

SOUTHSIDE

BOOMERS

A DAILY JOURNAL PUBLICATION

Winter 2021

Post-retirement Poet

Local retiree takes to writing

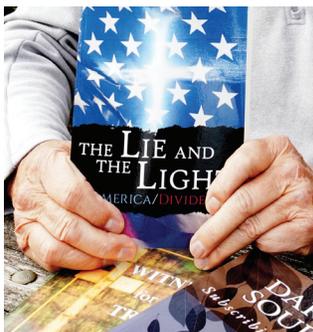


Columbus Retiree Starts Dream Business // Pecan-Crusted Pork Tenderloin

SOUTHSIDE BOOMERS

Winter 2021

ON THE COVER



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Jim Ellsberry holding one of his books.

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5 Tips to Prevent Common Holiday Foot Problems

STORY BY STATEPOINT

The holiday season is one of the most joyful times of year, but it can also lead to aching feet. One source of seasonal foot pain is gout, a type of arthritis exacerbated by consuming too much of certain holiday foods and beverages.

As you celebrate, prevent gout flare-ups and other painful afflictions with these five tips for healthy holiday feet from the American College of Foot and Ankle Surgeons (ACFAS).

1. DON'T OVERINDULGE IN HOLIDAY CHEER. Your feet can sometimes feel the effects of too much holiday cheer. Foods and beverages high in purines, such as shellfish, red meat, red wine and beer, can trigger extremely painful gout attacks, a condition when uric acid builds up and crystallizes in and around your joints. According to foot and ankle surgeon and Associate Member of the American College of Foot and Ankle Surgeons, Josh Sebag, DPM, AACFAS, "Often, it's the big toe that's affected first since it's the coolest part of the body and uric acid is sensitive to temperature changes, but this may also occur in other parts of the foot and ankle."

If you do experience pain in your big toe or other parts of your foot or ankle, drink appropriate fluids, elevate your foot and immobilize it. Frequently, non-aspirin equivalents of non-steroidal anti-inflammatory medications are used to treat gout. In severe cases, contact your foot and ankle surgeon.

2. IF THE SHOE FITS, WEAR IT. When hitting the dance floor or shopping malls, don't compromise comfort and safety when picking shoes. Narrow or overly high-heeled shoes or shoes that aren't worn often, such as dress shoes, can irritate feet, leading to blisters, calluses, swelling and even severe ankle injuries. "Choose low-heeled shoes that fit your foot in length, width and depth while you're standing," says Dr. Sebag

3. BE PEDICURE-SAFETY CONSCIOUS. Heading out for your holiday pedicure? Nail salons can be a breeding ground for bacteria, including MRSA, a type of staph infection that causes fever and painful red bumps, and can be life-threatening if left untreated. Reduce your risk of infection. Choose a salon that follows proper sanitation practices and is licensed by the state. You may also want to consider bringing your own pedicure instruments for safety.

4. WATCH FOR ICE AND SNOW. Though winter wonderlands are beautiful, they can also be dangerous. Use caution outdoors, watching for ice or snow patches. The ankle joint can be more vulnerable to serious injury from falling on ice. "Ice accelerates the fall and often causes more severe trauma because the foot can move in any direction after slipping," Dr. Sebag explains. If you fall, take a break from activities until you can be seen by a foot and ankle surgeon. Use RICE therapy (Rest, Ice, Compression, and Elevation) to reduce pain and control swelling around the injury.

5. LISTEN TO YOUR FEET. Don't let foot pain ruin holiday fun; inspect your feet regularly for evidence of injury, ingrown toenails, bruising, swelling, blisters, dry skin or calluses. "If you experience foot pain (while at rest or with activity), swelling or notice signs of problems, make an appointment with your foot and ankle surgeon," Dr. Sebag says. "Often, especially for people living with diabetes, and those with altered foot sensation, what may seem like a simple issue can turn into a larger problem if medical care is delayed."

For more resources or to find a foot and ankle surgeon near you, visit FootHealthFacts.org, the patient education website of the American College of Foot and Ankle Surgeons.

Treat your feet right. Being proactive, protective and preventive can mean a healthier holiday season for your feet — and your whole body.

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Jim Ellsberry

POST-RETIREMENT POET

Local retiree takes to writing

STORY BY CHERYL FISCUS JENKINS | PHOTOS BY MARK FREELAND

The poem sets the scene of the 1955 Indianapolis 500 crash killing racing superstar Bill Vukovich and the beginning of a local author's writing passion. "Out of the curve with blinding speed The twisted cars Bill failed to heed. He gripped the wheel and rode with death Over the rail and one last breath."

Decades after crafting "The King of Speed" in college, James Ellsberry can still recite some verses without a refresher. Verbalizing the accident was an attempt to process the fatal ending of Vukovich's racing career and served as the beginning of this 85 year old's post-retirement gig writing poetry, fiction and Christian-based books at lightning pace.

"It really got to me, then these words started coming to me," Ellsberry said. "Others would come to me from time to time, and I would jot them down."

In 2015, at age 79, Ellsberry heeded encouragement from his local minister and a fellow friend at New Beginnings Community Church in Franklin to package his best poems into a book called "The Gift." The work is formatted with illustrations,

scripture, the poems and a short essay-style summary describing the creation of each composition.

