

An Anthology of
Timely Tidbits and Fascinating Factoids for

Savvy Jersey Seniors



Advice, Humor, and Miscellaneous Words of "Wisdom"
For & About Seniors

Volume 3, Numbers 7 & 8 • July/August 2022 • LABOR DAY EDITION

Welcome!

In this special Labor Day Edition (and latest double-issue edition) of *Savvy Jersey Seniors* for July and August of 2022, we present some first-person thoughts on both:

- Volunteering as an usher from Phyllis St. Onge, and
- What can happen when you spend your weekends sailing on the Chesapeake from Nancie Merritt.

We also have the usual esoteric potpourri of topics, which this time includes:

- Why fires, bed rails, and pools can be deadlier for seniors,
- What pain and cramping in your legs may be telling you,
- Whether you should consider reducing your need to drive,
- Why many seniors are not prepared to age in place.

And, of course, we'll continue to share more "fascinating observations" on being a senior that you can pretend that you made up...and use to poke fun at yourself and your friends.

By the way, please don't forget that we always welcome your ideas for any topic that you'd like to see us tackle. And, as noted, we're especially interested in the avocations and hobbies of our readers. In that vein, we really want to hear about the volunteer efforts that seniors across South Jersey are making on behalf of the literally thousands of non-profit organizations that serve our region. Just drop us a note savvyjerseyseniors.com.



Ushers & Greeters



Ever Considered Volunteering As An Usher?

Haddonfield's Phyllis St. Onge tells us that being a volunteer usher is "very gratifying."

"I began ushering at the Walnut Street Theater in Philadelphia when my daughter's Girl Scout troop did it for a community service badge.



"The troop leader asked mothers to be chaperones and I consented. Of course, the scouts grew up and went on to other adventures, but a small contingent of mothers remained 25 years later. We have selected our own most favorable times.

"I usher by myself for Thursday matinees. At the Walnut, you commit to all 5 plays and have a schedule with a specific date and time to arrive. At Philadelphia's Arden Theatre, where I also volunteer, you decide to which play and time you want to commit.

"Each theater has a different time to arrive as well as a dress code. At the Walnut, you work prior to the play, briefly at intermission and you are finished. At the Arden, you work before the play and pick up playbills after the play.

"There are also opportunities for ushering in New Jersey specifically Haddonfield Plays and Players and The Broadway Theatre of Pittman. Both of these theaters send an email for their performances and you can choose the date you want to usher.

"Friends and I have also ushered in New York City. You would have to physically sign up for the plays, but I believe you can do it online presently. NYC was wonderful and we have seen

first run plays, i.e., *Anything Goes* with Sutton Foster, *The Philanthropist* with Matthew Broderick, and *Harvey* with Jim Parsons. Lots of fun and enjoyment can be had!!!!"



Fires, Bed Rails and Pools Can Be Deadlier For Seniors

A new report delivers a troubling statistic: Seven in 10 consumer product-related deaths occur among those over 65, even though these people only account for 16% of the U.S. population.

The report discovered that the clothing fire death rate among older adults is 14 times higher than among people younger than 65.

The dangers don't end there: About 300 older adults die due to drownings, mostly associated with swimming pools, bathtubs, and spas.

Adult portable bed rails are involved in about 16 deaths a year among people aged 65 and older. These bed rails are generally used to protect people who are at risk of falling out of bed, but many do not meet safety standards and create an entrapment risk, resulting in suffocation.

Fire and Older Adults



Did you know? In 2018, older adults in the United States:



Had a 2.6 times greater risk of dying in a fire than the total population.



Ages 85 and over were 3.8 times more likely to die in a fire than the total population.

Ages 85 and over

had the highest fire death rate.



Pain or Cramping in Your Legs May Be an Early Sign of PAD

Pain or cramping in your legs during physical activity may be an early sign of a condition called peripheral artery disease (PAD)...and you should get checked out by your doctor, an expert says.

PAD occurs when plaque develops in the arteries of the extremities and restricts blood flow to the legs, and sometimes the arms. The condition is more common in older people, and affects up to 10% of those in their 60s and 70s.



