e-zine of YMCA Alumni

PERSPECTIVE

HOBBIES FOR FUN & PROFIT









NOVEMBER 2026

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| By Craig Altschul and Peggi Simmons



EDITORS' NOTE

We're The New 'Hobby Lobby'

Some hobbies ignite in childhood; others begin as an escape from the everyday stress of work and raising a family. Still others start as a fun part of retirement.

You'll find some of all of those scenarios among our YMCA Alumni hobbyists in this Fall issue of *Perspective e-Zine*, themed *"Hobbies for Fun and Profit."*

We assumed we were putting together a normal-sized edition when the production cycle began. We were way wrong. Emails kept coming from members wanting to share their hobbies and others "ratting" out members they thought should share theirs. So, here we go: We hope you enjoy these stories, some longer, some shorter, but all passionate about hobbies.

My own hobby began when I was about six years old, and a member of both Gra-Y and Cub Scouts in LA's San Fernando Valley. My father signed me up for clarinet lessons. But I wanted to play the saxophone. So, he told me if I learned the clarinet, I could get a sax. A flute, too. I performed one night at a Cub Scout Blue and Gold dinner, promoted as *Craig's One Cub Band*. No one seemed particularly impressed. I got a modest round of applause, though my parents still had to buy the potluck dinner tickets.

I continued to take lessons and played in a whole bunch of different school groups well into college, including my favorite – a Big Band called *"Bruce Gair and his Fair Bairs."* Really. I even paid a bit of my tuition from our dance gigs.

Fast forward about 40 years. Peggi and I had just moved to Arizona and went to see the Tucson Symphony's season opener at the Music Hall. Over some intermission champagne, we noted that the new First Chair clarinet player had been introduced. "Do you think you could still play the clarinet?" Peggi asked me, stifling a laugh. "Of course," I smugly replied.

Long story short, she called the Symphony office, and they put her in touch with the new clarinet fellow, who told her he'd take on a 60+-year-old "kid" for lessons if he was serious about playing again. So, my hobby was reborn. I took lessons from Jeremy every week for nine years before he moved on to head the Clarinet Studio at the University of Denver. Picking up the sax again was a breeze. I passed on the flute.

Many more moons have passed since then. I've played clarinet and alto sax in three concert bands, sax in four Big Bands with musicians of all ages who love that musical era, and even ukulele in a band where they wisely didn't let me sing. So goes my hobby.

Perhaps a story you read in this issue will inspire you. We hope so.

| By Tom Madeyski

A Sports Fan with a Microphone



“I taught my kids to pursue their dreams, and now it was my turn.”

“Touchdown Bulldogs!”
“That pass intercepted by Defensive Back Eric Haney!”
“Three-point field goal by number 32, Romeo Carter”
“Stuff block by Middle Attacker number four, Addy Picha”

These are some of the calls I’ve made as a Sports Stadium Announcer. I fell into this hobby while working for YMCA Camp Marston in a small town outside San Diego. My kids attended the local Julian High School, and one day, someone suggested that Head Coach Tim White recruit me as the football announcer (“he has a good voice, let’s ask him”).

So began an enjoyable, enriching hobby that I’ve carried passionately into retirement. And, what fun it is:

I love being around young people again; recognizing and elevating the accomplishments of student athletes; enhancing the fan experience

Getting to know parents and kids in the community; watching every home football game and volleyball match at my local schools and being part of an athletic event production.

I call myself a sports fan with a microphone; what’s not to love? Today, I serve as the voice of the Point Loma High football and volleyball programs, as well as Mesa College volleyball. Each fall week is filled with script updates, roster formatting, and the announcement of athletic contests. It’s so much fun!

After a few years of announcing Julian 8-man football with rosters of 12-15 athletes, I metaphorically “jumped off the high dive”.

One day, I had some time between Y meetings in Mission Valley, San Diego. I looked up at the hillside, and there stood the University of San Diego. I recently attended one of their NCAA Division I football games and loved the venue, atmosphere, and program culture.

I taught my kids to pursue their dreams, and now it was my turn. I mustered my courage and walked into the Athletic Department Offices. My ruse was to ask about the sportsmanship script they read at each home game because I thought it was positive, clear, and well-written.

But my real reason for dropping by was to suggest I could serve as their football announcer if the position ever opened. I was sent to the Sports Marketing Department and, lo and behold, there was an opening the next season and presto, I became the Voice of the USD Toreros.

What a fabulous role that was: eight years of announcing for the Pioneer Football League, where USD was a perennial champion. I never thought I'd end up announcing future NFL players – Jacksonville Wide Receiver and Cornerback Jamal Agnew, Denver Wide Receiver Michael Bandy, and San Francisco 49ers Tight End Ross Dwelly.

There's a funny story about my very first Torero game. I was coming from small-school 8-man football to Division 1 collegiate ball. My high school kids played both offense and defense. The USD roster had over 100 players and was printed in small 6-point font, and by that time, I needed reading glasses.

I was nervous that first game, and it turns out I was unprepared. I brought with me the tiny-print roster, ignoring the "Two-Deep" roster they had sent me.

We were playing the Princeton Tigers, and as fate would have it, Princeton ran an up-tempo, hurry-up offense all game. I was so lost watching the play, putting down my binoculars, donning my reading glasses, trying to find the player's name to call, only to look up and realize I was too late to make the call (announcers are not permitted to announce once the team breaks the huddle).

That first game was a disaster. I fumbled and bumbled all day. Thank goodness the previous announcer was in the booth doing stats. Following the game, he put his arm around my shoulder and gave me a few excellent suggestions that helped me immeasurably.

Looking back on that game now, it reminds me of how important thorough preparation can be, how it feels to fail miserably, how to bounce back and improve, and certainly how much kind support from others can help. I still get nervous before games.

Most people shy away from microphones and public speaking, but it's part of every Y Director's job description. I joked during my Y career, "I never met a microphone I didn't like." Sports stadium announcing was a perfect fit.

These are virtually volunteer roles. High school sports announcing does not pay, and college sports offer honoraria of $25- $50, at least in the San Diego area.

Perhaps the greatest joy I get from announcing is this: After a play is made, I make the call to recognize a student-athlete. Even on a busy "Friday Night Lights" football game with 3,000+ fans, you can still hear those little micro-burst cheers as that player's family and friends hear their son/daughter's name called. What's the old saying, "People love to hear their name in lights," or something like that?

What is your "sports stadium announcing" hobby? Are you engaged in your community? What is your passion?

Retired Y directors bring useful skills from our career days. We're organized; we know how to raise and manage money; we're comfortable in front of a group; we love teaching and coaching, and we're especially good with young people. How can we continue to use those career talents for the good of the community?

***TOM MADEYSKI**, a member of the Marston YMCA Alumni Chapter and editor of its "From The Grapevine" newsletter, spent his career in Overnight Camping at the Youngstown, Ohio, YMCA Camp Fitch, Hartford YMCA Camp Jewell, and San Diego YMCA Camps Marston, Raintree Ranch, and Camp Surf. He has called games for high schools in Julian, Warner Springs, Ramona, Clairemont, and Point Loma, California. On the collegiate level, he's announced games for Mesa College, Grossmont College, Point Loma Nazarene University, and the University of San Diego.*

| By Jill Hallen



HERE COME THE JUDGE

"Equestrian sports are the only Olympic sport where men and women compete equally, perhaps because the horse, with its own brain, is the great equalizer."

For much of my life, I trained horses and gave riding lessons to riders and people who owned their own horses. I began judging horse shows in Washington State more than 30 years ago to boost my "horse income" and help pay for a lifestyle that included owning several horses.

As my horses have passed away these last few years, I am now "horseless," so I changed my judging parameters. I used to judge adults and kids riding all breeds of horses in several divisions, including Western, English, Dressage, Jumping, Trail, and Driving. Now, I concentrate primarily on judging 4-H horse shows and fairs.