"The Gift" has become popular with readers, the author said, because of its layout and shared intimate stories that relate well to people from all walks of life. One poem in the book is also named "The Gift" and was written for his daughter, Carol Lynn Thomas, who died in December 2012 after a long battle with alcohol and drug abuse.

"Live each day as if it's your last. Value today don't dwell in the past. Know that within you God's love does abide.

So pursue life fully casting self-doubt aside."

Ellsberry has received hugs and kind words from friends and strangers seeking solace and life-changing reflection in the book's message.

"You never know what you say and how much it impacts someone's life," he said.

Ellsberry has taught Bible studies at various churches with "The Gift" and also with his 2019 book, "The Lie and The Light

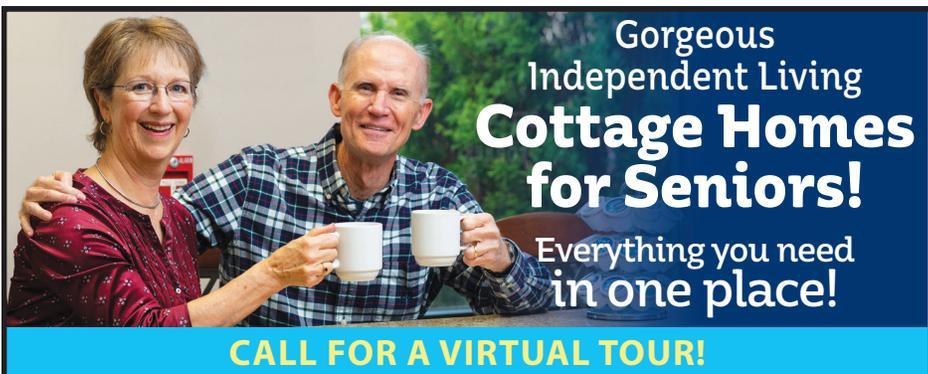
- America/Divided," which explores how America, so loved by citizens and blessed among nations, can be so split among party lines.

He instills this message: "How Christians might look at what's going on in the country and see things they can identify with and help others understand how we got into this mess." The book covers topics of evolution, expelling God from schools and abortion.

"We are more divided now than when I wrote that book," he said. "We are fallen people. We elect fallen people. If they don't have a conscience by the Holy Spirit, they have a conscience that can be led astray."

A longtime resident of Prince's Lakes and Elder at New Beginnings Community Church, Ellsberry says his purpose is to write on topics that inspire and trouble him and to encourage others to think about whom they believe and why they trust a particular source of truth.

Bruce Bendinger, pastor of NBCC, has read and helped edit his friend's books and likes how the writer takes national events, looks at the cause and offers a lesson from Biblical



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Books written by Jim Ellsberry



perspective. He credits Ellsberry for being a role model in his educational career and personal life.

“He’s encouraging and knowledgeable and a man of God,” Bendinger said. “He’s a unique, kind, good-hearted guy that everyone wishes they had in their life.”

Ellsberry’s second book, written after “The Gift” and published originally as “Testimony of the King,” examines Bible verse John 18:37 and 20 reasons why Jesus came into the world. The book has been reworked and renamed “Witness For The Truth” and also

explores the subject of a divided nation needing a wakeup call.

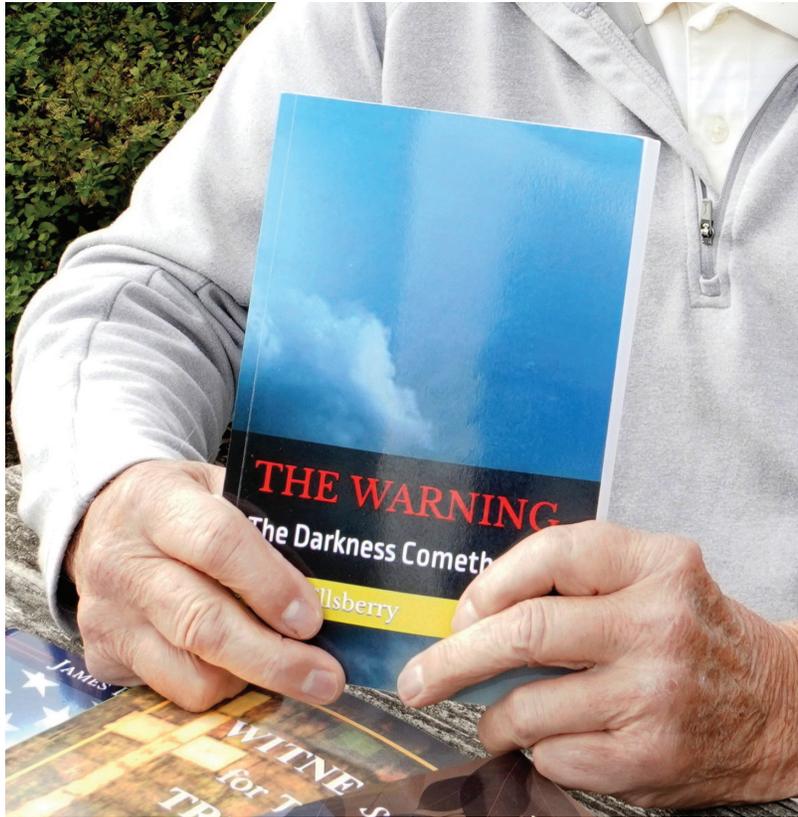
Ellsberry recites the philosophical phrase “a life unexamined is an empty vessel.” He typically cheers for the underdog, as evidenced in his novel “Dark Souls – Subscribing to Evil,” which explores the fictional life of a white orphaned boy raised among Native Americans and battling loyalty to his race with love of people who nurtured him through life.

