

## IN OTHER WORDS

Columns and Letters to the Editor

# Resurrection in the spring forest

**A**FTER THE LONG winter illness, colour is returning to the cheeks of my bush lot. A red-breasted robin hops through the newly-exposed layer of dead leaves, looking for a grub, or anything else edible.

Then there's the slow, silent orange flicker of the wings of an early-returning Monarch butterfly. Or, perhaps it is a Viceroy; the untrained eye finds it difficult to distinguish between the two.

Green patches of wet moss cling to the ancient granite outcrops, and the bases of the naked trees, adding more splotches of colour to a dreary landscape.



**JIM POLING SR.**

*From Shaman's Rock*

And peeking out from the rock crevices are the brightest spots of all – red wintergreen berries glistening in rays of sunshine.

These berries, and their surrounding green waxen leaves, truly are a miracle of the woods. They blossomed into fruit last summer and survived beneath the snow and ice throughout the brutal winter cold.

All are signs of spring's resurrection from the dank forest floor in which trees stand stiffly silent like skeletons. Small but hopeful signals that warmer, more productive times are coming.

Beyond this forest is the chaos of humanity's coronavirus pandemic. Out there, spring has become a season of things lost – lost lives, lost important events, lost incomes.

Here, the forest is quiet and ordered, demonstrating the consistency of nature left alone to exist as it has for thousands of years.

This consistency is seen in the moose track along my forest trail. Every April, when the snow begins to disappear, a moose ambles this path, migrating from winter to summer quarters.

I have yet to see a track from the bear who occupies this forest. I know it must be up and about after hibernation, but I have not seen it, heard it or smelled it.

That's probably because we both practice social distancing. We are both cranky on early mornings before breakfast, so neither wants to come anywhere near the other.

What is awesome about the spring forest is its easy transformation from the cold miseries of winter to the buoyancy of summer.

The little wintergreen plant and its red berries illustrate that beautifully. After so many snowbound months, the berries are ready to do what they were born to do.

Plump and bursting with life, the berries soon will shrivel and rot, dropping minuscule seeds to create new life and fulfill their sole purpose – to endure, to survive and to carry out their role in nature's plan.

The pandemic and its forced isolation have created time to be out here observing the wonders of the awakening forest. All that time once spent doing other things – many of them materialistic things – now is spent thinking and viewing things differently.

It is amazing how our vision widens and becomes more focused when we stop doing all those "other things."

What comes into view more clearly is an important lesson of nature: think ahead and be prepared.

Everything that exists in this forest understands that lesson. The squirrel that procrastinates and does not gather and store enough nuts likely will not survive the winter.

It is a stark lesson: Prepare well or be ready to suffer, or even die.

That was a lesson highlighted by the commission investigating the 2003 SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome) outbreak. It emphasized the precautionary principle, which basically is about thinking ahead, preparing and taking action before a situation becomes critical.

There is mounting evidence that if governments, corporations and people in general had paid attention to this principle, the current pandemic would have been less severe.

Another thought prompted by this pandemic, and by a walk in the spring woods, is whether our human activities are drawing us farther away from nature and its many lessons.

We live in a materialistic, money-oriented world. When I look into the forest, I wonder whether we really need to have all those things we think we do. Everything we really need is right here in nature.

Our human world is one we have moulded outside of nature. Thinking about how to change it is too deep and too complicated a thought to work through today.

And, it's likely that the pandemic will end up making some of those changes for us.

# Dental work

**T**O STATE THE obvious, many of us are in some form of lockdown right now. There are so many posts on social media talking about letting go of various daily hygiene rituals. There's no need to shower every day if we're not seeing other people. There's actually no need to shower every day even when we are seeing other people but I'll save that for another time. Beards are getting longer, hairstyles are losing their shape, and nails are not getting painted quite as often. It's kind of funny that this is happening given we do have more time for taking care of the small stuff.

The one area that should be getting an equal amount or extra attention these days is your smile. It could be months before you climb into the dentist's chair again. I believe most offices are closed right now. There must be quite a backlog of appointments building up. I'm scheduled to go in June but I have a feeling it will be postponed. With that in mind, now is the time to jump into the routine of dental care like our lives depend on it. Actually, our lives do depend on it!

Poor oral health can contribute to these potentially life-threatening diseases and conditions:

- Endocarditis: This is the infection of the inner lining of your heart chambers or valves. It can happen when bacteria

or germs from another part of your body spreads through the bloodstream, attaching to areas of the heart.

