

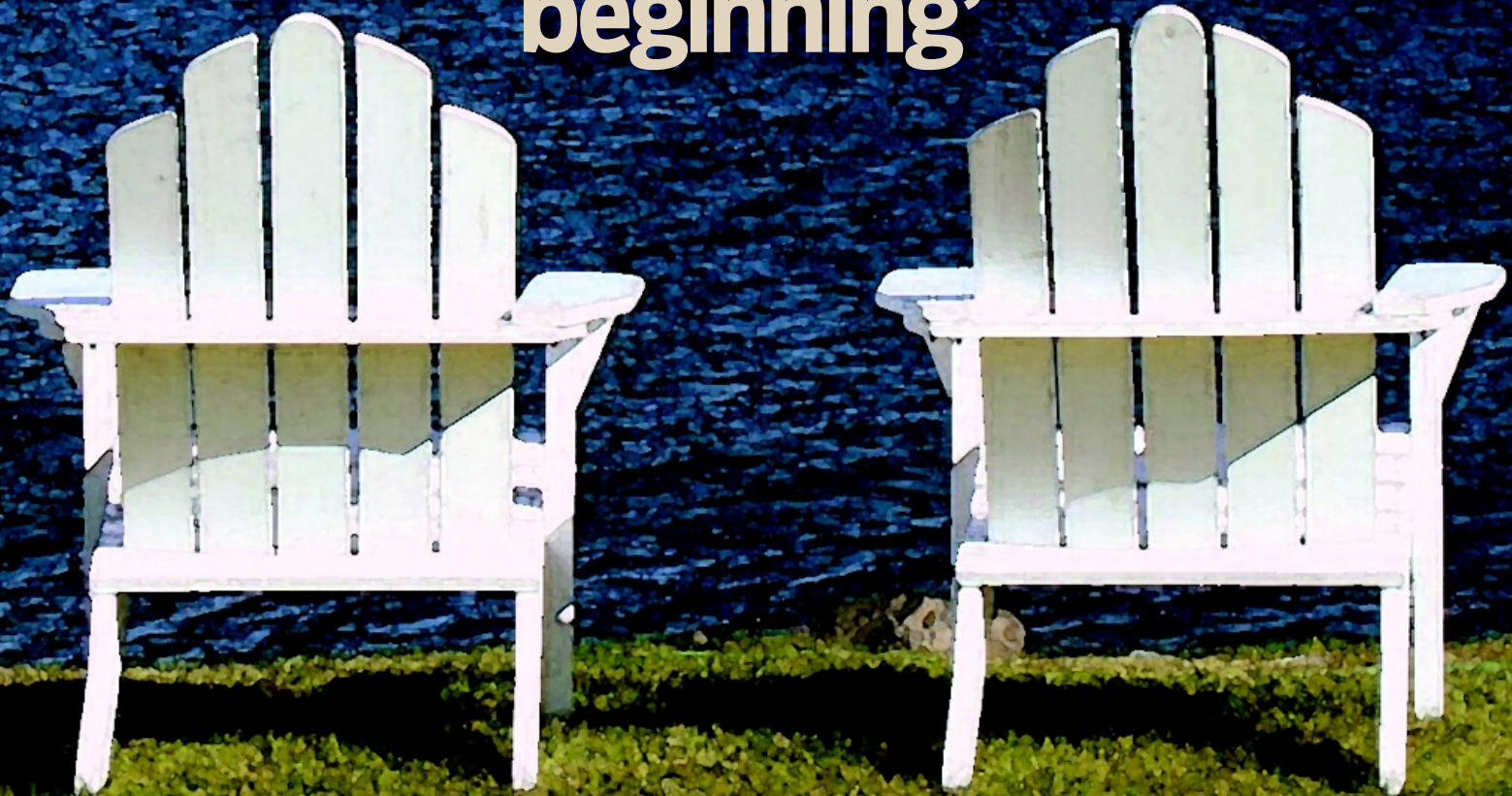
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A second chance at love | Card games stave off Alzheimer's | A cantankerous Airedale

SECOND CHANCE AT LOVE

Denied a date in 1947, friends reunite in their 90s

Tony Gillistro holds up a photo of him and Dorothy Campanelli from when they first started dating in 2005. “Who can you find at 91 and 95 that knows everyone you know and knows your entire life?” Meg DeLeo, Campanelli’s second eldest daughter, said.