Drama, deceit, brutality and reconciliation unfold in this story about brilliant Native

American leaders. Ellsberry becomes passionate about his characters and can easily switch gears from Christian writing and poetry to fictional works.

“I’m in another world at that point,” he said. “I get captured in the moment of my own writing like I was a participant – like I was really there.”

Ellsberry was born in Terre Haute and graduated from Indiana State University with bachelor’s and master’s degrees in education and secondary school administration. He holds a degree from Michigan State



University in guidance and counseling. He entered the United States Army in 1959 and served as a teacher, counselor, principal, professor and coach of basketball and baseball during his extensive educational career.

He taught graduate courses in school administration and gifted education at Indiana, Purdue and Ball State universities and also served as adjunct professor at Butler University, where he worked with more than 300 teachers to become certified school administrators.

Ellsberry and wife, Doris, have four children, three grandchildren and one great-grandchild. When he is not writing, the Nineveh resident fishes and is an avid golfer.

“I think I play pretty well for 85,” he said. “The problem is there aren’t many 85-year-olds to compare myself to.”

“The Warning: The Darkness Cometh” is Ellsberry’s latest Christian book, which depicts a host of Americanisms he feels God is unhappy about such as increased violence, pornography, issues in education and abortion.

He wants America to pay attention as history repeats itself and as massive eruptions hit the globe in terms of weather, socialization and economics. He is a fan of bestselling books “The Harbinger” series and “God’s Chaos Code,” and boldly pulls from his Christian roots to relay beliefs the world is in its state of disarray for an obvious reason.

“Either you believe or you don’t believe,” Ellsberry said. “You can’t straddle the fence. Jesus is a peacemaker, but He is also a warrior.”

Ellsberry’s work can be found at major online book outlets and also from the author at jells3344@gmail.com

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The Jekyll Island Club

BUSTLING AROUND

What started out as a simple bus trip to Savannah ended up being a wild ride with old people.

STORY AND PHOTOS BY PHYLLIS BEX

If you haven't traveled by bus with a bunch of seniors, you are in for a treat. The "old" people, as it turns out, is me. Who knew there would be about a third on the bus younger than I? We were from all over Indiana except for one person.

There were two smartly dressed women who seemed older yet were light on their feet. They got on and off the bus with ease. They even walked with a younger gait. It didn't take long to find out their ages — 88 and 98. Mercy, I wish I knew what they ate and drank to have captured their youthful appearance and bounce. I tried to observe them at mealtime but was too busy enjoying our delicious meals. They still live in their own houses on farms. Hmm?

Our visit started with a narrated trolley tour of Savannah founded in 1733. The city withstood three major wars: the Revolutionary War, the War of 1812, and the Civil War. Savannah has been burned down and rebuilt twice. Once in 1796 and the other in 1820. General Sherman was headed to torch Savannah a third time after he burnt Atlanta. Upon arrival, he was so struck by the serenity he felt when he saw its beauty. Ironically, he bought a home on one of the squares.

Once we finished with the trolley tour, we

shopped in the city market where souvenir, candy and cookie shops abound. After a few hours of shopping, we enjoyed lunch at Paula Deans where they served way too much food. Fortunately, our trolley pass was good for hopping on and off until five o'clock. Therefore, we walked around some of the 22 squares in beautiful historic Savannah. In 1966, this district of Savannah became a National Historic Landmark.

The squares serve as shady parks surrounded by 200-plus year-old mansions, churches and other buildings. Most squares are a short block by design with the traffic flowing one-way around them. The world renown Leopold's Ice Cream was a big hit with our group and was only about 4 blocks from the hotel. You know how young and old people love their ice cream.

The Chippawa Square is famous for Forrest Gump's bench in the movie. In the middle is a statue of General James Oglethorpe, the man who founded the city. The bench was replaced with bushes and flowers. It is told they used several benches in the movie production. One bench is in the Smithsonian, a second is in the Savannah Museum at the visitor's center, and a third bench is a piece in Tom Hanks' private collection. Hanks, as you may know, starred as

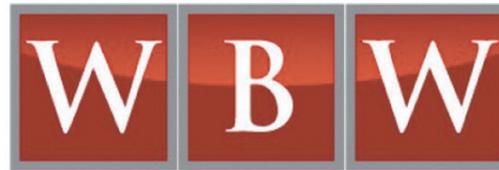
Forrest Gump.

The squares have beautiful fountains and statues of noble figures in history. I thought the John Wesley statue was very informative, as were the framers of early Americana in the South.

"What is Savannah's population?" To my surprise the answer is 150,000. However, they welcome over 14 million visitors per year with an average of a three-night stay. It's amazing! They predict the number of visitors for 2021 will exceed 16 million. I wonder what percentage of the population is employed for tourism. Keep in mind, youngsters and oldsters don't work. This is not a very big place, but they do have an ample supply of hotels and restaurants.