- Cardiovascular disease: The exact link to cardiovascular disease is not completely understood, but some research suggests that the clogging of arteries might be linked to the inflammation and infections that oral bacteria cause.

- Pneumonia: Some of the bacteria in your mouth can be pulled into your lungs and cause pneumonia and other respiratory diseases.

Now is the time to up our dental hygiene game or at very least to do a review.

Here's the checklist:

- Brush your teeth (all of them, inner/outer and chewing surfaces) with a soft-bristled tooth brush;

- Floss between every tooth, every day; and,

- Use a mouthwash to remove any food particles left behind after the first two steps of this process.

The benefit of this extra bit of work is a wonderful smile and a good set of teeth that will get you through any meal that comes your way for the rest of your days!

Something to think about.

*Laurie Sweig is a certified personal fitness trainer and spinning instructor. She owns and operates The Point for Fitness. She can be reached at [laurie@thepointforfitness.com](mailto:laurie@thepointforfitness.com).*



**LAURIE SWEIG**

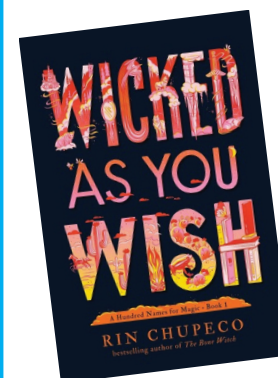
*Practical Fitness*



## April flurries brings ...

Late last week, Minden Hills was blanketed by a dusting of snow, as seen in this image of the Gull River in the downtown on Thursday, April 9. Although the snow melted, snow fell again the next day and left behind accumulations of a few millimetres. /DARREN LUM Staff

## Book of the Month - April



Many years ago, the magical Kingdom of Avalon was left desolate and encased in ice after the evil Snow Queen waged her war. Its former citizens are now refugees in an unfamiliar world devoid of magic. Arizona.

Prince Alexei, the sole survivor of the Avalon royal family, is hiding in a modern town so boring that magic doesn't even work there. Few know his secret identity, but thankfully, his best friend Tala is one of them. A new hope for their abandoned homeland reignites however, when a famous creature of legend, the Firebird, appears for the first time in decades. Alex and Tala must unite with a ragtag group of new friends to journey back to Avalon for a showdown that will change the world as they know it.

This nail-biting quest is the first in an epic new series by Rin Chupeco. Check out the e-book from Haliburton County Public Library's website.



## IN OTHER WORDS

Columns and Letters to the Editor

# Lessons from Grandma's Room

**W**HEN I WAS growing up, any conflicts from inside or outside the home usually got resolved in Grandma's Room.

For the 17 years that I knew her, Grandma was mainly bedridden and confined to her room with crippling rheumatoid arthritis. When there was a problem or a conflict you went to her room to whine about how unfair the particular situation was to you.

Grandma listened patiently to your side of the story, asked you to outline honestly the other person's side, then advised a calm, quiet look at the entire picture as a start to resolving the dispute.



**JIM POLING SR.**

*From Shaman's Rock*

It was in Grandma's Room that I first realized that a woman's approach to problems and conflict was different, and frequently superior to a man's. When tough situations arise, it is female intervention and management that often gets them resolved.

That view got some support recently from a *New York Times* article by columnist Nicholas Kristof.

Kristof wrote that he compiled coronavirus death rates from 21 countries. 13 led by men, eight by women. The male-led countries had an average 214 coronavirus deaths per million people. The women-led countries had an average of only 36 deaths per mil-

lion, a huge difference.

He also found that almost every country with a coronavirus mortality rate above 150 per million people is led by a man. Canada's COVID rate is 231 deaths per million population.

All this confirms what the daily news tells us; countries where coronavirus is a runaway disaster are led by egotistical authoritarians who shouldn't be allowed to manage anything bigger than a peanut stand. Look at the United Kingdom, Iran, Russia, the United States and Brazil.

Then look to the countries with the most successful responses to the virus - New Zealand, Germany, Taiwan, most Nordic countries - all led by women. Their leadership through this plague has been decisive, truthful and empathetic.

Taiwan's Tsai Ing-wen jumped on the pandemic in January, introducing 124 measures to stop the virus' spread. Angela Merkel told Germans early on to take the virus seriously and brought in early testing. Jacinda Ardern locked down New Zealand just three weeks after the first case of the disease was reported.

Iceland, led by Katrín Jakobsdóttir, offered free virus testing for every citizen and had a thorough contact tracing system. Its death rate was an amazing 30 per million population.