**SOFIE BRANDT, HARTFORD COURANT
VIA TRIBUNE NEWS SERVICE**



ISABELLA CHAN
Hartford (Conn.) Courant

It was December 1947, just days before New Year’s Eve. Twenty-one-year-old Anthony “Tony” Gillistro had just come home from the Marine Corps and was paying his childhood friend, William Manocchio, a visit on Standish Street, their old neighborhood in Wethersfield, Connecticut.

“The guys were getting together for a New Year’s Eve party. We all just came home. That was, I think, ’47. And I didn’t have a date,” Gillistro said. “Billy said, ‘Why don’t you ask my sister?’ So, I asked Dottie, she asked her father and he put the sign of the cross.”

Since Dorothy “Dottie” Campanelli was just 17 years old at the time, her old-school Italian father said she was too young for Gillistro, leaving him without a date and the two of them just friends.

“I’ll tell ya — she had a crush on me when I was a kid. Because when I used to go over her brother’s house, I could see her and her

girlfriends peeking out of the door to see us. We were the older guys,” Gillistro said. He says “she was always like a sister, and Billy would kick the bologna out of me if I tried to date his sister.”

Nearly 75 years later, the two are in their 90s and nearly inseparable. As they sit comfortably in Campanelli’s home, they look back on their lifetime of memories together, from playing outside in the neighborhood as children to their first date at Friendly’s in 2005.

Gillistro had just undergone knee surgery and was recovering in the hospital. His wife had died just a few years prior and he “had no inclination to date again, I was up there like 79, 80 years old.” But once Campanelli came to visit him in recovery with a mutual friend, he began to reconsider and called his daughter for advice.

“After that, I said ‘Judy, Dottie came to see me. You think I should call her?’ And she said, ‘Yeah Dad, what’ve you got to lose?’”

Though dating at their age wasn’t what they expected, Campanelli found there was

no reason not to. “There were no obstacles. My kids were all grown. I was free,” she said.

Since then, the couple never spends more than three days apart. Every chance they get, they are creating more memories together: attending events at the Wethersfield senior centers, sharing Wendy’s meals on the ferry ride to Rocky Hill, even traveling to Florida to meet with Campanelli’s friends.

“Dottie, she don’t like to sit. She’s always go, go, go,” Gillistro said. “She likes to go here, there and everywhere. Me, I’m satisfied sitting on my rear end. I have always been like that. We’ve been to a lot of places.”

The couple’s bond is everything that her five children could hope for. After her husband, Al Campanelli, died in 2002, they worried whether their mother’s lively spirit would return.

“We were so happy when she started dating Tony because she got her spark back,” Meg DeLeo, Campanelli’s second eldest daughter, said. “I think that’s why they’ve lived this long and are thriving in their old

age. They are thriving in their 90s.”

Her relationship with Gillistro came as no surprise to her children, as their families have been intermingled since their days on Standish.

“Throughout our whole life, even growing up, we would always go see the Gillistros,” Mary Beth Welch, Campanelli’s eldest daughter, said. “He’s like part of the family. He’s like my second father.”

“The families always kept in touch and stayed in the Wethersfield area. (Tony) always was called whenever the families needed work on their house,” DeLeo said.

In 1982, Tony helped Dottie and her husband renovate their new home on Bittersweet Hill, just minutes down the street from his home on Bunce Road. Tony was always just a phone call away to help repair and fix anything in need.

With nearly two decades of dating under their belt, the couple continue to enjoy daily moments of laughter, love and a lifetime of memories.

“It’s rare to know somebody that long and know someone from childhood. She

... Billy would kick the bologna out of me if I tried to date his sister.”

PLAYING CARD GAMES COULD STAVE OFF ALZHEIMER'S



EMMA STEIN
Detroit Free Press

Good news for competitive people: Those family euchre tournaments that get a little too intense may be delaying the onset of Alzheimer's by five years, a new study reveals.

Scientists have long thought that brain-stimulating activities like reading, puzzling and playing cards could prevent dementia, and the July 14 study in the *Neurology* journal shows cognitive activities may be helpful in staving it off.