PAD causes no symptoms in its earliest stages. The first and most common symptom people notice is repeated pain, cramping or heaviness in one or both legs during walking or exercise. These symptoms occur because muscles can't get enough oxygen and nutrients.

As PAD advances, symptoms typically become more severe, and can include wounds or ulcers on the feet that won't heal, or continuous pain or numbness. Either of these may be precursors to onset of gangrene.

Vascular problems tend to escalate rapidly without prompt diagnosis and intervention, particularly in patients who have wounds on the feet that won't heal.

Diogenes Syndrome May Include Severe Self-Neglect

Diogenes syndrome happens when a person does not take care of themselves or their surroundings, leading to poor hygiene and possibly some health and social problems. It often occurs with other conditions, such as dementia.



People with the condition often show signs of severe self-neglect, social isolation, and hoarding.

They may live in unsanitary conditions, but the person does not make a conscious decision to do this.

Research suggests that it is most common among people with average intelligence, who are over 60 years, and who live alone.

Some sources estimate that at least half of all cases occur in people without prior mental health conditions.

When there is no other medical condition, scientists suggest that Diogenes syndrome may be stress reaction, resulting from a traumatic event, such as the death of a loved one.

Most Women Over 50 Experience Thinning Hair

Menopause isn't just about hot flashes and night sweats. More than half of women over age 50 will experience thinning hair, says a new study. The result can be a blow to their self-esteem.

Researchers, scrutinizing the scalps of nearly 200 postmenopausal women, found that 52.2% had some hair thinning, a condition called female pattern hair loss. Low self-esteem was found in 60% of participants and increased with severity of hair loss.



While it's unclear exactly why menopausal women's hair starts to thin, new research suggests declining estrogen levels. While thinning hair in an aging man has been normalized, few women are prepared for it. Mothers rarely, if ever, talk to their daughters about menopause symptoms, so, for many, menopause-related hair thinning can be a shock.



Minority Patient Groups Face Disparity in End-Of-Life Care

Minority patient groups with a diagnosis of metastatic cancer, are less likely to receive end-of-life palliative care or a hospice referral, according to Rutgers researchers. Black and Hispanic individuals and those whose primary language was not English were also less likely to be diagnosed with depression, a common symptom that triggers palliative care consultations and hospice referrals.

"New Jersey is a diverse community, and our clinicians must take into consideration language barriers and potential translation obstacles that can lead to misinterpretations of symptoms," said Elissa Kozlov, senior research author.

"When we remove these obstacles and educate our workforce, we are able to work towards ensuring that we are providing the best quality of life for patients."

For people diagnosed with metastatic cancer, end-of-life planning becomes critically important in impacting one's quality of life and end-of-life care goals.

Many Seniors Not Prepared to Age In Place

The vast majority of people over 50 say it's important that they keep living in their current homes for as long as possible.

But a new poll shows many of them haven't planned or prepared for "aging in place," and a sizable percentage might have a hard time paying for in-home help.

The pandemic's toll on older adults, especially those in nursing homes and other

long-term care facilities, has brought the issue of living independently at home into the national spotlight. So have policy proposals around changing the ability of Medicare and Medicaid to pay for virtual care and in-home help.



But the new findings from the National Poll on Healthy Aging suggest many people in their 50s, 60s and 70s need to do more to modify their homes or plan for services they may need if they want to avoid or delay needing to move. The poll also shows differences in aging-in-place readiness among the 28% of older adults who told the poll that they live alone.

In all, 88% of people between the ages of 50 and 80 said it was very or somewhat important to them that they live in their homes as long as possible. But only 15% said they've given a lot of consideration to how their home may need to be modified as they age, while 47% have given it little or no thought.

Conscientious People Cope Better With Mandatory Retirement

A new study has identified novel associations between older adults' personality traits, the routes they took to leave their jobs, and their well-being after exiting the workforce.

Researchers found the trait of conscientiousness was linked to increased satisfaction with leisure time for older adults who underwent mandatory retirement, and to increased life satisfaction for people who became unemployed.

The authors suggest that conscientiousness might act as a "psychological buffer," with conscientious individuals being more proactive in finding new fulfilling life patterns.