These female leaders managed the crisis competently, talking to their citizens truthfully, with care and compassion. There were none of the strongman tactics used by the Johnsons and Trumps - downplaying the threat, blaming others and playing political games.

Much has been written over many years about how female leadership styles are different. But there has been little acknowledgement of how those styles can benefit nations or organizations.

In politics and business there remains the attitude that to really succeed, women have to learn to behave more like men. That's 20th century thinking that is hopelessly dated and needs changing.

Women leaders tend to be less self-focused than their male counterparts. They don't simply tell others what to do; they work with them.

They usually are more empathetic and humbler, and in my experience, are good at identifying and motivating new talent. They are good team builders.

We have seen a trend in which more women are taking up leadership positions. There's still room for many more, in fact there's a real need for more female leadership as the world's problems become more numerous and more intense.

One area where female leadership would help immensely is our off-kilter capitalistic system. It needs reform, not replacement, and reform that creates more equality.

Our capitalistic system is designed to provide the greatest benefits to company shareholders, directors and executives. It should be promoting achievement of the greatest benefits for everyone - employees, suppliers and customers.

They all have vital roles, yet are not treated equally. Big gains for shareholders and executives are seldom seen by others who had a direct impact on achieving the gain.

Studies have shown that women are more inclusive and more likely to see others as equal parts of the team. They are better communicators in that they listen more and are more apt to allow others to talk and put forth their ideas.

# Working out with friends

**T**HANKS TO COVID-19 many of us have improved our video chatting skills. I often have coffee dates with friends. I know of many people who have game nights, cocktail calls and even cooking/wine tasting events. Thank goodness for technology during this isolating time. Perhaps it's time to use it to work out with friends and family.

I've read that fitness facilities will be opening soon. They are figuring out how to welcome members back in a safe manner. Several people I've spoken to about returning to the gym have expressed concern about rushing back. It's kind of a "rock and a hard place" situation. They find motivation in going to a designated place to work out and without that they're worried that they won't work out. My suggestion - book work out calls with a friend or a whole group of friends.

Exercising does not require equipment nor does it require everyone to be at the same fitness level. Pretty much anyone can do push-ups. They may not all look the same but that doesn't matter. The important thing is that everyone is moving in some way.

Here's a sample workout that would take no longer than 20 minutes depending on the chatting that goes on between the exercises:

- Start with a warm-up. March on the spot for two to three minutes. Add in five to 10 toe touching movements.
- Next up are push-ups. At the wall, on your knees or toes. How many reps completed is up to the participant.



**Laurie Sweig**

*Practical Fitness*

- Then try some squats. Same rule about the number of reps to be done as with the push-ups.

- Move on to the plank after the squats. On the elbows and knees or toes depending on fitness levels. Hold for five to 10 seconds and repeat as many times as feels good. There are modifications that can be found online if needed.

- The superman is next. Lying facedown on the floor with arms extended, raise the right arm and the left leg a couple of inches off the floor. Repeat on the other side. Again, reps are depending on each individual's capabilities.

- Add some cardio in with some jogging on the spot, dancing, lunging, etc. Change the exercise every minute. Maybe have each participant bring an exercise to the group for this part.

- Don't forget a cool down - walking on the spot slowly and then some stretches.

This should be a fun thing to do. Actually it should be playful. Throw conventional exercise thinking out the window. We've gotten quite good at changing how we do things, we might as well apply it to fitness. Be creative. Be safe, but be creative. The goal needs to be that everyone leaves the call feeling energized and wanting to return for the next one!

Something to think about.

*Laurie Sweig is a certified personal fitness trainer and spinning instructor. She owns and operates The Point for Fitness. She can be reached at [laurie@thepointforfitness.com](mailto:laurie@thepointforfitness.com).*

# Play your part

You did not intend to visit the emergency department today. No one does. You did not anticipate your fall off the ladder, your husband's stroke, the fishhook in your granddaughter's thumb, your son's poison ivy rash, the family's food poisoning, the boat accident.

But we did.

Because that's what we do, manage health crises and concerns, day after day.

Our local emergency departments are easily four times busier in the summer months, accommodating our seasonal visitors. The health care staff are especially busy this summer managing the usual, while staying vigilant for coronavirus. Every single patient is screened, possibly isolated, before their reason for visiting is assessed and treated. Everything takes longer, requires more staff, more equipment, more supplies. More resources. More patience. And a constant high level of attention.

We hear people say, "The rules keep changing," "I'm confused whether I'm supposed to wear a mask," and even, "Do you believe that COVID is real, or is it a hoax?"

