

Living on the Waters Edge

Healing Through Humor: Part II

By David Ruttan

Of all the research done on the healing power of laughter, none tops the amazing story of Norman Cousins. His story began in 1964, when doctors found that the connective tissue in his spine was deteriorating and that his chance of survival was approximately 1 in 500. Faced with the real prospect of his impending death, Cousins thought long and hard about what role, if any, he could play in his own recovery, and eventually did three things utterly contrary to medical opinion.

First, he began his own research on all of the various drugs that had been prescribed to him. He discovered that his condition was depleting his body of Vitamin C and based primarily on Cousins' personal research, doctors agreed to take him off several of his medications and to inject him with extremely large doses of this supplement. Secondly, Cousins made a decision to check himself out the hospital and into a hotel room. Cousins had concluded that hospitals, with their poor hygiene practices, culture of overmedica-



tion, general feelings of negativity, and routines that disrupted basic sleep patterns, all contributed to his feeling that a hospital was "no place for a person who is seriously ill."

The third thing Cousins did was to procure a movie projector and a large supply of funny films, including Candid Camera tapes and several old prints of Marx Brothers movies. On his first night in the hotel, Cousins found that he laughed so hard at the films that he was able to stimulate chemicals in his body allowing him several hours of pain free sleep. When the pain would return, he would simply turn the projector back on and the laughter would re-induce sleep. He was able to measure the changes in his body by measuring his blood sedimentation rate; a key measurement of inflammation and infection in the blood and found that this rate dropped by at least 5 points each time he watched one of these videos.

Now off every drug excepting Vitamin C and laughter, Cousins described being in a state of euphoria over the next week as he continued to laugh himself back to health. Within a few weeks, he was back to work, and although he still had some minor physical diffi-

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Alameda Elder Services: Exercising your Body and Mind

By Rosemarie Caigoy



Most people separate exercise into physical exercise and mental exercise, but there is a way to combine the two to make sure your reaping both benefits at the same time. Doing coordination and balance exercises can sharpen your thinking, fine tune your memory and focus, and can spark your creativity. **Sharpening your thinking:** When we do exercises that require us to consciously control two movements at

one time, our brain is releasing neuro-chemicals that improve the connections in our brain. This makes the once complex movement into something you can do easily. Exercising complex motor movements will lead to a more efficient and sharp brain.

Fine-tune memory and focus: Doing balance exercises triggers the parts of the brain that are the key players in focus and memory. When we stand in a position that require us to use our midsection muscles these areas of the brain are firing off which in turn stimulate cell growth and strengthen existing cells. Consistent balance exercise will result in improvement in our memory and attention skills.

Sparking Creativity. Often when we're in a creative slump, we're in an environment that is NOT new to us; usually our rooms or work space. As soon as we change our environment (like going to the fitness room to exercise) our bodies are experiencing things that are out of our everyday norm; from the movements we do, to the bright lights we see, down to the people we interact with. So while we are slimming our bodies, our brains are doing quite the opposite: learn-

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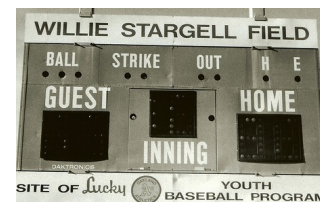
Waters Edge Lodge: July Special Activities

Now that the long, lazy days of summer are upon us, we'll have many great opportunities to enjoy our wonderful outdoor grounds. On July 7th, we'll continue the patriotic fanfare of Independence Day with red, white and blue ice cream on the patio. Root beer and Coke floats will be served on the patio on July 12th. We'll have blueberry pie on July 14th to mark National Blueberry Month, followed by more ice cream on the patio on the 19th. In addition to all these wonderful events on-site, we have an exciting lineup of outings set for the month of July.

This month, we have scheduled many wonderful outings, such as the Tour of Alameda, Putting Contest at the golf course, as well as weekly lunches. The lunch outings in July will take us to a diverse sampling of Alameda's best dining establishments: Pier 29 Restaurant, C'era Una Volta, Burma Superstar and Pasta Pelican. Starting this month, there will also be weekly outings on Wednesdays via the Alameda Paratransit Shuttle. On the first and third Wednesdays in July, residents will be able to take the shuttle directly to Alameda Theatre for matinee showings of newly re-

leased movies (titles and exact showtimes will be announced as they become available on the theater's website). On the second and fourth Wednesdays in July, residents can take the shuttle directly to Alameda's main library on Oak Street, giving them an opportunity to take advantage of the library's many resources, including checking out books and movies.

