

# SONOMA SENIORS



COUNCIL ON AGING

Today

MARCH 2009

## Senior Homes? No Thanks, Says the Eritrean Community

*Parents expect, and receive, care from grateful children*

by Bonnie Allen

**M**edhane Kidane is a busy man. He commutes from his job as a financial analyst at Fetzer Vineyards in Hopland and Sonoma-Cutrer in Windsor to Sonoma State University, where he is studying for his MBA.

On the way, he stops at his brother's house in Windsor to visit with his mother, Fana (his father passed away three years ago), and make sure she has everything she needs. How does he find the time?

"I believe that if you really want to do something, there's always time to do it," says Kidane. In Eritrean society it is expected that children will care for their parents. Moreover, unlike typical American parents, Eritrean parents themselves believe such care is their right and don't feel they are imposing.

It's an age-old unwritten contract. "Parents," says Kidane, "provide for us and in return, children have the responsibility to return that obligation."

There is, says Kidane, a reverence for parents that recognizes the real sacrifices that Eritrean parents have made to raise their children amidst poverty and war. And Kidane has much to thank his parents for; his father taught himself to read and write because he valued education. In turn, he sacrificed so that Kidane could go to school and college.

It was not easy. "My father had very difficult rules. We had to work with him half a day—he had a shop of his own—and half a day we went to school."

Though illiterate herself, Fana, like another mother in the news recently—President Obama's—rose at 4 AM to get her children up and studying.

Because of his professional training and experience in accounting and finance, Kidane was able to apply for a diversity visa. This program, little known in the U.S., allows trained applicants from under-

represented countries to enter a lottery for a visa to be awarded to 50,000 applicants every year. He was lucky enough to be chosen, and came to the U.S. in 2002.

Despite hardship, Eritreans value education so much that one father sold all of his cattle to send his eldest son to school.

A tradition of large families (Kidane is one of 11 siblings) provides a cushion when care might otherwise be lacking.

Fana's parents died when she was small and she was raised by her elder sister. And although his own siblings have relocated all over the world, he has a brother and sister near enough to help care for his mother.

People sometimes ask Kidane how he can do so much for his mother.

"I say, these people gave me life, they gave me whatever I have today. They did everything to provide for their children. I understand that that's our tradition, but we have to show an appreciation for what they did for us."

In addition to family obligations, a network consisting of friends, extended family and church binds the Eritrean community together.

"Eritreans in Santa Rosa," says Kidane, "think like family; they take care of each other and visit each other and help each other when there's a need. On weekends there's always people coming to visit my mother, whether from Santa Rosa or San Francisco or whatever. And sometimes they take her to their home and she stays there for maybe a couple of days."

This strong bond of mutual obligation is what sets traditional societies apart from modern American tradition. Can the two be reconciled?

Kidane admits that U.S. born children of the Eritrean community sometimes feel less family commitment than the foreign-born. And the culture as a whole is evolving. Would he like to have 11 children?



**Medhane Kidane's parents, Gebretinsai and Fana**

"Oh, my god, no," he laughs. "That's changing. Life was very simple in Eritrea; you could provide with very little, and people were happy with fewer things. Everything is harder now. It's very hard to raise two children, let alone 11, in the U.S."

Everything is harder now? A novel perspective on our privileged American lifestyle.

Meanwhile, life in Eritrea is changing. Kidane was born in Asmara, a large, modern city with excellent schools, where education is increasingly available to boys.

Opportunities are growing for girls as well. Fana was required to marry at age 15, but Eritrean girls today are more likely to be able to choose their own destiny.

### What can we learn?

Today's busy baby boomers are now considering care for their aging parents. Compounding their difficulties is the fact that many parents don't want to be a burden on their children. Given this dilemma, the retirement home option is often suggested, and acquiesced to by the parents. Is it for the best?

In countless interviews with elders, we hear the lament, "I don't want to be around just old people," or, "being around young people makes me feel younger." (See Bess Ballard, page 5, for instance.)

Perhaps we need to take a lesson from a culture that is straddling the divide between tradition and modern American life.

*Inside.....*

NEW! Ask Kate .....	page 2
Aging at Home .....	page 3
Mama's Revenge .....	page 4
Bess Ballard .....	page 5
Dave Silva .....	page 6
Leaving Your Legacy .....	page 6
Crossword & Sudoku .....	page 7
Save the Date .....	page 8



**Council on Aging  
Services for Seniors**  
30 Kawana Springs Road  
Santa Rosa, CA 95404

Nonprofit Org.  
U.S. Postage  
**PAID**  
Permit No. 341  
Santa Rosa, CA 95401



# Ask Kate

by Kate Maxwell,  
Ph.D., MFT  
Clinical Supervisor,  
Council on Aging

## Dear Kate,

I live a few miles from town, and I know that I shouldn't be driving anymore, because I've had some close calls. I haven't told my daughter about my driving, but she is insisting that I move into town. I love my home and I don't want to leave it. My husband died three years ago, and we raised our children here, but they don't want to live here and all of them live in other areas. I don't know what to do. What do you suggest?

—A Few Miles From Calistoga

## Dear Few Miles From Calistoga,

Thank you for writing about some very serious issues. About the driving, you are very wise to acknowledge, even to yourself, that you are not as safe as you used to be. Everyone reaches this dilemma eventually, and the problem has many elements. No one wants to give up driving when it means loss of freedom and isolation. Isolation is the primary problem, because with isolation comes possible depression or anxiety and increasing health problems. You can't count on public transportation, because it is basically non-existent throughout the rural county. If you have the funds to hire a taxi or someone to drive, you can avoid the isolation, but otherwise you need a different solution.

Don't try to make your decisions on your own. Confer with family, friends or clergy who have a history of being there for you. Try to look forward five to ten years and imagine how you might be feeling, both emotionally and physically, and discuss your projection with a neutral person. There may be a nearby agency that can offer you resources.

On a note of caution, your children may be unwilling to accept the changing needs and declining energy or health of their mother. They want to see you continue in the same manner you always have, so some of them will deny that your needs are changing.

Your children generally have created lives with their own directions, just as you did when you were raising your own family. Try to remember your own relationship with your parents when you were your children's age. Remembering may help you to understand if your children are unwilling to fulfill your dream of passing home and treasured belongings on to them.