We in the front lines of health care have felt overwhelmed too. Yes, the "rules" are evolving, and we are all adapting as we learn more about this virus.

There are things you can do to reduce risk of infection in your home and community that will ease the strain on our front line health care and emergency staff. You want these vital workers supported so they can stay strong. It benefits you in your time of need to be invested in our wellbeing every day.

There is a set of rules that has consistently been shown around the world to be effective

at reducing cases of COVID-19.

You should wear a mask that fits snugly over your nose and mouth to prevent viral transmission from your speech any time you are near anybody who is not part of your household. You should stay six feet from anyone who is not masked. Their speech may infect you if they are not masked. Be courteous and safe: wear a mask. Ask others to do the same. You should minimize your time in indoor spaces with multiple people. You should move as many activities as possible outdoors. You should wash your hands frequently. And you should stay home, stay away from even your own family members, if you feel sick.

Government officials can slow the virus's spread by encouraging all of these steps as well by organizing widespread testing and contact tracing of people who are likely to have the virus.

In Haliburton County we are running an assessment centre to identify infected, and to test at-risk individuals, as well as those who are neither sick nor at risk, but who wish to be tested. Did you realize, more than half of those being tested in our centre are visitors to Haliburton? (That's a lot to ask of our finite resources.)

Remember, you want us to be healthy and strong so we can be there when you need us for your unplanned visits to the emergency department. And we need your help to reduce unnecessary risk, to be responsible and play your part in keeping the infection controlled, ensuring the safety of your families and communities.

*By the Haliburton Highlands Family Health Team*



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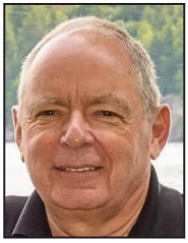
# The voice in the grapevine

I WAS HAVING a genuinely down moment saying goodbye at the end of a physical distancing visit to my son's home in Hamilton.

We don't get to see our children and grandchildren often now because of the pandemic. And when we do we can't hug them, shake hands or even get close to them.

It's depressing, not just for us but for millions of others.

I was already feeling down when I arrived for the visit. I had fought the miserable Toronto area traffic to get to my dentist's office. After some less-than-joyful poking, drilling and grinding I was back cursing the Highway 403 traffic en route to Hamilton.



**JIM POLING SR.**

*From Shaman's Rock*

The visit was outside and brief and as we were saying goodbye, my son pointed to an alluring grapevine canopy at the rear of his house. He told me raccoons were driving him crazy, sneaking into the vines late at night and making off with the fruit.

As I listened, I put out my hand and leaned against the grapevine's trunk. My down mood lifted as the vine's energy pulsed beneath my fingertips.

"That's from Compare Frank," my son said. "He gave me a slip from one of his vines when we moved here many years ago."

I clutched tightly the trunk, now the thickness of a large man's wrist, and felt a surge of optimism and love of life. I was feeling the positive energy of my good friend Compare Frank. Although he passed away five years ago, I could feel his spirit flowing in that vine.

Compare Frank was Francesco Covella, my pal and the kid brother I never had. We called each other Compare, the Italian reference for comrade, or godfather.

The energy in the vine got me thinking about the COVID-19 crisis and Compare Frank. How would he handle the pandemic, which has become one of the saddest periods of many people's lives?

Sad not just because of the separation from family and friends. Not just because we can't shake someone's hand, or place a hand on their shoulder, or any of those other signs of goodwill and appreciation.

Sad because of all the hard-working, expectant folks who put their dreams and their money into small businesses that are suffering horribly. Sad because of the folks who are having trouble meeting the rent or the mortgage payment because their jobs have been suspended for months.

In a way I am glad Compare Frank is not here to witness the sadness, suffering and the nastiness that this pandemic has brought. They are the antithesis of his style of living, which was to be happy and work through difficulties with perseverance and patience.

I'll never forget the scene when Compare Frank decided my old house in Ottawa needed a bigger basement. The project would require breaking concrete and digging out a nine by 12 space with hand shovels.

"It can't be done," I cried with unrestrained disgust.

Compare Frank turned his calloused palms upward and shrugged his shoulders.

"Compare," he said, calling me by the special name bestowed when he had become my son's godfather, "this is not difficult if you don't want it to be. Let me teach you."

The basement room got dug out, as I later recalled in a *Readers' Digest* story, and in this column.

Compare Frank taught me not just how to shovel properly, but how to work through life's difficult times.

This pandemic is more difficult than shovelling out a basement, no matter how deep or how hard the earth. There is the stress of having to remember to wear masks, avoid crowds, keep two metres space between everyone, including friends and family, and give up many things that are important parts of our normal lives.

