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BOB HORNE

Special Section of The Addison Independent • July 15, 2021

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How to stay active at age 75? Build a barn!

By JOHN VAALER

MIDDLEBURY — We sometimes associate people's golden years with the relaxed life.

Book clubs. Matinée showings of Judi Dench movies. Stamp collections.

Middlebury resident Bob Horne, 75, has a different idea. He is building a barn next to his home on Halladay Road, using wood from his own backyard to make the barn's foundations.

"I think it... brings some vitality to older age," Horne said about his project.

Built plank-by-plank by the septuagenarian, the homemade barn is meant primarily for storage.

"I had three sheds over here; three junky sheds," Horne said. "I wanted to clean up this mess, so I decided 'I'll build a three-base salt-box (the barn) so that way I can store all of my saw stuff.'"

Horne, who worked as a program director at a mental health institution in New York until his retirement a decade ago, has only recently started his barn project.

"I got the building permit round January," he said. "I started it when the contractors arrived to get the groundwork and the foundation. That was probably around close to the first week of June, maybe the end of May."

With the exception of the concrete in the structure's foundations, the materials used to build Horne's barn are all from his backyard. The barn's wood comes from several types of trees on his property, including sugar maple and white pine.

Horne refines the wood with his very own sawmill, a Hud-Son Oscar 228, which Horne purchased in Crown Point, N.Y.

A BARN OF ONE'S OWN

Horne has several reasons for constructing his barn with materials made from own his property.

"It's sustainability, the costs; you're reducing the use of oil," he said.

But when watching Horne's concentrated brow and hint of a smile as he saws a piece of wood in his workshop, you can see another reason he's going at the job with his own resources: He's

having a ball building a barn of his own.

Horne's already constructed the structure's skeleton, and the day the *Independent* interviewed him, he was making the barn's stairs.

"I originally thought I wanted a three-foot-wide stairway. And I put the rails up this morning and it was too much space," he said.

But it's the process itself more than any particular task that makes Horne's barn a joy to make.

"There are two (things) I think," Horne said in describing what he enjoys most about building his barn. "There's the end product satisfaction: being able to say, 'Hey, this is what I did. It looks good; it's functional.' Then there's the process satisfaction."

"For me, the 'doing it' is satisfying," Horne added.

The new storage barn is not the first building Horne has constructed.

The house he and his wife, Patricia, (See Horne, Page 14)



HAVING DONNED HIS safety glasses, Bob Horne cuts the next piece of wood he will use as he builds a barn with white pine and maple trees he logged and milled on his own property.

Independent photo/William Haig



BOB HORNE GRINS while talking about his plans for the construction of the stairs in a barn that the 75-year-old is building himself.

Independent photo/William Haig

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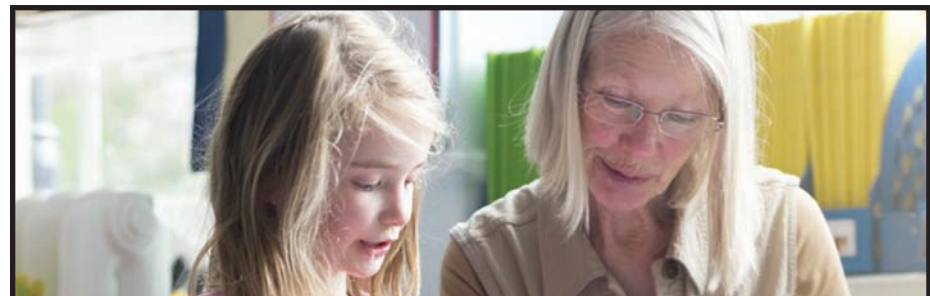
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AmeriCorps
Seniors

Being elders: generational stories can create community

By HANNAH LAGA ABRAM

ADDISON COUNTY— When Christopher Shaw was in his twenties, he had a wizened, old, long-distance sailor for a friend. A relentless chain smoker of Camel cigarettes, this man was one of a few elders in Shaw's life at the time, and Shaw remembers his wily stories and rollicking songs.

He loved listening to the older people in his life.

"I hung onto their words," Shaw said of the elders in his life. "I always looked up to them and wanted their wisdom."

To Shaw, these women and men were the "living embodiment of a past you couldn't access in another way," he said. They were good instructors, even if they weren't all good examples. Shaw, who taught English and writing at Middlebury College until three years ago, is now 72. He said that in the past few years he has felt hostility instead of word-clinging respect from young folks. Though he doesn't think the hostility toward his generation is entirely warranted, he does understand where it comes from.

— Mark Orten

"Teenagers look at those who come



MARK ORTEN

before them and say they are to blame," Shaw said.