I promote Dressage to riders who have not been introduced to that division. The divisions vary from judging the rider's ability to judging the horse's training to judging both and determining which is the best equine pair.

The different divisions and horse show classes are necessary because certain horse breeds are predisposed to certain types of riding. For instance, Quarter Horses were developed to carry cowboys for long distances to check fences and herd cattle. They take shorter, smooth steps. Ridden in a Western saddle, they carry extra gear such as ropes and lariats as they would have on a working ranch.

English riding derives from European cavalry and royalty, with riders using horses that take bigger strides, such as Arabians and Thoroughbreds. They cover more ground and are ridden in a smaller English saddle that allows the horse's shoulder to move freely forward. A course of jumps can be judged on the horse and rider's style and skill, or strictly on time, with the quickest horse winning without knocking any poles down.

Driving is when a horse is harnessed to a cart and is expected to respond quietly to the driver. It also performs patterns that demonstrate its training and maneuverability while pulling the cart.

Dressage is a French term meaning 'training' and is a pattern class, much like ice skating, where each movement in the pattern is given a numerical score from 1-10. The horse and rider with the highest score wins, and some consider it the most objective, not subjective, judging. In the Olympics, very high-level Dressage tests include difficult movements, such as trotting in place (piaffe), that Olympic horses are expected to perform. *(Fun fact: Equestrian sports are the only Olympic sport where*

men and women compete equally, perhaps because the horse, with its own brain, is the great equalizer.)

Once, after judging a show, I offered to purchase a pony which had been a bit of a rogue, bucking its rider off in the show and generally causing a lot of disruption. The people had not owned her very long and were not attached to her.

I thought that being in my lesson program and often with advanced riders, she would get some training and could be a better pony. When I got home after the show and told my husband of six months that I had to return the next day to pick up the pony I bought, he asked if I bought a horse at every show I judged. Because if so, I needed to change my hobby. We renamed the pony Popcorn (she was pure white), and she stayed with us until she died at 31, after she had taught many of my students, who fell in love with her as I had.

I enjoy the 4-H riders and respect the program, which started in Ohio in 1902 and is still going strong in every state. Their pledge, which the kids recite before every horse show, is: *"I pledge my head to clearer thinking, my heart to greater loyalty, my hands to larger service, and my health to better living, for my club, my community, my country and my world."* It reminds me of the YMCA philosophy.

One of the best parts of judging is traveling around Washington and Oregon. The fairs are generally held in agricultural areas, often in counties I would otherwise have no reason to visit. From Eastern Oregon and Washington to the coasts in both states, the scenery can be stunning. Often, as I look out over an arena of riders showing their horses, I am amazed that I get to enjoy my weekend this way. I have also had the opportunity to judge in Alaska and Canada, meeting wonderful "horse people" up there and seeing the beauty of those areas.

I take my judging very seriously because the riders are dedicated to their riding style and want to improve. I try to be positive and generous with comments that can correct any issues while also enhancing their experience riding with me. Most shows are run by volunteers, and I appreciate all the effort people put in to provide a place and time for the kids to show their horses.

Judging horse shows remains a perfect retirement hobby for me!

***Jill Hallin** is President of the YMCA Alumni Allen-Stone Chapter, and was raised in a YMCA family. Her mother's father was Frank "Woody" Wood, a Y director in California. His son-in-law, Earl Collins, Jill's father, started and ended his Y career in California, with several years at the Seattle Y, three-plus years at the Rome, Italy YMCA, where, as Executive Secretary, he started camper and hiking programs in the Italian Alps.*

Jill trained horses, spent 10 years as a Police Officer in Washington State. She ran her own Private Investigations company until 2023.

A-TISKET, A-TASKET:
TWO HOBBIES OF BASKETS

By Julia Gallaher



THE NANTUCKET BASKET AND ME

"Throughout history, every culture has had a basket-weaving tradition."

I am an avid basket weaver. I started weaving reed baskets in 1990 after taking a class at Kutztown YMCA's Women's Winter Weekend. Then I took a class with Maggie Silva, a nationally recognized Nantucket Basket maker, and that began my long love affair with those iconic baskets.

Throughout history, every culture has had a basket-weaving tradition. Basketry is one of the oldest crafts, with pottery shards found in Iraq and basket-weaving imprints dating to 35,000 years ago. Basketry comprises several types: Wicker (from Willow), Reed and Cane (from the Rattan Vine), Pine Needle and Sweetgrass, hardwood such as oak, ash, maple, and cherry, and tree bark or roots.

Nantucket baskets are uniquely American, with handmade baskets originating over 150 years ago on the Nantucket Lightship, anchored off the coast of Nantucket, MA. The crewmen first created them to pass the time at sea.

These baskets are labor-intensive and have several distinctive features. They are hand-woven from the finest quality rattan, cane, or hardwood over a wooden mold. The staves are inserted into a wooden base, which is then attached to the mold. A wood or reed rim is attached to the basket by nailing, lashing, or gluing it to the basket's top. Today, molds can be made of metal, glass, or plastic.

The baskets can take many forms, from round to square to specialty shapes such as Nantucket purses. The baskets are often decorated with carvings or scrimshaw made from antique ivory, mammoth ivory, bone, and more recently plastic.

For a well-made Nantucket basket signed and dated by the weaver, expect to pay from $50 to thousands per inch of diameter for standard sizes. This price will vary quite a bit according to materials and specialty shapes. Baskets with wooden staves and rims generally cost more as they require much more time, effort, and cost. Baskets decorated with antique ivory or bone scrimshaw pieces add significantly to the cost.

Many mass-market and replica baskets are on the market today, and prices range from $10 to $75; however, they are made in China and Southeast Asia with substandard materials. A Nantucket Basket does not have to be made on Nantucket Island to be authentic; It just needs to follow the construction rules and use quality materials.

The staves (stakes) should be parallel, straight, and well seated in the base slot. The weaving should be well packed, with no gaps between rows, and the weaving splices should be hidden from view. The rims should fit the basket and cover the unfinished staves. Hardware should be sturdy and strongly attached.

I weave Nantucket's just for the fun of it, for family, friends, and the occasional charity auction. I don't sell my work because, frankly, that's too much like work.

***JULIA "JUDE" GALLAHER**, editor of Clippings, the newsletter of the Central Atlantic Chapter, was a YMCA and YWCA professional for 28 years, serving at several YMCAs and YWCAs in New Jersey and Pennsylvania. She retired from the YMCA of the USA in 2010 as a Resource Director. She enjoys visiting her children and grandchildren, and as you've read in the story, she is an avid basket weaver.*

| By Debra Zvanut



BASKET WEAVING: FROM HOBBY TO RETAIL

"I went from curious to interested, then hooked, and then obsessed."

As an outdoor enthusiast, I used to do craft projects only when the weather was bad. I sewed a lot and did needlepoint when I wanted something easier. It was fun but not very exciting.

I started basket weaving when I asked a local teacher to come to a YMCA women's retreat, and I took the class. I went from curious to interested, then hooked, and then obsessed. I gave away every needlepoint and my other craft supplies to the YMCA Day Camp and moved on to all types of basketry.

Rattan is easy to use and readily available, so I made something for my home and worked through the introductory stages of the art. I wanted to share my hobby, and what better way to share it than with children? So, I learned a variety of skills, including trims, stitches, and handles, that children can do.

Then my love of color surfaced. I didn't even know what a color wheel was, but I started buying dyed reeds and then doing it myself, mixing dyes to get different and more

vibrant hues. My latest creations are called “space-dyed reeds” with multiple colors, creating a tie dye effect when woven.

Thirty-plus years later, I am still weaving. Today I use rattan, paper, seagrass, birchbark, cane, pine needles, black ash, and occasionally sweetgrass.