The researchers examined about 1,900 older people, averaging 80 years old, who did not have dementia and monitored their participation in "cognitively stimulating activities," and then clinically evaluated them to diagnose dementia and/or Alzheimer's.

"We tried to pick activities that would

not have too many physical or social barriers, or financial barriers, so these are things that most older people are able to do," said Robert S. Wilson, lead researcher and professor of neuropsychology at Rush University Medical Center. "And what we looked at was the age at which dementia was diagnosed, and we found that people who reported being cognitively active got dementia at a much later age than those who were cognitively inactive."

The study found that participants with a lower cognitive lifestyle developed dementia at around 88, on average, while the mean onset was 93 for those with higher levels of cognitive activity.

Wilson said it is an observational study that does not prove causality, but there are very few alternative explanations.

"This is suggestive of the idea that a cognitively active lifestyle doesn't make

the underlying disease go away, but it can delay the appearance of the symptoms which disable you," he said.

For Midwesterners, the card game you're most likely to play is euchre, according to a survey conducted by TopUSCasinos.

The study, which surveyed 1,000 Americans, also found that Americans played card games more frequently during the COVID-19 pandemic. About 55% of Americans learned a new card game this year.

Wilson said that, despite how passionate Midwesterners are, euchre might not technically be better than other card games in this particular scenario, but all that trying to read your partner's mind or trying to remember what suit the jack is this round could be paying off.

"It's not the actual cognitive activity that is key," Wilson said. "The brain is not something that just sits there like a blob, it's con-

stantly responding to the activities that we ask it to do, so I think the key with cognitive activity is something that is sustainable and hopefully enjoyable because we think that the important thing is that it's something that you repeat over time."

A new study shows that playing competitive card games like euchre can help stave off dementia.

DREAMSTIME VIA TRIBUNE NEWS SERVICE



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INVISIBLE DISABILITY

Since COVID, increased concern over smell loss is prompting new research

LIZZY LAWRENCE
The Baltimore Sun

BALTIMORE – One day in kindergarten, Alex Pieraccini sat and watched her peers pass around spices, sniffing them up as a sensory exercise.

Pieraccini, now 30, couldn't smell anything.

"I was like, 'Nothing is happening,'" said Pieraccini, a psychologist living in Baltimore. "I remember telling adults and not being believed for a long time."

Pieraccini has congenital anosmia, the chronic inability to smell. It is a rare condition – approximately 1 in 10,000 people had it according to 2016 figures from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Genetic and Rare Diseases Information Center.

But now, millions more lost their smell as the preeminent symptom of COVID-19, and many haven't regained all of it.

The increased attention afforded to smell loss as a chronic condition has prompted new studies, piquing the interest of olfactory researchers bent on understanding more about the coronavirus. Meanwhile, scientists have not yet found conclusive treatments for smell loss.

At a minimum, the pandemic has highlighted the everyday struggles of people living with what some have termed an "invisible disability," one that makes life more difficult but might not be easily detected. It could also prompt breakthroughs for scientists and researchers in the field.

"I was made to feel invisible because people don't understand, so a little part of me has had a lot of validating experiences" during the pandemic, Pieraccini said. "Another part of me is like, 'Why did it take this long for it

to be a visible thing?'"

A spike in recognition

According to Google Trends, Google searches for the term "loss of smell" in the United States jumped from an interest value of 3 to 100, the maximum, the week of March 22, 2020. Searches hit another high in the last week of December, as the nation approached a peak in average new cases per week.

Dr. Andrew Lane, the director of the Johns Hopkins Sinus Center, said the virus appears to specifically target olfactory cell tissue, which is necessary for the development of odor-sensing cells. This is why smell loss is a common symptom of COVID-19.

"People may not even know it, because people aren't that in tune to their sense of smell," Lane said. "If you test people formally, you would probably find even more of it."

Pamela Dalton, an olfactory researcher at the Monell Chemical Senses Center in Philadelphia, said the pandemic may have caused people to pay attention to the long-term effects of anosmia. The center has been busy fielding frantic calls for help, she said.

The rush in attention has caused some resentment among people who have dealt with loss of smell in the long term, Dalton said.