Among people who retired early, extraversion was linked to lower satisfaction with life, income, and leisure.

However, for people who stopped working due to ill health or caregiving demands, extraversion was linked to higher satisfaction with leisure time.

The authors speculate that extraverts might miss social relationships at work, but might also be motivated to find sociable, rewarding hobbies.

Should You Consider Reducing Your Need To Drive?

"On the whole, older drivers are safe," says Dr. Marian Betz, an expert in healthy aging at the University of Colorado. "They tend to drive slower than younger drivers and have a lot of experience."

But some health conditions common with aging may make it riskier to get behind the wheel. Stiffer joints and weaker muscles can make it harder to steer or brake safely. Eye diseases and some medications can cause vision problems. Hearing loss can blunt the sounds of horns or sirens. And cognitive changes, even mild ones, may impair quick decisions behind the wheel.



There are many alternatives to driving. Some areas provide free or low-cost bus or taxi services for older adults. Some communities offer a carpool service, or scheduled trips to stores or the doctor. Rideshare service may also be an option.



Your local Area Agency on Aging can help you find services. Call 1-800-677-1116 or go to eldercare.acl.gov to learn more.

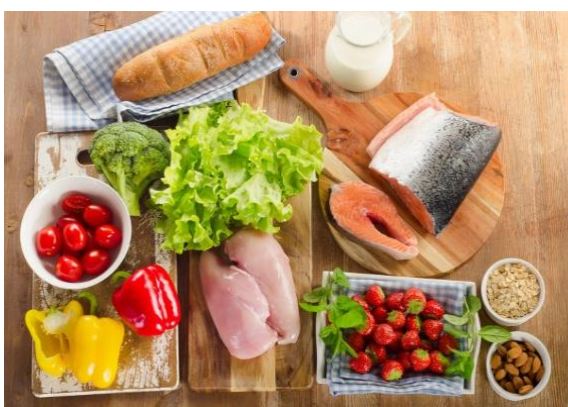
Options for getting things done without leaving the house have also boomed recently. Grocery delivery, telehealth visits, and online social hours can reduce the need to drive every day.

"Online options can't—and shouldn't—replace everything," says Betz. "But some of these things are good solutions for people to reduce their need to drive."

Dentures and Nutrition: Chewing "Efficiency" May Suffer

Dentures may take a bite out of your nutrition, a new study warns.

"They do not provide the same chewing efficiency, which may alter eating habits," said senior author Dr. Thankam Thyvalikakath, at Indiana University. "Dentists need to be aware of this and provide advice or a referral for nutrition counseling."



A comparison of lab results for 10,000 people from two years before a patient received dentures and two years after showed a significant decline in certain nutrition markers.

While those markers were still within the normal range, there is a chance that levels will continue to decline, and dentists need to be aware of that possibility.

People who did not wear dentures did not have decreases in nutrition markers, the study found.

Twenty Percent of Medicare Recipients Use Medical Marijuana

One in five Medicare recipients use medical marijuana, and two-thirds say it should be covered by Medicare, a new survey reveals.

Medical marijuana is legal in 37 states, four territories and the District of Columbia, but it isn't covered by Medicare. Possession of marijuana remains illegal under federal law.

Respondents use it to treat a variety of physical and mental health conditions, including 32% for anxiety and 31% for chronic pain.

Roughly one-quarter said they use it to treat depression, glaucoma, and symptoms associated with HIV/AIDS, including nausea, appetite loss and pain.

Two-thirds of respondents said they "strongly agree" or "agree" that medical marijuana should be covered. Thirty-four percent said they "disagree" or "strongly disagree." Nearly six in ten supporters of Medicare coverage for medical marijuana said they believe medical marijuana can be effective when other treatments fail.



Adventure on the Radio...on the Chesapeake

This report was submitted by *SJS* friend, Nancie Merritt, 80, a noted South Jersey pastel artist, who has been sailing for more than 20 years, most recently on the Chesapeake with her partner, Bill.

Together, they spend most weekends each summer sailing and socializing with like-minded sailing friends. Nancie's hobbies include writing and belonging to a writing group in her local community, as well as three book clubs, one for history and two for fiction.