Tackling these weaves and techniques is still the love of my life. My favorite style is Nantucket basket making. I have received multiple awards at local fairs and am proud to see my students also receiving ribbons for their work. I have cataloged my creations and soon will reach 1,900 baskets.

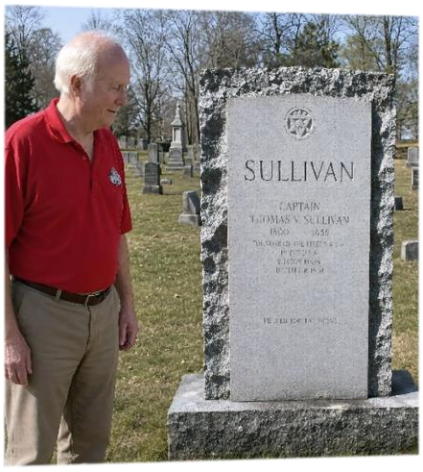
I love spending my time instructing at local festivals and working with Girl Scouts, Cub Scouts, and 4-H programs. This allows children to stretch themselves as they learn a heritage craft while creating a special basket for their home or as a gift for someone special in their life.

I enjoy spending a week at a Girl Scout resident camp leading a program for girls in seventh through eleventh grades. They each make five baskets during their stay, learning a new technique each day. By the end of the week, each girl can enhance her basket with their own designs and decorations.

The joy comes in seeing others learn and succeed.

DEBRA ZVANUT *holds degrees in Administration of Organized Camping and in Environmental Education. She was an Outdoor Program Specialist and Camp Director for the Washington, NJ Girl Scout Council. She served as a Branch Executive for the YMCA of Reading & Berks County, PA, and the Flemington County YMCA, NJ, and as a Program Associate for the Philadelphia and East Field YMCA offices. After retiring, she started two businesses: Baskets in the Woods and Deb's Glass Creations.*

| By Philip Dwyer



I SEARCH FOR DEAD PEOPLE

"Family historians do not simply gather facts but breathe life into all who have gone before."- Genealogy Threads

Some people believe my hobby is ghoulish or a disease. No matter. I pursue it regularly for pleasure and relaxation in my free time – a classic definition of a hobby. I'm a genealogist, and over the past 30 years I have found 7,042 people related by blood or marriage.

How far back do I trace my roots? For my Dwyer clan, it is 1760. I visited the church archives in Fermoy, County Cork, Ireland, and found the handwritten record of my great-grandfather's birth. My maternal Fitzgerald family dates to 1808.

Gerald, a great-uncle, was a colleague of Clarence Birdseye, the founder of the frozen food industry. He also helped develop Iran's dried fruit and canning industry. On my wife Debby's side of the family, the Barones trace back to Gaetano Barone, born in 1845. Her grandfather, Francisco, was a composer and music teacher. Her mother was a Laraway, whose family traces back to 1534. Jehan Laraway was born in Rennes, France.

Genealogy also confirmed that I chose the right bride and profession. I discovered a photo of Debby's grandfather as band director of the Old Colony YMCA (then called Brockton YMCA) *Cosmopolitan Band*.

Walking in the Woburn, MA, cemetery looking for her great-grandfather's grave, I found he resided just three headstones from Capt. Thomas Sullivan, the founder of the first YMCA in America. My father died when I was 11 years old. I found a news story of his death which said, "Dwyer was a member of the Lynn YMCA Board of Directors." Coincidences or signs?

What proof do I have? The standard of proof for genealogists is a five-step verifiable research methodology. Reasonably exhaustive research comes first. Then comes accurately sourced citations and good analysis. Next, resolve any conflicts between documents, and finally, reach a reasoned, coherent conclusion.

I have taken a DNA test and found new relatives. Two women contacted me in search of their biological father, but unfortunately both had died. Five "Dwyers" found each other through DNA while tracing their families back to Fermoy. A recent DNA connection revealed a long-held family secret: I welcomed a new niece into the family – my sister's fourth child. She was pregnant during a divorce, and both parents decided to place the baby for adoption. She took that secret to her grave. My new

niece is a welcome addition to our family, and I now better appreciate the emotional search for biological parents.

I am not related to anybody famous, but I have found interesting stories. I am related to Isaac Allerton through marriage. He was one of the original Pilgrims aboard the *Mayflower*. Isaac sailed to Marble Harbor (Marblehead, my hometown) on the ship *White Angel* with what the Puritans called "a wicked and drunken crew."

John H. Lancy, III of Marblehead died in 1815 while aboard the *USS Constitution* and was buried at sea. Hiram Laraway, Debby's half-second-great-uncle, enlisted in 1863 and went off to the Civil War. Five months later, in the Wilderness campaign, he was captured and listed as a Prisoner of War (POW). He was held in the infamous Andersonville Prison, GA, and died in August 1864.

The Laraway and Simonds families fought in the Revolutionary War, but for different sides. Most fought for American independence. But Jonas Laraway was a Loyalist (Tori) and fought with *Butler's Raiders*. He was forced back to Canada after the Revolution. Today, my son Scott is the Executive Director of the Sons of the Revolution of NY and traces his roots to the Simonds family in the Revolution.

George Ashley Laraway was a successful farmer from Quebec, Canada. One early morning, he went to the barn at 1 a.m. and did not return for breakfast. They found him hanging from the barn's rafters. The news report read, *"…he was troubled by insomnia, but otherwise was in good health."*

Family oral histories can differ. The East Coast Foleys believed James Foley left Oregon after his first wife died and the ranch burned. As it turns out, the ranch he worked at was burned by Indians in the 1860s, and from then on was known appropriately as "Burnt Ranch." The West Coast Foley's story was that James abandoned his wife and their newborn son, took his three older children to Ireland, married, then came to Boston, MA, and had eight more children, including my maternal grandmother. He never went back for his son.

My fellow YMCA retirees golf, hike, and boat. I spend time in dusty court archives, walking through cemeteries and hunting through library records. I have written a 270-page family history book that is, as yet, unpublished. Each year, I find new births, marriages, and deaths to record. I do not know how or when the story should end.

PHILIP DWYER *is a member of the New England Chapter and a past president of the World Fellowship of YMCA Retirees (WFYR). He learned to swim at the Marblehead (MA) YMCA, where he served as President of the Leaders Club before attending Springfield College. He had a 42-year career serving YMCAs in New York City,NY; Bethlehem, PA, and Hartford, CT, before retiring as CEO of the Central Connecticut Coast YMCA.*



| By Mary Carol Fish

SINGING ALONG WITH 'JUST US GIRLS'

"If I cannot fly, let me sing."- Stephen Sondheim

One of my favorite pastimes in retirement is singing with *Just Us Girls*. We are a local group of 12 members, formed by two friends who just wanted to sing for fun. They invited their friends and acquaintances to attend a formative meeting 20 years ago. Some stayed and have been charter members ever since. Others joined and dropped out along the way. One of our original founders' husbands plays piano for practice and performance. (Poor fellow.)

We practice every Monday evening year-round. We've sung for weddings, funerals, church services, nursing homes, Farmer's Markets, the Iowa State Fair, and everything in between. We average about 15 performances a year.

Our song choices span a wide range of golden oldies, '40s, '50s, and '60s favorites, plus some country and sacred music. We like to feature female vocalists' music whenever we can.

We also have some small groups within the larger group. I sing with a trio, dubbed the "3 M's." Yes, all our first names begin with M.

We solicit sponsorships and hold a special free-will concert annually. Proceeds from these sponsors and concerts, along with other donations, have enabled us to award a $1,000 scholarship annually to a woman pursuing higher education. We are very proud to be able to support our belief in the importance of music in all our lives.

Singing as a group is fun, and we have become good friends along the way, supporting each other through thick and thin. We come from all walks of life and a wide range of past or current occupations. Some in the group are retired, but not all.

It's been fun to be a part of *Just Us Girls* for all these years.

