Ontarians get the quality of care and quality of life they need and deserve. The plan to improve long-term care is built on four pillars: staffing and care; quality and enforcement; building modern, safe, and comfortable homes; and connecting seniors with faster, more convenient access to the services they need.

Seniors — people age 65 and older — make up the fastest growing age group in the province.

In the first quarter of the government's 2025-26 fiscal year, residents received an average of 4 hours and 5 minutes of PSW and nursing care every day.

As part of its plan to fix long-term care and address waitlists, the government is building 58,000 new and upgraded long-term care beds across the province.

Ontario is offering incentives of up to \$35,400 to PSW students and eligible PSWs to launch careers in long-term care homes and in the home and community care sector.

"Under the leadership of Premier Ford, our government is continuing to protect Ontario's health-care system — and that includes protecting long-term care. Through this over \$180 million investment, our government is launching new programs to attract and retain highly skilled nurses, ensuring Ontario's seniors can receive the high-quality care they need and deserve, no matter where they live."

- Sylvia Jones
Deputy Premier and Minister of Health

"WeRPN is pleased with the Ontario government's comprehensive approach to supporting nurses in long-term care settings — the majority of which are RPNs. This critical funding will not only attract more nurses to the sector but also ensure they are well-supported and encouraged to build lasting careers, translating to better, more consistent care for long-term care patients."

- Dianne Martin, RPN
CEO, Registered Practical Nurses Association of Ontario (WeRPN)

"This investment represents a significant step forward in strengthening long-term care (LTC) across Ontario. By supporting both new and experienced RPNs, RNs, and NPs, we are advancing the compassionate, high-quality care that residents need and deserve. Nurses play an essential role in enhancing the lives of seniors, and these programs will help build a more stable, expert, and dedicated workforce — one that honours both residents and the nurses who care for them in Ontario's LTC homes."

- Dr. Doris Grinspun, RN, BScN, MSN, PhD, LLD(hon), Dr(hc), DHC, DHC, FAAN, FCAN, O.ONT.
CEO, Registered Nurses Association of Ontario (RNAO)

"NPAO welcomes the initiatives and investments introduced today by the provincial government. As healthcare leaders, Nurse Practitioners (NPs) play a key role in providing compassionate, holistic and high-quality care for those living in long-term care (LTC). Supporting the recruitment and retention of NPs in LTC settings is critical to supporting the health, well-being and quality of life of Ontario's seniors. We look forward to continuing to work with the provincial government to foster LTC environments where NPs can thrive, build careers, develop skills and protect Ontario's most vulnerable."

- Dr. NP Michelle Acorn
CEO, Nurse Practitioners Association of Ontario (NPAO)



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