The sweet tea in the south is disgustingly sweet. I mean they must fill the glass half full of simple syrup before adding the tea. After the second meal, I avoided sweet tea altogether. I could see a pattern here, yet I love McDonald's sweet tea and many others around home.

Have you ever heard of SCAD? Sounds like a parasite or a bug. SCAD is a school which teaches preservation of historical buildings and other sites, including all artistic displays. Keep in mind we are in Savannah. However, I kept calling it, "SCAD, the South Carolina Arts and Design."



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The fountain in Forsyth park, the largest "square" of the 22 squares



Chippewa Square used in the "Forrest Gump" movie

Someone said, "Where are we?" I replied, "Savannah, of course!" She said yes, "and SCAD stands for Savannah College of Art and Design." Oh dear. In my defense, South Carolina was just across the Talmadge Bridge.

The SCAD motto is "Art is long, life is short." Another reason why the current situation where the historical monuments are being destroyed is so shameful. History is history, good or bad depends on your point of view. The SCAD school was established in 1978 with only 71 students. SCAD's enrollment currently exceeds 15,000 4-year students from all over the world.

Another fun fact: Savannah is the third largest seaport in the United States. Surpassed only by New York City and Los Angeles. We watched many huge container ships from our River Street Inn hotel hauling their loads in and out on the Savannah River to the Atlantic. These massive container ships numbered at least 18 boxes long and 9 high. We marveled at the overwhelming appearance as they floated by at street level.

The day we visited Jekyll Island was filled with wonder. We wondered where they got all their money. Early in 1886 a group bought the island from Georgia for an exclusive rich man's club. Some of the original members of the Jekyll Island Club were William Vanderbilt, Marshall Field, J.P. Morgan, Joseph Pulitzer, and William Rockefeller. From the

stories we heard on the tour, it reminded me of the "Downton Abbey" TV series. We learned the stories of wealth for many of the lesser-known members. At the end of World War II, the economy was so bad they couldn't pay all the back taxes. So now Jekyll Island is a lovely Georgia State Park.

When we visited Old Fort Jackson, we were treated not only to a musket firing demonstration but a cannon boom as well. The narrator, in period costume, was quite knowledgeable as he enthusiastically retold the history of the fort and all the battles which took place in the area. I have visited several Civil War battle sights in five or more states. It seems the place I am visiting on that day, it's the most important battle of the Civil War. That makes me ponder.

A visit to Tybee Island was not on the program, but we were thankful to visit. The lighthouse is 178 feet to the top. Steve, the bus driver, said it was worth the climb. He promised we would not be sorry and that we could "see forever." With a tiny bit of coercing, I went. My sister Lois, 79, who just had open heart surgery in February 2020, wasn't going. I finally made it to the top and was thoroughly exhilarated by the view and the fact that I made it to the top. Steve was right, we could see forever. As I was starting for the door to go back down, I heard Lois's voice, "Is my sissy up there?" There she was, taking the last few steps. I was both excited and concerned for her, yet we took advantage of the

photo op. When going down the stairs, I found it was almost as hard to go down as up. Someone said I should have slid down the banister. I was happy to have that climb marked off my to do list.

The paddle boat, Georgia Queen, was docked right behind our hotel on River Street. An interesting fact, the door facing the river side of our hotel was on the first floor. The fourth-floor door was facing Bay Street. The Savannah Cotton Exchange used to be where the hotel is now. They didn't change the exterior at all and much of the interior is still preserved. Anyway, the cruise up and down the river on the Georgia Queen was interesting. We passed two of the massive container ships.

Nightly at 5:30 p.m., the River Street Inn hosted a reception for us including hors d'oeuvres and beverages. Val, the reception hostess, provided great entertainment as she lip-synced several songs accompanied by toy instruments. She was intent on everyone having a good time.

Suffice it to say that by bedtime each evening, our puppies (feet) were barking and our thunder thighs were aching. We walked to most places and didn't have any trouble getting our steps in for the day. Besides, most of us have a bad case of FOMO, the fear of missing out. And we may never pass this way again.

No doubt, I fell in love with Savannah's charm and peaceful easy feeling. The live oak trees add a certain flavor to our spirits. I know the magic of Savannah left me refreshed. I finally found out why they are called "live" oak trees. They keep their green leaves until April when the new green leaves push them aside. How about that?

Near Marietta, Georgia we stopped for lunch at the Marietta Diner and then visited the "Gone With the Wind" museum. That was a "mystery stop" for our adventure. The museum included beautiful gardens. One t-shirt in the gift shop showed Rhett and Scarlett in an embrace about to kiss, but they had on blue surgical masks.

Our bus driver, Steve is married to the tour director, Brenda. The last lunch they sat at different tables. Hence, Steve was at my table. As the conversation

kept unfolding, he told me a story of when they were dating. Steve told her, "If you ever want to get rid of me, just get a tattoo. I can't stand a woman with a tattoo." Brenda pondered for a few moments and replied, "How big does it need to be?" Yes, Brenda is a cool-headed professional and apparently she knew how to handle herself even 27 years ago when they were first dating.