MARY CAROL FISH *is past president of YMCA Alumni and a member of the Mott Chapter. She and her husband, Jack, live on a farm in southeastern Iowa. They have three children and eight grandchildren. They like to travel, garden, and enjoy the outdoors. Her YMCA career included leadership roles in Washington and Marshalltown, IA.*

HARRY 'ROCKS ON WESTFIELD' AS A TV TALK SHOW HOST



"I have interviewed musicians, artists, lawyers, district attorneys, school superintendents, fire chiefs, police chiefs, beauty pageant contestants, athletes, local and national politicians, business owners, hospital administrators, and more."

Of the several large, visible community volunteer projects I've been involved in since retiring, the most interesting to me was becoming a talk show host on my local cable TV station, which simulcasts on our hometown radio station.

Shortly after retiring, I was standing in line at a funeral with a friend who I knew was a show host for WCPC Westfield Cable Channel 15. He started talking to me about hosting a show of my own. Knowing nothing about broadcasting or hosting a talk show, I didn't give it much consideration until he invited me on his show as a guest. After experiencing it firsthand, I thought it might be fun to try broadcasting. Nine years later, I am still going strong as a host with a loyal base of viewers and followers.

The name of my show is *"Rock on Westfield."* The focus is on events, activities, announcements, celebrations, and other topics of interest in the greater Westfield, MA, area, where I served as the Y's CEO.

Over the course of my career, I have interviewed musicians, artists, lawyers, district attorneys, school superintendents, fire and police chiefs, beauty pageant contestants, athletes, local and national politicians, business owners, hospital administrators, and more. I spend a lot of time scouring local newspapers and social media for interesting and relevant guests to interview.

Most of the time, I know little about the topic we are discussing, so I do a fair amount of research to build a base of understanding from which I can then formulate and conduct an interesting interview. I map out the entire hour-long interview, using questions that serve as a "lesson plan."

I know how I'm going to introduce the program, where I am going to take the discussion, and how I am going to wrap up the interview. I send that list of questions to my guest(s) ahead of time, so they know exactly what I'll be asking. This allows them to prepare and have well-formulated answers, making for an informed and interesting discussion.

Local and state politicians are always willing to come on my show because they know what we will be talking about and because I do not ask surprise questions or try to catch them off guard while on the air.

Most of my interviews are conducted in our Channel 15 TV studio, but we also go on location with our full production truck to cover local events, including parades, fairs, concerts, and more. We upload all of our interviews to YouTube, which I then share and promote on Facebook to increase our reach for people who are unable to tune in at 8 a.m. each Wednesday.

The biggest challenge I faced was learning how to structure a discussion flow of questions that creates a comfortable, relaxed setting for the interviewee and keeps the viewing audience engaged.

I realized that I'm always one question away from dead air, which is the worst thing that can happen. I always listen to their responses to questions to determine whether to dig deeper into the topic or move on to the next question.

I try to create a very comfortable, open, and relaxed setting for the guest so they can give their best responses and make the interview interesting. I have to keep one eye on the clock to know when to break for a station ID and messages, and when to wrap up before the next show. The other priority is learning names and pronunciations.

I've found that the most effective trick for creating a relaxed setting for nervous guests is to open with the YMCA song and get my guests to do the YMCA arm motions with me. That's a natural fit for me, and the song gets people smiling, laughing, and feeling less nervous.

The opportunity to create stories and interviews for our audience has been a very rewarding, unexpected, and fun experience following my YMCA career.

The show's success has been due to the communication skills I developed as a YMCA professional, always needing to tell the Y's story and get people excited about being part of our great cause and purpose.

***HARRY ROCK**, a member of the New England YMCA Alumni Chapter, is a 36-year YMCA professional who grew up working in YMCA summer camps throughout high school and college. He worked at YMCAs in New London, CT; Westfield, NJ; and Westfield, MA before concluding his career as Director of the YMCA Relations Office and the National YMCA Hall of Fame at Springfield College. Harry serves on his chapter board and the National Service Project Standing Committee. He has documented the progress of the Tiny Home and Twig project regularly on the YMCA Alumni Facebook page.*

| By Wendy Fox



BLOOMIN' AT THE FLOWER SHOW

"If this was a garden club activity- beautiful homes and gardens, interesting people to meet- then I'm in!"

It was a beautiful sunny day. A neighbor invited me to her Garden Club's annual summer picnic. I accepted and was delighted to hear it would be held at a member's old stone farmhouse with beautiful gardens.

As I wandered this lovely setting, enjoying idle conversation with Garden Club members, I couldn't help thinking: if this was garden club activity -- beautiful homes and gardens, interesting people to meet -- then I'm in. That's how I entered the world of horticulture, floral design, flower shows and, eventually, judging.

It was a massive learning curve, as I had no idea that the flower show world was so layered with rules, plant categories, and an international following.

Each Garden Club meeting featured a speaker on either horticulture or floral design, and many clubs also do community projects, such as tending church gardens, giving programs at schools, and creating floral designs for nursing homes. The community outreach aspect was similar to the Y fulfilling community needs.

The Flower Show aspect was all new to me, but I still offered to help organize my club's exhibit in the Philadelphia Flower Show when the exhibit chair got sick and a replacement was needed.

I had never been to the show, but a long Y career gave me lots of experience organizing events and creating program content. My first Philadelphia Flower Show taught me how much I didn't know. I immediately enrolled in the Floral Design Certification Program at Longwood Gardens and learned both floral history and floral design.

Once I had the knowledge and design experience, I started entering local club shows and continued to chair my club's Philadelphia Flower Show entries. We earned our share of blue ribbons.

In time, I was invited to be on the Philadelphia Flower Show Committee, first as Chair of a Design class, then Passer for Design exhibits, and eventually I took courses to become an Accredited National Garden Clubs, Inc. Judge.

All this activity has kept me learning, creating, and most importantly, interacting with people from all walks of life.

***WENDY FOX**, a member of the Central Atlantic YMCA Alumni Chapter, began her career at the Reading, PA YMCA as a Physical Director, later serving as a consultant with the former East Field Staff of Y-USA. She retired as Associate Director of Training for the Chicago, IL YMCA. She represented the YMCA at the Women's Conference in China and on the Women's Sports Foundation, founded by Billie Jean King. She holds a master's degree from the University of Pennsylvania.*

| By Stan Kaslusky



MY RETIREMENT IS FOR THE BIRDS

"Walden had his pond, Jefferson his Poplar forest, Isaac Newton his Apple tree. I have my humble lakeside backyard."

After 40 years with the YMCA in the Northeast, I retired to a delightful lake community in the foothills of the beautiful Blue Ridge Mountains of Virginia.

Growing up in New York City, I often found myself exploring the public parks and yearning for our family vacations out to the countryside. My choice of retirement community provided a wonderful environment to pursue my interests in the outdoors, birding, and wildlife photography.

I credit my interest in photography to my friend and minister of my church in Westfield, NJ, 40 years ago. Bob taught me the basics of photography, which I used in my work and when traveling.

I was able to spend more time on my interest once I retired. With my kids "launched" with their own families, I had the disposable income to improve my photographic equipment., I began focusing on nature photography and learning about bird life. Today, my wife Julie and I travel near and far, looking for locations to photograph.

I have turned my property at the lake into a certified Wildlife Sanctuary with bird-friendly plantings, housing, and access to food and water. Our backyard bird count currently shows more than 95 species observed over the years.

Julie shares my interests. We keep an ever-growing bird list and try to include birding sites in our vacation plans. She assists with my photography by being an excellent bird spotter on our outings. She embraces lifelong learning and enjoys walks in the natural settings that we visit.

Julie's son lives near Yellowstone National Park in Montana, so a trip to visit Carl always includes lots of wildlife opportunities. One year she arranged to spend a day accompanying a falconer and his Harris Hawk, as a birthday gift for me.