"Not surprisingly, people are like, 'I've had this for 20 years and I've coped with it.' They're resentful that there wasn't more attention paid to it before," Dalton said.

Lane hopes the added attention will lead to more treatment options for all kinds of smell loss.

"This will potentially be a boon to people who've lost their sense of smell for other reasons, because all this attention and research will potentially lead to some better under-

standing," Lane said.

Ken Halstead, 38, says he is cautious now about disclosing his long-term inability to smell because of its association with COVID-19. Around Christmas, he was in a liquor store when a woman recommended he check out new peppermint Smirnoff bottles with scratch-and-sniff labels.

"I said, 'Oh, I have no sense of smell,'" said Halstead, an information technology specialist living in Alexandria, Virginia. "She nearly dropped the bottle," thinking he had COVID.

Dana Pair, who works in international development, contracted COVID-19 a few days before Christmas when traveling from her home in Upper Fells Point to visit family. She couldn't smell or taste anything at Christmas dinner. Pair, 27, hadn't known much about chronic smell loss before losing her own. She's regained some of her smell, but still experiences intense smell distortion.

"There really isn't a way for other people to fully understand it, especially if they haven't experienced anything similar themselves," said Pair, who has since moved to Knoxville, Tennessee.

It's a lonely condition, Pair said. She tries not to dwell on it, though.

"In the grand scheme of things, a sense of smell versus being alive are two very different things," Pair said. "You don't want to be considered ungrateful and the complainer."

A condition with varying types and causes

There are several different types of anosmia, or smell loss disorders, ranging from temporary and partial to chronic and per-

manent. Some people grow up without the ability to smell, while others acquire the condition through traumatic brain injuries, severe burns or viruses. Some people, especially those recovering from COVID, experience parosmia, or smell distortion.

Some people lose some of their ability to smell due to age. And there are environmental and occupational factors that can erode the sense over time, Dalton said, such as air pollution or toxic fumes. She has worked closely with firefighters who responded to the 9/11 attacks, for example.

COVID-19 attacks cells and causes inflammation, including in the areas around the receptors in a person's nose. The inflammation can last days or weeks, even months. But unlike other viruses that can affect a person's ability to smell or taste, such as the common cold, the coronavirus is not typically accompanied by congestion, Dalton said, making it more unusual.

"The way it shuts down the system is like a light switch," Dalton said. "People go to sleep or they have breakfast and all of a sudden everything's changed. It's really dramatic."

A study published in January looked at 2,581 patients from 18 European hospitals and found that almost 86% of people with mild COVID-19 develop anosmia. Ninety-five percent of them regained their sense of smell after six months. But for some, symptoms that included anosmia persisted – an occurrence known as long-haul COVID.

Dalton said it's not clear why some people lost their sense of smell as a symptom of the disease while others didn't, though there may be an underlying biological reason.

Christine Creed, 51, said it was frustrating to see friends who'd contracted COVID



Alex Pieraccini chops an onion on July 8 as she prepares dinner in her home.

KIM HAIRSTON, BALTIMORE SUN VIA TRIBUNE NEWS SERVICE

recover their smell after only two weeks. Creed, who lives in Dundalk, caught the virus in November and couldn't smell for about a month or so.

Now, she's still experiencing smell distortion. Some days, she'll smell nonexistent cigarette smoke. Vegetables have no taste, beef tastes rancid and peanut butter is a "no-go."

"You just never know from day to day what you can eat, you don't ever get that real hunger feeling," Creed said. "I wouldn't wish this on my worst enemy."

While there are no life-threatening side effects to losing the ability to smell, Dalton said "strong evidence" points to smell loss causing depression, especially among those who lost it suddenly.

There are also safety implications, as people can't smell dangers like smoke, natural gas and rotten food. It can also cause weight loss.

Treatment options or lack thereof

Treatment depends on the cause of the loss of smell, said Lane, of the Hopkins Sinus Center. He'll treat patients with sinus problems with anti-inflammatory steroids or, if the case is severe, surgery. Unfortunately, there's not much doctors can do for congenital, viral or trauma-related anosmia.

Younger people stand a better chance of recovering their sense of smell, Dalton said, though nothing is guaranteed. Recovery may be linked to the passage of time, she said, since the olfactory tissue can regenerate.