But whereas community traditions all over the world have long held elders at their center — as storytellers, leaders and guidance-givers — senior folks in our fast-paced, globalizing, in-crisis culture often feel they are regarded with less and less priority.

François Clemmons, 76, doesn't feel



FRANÇOIS CLEMMONS

he's being treated as the resource he is. Clemmons, who retired in 2013 after 15 years as Middlebury College's Twilight Artist-in-Residence and many more as director of the Harlem Gospel Choir, said the school and wider community's "community outreach" has not reached him. He is happy to own the role of "elder" and said he thinks students, young people and community members of all



CHRISTOPHER SHAW

stripes should come talk to him and other community elders (particularly those who live alone), but they rarely do.

The Black singer doesn't want to force himself on anyone but said he doesn't think this lack of regard or invitations is "healthy or honest."

Clemmons wishes the college would offer students the opportunity to learn (See Reflections, Page 13)

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Move and fight dementia

Leisure activities may be widely viewed as fun ways to fill up free time, but the benefits of leisure activities extend beyond beating boredom. A 2011 analysis published in the journal *BBA Molecular Basis of Disease* found that leisure activities have a positive impact on cognitive function and dementia.

The analysis was conducted by researchers with the Aging Research Center in Stockholm who examined various studies regarding the relationship between certain activities and cognitive function. They defined leisure activity as the voluntary use of free time for activities outside the home.

After retirement, leisure time constitutes a large part of many retirees' lives, and finding ways to fill that time is more beneficial than merely avoiding boredom.

The researchers behind the study concluded that the existing research is insufficient to draw any firm conclusions regarding the effects of certain types of leisure activities on the risk for dementia and cognitive decline, though they did note that multi-domain cognitive training has the potential to improve cognitive function in healthy older adults and slow decline in affected individuals.

A multi-domain approach to cognitive training involves memory, reasoning, problem-solving, and map reading, among other activities. Aging adults who embrace activities that require the use of such skills may find that they're not only finding stimulating ways to fill their free time, but increasing their chances of long-term cognitive health as well.

— Metro Creative

Reflections

(Continued from Page 12)

from him and other community elders.

"You're depriving the Black, international and artistic students of a role model," he said.

Hailing from Birmingham, Ala., Clemmons is chockablock full of stories, and brings a different perspective than most to this community. "I don't like rhubarb, I don't ski, I don't climb mountains, I don't drink beer and I still like cane syrup more than maple syrup," he laughed. But he's here because he loves Vermont's people, and he believes there's healing power in that love.

"Unconditional love, that's the first thing to put out there," said Clemmons, who weaves his care (and his resonant singing) into all of the stories he shares.

Mark Orten, age 55 and Dean of Spiritual Life at Middlebury College, agreed that receiving love, lessons and stories from older folks is key to growing in a healthful, deep-listening way, but these aren't conversations he wants to have in a hurry.

"We do have pieces to hand off," he said. "Generations have things to say to each other that are profoundly changing."

But in what Orten calls "the real consequences of a capitalist culture," this intergenerational rapport is often neglected and he said it will take active attention to return to it.

"People don't even know what they're missing, it's just absent," Orten said of honoring elderhood. He added that our culture's aversion to death and dying is an obstacle to rich mentor relationships.

Another thorn in the side of intergenerational communication and community-creation is the mounting climate crisis.

"It crushes me every day that I'm going to leave the world in this shape," Shaw said.

Clemmons agreed this crisis is one all generations are responsible to, which makes communicating with older folks even more urgent and crucial.

"Us elders are caretakers of the earth, and we are also a part of it," he said.

"If we don't want to destroy ourselves, we will begin by cultivating relationships."

— François Clemmons

Clemmons added that if he weren't so spiritual, he would be "terrified."

"If we don't want to destroy ourselves, we will begin by cultivating relationships," he said.

Carol and Reg Spooner, age 92 and 84, respectively, have been facilitating relationship with place and community through the Spirit In Nature

Interfaith Path Sanctuary in Ripton since 1997, when they co-founded the trail system with several other community members. The couple, who claim old age "works" with a partner, said their way of dealing with how "screwed up everything is these days" is to "live for today and do what we can for today, and hope others do the same."

Shaw shared a similar sentiment.

"How do we get through it — jeez barely," he said. "But the world is still so beautiful...my daily practice is living into how things really are and also feeling the joy of every day."

Shaw said this is what he yearns to share with younger friends. "But hey," he added, "old folks will share what they think is wisdom, and sometimes it's just bullshit."

Then again, sometimes it's precisely what's needed — young folks need only be open to listening.