As I've become less mobile due to spinal issues, I've adjusted my jaunts to include driving the countryside, photographing from the car, and looking for driving loops in National Wildlife Reserves. My bumper sticker reads "Caution, this car may stop to photograph birds." Our interests have taken us all over the country and overseas.

Many of our drives are accentuated by Julie's call, *"Look, a Red-shouldered Hawk."* Retirement has allowed time to make bird photography a serious pursuit. It is a wonderful hobby that comes with travel, new friends, and many opportunities for continuing education.

Joining our local camera club has greatly increased my skills through workshops and sharing techniques with friends. I've organized several field trips for the club, including a trip to a haunted abandoned farm filled with cobwebs and tattered furnishings. It was fun to see the creative, spooky photos our club members produced on a lovely Fall afternoon.

My photography hobby is meant for pure pleasure and enjoyment. No sales of pictures or pressure to produce income. I am, however, proud to have published both articles and photos in wildlife and birding magazines. Any payment usually turns into another equipment purchase (one drawback of the hobby). I am also a hit with my fellow senior-citizen crowd, having given several presentations to local organizations.

As Julie and I turn 80 this year, I feel truly blessed to continue sharing moments of wonder and peace together while enjoying our hobbies with family and friends.

(Stan invites YMCA Alumni members to follow his photography in his blog called The Photography Quarterly: Images by Stan Kaslusky. Click to: https://wowpixels.blogspot.com/2022/)

***STAN KASLUSKY**, a member of the Weatherford Chapter, previewed his Y career by becoming a day camp counselor and attending Youth and Government. After Springfield College, he served as a Youth Director with the West Side YMCA in New York City and then as Executive Director in Southeastern Connecticut. He helped merge a YMCA and a YWCA in Westfield, NJ, where he worked for the next 19 years. He was the volunteer VP of Y Mutual. Stan has been his church treasurer for 17 years. My wife Phyllis and I live in Charlottesville, Virginia.*

| By Don Kerr



BAITING SOME FUN FOR CHILDREN; MY FISHING HOBBY

"For I tell you, Scholar, fishing is an Art, or at least, it is an Art to catch fish."- Izaak Walton, The Compleat Angler

Fishing has been a lifelong joy for me – a joy that improves the quality of life for everyone participating.

My personal fishing journey began when I was just seven years old, fishing for crappies, bullheads, catfish, carp, and buffalo fish along the shorelines of the Wapsipinicon River on our family farm near Coggon, Iowa.

My life changed when the Cedar Rapids YMCA bought 100 acres of our farm, and my mom became the YMCA Wapsie Camp Cook for many years. I was a kid then, hooked on Y camp in summer and winter, which led me to a 40-year YMCA career in the Upper Midwest.

For me, the joy of fishing comes from watching children catch their first fish. I bait their hook with a worm and watch the bobber head for the bottom.

Then I help the youngster set the hook and land their own fish. That becomes photo time for the children and parents.

The kids sometimes like the worms used for bait more than they like to fish, so they toss the worm in the water and watch the fish come up for a snack.

Other children love to catch the fish, touch it, and then toss it back in the lake so it can get bigger. Some kids cry when they realize that Mom and Dad are ready to head home.

***DON KERR**, Past President of the Upper Midwest YMCA Alumni Chapter, had a 40-year professional career spanning service as a physical, aquatic, and executive director at Ys in South Bend, IN; Appleton, WI; Bismarck, ND; Brainerd, MN; Northbrook, IL; and as a consultant with Y-USA. Phyllis and I live on Lake Minnetonka, Minnesota, with a boat dock, pontoon, and a boathouse.*

| By Kim Harty



A PASSION FOR ART FROM THE HEART

"I make 'heart art' with fiber, paint, paper, and found objects, but the finished piece becomes a heart."

My hobby grew into a passion and something of an obsession throughout my Y career and beyond. I have been a fiber artist for more than 40 years, creating simply for the joy of it. Art has been a constant in my life, providing calm, grounding, and renewal during stressful times. I love fiber and paint in all their forms and have never been able to resist experimenting with something new.



Early in my career at the YMCA of Greater Hartford, our CEO at the time, Bob Neal, recognized my passion for connecting people to the arts. He gave me the opportunity to serve on the Y's first nationwide task force focused on establishing the arts as a major program area and to strengthen the "spirit, mind, and body" spiritual dimension of the YMCA triangle.

Jason Shinder and Lynne Vaughan led that movement, and I was honored to be part of it. It was an exciting time. YMCAs around the country began developing stand-alone arts centers and expanding arts programming. I had the opportunity to build relationships with arts organizations, develop a partnership with Connecticut Children's Medical Center, and integrate new arts programming throughout our association.

Today, I have been able to delve much more deeply into my own art. Because I still can't resist trying new techniques and mediums, I finally gave myself one simple parameter: I make "heart art." I can work with fiber, paint, paper, found objects — whatever inspires me — but somehow, the finished piece has to become a heart.

I attribute much of this passion to my years with the Y. At its core, the YMCA is about building strong people and strong communities. I have come to believe that neither is truly possible without love expressed as compassion, belonging, connection, acceptance, and care for one another. Everyone should have a connection to the arts, whether through creating something themselves or simply experiencing what someone else has created. Art takes us beyond words. It can quiet us, open us, connect us to one another, and bring us to a deeper, more spiritual place within ourselves. For me, that journey has ultimately led to the heart.

KIM HARTY *spent the majority of her career serving YMCAs in New England, with a couple of side steps at a YWCA and The Armory Art Center in West Palm Beach, FL. She recently moved back to CT to be near her daughter and four grandchildren. She is involved with the New England YMCA Alumni group and its Senior Advisory Mentoring pilot.*

| By Debbie Redmond



EXPLORING HISTORY: IT'S ALL ABOUT THE STORY

"It isn't about the dates or the timeline of events; it's the story of the people and their journey."

When I retired from the YMCA, I set out to help gather items to donate to the local archives and found myself wanting to know more about the people who made the YMCA so great.

I've explored multiple archives, including those in the city and the state, as well as the Kautz Family YMCA archives in Minneapolis and the Springfield College Digital Archives. I've corresponded with YMCA staff (past and present) as well as family members of some of the people who made our YMCA.

If someone found photos or documents in their YMCA or Y's Men's Club, it seemed to find its way to my house. Then, the Y started asking for more history on specific people or YMCAs. It was indeed a challenge to find information and so much fun. I'm considered the local historian for the Gateway Region YMCA in St. Louis, MO, and I was appointed International Historian for Y's Men's International.

I've curated additional information for the State archives, including family letters and photos, Zonta Club St. Louis, and the Ozark Chapter of YMCA Alumni. I've written articles for *Gateway Magazine* (Missouri Historical Society), *Y's Men's World*, and *Y's Alliance*; helped provide research information for several books (one about Y-Indian Guides and another one about the 100th Anniversary of Y's Men); and worked to help get Harold Keltner (*Y-Indian Guides founder*) and *Henry Grimes* (Y's Men International Secretary) into the YMCA Hall of Fame.

So, is it a hobby, or a new vocation with little monetary incentive? I spend at least three hours a day on this "hobby," and my husband keeps asking, "What's the project for the day?"

***DEBBIE REDMOND**, a member of the YMCA Alumni Ozark Chapter, worked for Gateway Region YMCA in St. Louis, MO, for 32 years as Director of the YMCA Adult Habilitation Day Program. She served as board chair of the Community Development YMCA and currently co-chairs the Gateway Y International Committee. As a member of the Carondelet Y Service Club (Y's Men), she has held multiple positions at the local, regional, U.S. area, and international levels. She has also held leadership positions in the Zonta Club. Debbie celebrated 54 years of marriage to Charley, and they have four sons and four grandchildren.*

| By Jack Young



THE iPHONE AND I

"Sometimes, when you least expect it, a photo opportunity happens right before your eyes with little or no warning."