Smell retraining therapy is one method people use to try to rehabilitate the sense. Dalton said people who enroll in olfactory training or smell retraining sessions earlier tend to report more thorough recoveries. The treatment doesn't work, however, for people who could never smell.

Creed has used a smell-training kit with scents like orange, tea tree oil and peppermint, though she hasn't had much success. She can remember what each should smell like, but the scents still emerge distorted.

Halstead has made some casual attempts to find the cause of his anosmia. Ultimately, though, he feels he doesn't need treatment. His anosmia isn't as emotionally distressing compared to those who acquired it — he hasn't lost anything.

"To me, it's not life-altering," Halstead said. "It's just a quirk."

The Monell Center has developed a smell test to screen for COVID, which tends to be a better predictor for the virus than taking temperatures or testing for respiratory symptoms. More people are reaching out to be included in research trials, Dalton said.

In the meantime, with no effective treatment in sight, Canton's Pieraccini has found it helpful to ask friends or loved ones to help her fill in the gaps when she's afraid of missing something.

"Having people you can trust — who will be there to help you out and understand and believe you when you say you're having this difficulty — is really important," she said.

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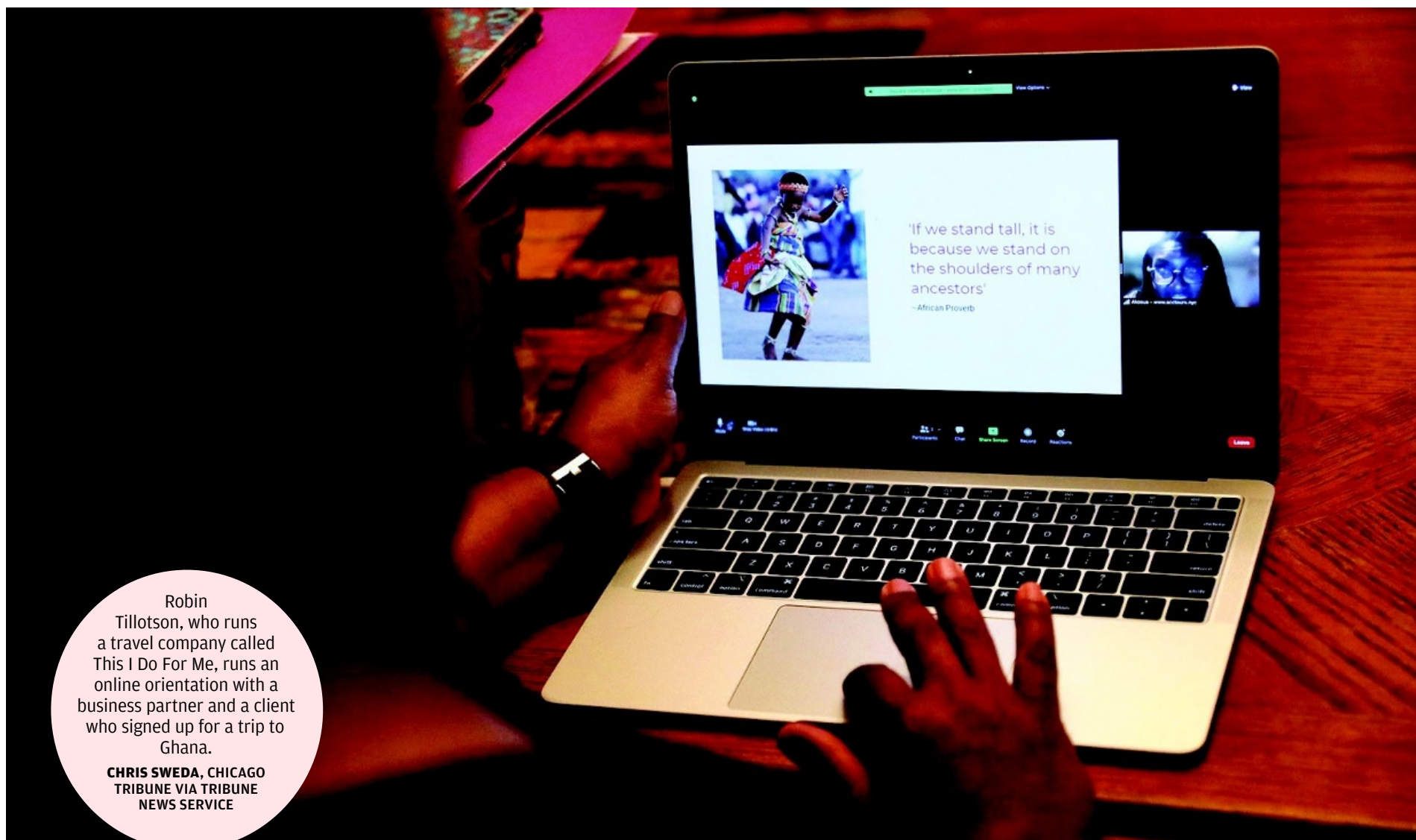
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Robin Tillotson, who runs a travel company called This I Do For Me, runs an online orientation with a business partner and a client who signed up for a trip to Ghana.