As Clemmons put it, "I've got some medicine, folks, come and get it."

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FED UP WITH the mess in three “junky” sheds on his Middlebury property, Bob Horne decided to build this storage building himself. The saltbox barn, surrounded by the trees that provide Horne with the barn’s wood, started taking shape a month into the project.

Independent photo/William Haig

Horne

(Continued from Page 11)

bought in 1987 was almost entirely built by Horne, and the garage where Horne keeps his myriad constructions tools is also his creation.

When asked if he had any professional experience in building or architecture, Horne said his knowledge comes primarily from observation. One influence was his father, who was an aeronautical engineer who made fuel cells for NASA.

“I have friends who are electricians who tell me things,” Horne added — as if this somehow explained his uncanny talent for building.

Horne has a design for his barn, but, similar to his talent for building, the barn’s layout is really in his mind.

“I did a lot of building in my head,” Horne said. “I have a diagram for this barn I’m building, but everything else is in my head.”

Another influence on Horne’s barn is an illustrated book by Eric Sloane.

“One of the best books is (Sloane’s) ‘Diary of an Early American Boy,’ which was a narrative about a family who moved and started a homestead,”

Horne said. “(The book describes) all the buildings they built; how they built them; how they did the joinery; where the lumber came from; how they made the lumber; how they made the tools to make the lumber.”

RETIRING WELL

At 75, Horne also stays active in a pick-up soccer league that he has been going to since the 1980s. His other hobbies include gardening, which he and Pat do together.

Oh, and Horne also makes his own maple syrup, because, of course he does.

Similar to his barn project, pick-up soccer gives Horne plenty of physical and mental activity to stay at his prime at the age of 75.

“(Soccer has) maybe given me strength and stamina,” he said. “It’s (a) diversion; it’s a release; it gives me some physical activity. It’s a social thing.”

Soccer also allows him to enjoy more

social interaction with friends and family, he noted.

Horne was happy to resume playing soccer again after he got his COVID-19 vaccination earlier this year.

“We have a Wednesday and Sunday pick-up group that meets at the Creek Road fields,” he said. “There’s three of us over 65. They’re in their late 60s. We’ve played together since the ’80s ... It’s now fun because I can go out on a given day (and) can play with my friends, my son, his wife and my two granddaughters.”

One of the main reasons Horne says he is staying active athletically and architecturally, though, is a fear of ennui in his later years. He cited a business trip he took to Florida in 1979 as a parable of how to spend your old age if doing nothing is your only priority.

“I don’t know if you’ve ever been to

Miami, but Collins Avenue is the main drag,” Horne said. “And along Collins Avenue are all of these retirement apartment houses. And they have all of these long porches, long verandas. On each of those verandas are hundreds of chairs. And in those chairs are hundreds of retired people from the city.”

He paused.

“And it’s all they do,” Horne observed. “All they’re doing is sitting on the veranda, watching the cars go by.”

Watching the way Horne confidently toils with his barn on a rainy Vermont morning — mosquitoes buzzing in the damp air, flakes of saw-wood flying into his safety glasses, mud splashing as he quickly strides toward the barn, inspecting its new stairs and railings with the eyes of a hawk — it is not a stretch to conclude one thing about Horne.

This 75-year-old is a long, long way from retirement à la Miami Beach.

Thinking back to the seniors he saw in Florida so many years ago, he knows he learned at least one lesson:

“I did not want that to happen to me when I got older.”

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AmeriCorps Seniors

What you need to know before starting Social Security

Hardworking adults spend years striving to achieve their professional goals. Along the way, planning for retirement is a way to ensure all that hard work pays off when the time comes to call it a career.

In the United States, men and women nearing retirement age may be thinking about when they should begin collecting their Social Security retirement benefits. Social Security is a social insurance program instituted by President Franklin Delano Roosevelt in 1935. The program consists of retirement, disability and survivor benefits, and workers in the United States contribute to Social Security each week.

The decision about when to claim Social Security retirement benefits is one all those who have contributed to the program must eventually make. In recognition of the difficulty of that decision, the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB) offers the following tips to people wondering when they should begin collecting their Social Security benefits.



The Consumer Financial Protection Bureau notes that you can expect to get an additional 5 to 8% in monthly benefits for every year you wait to claim your Social Security benefits after age 62, maxing out at age 70.

• **Confirm your full retirement age.** Full retirement age refers to the age at which people can begin collecting their full benefits. Depending on the year you were born, you can begin collecting your full benefit at age 66 or 67.

Claiming your benefit before you reach full retirement age will lead to a permanent decrease in your monthly benefits. Conversely, claiming after you reach full retirement age will lead to a permanent increase in your monthly benefits. Since the stakes are so considerable, it's vital for adults to confirm their full retirement age before they claim their benefits.