Leaving your home can be devastating, but it can also be freeing. The upkeep of a home can become overwhelming, and will certainly become so over time. Try to imagine how it would be to find a comfortable home or apartment within

# Scam Alert!

**Homeowners:** Did you get a letter in the mail offering to lower your property taxes if you pay \$179 (or some other amount) to have your property tax reassessed? It comes with a green payment envelope that looks just like the green envelope that comes with your official property tax bill from the Sonoma County Tax Assessor.

## Don't fall for this scam!

Sonoma County is already reassessing property values because of the housing downturn. But if you want to request a property tax reassessment, simply go to [sonoma-county.org/Assessor](http://sonoma-county.org/Assessor) on the Internet, or call 565-1888.

**Tip:** Always read the fine print. Only the fine print in these scam letters tells you that they're not official county notices..

*Your Concern...*



*is our expertise.*

**HIRED HANDS INC.**  
**Homecare**  
*Trustworthy & Compassionate Caregiving*

We provide comprehensive Non-medical Homecare Services, enabling our clients to maintain their quality of life, safely and comfortably at home.

**HIRED HANDS INC. is family-owned & operated, and has been dedicated to Seniors since 1994.**

*Now serving Sonoma Co. from our NEW Rohnert Park office!*

**707-584-5400**  
**WWW.HIREDHANDSHOMECARE.COM**

walking distance of shopping and community resources. Begin to plan, in as much detail as possible, just what you would like to have. Imagine the freedom that could exist when you don't have to get the lawn mowed, trim the trees and bushes, paint the house, fix the plumbing, and so forth. You may see the benefits of making a move sooner rather than later—when the transition could be far more complicated as a result of unanticipated health issues.

Let me suggest that you make a list, putting the "pros" for moving on one side of the paper and the "cons" on the other. Revisit your list every few days and share it with your trusted advisors. This process will help you make a decision you can live with. Remember that there is no perfect solution, but you *can* find a *good* solution.

*Have a question about aging issues or family dynamics? Send it to Kate Maxwell at Council on Aging, 30 Kawana Springs Rd., Santa Rosa, or email to [kmaxwell@councilonaging.com](mailto:kmaxwell@councilonaging.com).*

# Sonoma Seniors Today

published monthly by



COUNCIL ON AGING  
SERVICES FOR SENIORS

30 Kawana Springs Road  
Santa Rosa, CA 95404

707-525-0143 • 800-675-0143

Fax 707-525-0454

[www.councilonaging.com](http://www.councilonaging.com)

Interim Chief Executive Officer: Mare O'Connell

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Bonnie Burrell, President

Jeff Beeson, Vice President

Lee Cachola, Margaret Clift, Carroll Estes, Ph.D.,

Corrine Lorenzen, Jeffrey Madura, Terry Moore,

Michael Randolph, John Reyes

and Komron Shahhosseini.

## Contributions, Letters & Subscriptions

Editor: Bonnie Allen

(707) 763-2544

Email: [SonomaSeniorsToday@gmail.com](mailto:SonomaSeniorsToday@gmail.com)

## Contributors:

Kate Maxwell, Marianne MacBride,

Lenore Pimental, Christine O'Brien

## Proofreading Assistance:

Steve Della Maggiora

Distribution Manager: Stacey Shade

Advertising: Kerrie Kennedy, 525-0143, ext. 112

[kkennedy@councilonaging.com](mailto:kkennedy@councilonaging.com)

*Sonoma Seniors Today* is a publication of Council on Aging, 30 Kawana Springs Road, Santa Rosa, CA 95404, (707) 525-0143

Email: [information@councilonaging.com](mailto:information@councilonaging.com)

[www.councilonaging.com](http://www.councilonaging.com)

*Sonoma Seniors Today* strives to share a variety of viewpoints on subjects of interest to a broad range of its readership. Opinions and viewpoints expressed by contributors and those interviewed for articles do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the Council on Aging. Readers are invited to share their ideas, opinions and viewpoints by writing to this publication. Suggestions for improving this publication are given careful consideration, and letters to the editor are welcomed. Photographs may also be submitted.

*Editor's note: Publication of all material is at the discretion of the editor; originals become the property of SST and cannot be returned. Mail all submissions to Sonoma Seniors Today c/o Council on Aging, 30 Kawana Springs Road, Santa Rosa, CA 95404.*

All rights reserved

© 2009 Council on Aging

# Come Home to VALLEY ORCHARDS...



Celebrating  
**25 Years**  
of Excellence

## Active Retirement Living in Beautiful Sonoma County

Rates as Low as **\$1,490** Including All Meals and Services (new residents only)

Call for more information:

**(707) 778-6030**

2100 East Washington St.  
Petaluma, CA 94954

[www.ValleyOrchards.com](http://www.ValleyOrchards.com)

Visit our Napa Valley Community - [www.SilveradoOrchards.com](http://www.SilveradoOrchards.com)



Family Owned & Operated  
Continuously Since 1983

A FULL SERVICE RETIREMENT COMMUNITY



# Council on Aging Donors

Many thanks to our generous donors who made gifts to Council on Aging's programs and the Holiday Appeal January 8, 2009, through February 9, 2009.

## GENERAL FUND

### \$100-\$249

Alex Bendahan  
Mr. and Mrs. Robert Guske  
Cathy Haralson  
Policy Now Insurance Services

### \$1-\$99

Law Office of William Cutler  
David Valente

## FINANCIAL SERVICES

### \$100-\$249

Mark and Maria Brown

### \$1-\$99

Marna Garriety

## MEALS ON WHEELS

### \$5000 and above

John and Jeanne Johnson

### \$1000-\$2499

Eve Lewis

### \$500-\$999

The Bob and Marie Gallo Foundation  
J. Scott & Carol Kenyon

### \$250-\$499

James Reinemer

### \$100-\$249

Elisabeth Jensen  
Santa Rosa Boat Club

### \$1-\$99

William and Sally Condon  
Thomas and Carin Cutler  
G. M. Fitzgerald  
Marshall and Blanche Johnson  
Mark Pedroia  
Guadalupe Roman Moreno  
Opal Tantarelli  
Dorothy Tarver

## HEALDSBURG

## MEALS ON WHEELS

### \$250-\$499

Frank Howard Allen  
Realtors

### \$1-\$99

Wayne and Margaret Burrell  
Patricia Coffaro  
Cutting Edge Optical  
P. M. Gillespie  
Joe Trouette

## HOLIDAY APPEAL

### \$250-\$499

Fred and Liz Flynn  
Barbara Gegan

### \$100-\$249

Elyse and Dana Devon  
Dry Creek Neighbors  
Hee-Won Kang & Ronald Roberts  
Wendy Merget  
Suzann Ragsdale  
Diane Stewart & David Zezza  
Herbert and Louise Sullivan  
Randall and Laura Verniers