CHRIS SWEDA, CHICAGO TRIBUNE VIA TRIBUNE NEWS SERVICE

‘Once you hit 50, life is really just beginning’

Travel company specializes in group trips for women above 50

ALISON BOWEN
Chicago Tribune

CHICAGO — Robin Tillotson remembers her first flight as an escape, and a measure of her mother’s love.

Her father had cancer, and her mother sent her and her brother to Los Angeles to spend time with family. Her mother flew them first class, wanting to make sure they were cared

for and looked after.

“I distinctly remember that plane ride,” she said. “That was the time when a pilot would let kids come up!”

Her mother’s devotion to caring for not only others, but also herself, inspired the name of Tillotson’s travel company: This I Do For Me.

“I can still see her where she was standing, where I was



sitting, where my brother was sitting,” recalled Tillotson, 62. “She said, ‘I bought a purse. Now this, I do for me.’”

Years later, when Tillotson began thinking about how she wanted to spend time following finishing working full time, she thought of that phrase. It’s the name, and the message, behind her travel company, which specializes in trips for 50-plus women.

This is a group of women who might be spending their decades doing many things for other people — watching grandkids, serving at church.

“I started noticing that senior women 50-plus tend to put a lot of energy into other things,” she said. “What was glaring was that they were not necessarily doing anything that was just for them.”

She added, “After a while, when you are putting that kind of energy into other things and other people, you run out of gas, and that’s easy to do and we’ve all been guilty of that.”

A decade ago, she looked at fellow women in their 50s and thought, “But what are you doing for yourself?”

This thought, combined with her lifelong love of travel, spurred the idea of the company, which she started in 2015. She also launched a podcast, “This I Do For Me: Over 50, Black and Fabulous!” in 2019, which recently interviewed a 78-year-old business owner and encourages Black women to attain their dreams.

“Everyone thinks you stop developing at a certain point,” she said. “That’s not the case. We’re constantly growing.”

AARP’s 2021 travel trends survey showed many hope to get back to planning trips. The group reported that 54% of people ages 56 to 74 plan to travel this year. And for those who aren’t traveling in 2021, 57% said they are saving cash for future trips.

Tillotson loves seeing people who might have been hesitant to travel then bloom while abroad.

“Those who have never traveled overseas tend to be really reticent, a little shy and

even nervous,” she said. “Midway through the actual trip, you start to notice a new level of confidence and comfort.”

People are navigating different cultures, seeing things in person, like the Parthenon, they’ve only seen in pictures. “They’re learning a lot about themselves,” she said. “By the end of that trip, the next indicator that an impact was made, they will ask me, ‘When’s the next trip?’”

The company is a project in addition to her full-time job, working for the city of Chicago. It’s what she hopes to do fully after retirement, although she hates that word. Call it retirement, as in fired up for more, or regeneration.

Chicagoan Kathleen Vanna, 74, has been on several of the trips, beginning when Tillotson posted that someone dropped out of an Australian trip, leaving one extra spot. Pals told Vanna she always talked about visiting.

“Friends said when will you ever go? You talk about it,” she said. “I said, ‘You’re right, I’m going to go.’”