Finally, we have some very special plans for the month of July. On Thursday, July 22nd, we'll take an afternoon trip to the Morcom Rose Garden in Oakland, a beautiful garden with flowers, fountains, and benches—truly an urban oasis. On Tuesday, July 27th, we're organizing a picnic lunch at Stargell Field in Alameda, an athletic complex adjacent to Encinal High School, which has wonderful views of San Francisco and is named after Baseball player Willie Stargell.



Waters Edge Lodge Resident of the Month: Toni Ebert

By: Sean Durkin



Antoinette "Toni" Ebert grew up in Denver, Colorado and went to North Denver High. At school she made numerous friends where they enjoyed athletic activities like roller-skating and ice skating. You should know that she doesn't go by Antoinette because she thinks it is too long of a name. When she was younger, she suggested to her friends that she could be called *Toni*. Her friends loved it; they thought it was simple and easy to spell. She later realized she didn't like her nickname. Unfortunately, it was too late, her friends would not give up on her nickname so she has been called Toni ever since. She

took pleasure in her careers as a beauty operator, stenographer and nurse.

She married a wonderful man named George Ebert. Together they had a daughter named *Vali* because she was born two days short of Valentines Day. Now, when asked what or whom she is proud of, her response is quick and simple. She is proud of her family, especially her loving daughter who is doing very well in her career. Toni also became a grandmother, when her daughter had a handsome son named Kin-yon. Throughout her life, some of her most favorable memories have been dining and partying with her friends for holidays and birthdays. She also remembers having been to the most beautiful of restaurants. Recently, Toni has joined the Spanish Club with Grace, Mary and Lorraine.

Alameda Elder Services: Exercise your Body and Mind (Continued)

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ing new sensations and feelings. Storing more information helps us to be more creative thinkers.

Also remember that the connection between our bodies and minds still remains a mystery, but that connection is strong. When your doing something for the first time and you tell yourself you can't do it, your

body will listen and not do it. Negativity is like rocks in your backpack. Instead of jumping the gun and telling yourself you can't do something before you try it, tell yourself it is hard, and try your best to accomplish it. Next time you pass the fitness room and you think to yourself that you are too old to exercise, think again. Why not benefit both your body AND brain with a little more exercise in your life.

Elders Inn: July Special Activities

Wow! Is it July already? The winter chill and spring nips in the air have given way to the glories of summer. During this most patriotic of months, Elders Inn will be celebrating the founding of our country with our annual Independence Day concert. The Urquhart Big Band will once again be performing American standards and toe-tapping music in the patio on Wednesday, July 7th at 6:45 pm. Come join your friends and neighbors for our annual salute to America. Refreshments will be served after the music and the members of the band are always delighted to answer questions about their organization and the fabulous music.

The weather in July can be unpredictable, as we all know, so it is always a challenge to try and guess

which days will be sunny enough to have outdoor barbeques and ice cream socials. As weather permits, we will “play it by ear” and, if the weather looks accommodating, we will schedule a delicious meal or treat for all to enjoy. The best place to discover the latest news is always the Circle of Elders where all Residents can be brought up to date on any matters of importance to our community. The Circle of Elders meets Monday through Saturday in the Buena Vista Lounge at 11:15 am and all are invited. We will also be announcing the outdoor activities on the announcement boards located in the Buena Vista dining room and the Webster Street dining room.



Healing Through Humor: Part II (Continued)

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culties, his body continued to recover as he continued with his self-directed wellness program.

How in the world did this happen? In exploring this question it is interesting to consider Cousins own state of mind, and how much his personal will to live as well as his personal attitudes contributed to his miraculous recovery. While in the hospital, Cousins hypothesized that if negative emotions such as anger and frustration could contribute to poor health, why couldn't positive emotions such as joy and laughter have the opposite effect? Cousins embraced this idea, which contributed to an optimistic attitude that may have saved his life. Despite intense pain and discomfort, Cousins made a point of laughing until his

stomach hurt during the early stages of his Marx Brothers intervention, and his “unquenchable” laughter never failed to produce a strong reduction in his feelings of pain. Cousins also mentions many prominent thinkers throughout the ages who knew about the healing power of laughter. This list includes Sir Frances Bacon, Immanuel Kant, Sigmund Freud, as well as the great Albert Schweitzer. This list could be much longer, and Cousins own story has given rise to many new ways of thinking that help contribute to the rise of this phenomenon. Laughter may represent the rapture of the human spirit, and in finding this rapture, we also find our way back to health. Norman Cousins certainly thought so, and his journey back to life through laughter is an inspiration to us all.