### \$50-\$99

Anonymous  
Sheila and Edmund Brush

Judith and M. Edgar Deas  
Jon Diederich & G.S. Patterson  
Nadine Foreman  
Carlisle Holland, D.O.  
Emily Hough  
M. L. Konrad  
Mackey Picture Frame Co.  
Richard and Joyce Peterson  
Thomas Pierce  
Kenneth M. Rose C.P.A.  
Steve Sagehorn  
Harry Sheehan  
Steve Werle  
Horace Lee Willis  
Michael and Patricia Winters

### \$1-\$49

Wayne and Carolyn Adkins  
Edward and Caroline Broll  
Patrick Brummal and William Zuur, POA  
Danita Haynes  
Ursula Juricich  
Mary Kimble  
Walter Klinger  
May Lihtz  
Gail Mattei  
Eugene and Mary McCreary  
Dennis and Patty Murch  
William and Catherine Newman  
Helen and Len Silva  
Beverly Wallstrum

## MEMORIAL GIFTS

*In Memory of Peter Mazzucchi*  
Matteri Family Family

*In Memory of Jann Kalbaugh*  
Valeska Lattin

*In Memory of Estelle Ratner*  
Marlene Alves

*In Memory of Agnes Marson*  
Marlene Alves



## HONORARY GIFTS

*In Honor of Dick and Maureen Latimer*  
John and Kelly Latimer



*Any errors or omissions in these listings are inadvertent. If your name was omitted in error, please accept our apologies and let us know. We will print a correction in a future issue.*

## Aging at Home—Some Models

by Bonnie Allen

Fana Kidane (see page 1) lives in a family home surrounded by her children and grandchildren. But not everyone has a family support group nearby. Does modern American life for those who are childless or far away from their children mandate an inevitable progression toward the nursing home?

Sooner or later, there are certain things you can't do. Maybe you have no problem getting on a ladder to change a lightbulb, but reaching under a sink to fix a leak is beyond you. Some older adults have found a way around this dilemma, or at least, a way of remaining in their home much longer than they otherwise could have.

George and Anne Allen of Washington, DC, both in their eighties, found themselves struggling at home after injuries compromised their mobility. But they didn't want to leave their neighborhood, where they had formed relationships going back generations.

Their neighborhood had become what sociologists call a naturally occurring retirement community (NORC), as neighbors aged together. So the Allens banded together with their neighbors, formed a non-profit mutual care group with membership and dues, and lined up prescreened service providers such as housecleaners, handymen, nurses, and transportation services to be on call for members of the group.

More than 100 such organizations—often calling themselves “villages”—have

formed around the country, to make living at home easier and more comfortable as members age.

These self-organized groups can be pricey—with monthly fees of \$100 or more—but they are a lot less expensive than a nursing home. They do require a commitment to create the organization and a fair number of neighbors who want to participate.

Another model for self-help is a New York-based organization called Caring Collaborative (<http://tinyurl.com/CaringCollaborative>) which defines itself as “an innovative model for aging in community.” Funded by a foundation called The Transition Network, a Caring Collaborative is a membership organization in which members contribute their skills and use the skills of other members. A computerized database keeps track of hours of service given and received. Perhaps you need a garage cleaned out, and you are able to offer computer instruction. Someone will be able to clean the garage, and someone else in the collaborative may need to learn how to send photos over the Internet.

### The technological fix

For those with health or memory problems, a whole class of electronic sensors is making its debut. One such system is called “eNeighbor.” Using installed motion sensors, the system can keep track of your movements and detect

To leave a bequest is to make a permanent statement of your values. It is by this act of charity that the world will remember what you cared about and what you stood for. If providing for seniors matters to you, consider a gift to **COUNCIL ON AGING** in your estate plans.

deviations from your normal pattern. For instance, if sensor data indicate you may have fallen or lost consciousness, eNeighbor tries to contact you, and if they can't, they'll come to your house.

Other sensors can monitor your meds, check your blood pressure and blood sugar, and even greet you each morning and remind you to take your medicines. Clients of some systems receive a daily call from a registered nurse.

All this may seem intrusive, but again, it's far less intrusive than the care you'd receive in a nursing home. And far less expensive, a factor to consider as we confront an increasingly strapped public healthcare system for older adults.

These systems are too new for experts to say confidently whether they are a good idea. One downside is that family members may visit less frequently, believing that the sensors will alert them to any problems. Likewise, they may lead to less face-to-face contact with healthcare providers. And they are not covered by health insurance or government programs.

The good news is that, if the kinks can be worked out, technological solutions could keep more people in their homes longer in a time when we face a severe shortage of nursing home beds and public money to cover the costs for low-income elders with life-threatening needs.

# Mama's Revenge

*A story for National Women's History Month.*

*Indeed, a story for St. Patrick's Day* By Lenore Pimental

In our neighborhood in Brooklyn, New York, there was a saloon on every second block, alternating with a church or synagogue. This was in the 1950s. When my two oldest sisters, both in their late teens, walked by Gallagher's Bar and Grill on our corner they were greeted with whistles, rude remarks and obscene invitations by the group of half-drunk men always gathered there. My sisters called it "walking the gauntlet."

"They're hooligans," my Irish mother said angrily, and called the manager of the bar. He said he'd take care of it. Nothing changed.

My mother then went to our parish priest, Father O'Rourke, and complained that her daughters were being publicly humiliated on a daily basis along with all the other women in our neighborhood. Gallagher's bar was directly in the path of the subway, the bus line and our Catholic Church.

"I suppose we could switch our allegiance to St. Xavier's," my mother said. "It lies in the other direction."

"Nonsense, Agnes. I'll see to it." Father O'Rourke hated to lose his parishioners to other churches, and he knew as well as we that the culprits were errant Catholics from local families – the Flannigan men, the Murphy boys, and the Connor clan. All Irish. All big drinkers. All rowdy trouble-makers.

Father O'Rourke was observed the very next day outside Gallagher's bar talking and laughing with the men. He then went inside with them and had a drink or two or three, himself. In addition to the usual stale smell of beer and cigarettes emanating from the bar, there now came the sound of maudlin Irish songs. Everyone telephoned my mother.

When Father O'Rourke emerged, there was my mother standing with folded arms, looking grim.