Of all the seniors on this bus, only one had an appliance — a cane. She only used that on occasion. The people were all rich with great stories of their lives, travels and of course, grandchildren. Some even were spoiling great grandchildren. The week-long trip was a delight while we discovered Savannah.

Finally, a joke I saw on the way: "I'm supposed to respect my elders, but it's getting harder and harder for me to find one."



The Georgia Queen paddle boat right outside our hotel.

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COMING TOGETHER

Funeral industry adapts to changing demands, safety recommendations

STORY BY GREG SEITER | PHOTO BY ADOBE STOCK

COVID-19 impacted the funeral service industry as it did with virtually every other type of business across the United States. However, some local experts believe the pandemic merely accelerated trends that were already in motion; a few of which had been embraced particularly by the baby boomer generation.

“COVID was scary for staff and families. People were uncertain about what they could do,” said David Ring, president and owner of Indiana Funeral Care with facilities in Indianapolis and Greenwood. “Most wanted to limit services but those who were still hoping for visitation and a regular service were frustrated and angry.”

In some situations, family members were forced into making difficult decisions.

“When COVID first erupted, we were limited by the number of people allowed in our buildings,” said David Keller, owner and director with Jessen & Keller Funeral Homes in Whiteland and Franklin. “If a grandparent died in a nursing home, there were restrictions in the nursing home and then at the funeral home. So, family members were having to choose which grandchildren would get to say goodbye to grandma or grandpa.

“Thankfully, those days are gone but we still encourage people to wear masks.”

Even funeral receptions were eliminated.

“Food is a natural healer, but the areas dedicated to those types of service options were closed at funeral homes,” Keller added. “People constantly asked about and were missing that.” Ring agrees.

“For a long time, we had no services at all. We went straight to the cemetery. Things were very difficult for families,” he said.

With strict guidelines and regulations in place, funeral care providers had to be creative with their service offerings.

“There were a few instances in which we set up a tent in a parking lot with an open casket,” Ring said. “People drove by and one of our staff stood

there with a visitation book for them to sign or we recorded on a tablet.”

Pre-pandemic industry trends pointed toward growing interest in cremation, but Keller and Ring agree that COVID-19 sped up demand for that service.

“There’s been a movement toward cremation and at least some of that has to do with the fact that it’s less expensive,” Keller said. “These are tough economic times and many people, including boomers, are looking for ways to save money on a funeral.”

Ring also believes financial considerations were driving many in the direction of cremation long before the arrival of COVID.

“When the financial crisis hit in 2008-09, it changed the way people thought about money. That’s when we really saw a steep increase in simpler services,” he said.

However, Ring also believes that pandemic experiences may, in fact, ultimately lead to a widespread drop-off in cremations.

“We’re actually starting to see fewer cremations now and stronger interest in scheduling services,” he said. “We think that’s attributable to the psychological impact COVID had on people. They were isolated and scared and during that time, they went back and found the value of family and relationships.”

“When I talk with pastor friends, they say they’re seeing more people coming back to church. They’re

even starting to see new families,” Ring added.

COVID-time funeral and memorial practices may not necessarily lead to long term industry changes, but Keller said in some ways, trends and limitations during the last several months have helped industry professionals learn to think outside the proverbial box.

“The pandemic has been awful, but it has taught us lessons in many ways,” he said. “Elderly people don’t like to leave their homes and now that DocuSign is totally legal and universally accepted, they don’t have to. In fact, family members never have to leave the comfort of home. People can even create an arrangement online now.”

Keller also believes funeral care providers now have a better understanding of how important the incorporation of social elements is to boomers and younger generations when making final arrangements for someone.

“You’re going to need outdoor entertainment space and lounges that can be expanded to accommodate receptions,” he said. “If I don’t do things like that, people are going to go to places like museums so they can have cheese and wine. I have to keep up with those trends.”

Whether COVID-related or not, aside from an obvious increase in the demand for and utilization of online planning and purchasing options, the boomer’s generation seems to be increasingly interested in cremation jewelry — bracelet and necklace charms that hold a bit of a loved one’s

ashes, eco-friendly burials, online grief support and counseling, celebrations of remembrance that occur weeks or even months after a given death and livestreamed services.

“About 10 years ago, we had a surge in people asking for green burials with no casket and a grave that is unmarked or very simply marked,” Ring said. “But then people found out it’s just as expensive and sometimes even more expensive for that type of burial.”

“There’s additional expense involved because there still has to be a way to handle the body respectfully. In a traditional cemetery, people can be buried side-by-side because they’re in caskets or an outer burial container. When you do a green burial, you can’t go side-by-side because the remains can intrude on the remains of others. A green burial also takes up about six regular spaces.”

Ring is also hopeful that proactive funeral-related conversations among family members will eventually become a popular trend.

“The problem is that death and funerals are things we don’t want to talk about,” he said. “Unfortunately, probably 80 percent of people don’t plan in advance and because they don’t want to discuss things, it makes the remaining family members far more vulnerable because funeral pricing differential is staggering. Once somebody plans and thinks about it, everything else can be put aside. That can ease the pain of having to put a plan together at the last minute.”



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NEW BUSINESS, OLD SKILLS

STORY BY TOM JEKEL
PHOTOS BY
CARLA CLARK | FOR THE REPUBLIC

Training for a Columbus woman's dream career began far before her graduation in the field of science from the University of Alabama.