• **Delay claiming if you can.** The CFPB notes that you can expect to get an additional 5 to 8% in monthly benefits for every year you wait to claim your Social Security benefits after age 62, maxing out at age 70. If you can afford to do so, wait to claim your full benefit until age 70, as

doing so can translate to a benefit that's 32% higher than it would have been had you claimed your benefit at age 62.

• **Budget for retirement.** Short- and long-term budgeting for retirement can help you assess how much money you will need to cover your expenses when you stop working. This step can help you understand how much a reduced or increased Social Security benefit will affect your bottom line in retirement.

• **Continue working.** Remaining in the workforce full-time or even part-time can have a considerable impact on the size of your Social Security benefit. The CFPB notes that continuing to work for one or two additional years can replace low- or no-income earnings

from your earnings record, thereby increasing your benefit.

• **Consider the long-term needs of your spouse.** Surviving spouses receive the higher of the two spouses' benefits. So it makes sense for the higher earning spouse to wait to collect his or her benefit until he or she reaches full retirement age.

The decision about when to collect your Social Security benefit is complex. Discussing your options with your spouse and financial advisor can help you make the most informed decision.

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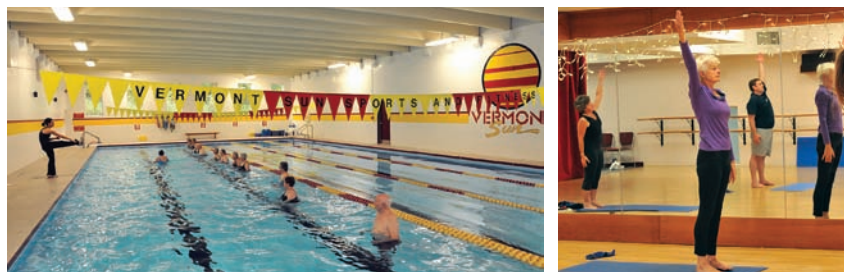
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Types, symptoms of glaucoma

Eyesight is important but easily taken for granted. Few people can imagine life without their eyesight, but hundreds of millions of people across the globe experience compromised vision every year.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, glaucoma is the second leading cause of blindness worldwide. In fact, estimates from the World Glaucoma Association indicated that 79.6 million individuals would experience glaucoma in 2020. By 2040, that figure is expected to rise to 111.8 million people.

What is glaucoma?

Glaucoma is a disease that damages the optic nerve. According to the American Academy of Ophthalmology (AAO), glaucoma usually results from the buildup of fluid in the front part of the eye. As that fluid builds up, it increases the pressure in the eye, ultimately damaging the optic nerve.

Are all glaucomas the same?

All glaucomas are not the same, and the AAO notes that there are two major types of the disease: primary open-angle glaucoma and angle-closure glaucoma.

• Primary open-angle glaucoma: The most common type of the disease,

primary open-angle glaucoma develops gradually. Eyes affected by primary open-angle glaucoma do not drain fluid as well as they should, resulting in the buildup of pressure that slowly starts to damage the optic nerve.

• Angle-closure glaucoma: Angle-closure glaucoma occurs when a person's iris is very close to the drainage angle in his or her eye. The AAO says that this proximity can block the drainage angle, causing pressure to build up very quickly. However, the AAO also notes that many people with angle-closure glaucoma develop it very slowly and have no idea they have it until they've suffered severe damage.

What are the symptoms of glaucoma?

The symptoms of glaucoma differ depending on which type a person has.

According to the AAO, there are no obvious symptoms in the early stages of open-angle glaucoma. Blind spots develop in patients' peripheral vision as the disease progresses. Because people often do not experience symptoms until the damage from open-angle glaucoma has become severe, the AAO urges adults to schedule routine eye exams with an



Metro Creative photo

ophthalmologist so the disease can be found before any significant damage has occurred.

Blurred vision, halos, mild headaches, or eye pain are some early symptoms of an angle-closure glaucoma attack. However, people with angle-closure glaucoma do not typically notice any symptoms until the attack has started. As a result, the AAO urges anyone experiencing any of the aforementioned symptoms to contact their ophthalmologist immediately. Once an angle-closure glaucoma attack has

begun, symptoms may include:

- severe pain in the eye or forehead.
- redness of the eye.
- decreased vision or blurred vision.
- nausea.
- vomiting.

No one is immune to glaucoma, which can quickly rob otherwise healthy individuals of their vision. Learning to recognize the early signs of glaucoma and seeking prompt treatment can reduce the likelihood of substantial vision loss.

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