"Now, now Agnes. Don't get in a huff. They're just fun-loving lads and I've talked to them. They promised to stop the shenanigans, to watch their manners. I'm sure we'll all see a vast improvement in the neighborhood."

"Indeed," my mother said, and watched her priest weave his way down the street.

The situation did not improve. If

anything, it escalated. "All right, then," my mother said. "This is war."

We had in our house gallons of an institution-strength cleaner used in hospital operating rooms. It was called "C and N" disinfectant and was meant to be diluted at one tablespoon of cleaner to one gallon of hot water. Even diluted, the solution brought tears to our eyes and made our nasal passages burn. Ours was the only apartment in all of Brooklyn that had never had a cockroach and we knew it was due to Mama's cleaning solution. The stuff was lethal.

Just before dawn the next day my mother slipped out of our apartment. I watched from my window as she crossed the street to Gallagher's and proceeded to pour the cleaning fluid, full strength, on the front sidewalk, the awning, the windows and door. I slammed my window shut because the fumes were streaming everywhere. Then my mother came home.

No one stood in front of Gallagher's all week. The manager tried hosing down the establishment, but that just released a cloud of poisonous fumes and had everyone coughing. The smell lingered for days, and it did not help that my mother repeated her ritual several more times.

The harassment of women ceased entirely. Father O'Rourke preached for several Sundays on the inadvisability of taking revenge into one's own hands: "Revenge is mine sayeth the Lord," he thundered, but my mother just smiled serenely.

"Why didn't we complain to the police, Mama?" I asked. I was eight years old and just beginning to realize that my mother was no ordinary woman.

"Because the New York City police are all Irish," she said, "and Irish men stick together. Now say not a word to anyone about what I've done. And especially don't tell your father." My parents were separated by then.

I promised. And this is the first time in sixty years I've mentioned it. Or any of the thousand and one other tactics my mother



Lenore Pimental and a picture of her mother, "who preferred not to be photographed"

used to deal with inequities – like uniting the grandmothers of drug dealers and having them patrol our streets, like calling on a local wife-beater with several of her women friends, like setting up a "child watch" among the neighbors so that we kids could play safely. Embarrassing, outspoken, as far removed from nun-like as she could be, my mother was a force. She made me proud.

It did not surprise me to learn after her death that my mother had been a member of the secret Sinn Fein Movement in Ireland as a teenager, involved in several undercover operations designed to force England out of Ireland. This may explain how it was that she emigrated at such a young age, only seventeen, interrupting her education at a renowned boarding school where she had won a scholarship. It also explains my mother's unconditional support of me in my women's liberation activities, my anti-war work, my habit of bypassing bureaucracies as a social worker.

"You've become your mother's daughter," she'd say, and beam at me. I'd just stand there and grin back at her. When I was small and frequently in trouble, I was dubbed my father's daughter. I much preferred this new alliance. It mattered.



TWEETEN  
ELDERCARE  
ADVISORS

Free assisted  
living placement  
for seniors and  
families

707.570.2589 ■ [tweeteneldercare.com](http://tweeteneldercare.com)

UPDATE: Planning to attend the 10th Annual Older Americans Month Senior Art Show this May? The show has been moved to a new time and location: Sep. 28-Nov. 24 at the Finley Center. Entry forms for art will go out in June.

golden  
living centers

Golden Living Center Santa Rosa

24 Hour Skilled Nursing Needs focusing on:

- ❖ Short-Term Rehabilitation
- ❖ Long-Term Nursing Needs
- ❖ Respite Care
- ❖ Stroke Recovery

Take a Tour Today!  
4650 Hoen Avenue  
Santa Rosa, CA  
707-546-0471

Move in by Feb 1  
1 MONTH  
FREE

Santa Rosa  
*La Esplanada*  
Apartments for Seniors

From \$800 per month  
limited time only

Brand New 2-Bedroom Units  
Granite Countertops  
Crown Molding  
Bathroom Tile  
Bocci Ball Court  
Putting Green  
Close to Hospital

Gated Community  
Upgraded Carpet  
Hardwood Floors  
Maple Cabinets  
Park-like Setting  
Parking Available  
Close to Shopping

An Active Community  
For Adults 55 Years and Up  
877-765-2888

# Independent Streak Leads to Life on Her Own Terms

## A Biography of Bess Ballard

Adapted from an interview by Christine O'Brien

How refreshing it is in this day and age to meet someone as strong-willed, determined and self-sufficient as Bess Ballard, who has seen, experienced and accomplished so much in her life and has such a great attitude. I feel privileged to have spent time with this remarkable woman, and I hope that after reading this you will see what I see in her.

Bess Ballard was born November 16, 1919, in Chandler, Oklahoma, one of seven siblings. Her mother died when she was only two weeks old. Her father soon remarried, and two stepsisters and one stepbrother were added to the family. Both of her parents were farmers.

Bess went to a little country school called Stony Point through the eighth grade. There, she remembers, she and her sister played on the boys baseball team because there weren't enough boys to make a team.

After finishing eighth grade, Bess went to Chandler High School. In her senior year, she and two cousins rented an apartment 28 miles away in Shawnee, so they could attend St. Benedict's, a Catholic high school. At age 18, Bess married her boyfriend of several years, and the two raised three boys, all born at home, and a daughter, Jean, born in a hospital after they moved to California.

Raising four children didn't stop Bess from having an astonishingly varied career. In Chandler, she and her husband owned a full-service laundromat. People could do their own laundry or have Bess do it for them. Her main full-service clients were the men who worked in the oil fields. The men's clothes were filthy and very difficult to clean, but Bess always did her best. Sometimes, men would leave money in their pockets, as much as twenty-five dollars, and Bess would always see that it was returned to them. Her husband also operated a dairy during this time.

While her children were small, Bess took care of other children as well. She recalls taking the kids to church, where people would ask, "Are all these kids yours or is this a picnic?" Bess would respond tartly, "Yes, they're all mine and this is no picnic."

Bess also worked on a farm, where she would tell the farmers how much of a crop they had and how much they could plant; then at a company that rebuilt car batteries, where she was the only female employee, continuing a trend toward ignoring gender-based job barriers that would last her whole life.

But it was hard to make a living in Oklahoma, and eventually the family moved to California; Bess's sister and brother-in-law had bought a lumber mill here, and Bess's husband was able to work at the mill.