Nancie's art has been exhibited in local galleries and she regularly has paintings on display at the Hammonton Art Center in Hammonton, NJ.

In addition, she is the editor of her community's newsletter, the *Weatherbee*, in Four Seasons at Weatherby in Woolwich Township, NJ.

Here is Nancie's first-person account of a recent "radio adventure" on the Chesapeake.



Nancie next to her 2nd place winning pastel "Sunbathe Where You Can," at the 2022 Gloucester County Senior Art Show in July.

"In this most unusual summer of our lifetime, we have been so fortunate to be able to spend weekends away on our sailboat. Our time there is a respite and a chance to feel a sense of normalcy amid concerns over the pandemic. Although typical socializing as in summers past is no longer the norm, we can still enjoy our time out on the water.

"So, on a mid-summer weekend it was an afternoon of really good winds, 10 to 15 knots, gusting to 18 or more. It was one of the more invigorating sails that we've had this season.



Unlike other days on the water there were many, many sailboats out on the Chesapeake Bay taking advantage of favorable wind conditions and a lovely, sunny day. With the brisk breeze, temperatures were more than tolerable.

And, as required, we had our marine radio tuned to channel 16, the hailing channel that mariners use to contact friends or request whether various marinas have dock space when they want to visit a different port.

It is also the channel monitored by the Coast Guard and the one they use to alert sailors to dangerous weather conditions, water hazards and other concerns on the water.

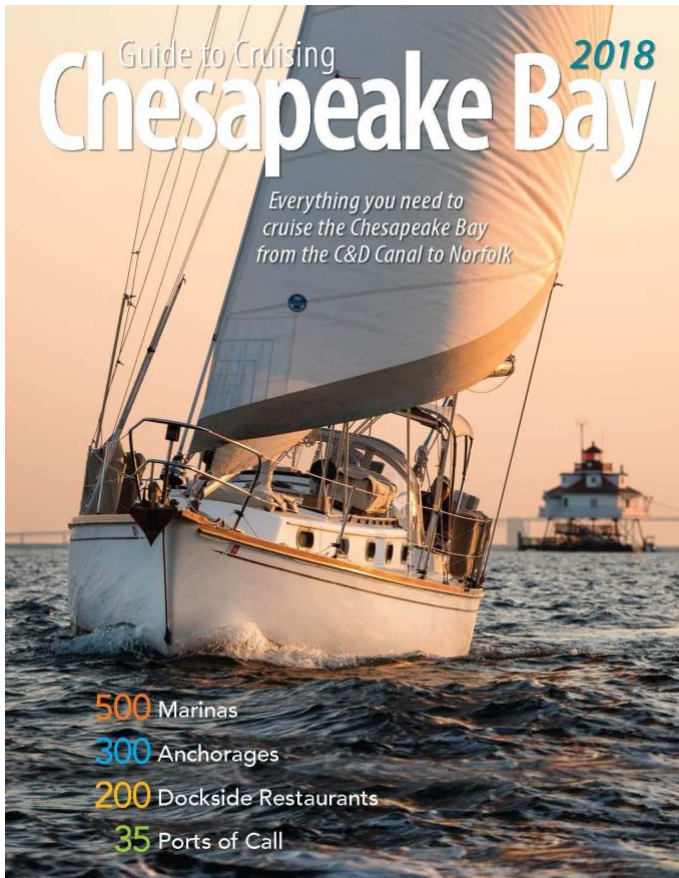
So, we were sailing along and just enjoying the ride with plans to pick up a mooring ball in Annapolis by 3:00 when thunderstorms were predicted to hit the area.

"Then we heard the protocol when hailing a boat: "Resolute, Resolute, Resolute, sailing vessel Saltaire calling Resolute." We heard no reply.

"Usually, when the vessel being contacted replies, the two parties agree to switch to another open channel so they can continue their conversation and not tie up this channel. However, we heard no reply. Then we heard Resolute being hailed again and again. Also, Saltaire described his vessel as a 40' catamaran. My ears perked up due to the urgency I heard in his tone. After several tries, we heard Saltaire hail the Coast Guard.