Elders Inn Resident of the Month: Patricia Ralston

Patricia Ralston was born in Springfield, Illinois and was an only child. While she was growing up, she thought that she was missing out on having brothers and sisters, but as she got older, she realized that she grew up to be quite non-competitive because she didn't have to vie for attention with siblings! Her father and mother were non-committal about having children, but during a vacation to the Great Salt Lake in Utah, her mother discovered that she was pregnant with Patricia. They were delighted because they had basically given up hope of conceiving owing to the fact that her father was 52 and her mother was 45! Her father had a Caterpillar industrial dealership in Springfield and her mother was a stay at home mom. At the age of 8, the family moved to San Bernardino, California to help Patricia's allergies but

when her mother passed away a year later, they moved back to Illinois. Patricia attended Catholic schools and Bradley University in Peoria majoring in Journalism and Social Sciences. She married at the age of 21 and has 3 children, a girl and 2 boys. After a divorce, she moved her family to Chicago, Berkeley and finally Colorado to help with her own daughter's allergies. After the kids had grown and moved away, Patricia moved back to the Bay Area and received her Master's Degree in Psychology and Feminist Studies from Antioch University, working primarily in social work through UCSF as a drug counselor before retiring in 2007. We are delighted to have Patricia here at Elders Inn and to honor her as our Resident of the Month.

Waters Edge Nursing Home: July Special Activities

The World Tour this month brings us home to North America. This month we will visit the United States of America, Canada, Greenland, Bermuda, St. Pierre and Miquelon.

Join us this month for the following activities:

On July 2, we will have a Barbecue outside for our Residents to celebrate Independence Day

On July 3, the American Red Cross Youth will be joining us for our Bingo Bonanza

On July 7, we will be working in the garden on the center patio.

On July 3 and 17 Roberto and Katy will perform a Live Opera show

On July 20, we will have Flower Arranging

On Mondays we will have Mental Stimulation with Liam. Don't Forget:

Every Sunday: Jerry Gee on Harmonica

Every Monday: Live Guitar with Jimi James

Every Tuesday: Jaime on the Andean Flute

Every Wednesday: Live Piano with Miles

Every Thursday: Live Guitar with John Heleen

Every Friday: Live

Saxophone with Dave

Every Tuesday: Rosary and

Prayer



Ann—The Exercise Girl: A story by Resident Bernard Welz

Ann came into Room 308 with a step that radiated health and vigor. She has dimples that show only when she smiles, otherwise remaining mostly hidden. She sat down in a circle of people and consulted a single sheet of paper she carried with her, checking names of those present.

When finished, she cupped her hands into fists. "Hands on shoulders," she shouted. Everyone put their hands on their shoulders. "Up," she said and hands went up toward the ceiling. She counted to ten, and the circle followed her count. After the ten count, she moved her arms straight out from her body.

"Out." Ann snapped and everyone worked in synchronization to a new count. Mr. Perkins fell asleep. Ann shook his arm. "This is exercise! MR. Perkins, wake up!"

Awake, Mr. Perkins says, "It's the count to ten that puts me to sleep."

Ann said, "Right leg out then down and foot to the rear!" followed by "Mary Jane, you are putting your left leg out, Right leg, please." Mary Jane pushed her right leg out, brought it down and back, smiling abashedly.

Exercise went smoothly after that. Ann smiled, and the class was surprised when her dimples showed.

Waters Edge Nursing Home Resident of the Month: Carlotita Schreiber

In the early 1900's, Carlotta Obarrio, a housewife, and her husband Pedro Obarrio, a physician specializing in the care of eyes, ears and throats moved from Panama to Alameda, where they raised four daughters. In 1912, Carlotta gave birth to her third daughter, Carlotita.

As a young girl, Carlotita enjoyed roller skating, bike riding and swimming. She also enjoyed her studies. Her favorite subjects were History because "it was like reading a book or a story," Geography, because "it was interesting," and Algebra, because "it was like a puzzle." While in school, Carlotita also enjoyed also enjoyed socializing at dances such as the Freshman Reception, Sophomore Hop, Junior Prom and Senior Ball. Later Carlotita attended the California College of Arts and Crafts where she grew her interest and passion for Art. She has quite a few favorite artists, but Michelangelo is her favorite. "It was funny, because

when I was in school, my teachers wanted me to write with my right hand, but I was actually left handed so I learned to write with both," recalls Carlotita.

In 1940, Carlotita married Jerry Schreiber, who was in the Navy Construction Battalion, which built highways and roads. They had one daughter, Linda. During her professional career, Carlotita worked many civil service jobs, including jobs for the U.S. Postal Service, the San Francisco Mint, and the Social Security Office in Richmond.

Carlotita was also a pianist, and she also taught lessons. Some of her favorite Activities at the WENH are Pet Therapy, Communion and visits from the Alameda Friendly Visitors. Her passion for art still runs deep, and she enjoys listening to the radio, and chatting with her caregivers and roommate. Carlotita's warm personality is why she is being celebrated as our July Resident of the Month.