In her late 30s, Bess got a job at Rockwell International—now called Boeing—inspecting plane parts and solar panels. Then she became a machinist; Boeing believed that women would make



good machinists, because they were more patient than men. Bess was on the machine for seven years. Then a supervisor recommended her to the planning and testing department, a salaried position. Then a bad car accident left her out of work for six months with both legs broken and her head cut open. On her return, she rejoined the union and worked with all men; she liked working with men because if they had something to say, "they would say it right there to your face and then it was over."

Bess always enjoyed her work and she was good at it. "It pays to be a good employee," she said. "If you put your heart in it and if you really try, you can get just as far as anyone else." She added, "if someone doesn't like their work, it's probably because they are not good at it."

Always resourceful, when she feared she might lose her job during an economic downturn, Bess decided to help her brother Patrick sell real estate. She held some open houses for him, became interested in real estate herself and graduated from the Century 21 real estate program in 1980.

After twenty-five years at Boeing, Bess retired with an excellent pension and benefits. By this time, she and her husband had divorced, and Bess was not about to sit around and get old. When you stop working, says Bess, "you get older faster."

After retirement, she kept busy—helping others. She became a chaplain at a local hospital and also did sewing for a senior citizens home called the Lamplighter. At her age, she said, it was tough to find a job. But not ready to give up working entirely, she finally landed a job—as a bar maid!

There she met and married a musician from a country and western band called "Ellis Bridges and his Country Masters." The marriage lasted ten years, until he retired and wanted to move to Georgia. Bess preferred to stay near her children.

Bess's daughter Jean lives in Southern California, and her two living sons are in Santa Rosa. Bess has three grandchildren and three great-grandchildren.

The greatest lesson she has learned, says Bess, is to depend on yourself and not on anyone else. She has been independent for much of her life and says that she likes it because "you can eat when you want, get up when you want, and go to bed when you want." At 89, she has lived independently in her Santa Rosa apartment for eleven years.

Her favorite ritual of the day is to get up, throw her robe on, and drink coffee while reading the morning newspaper. She goes to church when she can, does yoga, and stays active by taking her scooter to the mall or down to the corner store. She likes to be around young people because "it keeps you younger."

Christine O'Brien is a 21-year-old senior at Sonoma State University, majoring in Sociology.

**Get more out of life with a reverse mortgage**

Live better today, be more prepared for the future

MetLife

**A free video from MetLife Bank can show you how.**

If you're a homeowner age 62 or older, a reverse mortgage could give you the financial flexibility you need. MetLife Bank has the expertise and financial strength to help you get the most from this important financial tool. **Call today for your free reverse mortgage video—there's no obligation.**

**Wally Tice**  
**Reverse Mortgage Consultant**  
**(707) 360-5861**

**MetLife**

**For the if in life.®**

Mortgage financing provided by MetLife Bank, N.A., Member FDIC. Equal Housing Lender.  
© 2008 METLIFE, INC. L0401485[exp0509][All States][DC]  
PEANUTS © United Feature Syndicate, Inc.

# Despair and Renewal—The Dave Silva Story

*A born teacher, he inspires others with his hard-earned insights*

by Bonnie Allen

Dave Silva had it all—a beautiful home in the West County, a fulfilling career as a teacher, and a loving wife.

Then his wife passed away, and then he was sidelined by heart disease and arthritis. With no income, he couldn't meet his house payments.

"The payments weren't much, but I couldn't pay them," says Silva, who lost his home and now lives in senior mobile home housing in Santa Rosa.

"I was really down when I got here. I just sat in that chair over there for hours, all night, trying to figure out what to do. The doctor sent me to a pain counselor. Now, I'd sent people to psychiatrists for 40 years. This time I went myself.

"The first thing he asked me was, 'What's your self-image like?' I didn't want to answer, because I knew what my self-image was: I was a dying old man. And that's the way I saw myself. I never looked in the mirror except to trim my beard, because I didn't want to see myself.

"So I told him I didn't want to talk about that." They talked about other things, while Silva thought to himself, "this is Mickey Mouse stuff, I don't need this."

"When I left he said, 'you were a teacher; I'm giving you some homework.'"

The counselor gave him two pieces of paper. On one he was for him to write all the things he liked about himself; and the other, all the things he didn't like.

"So I took it home and it sat on my table for a week, and then I thought I'd better at least try to do this. So I started in and in about five minutes I had about seven or eight things I didn't like about myself—that was really easy."

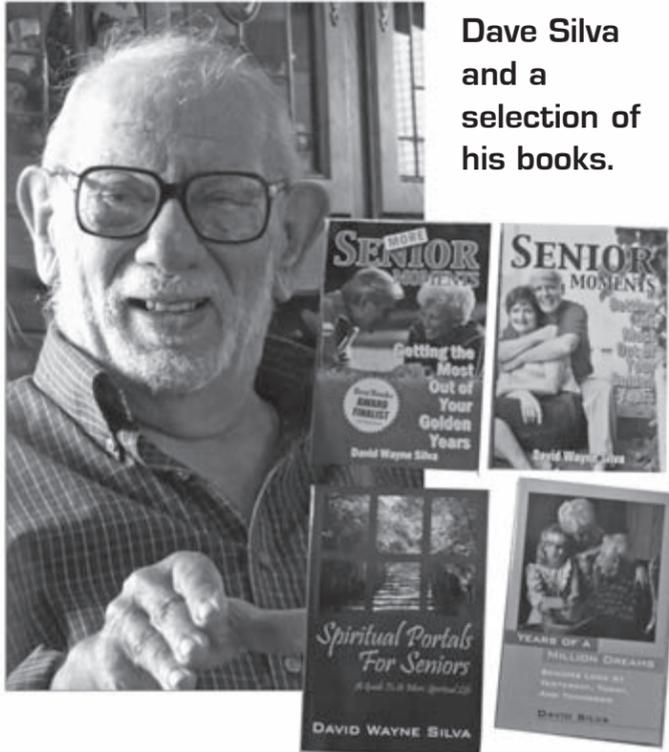
"Then I started in on the other side," says Silva. That's when he lost track of time. "I must have written for a couple of hours! I had pages of stuff I'd forgotten about. I forgot all the work I did, my lovely wife, my children—I forgot everything. All I could think about was being a dying old man. And I realized what I was doing to myself. I sat at this table and I just cried. I realized what I was doing with my mind."

The experience changed his life. In the days following the breakthrough, another experience pointed the direction for his future life: to share his new understanding.

A co-worker came to visit. She sat facing a mirror as it happened, and Silva noticed that she kept looking at that mirror and frowning and looking away.

Silva was puzzled and asked her if the mirror was crooked. And she said, "no, I just hate mirrors. Every time I look in one I see this wrinkled up old lady."