I was a YMCA Director with a "point-and-shoot" camera in my hand when I got my first iPhone. An article in *TIME* magazine featuring portraits of famous people taken with an iPhone suggested to me that I was missing out on a new hobby that could easily accompany me on camping trips, travel, family activities, and athletic pursuits.

A photography class was offered by the local community college, and I immediately signed up for it, followed by an online iPhone class. Both classes sharpened my focus on photography (no pun intended) and increased my exploration of new and unique applications of my newly expanded skill set.

I'm no longer that "point and shoot" tourist trying to get a quick photo of the Eiffel Tower with my wife (and hundreds of other tourists) standing in front of it. I'm now thinking about composition, background distractions, elevations, angles, lighting, the horizon, and the "golden hour" (that short period just after sunrise or before sunset when the sun is low in the sky and golden).



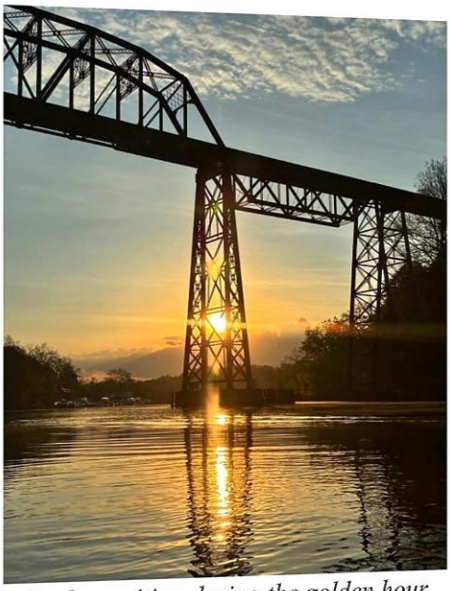
What are they looking at?

Most of us are unlikely to be professional photographers. But we can learn to think like one with some knowledge and practice. A photographer is trying to tell a story to the viewer.

Our careers were largely enhanced because we are *"people people."* We worked with and for people. People in a photo can be assets that improve the story.

Let's begin there. Find a special place for a friend's picture. Take a photo without your friend, then take the exact same photo with your friend in the shot. Which photo has the best potential for a story?

Placement of your subjects can be particularly helpful. Place your subjects in front of a statue, building, or landscape. Position them as you would for a photograph, but don't take it. Have them turn away from you and take the same scene. Who are those people? What are they doing? What are they looking at? Where are they? You just captured a unique, unfinished story in your photo.



Lucky position during the golden hour

Here's more: With your subjects facing you, direct them to lighting that can make all the difference in whether a photo elicits a *"WOW"* or just another "ho hum". Unless you carry or arrange lighting, which you likely won't, sometimes you'll get lucky. The iPhone is always close at hand.

A photo opportunity can pop up right before your eyes with little or no warning. Practice and familiarity with the camera's location and operation will enable you to respond to these *"quick, take a picture"* opportunities before they pass.

Direct your subjects to look away from the camera. Do you want them to smile or just look beyond you? Now you've created another story. And if you still want a different perspective, change your position. Squat or sit to lower your camera or hold it high over your head and shoot down on your subjects. Yet another story appears.

I do very little editing of my photos for lighting, color saturation, or erasure. I edit when I have time to review the photo on my larger home computer screen. I can improve the presentation by straightening the horizon and/or cropping along the edges to eliminate sideline distractions. These edits are also easily accessible in the iPhone's photography menu.

When time is not an issue, I review what I'm trying to photograph to get a slightly out-of-the-ordinary view of my subject. I challenge myself to consider a unique angle, a nearby landscape, or a person to add to the photo.

Considering that all of us can get a standard postcard photo of Mount Rushmore, our state capital, or the Eiffel Tower, I'd much prefer a photo of my own story. After I sat on the ground, behind the rock, to take a photo of this Cape Cod windmill, an onlooker asked if I was a professional photographer. Made my day.

A universal suggestion among photographers is to consider the *"rule of thirds"* for the final product. This application uses grid lines to divide the photo into nine equally sized squares. The photo is then cropped and moved to place the subject in the one-third grid to the



A different perspective



Where are they going?

left or right, furthest from the opposite side. This placement implies motion or direction of the subject.

I now have favorite “things” to photograph, such as reflections (water, mirrors, windows), trees, church altars (cathedrals in Europe), shadows, an artist working on their artwork, curves in nature, and occasionally a still life.

Today’s technology is helpful, as well. I can create albums for my special-interest categories right on my iPhone; I no longer need to sift through my entire library of thousands of photos for that special reflection photo I took five years ago. I simply move my cursor to albums/reflections and there it is.

For me, born during the Kodak Brownie era, iPhone photography is *PRICELESS*.

Jack has self-published a booklet of his favorite techniques and subjects, with examples, for friends and family. If you’d like a digital copy, email youngjj6367@gmail.com, and he will send it to you.

***JACK YOUNG**, a member of the McBurney-Morse Chapter, graduated from the U.S. Naval Academy and Springfield College. He met his wife, Ellen, in 1974, when they were both earning their MEd degrees. Jack’s 32-year Y career spanned roles as Physical Director in Coatesville, PA; Aquatic Director at the Auburn, NY, YMCA-WEIU; Branch Director at the Downtown Atlanta, GA, YMCA; and Greensboro, NC, Central YMCA. He was CEO of the Hagerstown, MD, YMCA and retired as CEO of the Kingston and Ulster County, NY, YMCA.*

| By Linda Garcia



FROM PHOTOGRAPHY TO WEARABLE ART

"The fibers had a mind of their own, creating abstract designs."

I've been interested in the visual fine arts since childhood. As an adult, I studied art to tap into whatever unknown skills I could, enjoying exploring all mediums. My focus was on 35mm black-and-white fine art photography, setting up a darkroom in my home. Success followed me in this medium, earning awards and publication. This process slowly gave way to the digital age.

When I turned my interests to painting, using a variety of mediums, I quickly learned that I had become an abstract artist with no rules. Paving my own art journey with this medium led to awards and juried showings, including at the New Britain Museum of American Art in Connecticut. Art classes at the museum have helped me understand how different media work together.

My friend, Shayna, who also took classes, asked me to sign up for a Nuno felting class with her. Nuno felting is an ancient art form for making clothes using a combination of environmentally dyed sheep's wool, alpaca wool, silk, gauze, and knitted textiles. A needle-felting process also uses these same materials to create fiber artwork.

In short, you lay your design template onto your resist with plastic and bubble wrap. Then you spray your design with water and goat's soap. You roll your design up into heavy towels and push and roll it back and forth for the allotted time. This process is referred to as "fulling." The water and soap are the glue that pushes the fibers into each other to form a piece of clothing, a vessel, or an art piece.

I quickly learned to dislike this uncontrollable medium. The fibers had a mind of their own, creating abstract designs, so I slowly learned to adjust. I've created wearable pieces, vessels, and fiber art for family and friends, selling my creations at juried art shows. Depending on my mood, creating art in all mediums is still on my agenda.

***LINDA GARCIA**, a member of the New England YMCA Alumni, grew up in the Hartford, CT YMCA program system, and spent her entire career at that YMCA. She began lifeguarding and teaching swimming and became a Faculty Trainer in Aquatics. She was Connecticut State Director for Youth and Government, Director of International Programs, and Director of Initiatives.*

| By Bill Moss



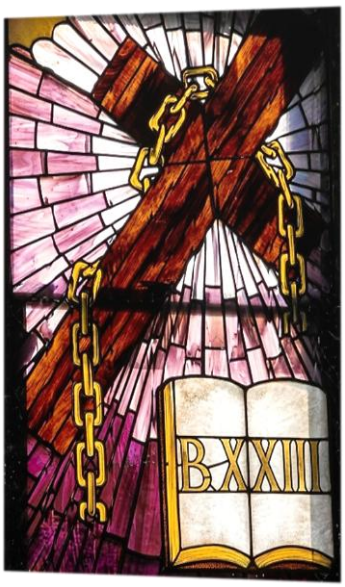
AN ADVENTURE IN STAINED GLASS

"For me, a stained-glass window is a transparent partition between my heart and the heart of the world."- Marc Chagall

My wife Charlotte and I were visiting her grandfather in Greenville, Illinois. Down the road, a farmer had a barn full of antiques. Charlotte loves antiques, so she bought a small, stained-glass window from his collection. I thought she'd paid too much for it and vowed to try making a few myself for much less.