"The Coast Guard answered and requested that they switch to two two alpha, which is how they describe their channel number 22. Curious, we also switched to channel 22 so we could hear what was going on.

"We heard Saltaire describe Resolute to the Coast Guard and that they had been trying to contact that boat. In addition to hailing them on channel 16, they used a blast of their horn to try to get their attention. The Saltaire captain described Resolute as a 32' white sailboat with both sails up with the captain who appeared to be passed out in the cockpit of the boat.



He had been unresponsive to Saltaire's radio calls or the horn. Saltaire's captain said there was no sign of another person onboard.

"The Coast Guard then asked Saltaire if they are close enough to possibly offer assistance.

"By this time Saltaire, which had been going in the opposite direction, agreed to turn around to try to catch up to Resolute. By now, he was around a quarter of a mile away. Saltaire gave the Coast Guard his coordinates so they could pinpoint the location.

"Listening, we were somewhat horrified since a boat that size weighs in at around 12,000 pounds and with both sails up and the brisk wind, it could be traveling at full speed.

Even though that may only be 6 knots, if a swimmer or water skier was in the water or a small fishing boat was drifting in its path, significant life-threatening conditions could result.

"Very soon we heard a DNR (Department of Natural Resources) captain respond saying he was in the vicinity and would head toward the location where Resolute was sailing. Not too long after that we heard the DNR captain report that Resolute had run aground.

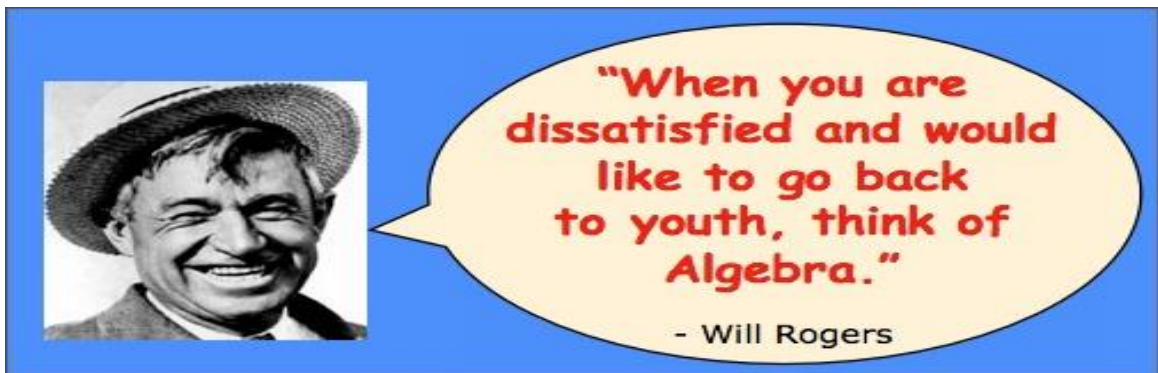
"This is the most fortunate outcome possible. A much more serious accident has been avoided. If he is aground on the usual soft bottom found in much of the Chesapeake, there is little likelihood of much damage to Resolute. Soon, Saltaire asked the Coast Guard if they could be relieved of their commitment to stand by for assistance.



The Coast Guard granted permission along with their thanks and Saltaire continued along with their sail. They asked if the captain of Resolute was OK. Apparently, he was released by the DNR captain back to Resolute.

"We don't know why he was passed out, but whatever it was it was not serious enough for hospitalization. My guess was that he would now require hiring a tow boat to pull him off from his grounding so he could continue on his way.

"As we always do when out on the water, we will be listening to channel 16. You never know what you will hear or when you might need the assistance it can provide."



The People Who Help Make SJS Happen:

Our contributors have included (in alphabetical order) Daryl Albury, Karen Berg, Lucille Bondi, Lou Ciavolella, Courtney Colletti, Bev Harting, Churchill Huston, Antoinette Maciolek, Nancie Merritt, Charlotte Ryan, Barry Sparks, Phyllis St.Onge, Phyllis Weber, and Jared Willmann.

Contact Us:

And remember that if you have story ideas, comments, or criticisms, you can e-mail us at savvyjerseniors.com.