"I said, well, wrinkles go with the territory—I mean look at me. And she said no, they look good on you but they don't look good on me. So when she left I gave her the homework assignment. A couple of days later she came to the door and I opened it. She threw her arms around me and kissed me.



Dave Silva and a selection of his books.

Silva's first thought was to share his experience. "My caretaker got me a scooter so I could go around the park and take the dog, and I started talking with people. And so many people had no self-image at all. So I started writing."

He's now the published author of three books, with a fourth one on the way. (For a review of *Years of a Million Dreams: Seniors look at yesterday, today and tomorrow*, see *Sonoma Seniors Today*, January 2009.) The books have been well-received, and his second book carries a sticker as a finalist in the USA Book Awards.

Silva began giving free lectures at senior centers around the county. He shared simple wisdom and tips for daily living. He's fond of telling about how he went to the doctor once, and she asked him to remove his pants.

"Oh, I can't do that," he said.

"You mean you're not wearing underwear," she said kindly. Many older men go without underwear, because it's so hard to put them on.

The doctor showed him an easy way to put on his underwear. "It was so easy," he laughs, "later I went around the park showing all these old men how to get into their underwear."

Recently, Silva's health problems took a turn for the worse, and he became unable to get up and down the stairs to his mobile home. He had to cancel his beloved rounds and his lectures. In January, he put out a plea for a wheelchair lift, and on February 13, received an early Valentine: a donated lift was installed. Now he'll be able to start lecturing again.

"Seniors," he says, "get put on a shelf. Sixty percent of the seniors in convalescent homes don't even get a visitor once a year."

"In a general lecture, I talk about self image first. Then I ask them to tell me about their self image. Loneliness, losing their partners, taking care of themselves as a tribute to the person they loved." He admonishes people to pay tribute to their deceased spouses by follow their advice: "Take care of yourself and find another partner." Silva's father was a Portuguese

## Leaving Your Legacy



### Take Two for the Team

By Marianne McBride  
Director of Development

Just recently, I heard an interesting story that warranted repeating:

Even the frosty winter weather could not keep the four friends from following through on their New Year's resolutions. For more years than anyone could remember, Mary, Paul, Tom and Lynne got together on the first Saturday after New Year's Day. Their purpose was always the same: to start the year by doing something good for someone else.

As they tossed around ideas for their good deeds Paul suggested, "Let's take two." The others looked at him with puzzled faces. Paul said they could each make an appointment with their lawyer during the coming week to revise their wills and include a gift to their favorite charity for 2% of their estates. They all thought it was a marvelous idea.

They would not miss the money because the gift would not be made until they were gone. Since 2% was such a modest amount, no family member could miss inheriting it. But it would certainly be a lasting legacy.

Once you have made the decision to remember a charity in your estate plans, the bequest language that you use will direct the charitable organization in how you want your gift to be used. For example:

*I hereby give, devise and bequeath to (insert organization name), a California non-profit corporation (address), 2% of my estate to be used for the benefit of said organization in such manner as the Trustees thereof direct, in their absolute and sole discretion.*

What an amazing world it would be if we all committed to "taking two."

farmer, who wanted Silva to follow in his footsteps.

"But I wanted to be a schoolteacher so bad," he says. "After I graduated, I worked all summer on the farm and when it was time for college to start, I hitch-hiked to Stockton and submitted them to UOP. They gave me a place to live and paid my tuition.

Silva taught music, chorus, band, drama, English, and drivers education.

He designed a small school with a staff of three teachers. "People came from all over to see it. My dad came, and saw it and started crying. He said, 'I'm so sorry. I didn't realize that you had a dream too.'"

Living across from Maria Carrillo High School, Silva keeps in touch with today's youth, who enjoy petting his dog. He finds them sophisticated and ambitious, compared with students of a generation ago.

To order or learn more about Dave Silva's books, visit [Seniormomentsbooks.com](http://Seniormomentsbooks.com), or call 707-537-8673.

Paid advertisement



### Life at the Gardens

by Sheila Almquist  
Sales and Marketing Director

You might be wondering what gardens we are talking about. As the new Marketing Director at Oakmont Gardens, Senior Living Community, I found a hidden treasure, a community within a community. A senior, rental, apartment community that is full of conveniences and services. It's a hidden secret nestled in the village of Oakmont, off of Highway 12, here in Santa Rosa. The best part of this secret is the life the residents enjoy, living here at the Gardens. We have satisfied residents that have been here for many years, along with newer residents who are trying out this new congregated lifestyle. Because we are a month to month rental community with no buy-in, it is possible to give us a trial run.

I interviewed Shirley Morrison, a resident who has been living with us, just 4 months. She moved to Oakmont Gardens from Dallas, Texas to be closer to her children. Shirley said "my perception of a retirement community was not old people, but, older people. I now know that living in a personal, retirement community is for the young at heart." She continued by saying "be young at heart and open your mind to new opportunities. Embrace the new lifestyle and let go of the past. I now exercise everyday as there are so many activities to choose from. I have met many friends. While dining, now I always have a friend to eat meals with. I used to have to go miles from home to keep my mind active and meet people. Now it is right here at home, at the Gardens." Shirley ended by saying "my lifestyle has changed, I am now living and enjoying each new day my new neighborhood provides me."

We invite you to join us for a complimentary meal and tour and see for yourself this wonderful, full service, convenient "Life at the Gardens." Call our marketing department for reservations, mention this ad and receive a useful, free gift from us. (707) 538-1914.