I enrolled in a stained-glass class when we returned home. Since then, I have made pieces as small as wind chimes and as large as my best friend's bank building's clerestory window, which is a five-foot circle, and another for a historical church.

The church story is my favorite: We learned about and visited the Pennytown Freewill Baptist Church while I was conducting a capital fund campaign in Marshall, MO. The story goes that soon after the Civil War, a freed slave named Mr. Penny purchased a tract of land just outside the town's city limits. He subdivided it and sold homesteads to other freed slaves.



It was a busy community for a while, but over time, local farmers began purchasing parts of it as they needed more land for their crops. Today, the only vestige left is the Pennytown Church. The property had been placed on the historic register. Some community members were raising money and were enthusiastic about restoring the property.

I asked if they would like a stained-glass window behind the pulpit. They said, "Yes." I told them I would make it and donate it to the church.

The elements they wanted included in the design were the sun, a reference to the 23rd Psalm, and a cross. I asked, "How about a broken chain to signify the end of slavery?" They liked the idea.

The following summer, when the window was finished, Charlotte and I loaded it into the trunk of our car and drove to Marshall to install it. Hobbies can be surprisingly fulfilling.

Here's generally how a stained-glass piece is made should you want to try one yourself: Take exact measurements of the space the finished piece will occupy. A “cartoon” of the window needs to be designed on white butcher paper and assigned a number. This pattern ensures the design fits the desired location of the finished window.

Transfer the design using carbon paper onto a sheet of pattern paper (light cardboard), then use scissors to cut a sixteenth of an inch between the edges of each piece for the solder that holds it together. Number and cut one glass color at a time.

It is assembled on a piece of cardboard and held in place by horseshoe nails. Next comes soldering.

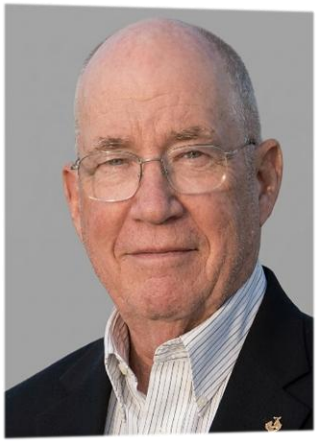
Once the window is fully assembled, remove all the horseshoe nails and solder. Only the nails around the window's perimeter should remain. The piece must be turned over, and the backside soldered the same as the front. At this point, putty all spaces between the glass and lead. Finally, clean the glass by sprinkling Plaster of Paris on it and rubbing with a short-bristled brush. This makes the glass glisten.

There may be a stained-glass shop near you. These shops usually offer regular classes for people who want to learn the craft.

This past summer, two of my grandsons asked me to teach them the process. Now there will be Moss-stained glass around for years to come.

BILL MOSS *of the Grand Canyon Chapter was Program Secretary at the Mesa Branch and Executive Director of the West Valley Branch of the Valley of the Sun YMCA in Phoenix, AZ, and Executive Director of the Heartland Branch of the San Diego YMCA, followed by 17 years as Chief Operating Officer in Phoenix. After retiring, he was a Risk Consultant for YMCA Mutual Insurance. A graduate of Arizona State University, he and his wife, Charlotte, live in Scottsdale, AZ. Bill edited Old Guard News, the predecessor to The Connection, where he currently writes Memory Lane, the newsletter's popular feature.*

| By Dale Packer



MY WOODWORKING PASSED THE 'BAR EXAM'

"Bourbon barrels are dirty, while wine barrels are generally cleaner."

My hobbies have included collecting caps, YMCA memorabilia from WWI, and history books. I began refinishing furniture when we bought our first home in Lexington, KY.

It had a one-stall garage, so I had to clean up each evening to put the car away. Some of the furniture included a 100-year-old kitchen table and chairs, an old ice chest, rolltop desk, and more. I built a porch railing, a pantry in the kitchen, and other small items around the house.

Because I traveled most weeks as a YMCA Field Consultant, I didn't do much building when we lived in Indianapolis. But I bought a 1964 MGB and spent my free time cleaning and driving it.

My son likely thought I should be involved in woodworking. On one birthday, he bought me a small clock that needed to be put together with a wooden frame. Another birthday, he bought me the plans for Adirondack chairs and asked me to make four for him.

As time went on, I began buying tools I might need to finish projects. As of now, I have 8 medium-sized electric tools. They aren't commercial, but they're good enough for my work. I've worked with both wine and bourbon barrels with pallet wood and other wood people requested.



Bourbon barrels are dirty, while wine barrels are generally cleaner. I've made 12 pieces I call "bars" from barrel halves, plus a 7-foot table and benches from pallets. When people visit my daughter's home, she always points out the items I built for her. My photos show 155 different pieces over the years, with no duplicates.

My wife Joy and I recently moved into an independent living cottage. These days, my workshop is at my daughter's farm, about a 25-minute drive away. I only get about four hours a few days a week. But woodworking has certainly been a great hobby.

***DALE PACKER**, a past President of YMCA Alumni and a member of the Hoosier-Buell Chapter, began his career as a volunteer at the Tuscarawas County YMCA in Dover, OH. He served as Aquatic Director in Columbus, OH, Physical Director in Port Huron, MI, and Executive Director in Fort Wayne, IN, and Lexington, KY. He retired as a consultant for the YMCA of the USA.*

| By Joyce Wilson



REALISTIC WATERCOLORS; STORIES THAT SPEAK

"Watercolor is the poetry of painting."- Unknown

A detailed pen-and-ink drawing of a pine tree leaning over a hill's edge is in my den at home. I created it in my mid-teens, and I think it's quite good. But since then, life, in terms of marriage, raising children, and career pursuits, pulled me from the guilty pleasure of dabbling in art.

It wasn't until my sixties that I took a watercolor class and remembered the joy of creating lines and forms that turned into something beautiful. Although I tried other mediums, I found watercolor gave me opportunities to experiment with techniques such as glazing and wet-in-wet, and I was often happily surprised by the result. I studied under renowned artist Maureen Fain in Jerusalem, where my husband Len served as Director of the Jerusalem International YMCA, and at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts upon returning to Philadelphia.

My paintings are somewhat realistic, and subjects that suggest a story seem to speak to me. One I call *"Morning Ritual,"* depicts a group of men at a coffee counter in a diner. Another, an exhibition award winner, is based on a photo I took at an oyster farm in Beaufort, SC, that I call *"Haulin' in the Oysters."*

I spend summers near the ocean and have painted egrets, sandy pathways, marinas, and old boathouses. Other rural subjects include two deer and a fawn, entitled *"Forest Family,"* a man leaning on a fence with his border collie, and pigs peering over a rail. I've also painted two of our pets, a cat and our Chinese Crested dog, Mojo. Among my still-life work is an award winner called *"Sun Shining on an Orange."*

I belong to an artist's club in Philadelphia called the Plastic Club, founded in 1897, when plastic meant "still in process." My work has been shown at the club exhibitions, at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, with the South New Jersey Artists, and smaller exhibitions where I have also sold paintings. One of my delights is donating a piece to our Central Atlantic chapter of YMCA Alumni for auction at our Christmas luncheon.

I usually paint from personal photographs, and I take more photos than I have time and energy to use. However, on a recent family trip to Montreal and Quebec, I spotted what will be my next painting. A group of red and yellow peppers sat beautifully arranged behind a counter at a small cafe, ready to be chopped for the next order. Time and inspiration are fleeting things.