Starting nearly two decades earlier at about age 5, Paula Piercecchi was getting an education of a lifetime in Farmington Hills, Michigan, where a passion for "making people happy and making people feel loved" began in her mother's kitchen.

Some of her earliest memories are from that room while seated near an open pantry door, watching her mother cook — and licking any leftover batter.

Today, less than a year into a new career as a professional caterer, the grown woman — Paula Watson, 60, of Columbus — is having the time of her life.

Recently, the owner of Purely Paula Catering shared her late mother Willie's recipe for pumpkin pie with cooking class students, helping them build their confidence and creativity in the kitchen.

That's a clear contrast to business activities during a majority of



Paula Watson,
Owner of Purely Paula Catering

Watson's professional life. She worked at Columbus-based Cummins Inc. for 29 years, with assignments in information technology, corporate strategy and quality analytics.

One example of Watson's ingenuity was helping the global power technology leader launch a program focused on telematics, providing remote connectivity to engines in the gathering of data to improve the customer's experience.

With her wheelhouse being analytics, Watson became a Six Sigma black belt and then master black belt, recognition for developing an expertise in process-improvement methodology.

But 18 months before her December 2019 retirement from Cummins, Watson — who had risen to a director position — started putting “flesh on the fantasy” of opening a catering business, an idea stored in the back of her mind most of her adult life.

During her June 1984 honeymoon, Paula and husband Bruce Watson enjoyed the atmosphere of a bed-and-breakfast inn and the newlywed started daydreaming of one day running a B&B or other type of business involving food.

But as the idea of making a 24/7 commitment to operating a food business lost some of its lustre, Watson put it on the backburner — until a corporate buyout opportunity arose. In her late 50s at the time, Watson jumped at the chance to follow her heart and try something new.

Purely Paula Catering began informally as the Cummins retiree helped friends celebrate important occasions by providing delicious things for them to

eat. While the official start of her catering business was delayed a year due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it ultimately opened June 2 of this year in leased 1,320-square-foot commercial space at The Workshop on Long Road in Columbus.

Watson said the first word in her business' name — Purely — was selected for two reasons. For one, she gets to operate the catering company her own way. Secondly, the food she prepares is pure rather than pre-packaged.

“If you order sandwiches, I make the bread. If you order pies, I make the crust. Everything is made from scratch,” Watson said.

While full-service catering makes up her core business, Watson also teaches cooking classes and will make her custom-designed kitchen available for other local small-business owners to rent. It's a more convenient food-preparation option than traveling to Bloomington or Greenwood for a comparable workspace.

Watson spent two years searching for just the right location, finally settling on her workshop suite near other start-up businesses instead of settling for retrofitted office or industrial spaces.

Landlord Tovey-Perry Co. built Watson's catering kitchen following a floorplan that she designed. Her working kitchen space features a four-foot gap surrounding the food-preparation island in a sea of silver, with nearly everything made from stainless steel. Along the walls, you will find a silver food processor, ware-washing and food-washing sinks, a Sheila oven hood, gas-burning cooktop, electric

convection oven and a microwave oven, as well as cabinets to store equipment. The kitchen also has an 8-foot by 8-foot walk-in refrigerator and a small freezer. The only splash of color comes from the KitchenAid mixer in pink, Watson's favorite color.

In the core catering business, Watson typically prepares food for small events, generally for a maximum of 50 people — such as birthday parties, other family events, a small wedding or rehearsal dinner, as well as baking and decorating cakes. She has also catered several local artist receptions.

Watson's biggest event so far has been preparing 200 carryout boxed lunches for the Sept. 15 Women in Leadership program sponsored by the Columbus Area Chamber of Commerce, of which she is a member.

Most of Watson's food creations are made using elementary natural ingredients, not poured from tins and boxes. Just steps from her northside Columbus business, Watson tends to a herb garden, which produces ingredients for some of her recipes. She also grows herbs and vegetables outside her rural home.

That doesn't mean everything she serves is home-grown, however.

“Every event warrants a shopping trip,” she said, whether it's to local grocery stores, shopping online for hard-to-get local items such as lavender, as well as using a wholesale food distributor for by-the-case meat, vegetables and produce. She steers clear of the frozen-food aisle, unless it's to buy frozen berries when fresh ones aren't in season locally.



Liz Cleland, at left, and Jacquie Bontrager McCann work on their ingredients as Paula Watson shows Elizabeth Kestler how easy it is to strip the swiss chard leaves off of the stalks during a private cooking party held at the Purely Paula Catering Kitchen.

PLEASING PEOPLE

Watson conducted her first cooking party Oct. 7, when Columbus city councilwoman Grace Kestler invited nine female guests to Purely Paula Catering to celebrate her birthday during a three-hour, dinnertime event.

They made a sweet potato curry with kale, served with coconut rice; Swiss chard with chickpeas and garlic; broasted vegetables with rosemary and parmesan; Caesar salad with homemade dressing, croutons and salad; and blueberry cake with blueberry glaze for dessert.

The guests gathered around a table decorated with lights and watched the sunset while enjoying their culinary creations.

When Chris Price decided to throw a theme party to mark a special anniversary of his own, the United Kingdom native knew Watson — a Cummins colleague in analytics starting in the 1990s — would deliver something special in her new role as a catering professional.