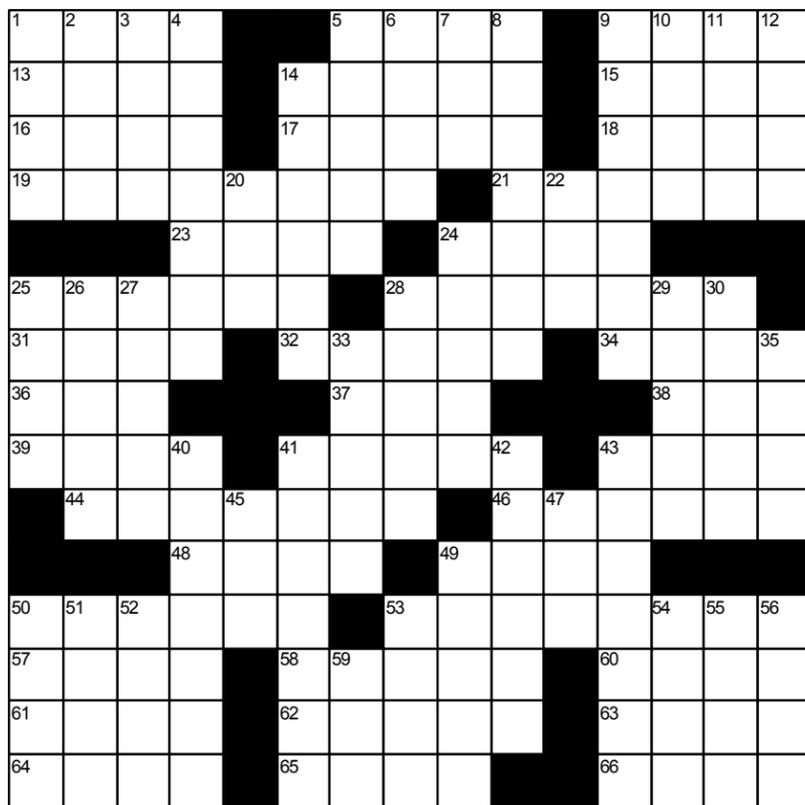
### ACROSS

- 1 Meat and potatoes dish
- 5 Seeds
- 9 Stair
- 13 Song by the Village People
- 14 Literary category
- 15 Yarn
- 16 Transaction
- 17 City Boca \_\_\_\_
- 18 \_\_\_\_ of Man, British dependency
- 19 Out of nothing
- 21 Gullible person
- 23 She was a machinist
- 24 Toot
- 25 Unroll
- 28 One of 5 in New York City
- 31 Pinball game ending
- 32 Liberace film, "Sincerely \_\_\_\_"
- 34 Support
- 36 Imam \_\_\_\_ Khan
- 37 Former Gov. Blagojevich
- 38 Pierre's "yes"
- 39 "From \_\_\_\_ to Eternity"
- 41 Speaker
- 43 Garden accessory
- 44 Soup legumes
- 46 Chemical variant
- 48 Part of speech
- 49 Colors
- 50 Uncover
- 53 Portion
- 57 Diabolic
- 58 Lubricated
- 60 Rim
- 61 Jose's allowance
- 62 Like Lenore's mother
- 63 Traditional knowledge
- 64 Fasten
- 65 Catches
- 66 Snow toy

### DOWN

- 1 Dr. Jekyll's "partner"
- 2 Charge card

## March Crossword Puzzle



www.CrosswordWeaver.com

- 3 Examine
- 4 Ocean flatfish
- 5 Rings
- 6 Interested in
- 7 Paid athlete
- 8 They can monitor health from afar
- 9 Mugging
- 10 Chore
- 11 Women's magazine
- 12 Look searchingly
- 14 Like some horror movies
- 20 Gene Tierney's "Leave \_\_\_\_ to Heaven"
- 22 Numero \_\_\_\_
- 24 Swarm
- 25 Beehive state
- 26 British actor Hawthorne ("The Madness of King George")
- 27 Emergency light
- 28 Water markers
- 29 Curry
- 30 TV doctor
- 33 Toothbrush brand
- 35 Dock
- 40 Enclose
- 41 Here's the beef?
- 42 Saudi capital
- 43 No-frills lodgings
- 45 "\_\_\_\_ for Two"
- 47 Champagne designation
- 49 Attire
- 50 Agents
- 51 Divisible by 2
- 52 Kigane won one in a lottery
- 53 "Quick, Henry, the \_\_\_\_!"
- 54 Valentino, or instance
- 55 Fairy tale villain
- 56 Require
- 59 Anger

### Irish Thoughts

Never iron a four-leaf clover, because you don't want to press your luck.

—Author Unknown

If a man who cannot count finds a four-leaf clover, is he lucky?

—Stanislaw J. Lec



### St. Paddy's Day Toasts

May your glass be ever full.

May the roof over your head be always strong. And may you be in heaven half an hour before the devil knows you're dead.

May misfortune follow you the rest of your life, but never catch up.

## SUDOKU A logic puzzle

Supply the missing numbers so that every row, column and 9-digit square contain only one of each number. No math skills are required, and no guesswork. For hints on doing Sudoku puzzles, visit [www.websudoku.com](http://www.websudoku.com), or send a stamped, self-addressed envelope to Sonoma Seniors Today, 30 Kawana Springs Rd., Santa Rosa, CA 95404. (Solution on page 8.)

7	8		2	4	9	5
	5	3			6	4
			5	8		3
6			9	3		
3	4				5	9
		7		3		2
	6		9	1		
2		4			3	5
8		9	5	4		1
						3



Life at the gardens

Oakmont Gardens is all about friendship and community. From the variety of programs we offer to the full-service we provide, friendship and community are an important part of The Art of Living Well<sup>SM</sup> culture.

Call (707) 538-1914 today for lunch and a tour!



301 White Oak Drive • Santa Rosa, CA 95409  
[www.kiscoseniorkiving.com](http://www.kiscoseniorkiving.com) • Lic No. 49601029

## Working for You

### Information & Assistance/ Case Management:

Do you need help with senior resources? Call us any time for information, assistance and case management services. Call Carol Martin at 525-0143, ext. 113. Sebastopol seniors only: call the Russian River Senior Center at 869-0618.

### Senior Financial Services:

Our bonded and insured counselors assist seniors who are unable to handle bill paying, checkbook reconciliation, eligibility documentation for retirement programs, and other financial needs relative to their daily money management. This program is especially designed for the forgetful senior or the senior with poor vision and often protects them from financial abuse and late fees associated with forgetting to pay their bills. For peace of mind, call Connie Aust, Director, today at (707) 525-0143, ext. 108.

### Senior Peer Support:

This program is to help seniors struggling with serious mental illness access services and programs that help them develop skills and social support, leading to a more constructive and satisfying life. After an assessment visit by CoA case managers and a licensed marriage and family therapist, clients are matched with trained volunteers for 12 weekly support sessions to develop a care plan solution with the client's approval, then follow-up with progress notes. Sponsored by the Department of Mental Health Services. Call Michele Leonard, Director of Volunteers, 525-0143, ext. 147, for information.

### Lawyer Referral Service:

If you are 60 years old or older and need an attorney, you will be referred to a panel of elder law attorneys experienced in working with seniors. An initial half-hour consultation is \$30. If you retain the attorney for further services, fees will be at the attorney's usual rate. The service is certified by the California State Bar, Certification #0111. Call 525-1146 for information.