A contrarian attitude about masks and physical distancing, and complaining about the inconveniences, distracts us from the critical work of overcoming the COVID-19 virus. We need to focus exclusively on getting the job done.

A week has passed since my visit and I still hear Compare Frank's voice pulsing through the grapevine that he gave to his godson:

"Don't think about how difficult the work is, or how much more remains to be done. Think positive and persevere. Focus on the task to overcome it, one shovelful at a time."

### letters to the editor

## Coffee awaits helpful stranger

To the Editor,

The week of July 25 to Aug. 1 we were up north renting a cottage at Burks Falls. It was important that I got my bloodwork done on Wednesday, July 29 at a Life Labs and, you guessed it, the nearest location was in your pretty little town of Minden. It was over a two-hour drive when we got there because of construction, so I was a bit late for my 10 a.m. appointment. My husband dropped me off at the door. As I rushed myself with my mask I saw a middle-aged man hold-

ing the door for who I thought was a person in a wheelchair turning around on the sidewalk. I rushed in to get out of the way and did not realize that he was holding it open for me. I am so sorry that I disappointed you that day and didn't say thank you, and may have given you a bad start to the day. That is not like me, so please accept my sincere thanks and apology. I don't know who you are, but there is a coffee waiting for you at Tim Hortons in Minden.

Elvera Trimboli

## Avoid poor circulation or fix it

THERE ARE SO many benefits to moving every single part of our bodies that it's hard to keep track of them all. Here's another to add to the list – circulation. As we know, moving does get the heart pumping. The bigger and faster the movement, the faster the heart beats. That is the heart's job. It's a pump and its function is to get nutrient- and oxygen-rich blood everywhere in your body. The thing you may not be aware of is that it has help. It's true. That assistance comes from the skeletal muscles of your body.

We tend to think that the role of skeletal muscles is to move us. That is their primary function. After receiving a signal from your brain, such as "hey, I need to lift my left knee," the muscles will change from long to short or short to long to make that happen. It's that muscle contraction that results in a pull or a release on the bones of the body. That is the movement that we see. The movement that

we can't see is a microscopic flow of fluids within the tissues. That is circulation. The more frequent the movement, the healthier the tissues. The longer a tissue (and the cells within the tissue) goes with little or no circulation, the harder it will be for the tissue to grow or regenerate and perform well.

Let's apply this information to sitting. When we sit for hours at a time we are limiting the bone and muscle configuration in the lower body. Any movement that there might be is limited. The muscles are not fully contracting or relaxing and therefore there is limited flow throughout the tissues.

Over time, the range of motion is reduced (try touching your toes) and with that so is the circulation. A lack of adequate blood flow to any part of your body can have consequences. On a minor level it leaves us feeling exhausted even though we have done nothing. On a serious level poor circulation can lead to bumps and bruises not healing and turning into ulcers. Unmanaged ulcers can result in tissue death and inflections. In scary scenarios this can lead to amputations.

When it comes to our bodies we really need to think about the long game. If there are movements that you can't do now start working at them. Touch your toes. Lunge forward and back. Do some Burpees. Kick off your shoes and get your toes moving (wiggle 'em, spread 'em, lift 'em). That's another area where restricted movement (being in shoes all day) leads to poor circulation. Start slowly, be patient and be consistent.

Our bodies want to be healthy and we want to be pain free. We have to remember that we are on the same team. Listen to those niggly messages that you get. You know the ones. That twitch in the lower back, the tightness in the knee or numbness in a toe. Chances are movement will help work that out by feeding the tissues that are starving.

Something to think about.

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**LAURIE SWEIG**

*Practical Fitness*

## Staff Pick - August

Dysart Branch assistant Vicky Rodden recommends:

***The Wives of Henry Oades* by Johanna Moran**

A single night of tragedy shatters the life of adventurer Henry Oades. His wife, Margaret, and their children are torn from his life, kidnapped during a Maori uprising in New Zealand. For months, Henry scours the surrounding wilderness, but his family is presumed dead. Grief-stricken, he marries Nancy Foreland, a young widow with a new baby, and tries to move on – until his first family reappears, having escaped captivity. Narrated primarily by the two wives, and based on a real-life legal case, *The Wives of Henry Oades* is the riveting story of what happens when the construction of "family" is different than expected.

Vicky Says: I love historical books, and this intriguing historical novel was set in New Zealand in the late 19th century and that's fairly new to me in fiction. Moran does a wonderful job in creating compassionate characters! Rating: 10/10