Since Price's beloved Triumph Stag Mark 1 vehicle was manufactured on June 24, 1971 in the United Kingdom, he chose his car's golden anniversary — to the day — for a gathering at his Columbus home with about 10 friends.

Price, a portfolio director in quality analytics, asked Watson to prepare English favorites on the party menu, and trusted her with the details.

Watson prepared bangers and mash, an English favorite consisting of sausages served with mashed potatoes, as the main course. She served a cooked chutney made with onions, cranberries and ginger as a condiment for the sausage. For dessert, Watson baked and served a crispy meringue-based pavlova.

"People loved it," Price said.

Price has been sold on Watson's desserts since joining Purely Paula's Dessert of the Month Club, his favorites being triple chocolate truffle pie, a "rhubarb crisp to die for" and derby pie, delivered in time for the Kentucky Derby.

"There's always a little something different with them," Price said. "The flavors, the texture and the presentation is always amazing."

Kathy Oren has known Watson for more than 30 years, starting when their children attended preschool together in Columbus. Beyond that, the two women and their husbands all worked at Cummins.

So when Oren wanted to throw a baby shower for her daughter-in-law with about 30 guests, she wanted Watson, one of her best friends — who also happened to be a great cook and creative meal planner — around to help.

Watson offered several meal options for Oren to choose from, settling on a taco bar featuring homemade ingredients.

"The food was spectacular. Just as importantly was the way she laid it out on my table. It was something I never could have done on my own," said Oren, executive director for the Community Education Coalition in Columbus.

"I am not a foodie and I really don't like to cook. I'm not creative in that way," Oren said.

Watson, on the other hand, came up with the idea of having a Mimosa (champagne and citrus juice) bar. And Watson baked cupcakes for dessert that Oren described as

spectacular.

Watson has long demonstrated a strength in analyzing processes — left-brain functions, as shown throughout her Cummins business career, Oren said.

"When she goes into a project, she's going to think of details that most of us wouldn't think of," Oren said of Watson.

But her right-brain abilities, such imagination and intuition, are equally strong and reflected in preparing food that is innovative and delicious, Oren said.

"She loves to cook," Oren said of her friend. "It's literally what lifts her up and brings her joy in life. What she's doing now is honestly what she was meant to be doing forever."

Watson never tires of preparing food — for catering clients or when hosting close friends or family at her home. "Cooking is how I show people that I care for them," she said.

When inviting people over to her home for a meal, Watson strives to make it a sensory experience — even with a simple food choice such as grilled hamburgers.

They will be served on hand-made brioche buns, with build-your-own-burger topping choices such as avocado, brie cheese, apple slices, bacon, poached eggs and the sandwich staples of lettuce, tomato and onions.

"It's my favorite kind of party: Cook and eat together all night long," she said.

During time away, Watson even packs a spatula when heading off with husband Bruce to visit state and national parks in their restored 1980 Airstream camper.

After all, "cooking is a big part of camping," she will remind you.

"If you order sandwiches, I make the bread. If you order pies, I make the crust. Everything is made from scratch"

- Paula Watson



Columbus city councilwoman Grace Kestler invited nine female guest to Purely Paula Catering to celebrate her birthday during a three-hour, dinnertime event.

Seniors and smartphones

Isn't it a hoot to hear the various love and hate conversations from seniors regarding their mobile phones? Some love them while others detest them completely — along with those who use them.

I remember the old crank phone that hung on the wall in our farmhouse kitchen. I recall the mouthpiece we spoke into and the part we held to our ear. We'd give the crank a whirl to reach the operator. It seemed we always had a party line with nosy neighbors eavesdropping.

Our current "smart phones" can be a friend or foe, depending on our attitude toward progress and change. I sternly resisted switching from my flip phone for a while. I'm finding it is futile to resist change, for change happens, like it or not.

Nine years ago, I was in Martinsville assisting one of my insurance clients, an 83-year-old. Needing to speak with her carrier, I asked to use her land line to dial an 800 number. She responded by handing me her iPhone, as it was her only phone. I didn't know what to do with it because I had not switched from my flip phone. Therefore, the 83-year-old showed me! She was proficient in calling, texting and emailing with her iPhone. On her computer, she performed Google searches, perused Facebook and more emails.

I was impressed with her gift of technology, and I told her so. She said, "Don't be impressed. It is my only way of keeping up with my grandchildren and great-grandchildren. Before, if I called them, I rarely got an answer or a return call. The text messages are most always immediate responses. Plus, I can stay up with their activities on Facebook!"

While walking, she was bent over, and her long gray hair swayed back and forth as she moved across the room. She was not the picture of youth at all. I told my adult daughters



Phyllis Bex has been a resident of Johnson county since 1973, making her home in Greenwood. She can be reached at pbex49@gmail.com.

the story and confirmed, "I am ready for an iPhone." They were happy I didn't wait until age 83 and bent over.

My older neighbor, Donna, had a flip phone until her husband's sisters were in town. Their smart phones had GPS maps. Everywhere they went, they had it mapped out in a jiffy. Her husband, Merritt, saw how convenient the features were. Immediately, he took Donna to buy one so they would also have the GPS feature. Later, I showed her some tricks and shortcuts to use. Donna is happy with her phone now, which proves you can "teach an old dog new tricks."