***JOYCE WILSON**, a member of the Central Atlantic chapter of YMCA Alumni, has lived in the Northeast, Midwest, and Israel. She worked as Director of Related Education at Indiana Vocational Technical College and as Communications Manager at Prudential and Penn Mutual Insurance Companies. She is an ordained clergy member of the United Methodist Church, serving churches in the Philadelphia area, and as Assistant Pastor at St. Andrews Scots Memorial Church in Jerusalem.*

| By Dave Patterson



CARS, CARS, CARS… FOR AS LONG AS I CAN REMEMBER

"A car is like a mother-in-law – if you let it, it will rule your life."- Janis Joplin

I have been interested in cars for as long as I can remember. As a kid, growing up in Lima, Ohio, I sat on the front porch and called out the make and model of every '50s-something car driving past my house on Spring Street.

My interest is not fueled by performance, horsepower, or muscle, but by automotive design. Cars made today, in my opinion, lack the styling and individuality of the '50s and '60s. We certainly don't see car lovers cruising the downtown strip in an SUV or minivan. Even color choices are limited by the Big 3. If it isn't white, black, silver, or red, it's probably a special order or "extra cost paint."

For definition's sake, *antique cars* are 45 years and older, kept in or restored to original condition. *Vintage cars* are those manufactured between 1919 and 1930 in the "Brass" or "Pre-war" eras. *Classic cars* are 20 to 45 years old, high quality, and historically significant.



Before I began my "older" car hobby, I purchased a 2003 Chrysler PT Cruiser as my wife's daily driver. Chrysler took a chance in 2001 and built a "retro" inspired car for car enthusiasts who wanted to get out of the box.

The 2003 Limited Edition Dream Cruiser was Tangerine Pearl, and we dubbed it the *"Orange Crush."* Car shows exclusively for PT Cruisers became a fun way to spend our Saturdays.

I enhanced the already popular "retro" look with aftermarket accessories such as body-match painted wheels, moon caps, sun visor, and running boards, to name a few. Classy modifications are what get you noticed in a car show among 1,000 other PTs.

Showing our car was fun and satisfying, so I decided to step up our game and purchased a 1948 Chrysler New Yorker. It was black with suicide doors (opening backward), 20 feet long, and enough chrome to sink a battleship.



What attracted me to the New Yorker was its striking, upscale interior. Tartan plaid wool cloth with red leather trim. I never took the *"Highlander"* to a show without opening the doors wide and attracting oohs and ahs from the crowd. The New Yorker was all original, dubbed a "survivor," in the car collecting world.





After years of enjoyment with the New Yorker, I purchased a 1951 Ford Victoria. *"Velma"* was a two-door and Ford's first hardtop. It had a two-tone paint scheme: Sea Island Green on top, paired with Greenbrier Green Metallic on the lower body. It was beautifully restored, but it was a major pain to start in cold weather.

But after a few years with no air conditioning, no power steering, and no power brakes, I got into a classic with most of the modern "must-haves."



These days, I drive my 2003 Chevy SSR to car shows in Northeast Ohio. Chevrolet put a concept car into production and named it the Super Sport Roadster. It is a 2-seat pick-up truck with a retractable roof for top-down fun. Painted Slingshot Yellow, my SSR is known far and wide as the *"Yellow Submarine."*

I am no mechanic. I let the professionals work on my cars when necessary. I get my enjoyment from showing and "detailing" my classics. Knowing which car care products to use to clean, shine, and protect the rubber, vinyl, leather, and paint is an art. The reward comes when showing the car and getting positive feedback from other car enthusiasts.

Go to a car show some Saturday, even if you don't own an antique/classic car. There is no doubt there is one near you on any weekend from May to October, benefiting some non-profit organization. It's like riding a time machine!

DAVE PATTERSON *is a Past President of the Chambers Chapter and currently the YMCA Alumni Membership Director. His 35-year career took him to YMCAs in South Carolina, Georgia, West Virginia, California, and Ohio. He retired in 2009 after serving as a Management Consultant for the YMCA of the USA.*



"To be really happy and really safe, one must have two or three hobbies, and they all must be real."- Winston Churchill: oil painting, bricklaying, and writing.

| By RiShawn Biddle

My Perspective

Winston Churchill: 'The Cultivation of a Hobby'

Winston Churchill once wrote that *"The cultivation of a hobby and new forms of interest is therefore a policy of first importance."* He knew this well. Even as he warned the world about the threat of totalitarian regimes and led Britain during the Second World War, the statesman crafted many of his more than 500 oil paintings, capturing scenes from everywhere he traveled.

For Churchill, taking up brush and easel helped him find respite from the many struggles he had with both his career and his clinical depression. Painting also helped him hone his considerable oratorical skills. He brought the attention to detail he used in his oils to his many speeches.

Churchill's experience with painting reminds us that taking up a hobby not only helps us relieve stress but also improves our lives.

It should be no surprise that Churchill was such a prolific painter. After all, the army officer-turned-politician had written 11 books by the time he turned 40 and authored another 28 (including one on painting) by the time he died in 1965. But painting wasn't something he did initially out of some great passion. It was to deal with the darkest period in his political career.

By 1915, Churchill's meteoric rise in politics hit a wall. Overseeing the British Navy, he planned the failed Gallipoli Campaign, costing some 302,000 British and French soldiers their lives, and contributing to the fall of the wartime government led by Prime Minister Herbert Asquith. Forced out of his job overseeing the British Navy, then effectively pushed out of politics altogether, Churchill was plagued with doubt and one of his many "Black Dog" episodes of clinical depression.

That's when painting came into his life. He was first introduced to it by his sister-in-law, Lady Gwendoline Churchill, who handed him a brush and helped him get started with oils. He would then spend time learning from painter Paul Maze and other friends who were into the hobby. Churchill proved to be adept at painting landscapes. By 1925,

he had won an amateur painting contest and had his work displayed in galleries under various pseudonyms. “Just to paint is great fun,” wrote Churchill in his 1948 book, *“Painting as a Pastime.”*

Painting was a relief for Churchill’s troubled mind, especially when dealing with the peaks and valleys of his career, as well as personal tragedies such as the death of his youngest daughter, Marigold, in 1921. For him, *“the Muse of Painting”* focused his mind on matters other than his career. From his perspective, the only way a man could deal with stress, turmoil, and exhaustion was to use other parts of his mind on hobbies unrelated to what was happening in his life.

Taking up painting also benefited Churchill's long political career in ways even he would only come to see later.

He had always been a powerful orator. It was his skills as a public speaker, along with his many books and tales of his wartime adventures, that helped him rise in politics. Over time, his speeches became even more descriptive and powerful, combining both immediate and subtle details.

The finale of his *“We shall fight on the beaches”* speech, given as the Nazis were successfully invading Western Europe, referenced images of the shorelines of both France and Britain and used words that were common to the tongues of both countries, in order to express a unity of purpose between the two nations.

Churchill advised that once you take up a hobby, you should take it up as seriously as you would learning a second language. This means learning intensively, learning from your failures, and finding as much pleasure in mastery as you do in the results.

RISHAWN BIDDLE *is an award-winning writer, communications consultant, and education policy advisor.*

(Excerpted from Fullfocus.com, a wellness website)

PERSPECTIVE NOVEMBER 2026



COMING UP IN PERSPECTIVE

WINTER: February 2027: Y Retirees Across The Globe: Their Stories
SPRING: May 2027: Can't Stop Working
SUMMER: July 2027: When We Were Kids
FALL: October 2027: Memorable Career Moments

Would you like to write for *Perspective* on any of these subjects? Please send a query note to Managing Editor Peggi Simmons (peggisimmons@icloud.com) summarizing your story concept. She will acknowledge your query. Please don't write it until your story idea is accepted.

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