### Senior Meals:

Meals on Wheels delivers hot meals to temporarily home-bound or chronically ill seniors. Ten dining sites provide meals and companionship. Therapeutic meals and nutritional counseling are available for special needs. Call 525-0143, ext. 135, for information on home delivery or dining site locations.

### Senior Day Services:

This service has helped hundreds of people to reconnect with others through our Senior Day Activities program, offering the opportunity to gather for meals, exercise, entertainment, companionship, and arts and crafts. The programs are held in Healdsburg, Sonoma, and Sebastopol. Call Sharon Boyce at 525-0143, ext. 116.

### Senior Helper List:

Our referral list includes caregivers in the county pre-screened with DMV/criminal background checks, employer references and interviews. Their services include some light housework, driving, cooking, and personal care. They charge approximately \$15-\$18 per hour. The cost of the list is \$100. Call Caroline Edillor, 525-0143, ext. 104.

### Senior Legal Services:

Legal consultation and representation in matters of housing, consumer fraud, Social Security and SSI, Medi-Cal and Medicare, and elder abuse are provided. Also available are simple trusts, wills and durable powers of attorney for health care and finance. Call 525-0143, ext. 140.

#### Council on Aging

##### Mission Statement:

To provide services that support the independence and well-being of older adults in Sonoma County, and to be a strong advocate for the quality of life of elders locally and nationally.

**Save the date...✓** [Events are free unless otherwise indicated]

#### ◆ March 4 & 18; April 1: Senior Legal Clinic.

- 10 AM-12 NOON: Sebastopol Senior Center, 167 N High St, Sebastopol, 829-2440.
- 2-3 PM: (By appointment only) Healdsburg Senior Center, 133 Matheson St, Healdsburg, 431-3324. Council on Aging paralegal Robert Bialkin will assist with senior legal issues. FREE, please RSVP to Robert Bialkin, 525-0143, ext. 142. Sponsored by Council on Aging.

#### ◆ March 8: Birding at River's Edge.

Allman Marsh & Shollenberger Park along the Petaluma River, 9:30 AM-1 PM. Bring the whole family for an easy walk to see feathered friends. We'll explore Alman Marsh & Shollenberger Park along the Petaluma River, hoping to spot some of the nearly 150 bird species that call this place home. Join us for an easy 2-mile or 4-mile flat walk followed by an optional picnic lunch. Leaders: Petaluma Wetlands Alliance docents, District & LandPaths staff. BYO binoculars and picnic lunch. RSVP. To request space(s) or for more details, contact 524-9318 or [Outings@LandPaths.org](mailto:Outings@LandPaths.org).

#### ◆ March 11: Stories About this Place.

6:30-9 PM. This annual event offers a hearty meal of story, humor & often poignant moments. Held this year near LandPaths' own Grove of Old Trees, we'll gather on the full moon for an evening of musings from people who have spent years developing a "sense of place" in Sonoma County. Always fascinating and always "sold-out." Reservations required. Contact [outings@LandPaths.org](mailto:outings@LandPaths.org) or 524-9318.

#### ◆ April 4-5: American Philharmonic Quintessential Classics.

Mozart, Marcello, Brahms, Beethoven. Ruth Finley Person Theater at Wells Fargo Center for the Arts, 50 Mark West Springs Rd, Santa Rosa. April 4 at 8 PM; April 5 at 3 PM. Discover the beauty, power, and magic of symphonic music in a distinctly inclusive community setting with the North Bay's amazing **People's Orchestra**. Free. 546-3600.

#### ◆ 1st Thursdays of the month: FREE Movies for Seniors.

Third Street Cinemas, downtown Santa Rosa, 10 AM. Choice of four current films. Call Street Cinemas recording, 522-0330, x 3, for titles. Pick up flyers at senior centers and Council on Aging. For further information, call Gwen at 523-1586, x 21, or 484-7328.

#### ◆ 1st Saturdays of the month: Parkinsons support group.

YMCA, 1111 College Ave., Santa Rosa, 1-3 PM, 538-3952.

#### ◆ 4th Fridays of the month: Parkinson's Support Group.

Petaluma, 1:30-3 PM. Relaxing atmosphere of sharing and caring for patients, family members and caregivers. Call Pearl Sorensen, 795-4858 for location.

**Attention Readers:** Is there a free event you'd like to share with others? Let us know by the **10th of the preceding month**, and if it's appropriate, we'll put it on our calendar. Call 763-2544, write *Sonoma Seniors Today*, 30 Kawana Springs Rd., Santa Rosa, CA 95404, or email [SonomaSeniorsToday@gmail.com](mailto:SonomaSeniorsToday@gmail.com).



**EB Exchange Bank**

#### Q: How can you invest in the well-being of Sonoma County seniors?

**A: Set up a charitable trust or estate plan that will help us feed and care for seniors now and into the future.**

For information on how you can help Sonoma County seniors, call Marianne McBride, Development Director, 707.525.0143, Ext. 146.

The Council on Aging is proud to announce that the Endowment Fund is managed by Exchange Bank. The Exchange Bank continuously serves Sonoma County community charitable endeavors.

For more information, call 707.524.3151.

7	3	8	6	2	4	9	1	5
1	2	5	3	7	9	6	8	4
4	9	6	1	5	8	2	3	7
6	8	2	4	9	5	3	7	1
3	4	1	2	6	7	8	5	9
9	5	7	8	3	1	4	6	2
5	6	3	9	1	2	7	4	8
2	1	4	7	8	3	5	9	6
8	7	9	5	4	6	1	2	3

H	A	S	H		P	I	P	S		S	T	E	P				
Y	M	C	A		G	E	N	R	E		T	A	L	E			
D	E	A	L		R	A	T	O	N		I	S	L	E			
E	X	N	I	H	I	L	O		S	U	C	K	E	R			
				B	E	S		H	O	N	K						
U	N	F	U	R	L		B	O	R	O	U	G	H				
T	I	L	T		Y	O	U	R	S		P	R	O	P			
A	G	A			R	O	D				O	U	I				
H	E	R	E		S	A	Y	E	R		H	O	S	E			
				L	E	N	T	I	L	S		I	S	O	M	E	R
					V	E	R	B		D	Y	E	S				
R	E	V	E	A	L		F	R	A	C	T	I	O	N			
E	V	I	L		O	I	L	E	D		E	D	G	E			
P	E	S	O		I	R	I	S	H		L	O	R	E			
S	N	A	P		N	E	T	S			S	L	E	D			