New technology is great but sometimes hard for older people to grasp. Donna loves the texting feature for ease of communicating with her family, grandchildren and friends.

A small group of women gather at my home for "movie night" every Monday. Last week, Donna was anxious to show off her oldest grandchild, Andrew. He left for college and sent her a text photo of himself in his dorm

room. She is so proud of Andrew and spoke of how he was awarded the "best hair" in his high school class of 600 graduates. Andrew plans to cut his hair and in the photo, it was much shorter. Donna showed the photo to everyone she met all week long.

Monday, she came displaying her "group text." She was ready to read the groups' comments to us out loud. Donna is hooked on the text feature.

Her granddaughter in Minnesota, Emily, texted to ask, "How is Andrew doing at college?" Donna happily forwarded the photo of him in his dorm. Emily zinged back her response, "That's not Andrew!" After a closer look, Donna realized the photo was not her grandson at all. Who was that young man who bears resemblance to her grandson Andrew?

Before Donna could send anything, she received another text photo from Andrew posing for his first day of college classes. There he stood, tall with very long "new bleached blonde" hair!

The boy in the first photo was his roommate with long hair, but much shorter than Andrew's.

Oh, the things we accomplish with smart phones nowadays! And to think, we once had to wait at least until October or Thanksgiving to see our children once they left for college. If we want, now we can Facetime them daily on the smart phone.

What used to require the space of a small home for a computer now fits in the palm of our hand. In addition, the power of that little smart phone is infinitely greater than those first computers.

We've come a long way. Thank you for the technological advances, baby boomers! You got us to the moon and back.

Now, how do I turn this dang thing off?

Hearty, Wholesome Winter Meals

BY FAMILY FEATURES

Seeking comfort from the cold in the form of a wholesome meal is a perfect way to cap off a day with loved ones. During the winter months when brisk temperatures chill you to the bone, warming up with hearty dishes at the family table can bring everyone together.

- Full of seasonal flavors with top-notch taste, Pecan-Crusted Pork Tenderloin offers a delicious main course you don't have to feel guilty about. This easy yet elegant entree puts a unique spin on a dinnertime staple thanks to a crunchy pecan crust.

- With cheddar and ricotta cheeses, sour cream and cavatappi noodles, this Mac and Cheese with Pecan Breadcrumbs is an extra creamy, creative twist on the kid-friendly classic. Pair this family favorite with the pork tenderloin for an easy weeknight combination that little ones can help with in the kitchen by stirring together the cheesy goodness.

This family dinner is made possible with tasty pecans, which are among the lowest in carbs and highest in fiber compared to other tree nuts, helping you stay fuller longer. As a nutrient-dense powerhouse, they have 3 grams of plant-based protein and 3 grams of fiber per 1-ounce serving with 12 grams of “good” monounsaturated fat and only 2 grams of saturated fat. Essential nutrients like thiamin, zinc, copper and manganese — a mineral that’s essential for metabolism and bone health — mean you can feel good about serving pecan-infused dishes to your loved ones.

Visit americanpecan.com to find more winter weeknight recipe inspiration.

Pecan-Crusted Pork Tenderloin

Total time: 35 minutes | Servings: 6

- 1 pork tenderloin (about 1 1/2 pounds)
- salt, to taste
- pepper, to taste
- 1/2 cup brown sugar, divided
- 2 tablespoons soy sauce, divided
- 2 teaspoons minced garlic
- 1/2 cup pecan pieces
- 1/4 cup pineapple juice
- 2 tablespoons Dijon mustard

Preheat oven to 400 F and lightly grease large baking dish. Season pork tenderloin with salt and pepper, to taste; set aside.

In small bowl, stir 1/4 cup brown sugar, 1 tablespoon soy sauce and minced garlic. Spread mixture over pork.

Press pecan pieces into brown sugar mixture on pork. Bake, uncovered, 20 minutes.

In medium saucepan over medium-high heat, combine remaining brown sugar, remaining soy sauce, pineapple juice and Dijon mustard. Bring mixture to boil; reduce to simmer 3-5 minutes then remove from heat.

Slice pork, spoon sauce over top and serve.



Mac and Cheese with Pecan Breadcrumbs

Total time: 50 minutes | Servings: 6

8 ounces cavatappi pasta
1 tablespoon butter
1 block (8 ounces) cheddar cheese
1/2 cup raw pecan pieces
15 ounces part-skim ricotta cheese
4 tablespoons sour cream
1 teaspoon salt
1/4 teaspoon ground pepper
1 large egg, lightly beaten



Preheat oven to 375 F.

In salted boiling water, cook pasta according to package instructions. Drain, reserving 1/2 cup pasta cooking water. Return pasta to pot and stir in butter.

Using box grater, shred cheddar cheese.

Using food processor, process 1/4 cup shredded cheese with pecans to coarse breadcrumb consistency.

Add remaining cheddar cheese, ricotta, sour cream, salt and pepper to warm pasta. Stir until thoroughly combined. Add egg; stir. Add reserved pasta water to loosen mixture; stir until smooth.

Pour into buttered 9-inch square or round casserole dish and top evenly with pecan topping.

Bake 30 minutes.





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