

TWENTY YEARS OF SENTINEL COLUMNS ON AGING ADVENTURES!

How time flies! It amazes me to realize that this is my 250th column, especially considering that I volunteered to contribute a single one for a new Keene Sentinel senior section of a Sunday “Life and Leisure” inaugural edition.

Editor Jim Rousmaniere attended a meeting of the Monadnock Senior Advocates group at the Keene Senior Center about this time of year twenty years ago to seek assistance in meeting perceived needs of a growing older readership.

Martha Baumann and I both “signed up” with some hesitancy “to try one!” and the rest is history. My first column dubbed “*Wit and Wisdom*” appeared on June 8, 1997 entitled “Attitudes Influence Aging Well: Preparation a Life-Long Process”.

At age 60 I believed that age and wellness could be compatible, and had a desire to add to my own education as a geriatric care manager. Little did I realize that I had given myself a rare opportunity to prepare over the next 250 months for my own aging adventure.

My initial topics drew on the growing knowledge at the time, with the goal “to modify both attitudes and behaviors and assist older folks in preparing for the inevitable and unexpected life events that occur.” Prevention prior to crisis was a mantra.

As time has matured my writing style which emphasizes my personal experiences with aging, I have come to appreciate the impact this passion has had on others. The willingness, indeed eagerness, of my life partner to sacrifice privacy for greater reward in service to others is acknowledged as a key contribution to the column which became known as “Age-Wise”.

We both are buoyed by reader feedback via emails, letters and conversations, as well as invitations to speak to clubs and organizations about our journey. Of special note is the apparent influence on younger folks, who always need reminders to avoid long term care procrastination.

Health and wellness information, discovered mostly from family and personal needs, prompted essays on such varied subjects as eyes (cataracts), ears (hearing aids), sleep, exercise, diet, foot care, walking, brain and heart health, driving, and medications. A sample of the varied headlines illustrate aging issues which found their way into columns over the years:

Preparing for the long term -

**The Gift of Family Discussion: Planning and Understanding
Long-term Care Insurance: To Buy or Not to Buy?
Spirituality Powerful Link to Aging Wellness
Companionship: A Key Ingredient In Quality of Life
Safety and Independence: A Delicate Balancing Act**

Cautions -

**Don't Be A Target: Be Alert To Deals Too Good To Be True
Accept Mortality As Part of Living Life To Its Fullest
Taking Care of the People Who Will Be Taking Care of Us**

Opportunities -

Guide To Eldercare At Home
Sex Adds Spice To Later Life
Organ Donation: Gift of Your Body
The Great Experience of Being a Grandparent
Stereotypes on Aging Should Be Challenged
Joys of Volunteering Are Best When Shared
Live Long. Live Well, Laugh Often

Personal situations -

An Experiment in Aging in Place
You can Help Fight Alzheimer's
Taking on the Fight Against Dementia
Do We Need Courage to Grow Old?
Facing the Huge Cost of Long Term Care
Dementia: Overcoming Fear the First Step
From Grief to Relief: A Search For New Life Settings
The Aging Adventure: Contemplating What's Next
Hospice Provides Quality Care at the End of Life

Resolutions in late life -

A Legacy Is About More Than Money
Happy New Year! What is Happiness Anyway?
An Age-Wise View of Challenges That Lie Ahead
Finding Comfort With the Ups and Downs of Aging
End of Life Issues: Who Will Make The Important Decisions

The 20 years of thought about spirit, mind and body contributions to how we live our lives in the years leading up to our death has contributed significantly to my quality of life. I believe that aging wellness includes living with dying in mind.

Mindfulness of our mortality supports and enriches living full and intentional lives. The quote "Today is the first day of the rest of your life" is often heard at commencement time. It is recognition of finiteness and reinforces the reality of the life cycle from birth to death.

So my wisdom for this topic is to let go of the denial of your own mortality, and celebrate life by recognizing the precious moments you have to enjoy God's creation and your time with others on this earth. And, Oh yeah – see you next month!

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