She did, and had such a great time with the group of 50-plus women that she signed up for trips later to Greece, and Thailand. She appreciates that Tillotson handled the preparation — “it’s less stressful because she’s done the planning” — and that there were always options of various restaurants, or doing something alone or with a group or another person.

In the years since the company began, groups have gone to every continent but Antarctica. They made lanterns in Hoi An, Vietnam, and macarons in Provence, France. In every destination, she seeks out theater and diverse eateries and historic sites.

Her years of childhood travel included numerous car trips, as well as studying abroad as a college student. A year in London through an Oberlin College program opened her schedule to weekend trips around Europe, visiting Paris as a 20-something.

“Anybody that knows me knows how much I love to travel,” she said. “I’ve always been a traveler.”

Every Jan. 1, her company announces a trip, and people can sign up. Groups have included not only Chicagoans but also people in Arkansas, Cincinnati, Texas, California and New York state who have heard about her online or from friends.

Challenges along the way have included the usual trickiness of group travel, and situations like a woman who realized on a ferry she forgot her passport in a hotel safe. A kind stranger already flying to Athens offered to bring it there and meet them.

Of course, like everything else, the pan-

dem had other plans for a trip to northern Italy. They delayed it once, and again this year. They still plan to go in 2022.

And that will be a big travel year, she hopes. They have a Ghana trip planned, with visits to three places; on a recent night, she was meeting with a traveler who had just signed up for that trip, on a Zoom with her co-lead on the trip, whose parents are native Ghanaians.

She’s ready to keep up the travel — and the telling of people to take that time.

“Once you hit 50, life is really just beginning,” she said.

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The pandemic made grief harder. Some may need help.

STACEY BURLING
The Philadelphia Inquirer

PHILADELPHIA — There is much about Alexis Washington's story of pandemic bereavement — the family trauma, the lonely deaths, the truncated rituals, the months of restrictions that put even a new normal out of reach — that sounds sadly familiar now.

That is why some experts on grieving worry that the millions of Americans affected by COVID-19 deaths may need extra time and support to come to terms with harrowing, unexpected losses compounded by isolation.

"The grief experience and even the death experience was profoundly changed by the pandemic," said Carmela McDowell, bereavement coordinator for the Jefferson Home Care Hospice Program.

"It has added layers of challenge, and I think that needs to be acknowledged."

Washington's family met for a small, indoor gathering on Mother's Day 2020 — May 10. They thought everyone — Alexis; her father, Lanxton; her mother, Deborah; her twin brother, Langston; an aunt and a great aunt — had been careful. They still don't know who brought the virus into the great aunt's condo.

Lanxton Washington, the 72-year-old pastor of First AME Church Sharon Hill, was the first to have symptoms. A cancer survivor with diabetes and heart and lung problems, he was soon in the hospital. Then everyone in the group except young Langston tested positive. Alexis and Deborah Washington were sick, but not sick enough for the hospital. Only Langston could visit his father.

A ventilator was not enough to save Lanxton Washington. He died on May 25 as his daughter, son and wife watched on FaceTime. The great aunt, 92, died on May 27. The aunt had a pulmonary embolism on May 31, but survived. Over that awful year, Deborah Washington lost another aunt to kidney failure and, in December, her mother, who "just slept away" in a nursing home.

"I have never had a year when I've lost so many people," Deborah Washington said.

Lanxton Washington's funeral was graveside, with no repast afterward. Relatives from out of state couldn't visit. Alexis Washington couldn't see her best friend, who had moved to Seattle. Alexis and Deborah, who live together in Aldan, Pennsylvania, had each other, but there were many fewer hands to hold, many fewer hugs to accept, than normal.

Alexis, who is 28 and was very close to her father, had little previous experience with grief. A school counselor in Philadelphia, she was already stressed from helping children affected by virtual schooling and the city's epidemic of violence. Her father died the day George Floyd was killed, setting off a wave of protest that affected her deeply.

Alexis felt anxious, nervous, confused. "I felt, well, sad, of course, but devastated," she said. "It felt like my whole world sort of crumbled."

Grief is always painful, and it's a lasting pain that, at best, becomes part of the griever, less intense and capricious, but never gone. People grieve at their own pace and in their own way, but most are resilient and feel more stable within six months after the death, research shows. Experts said it

is too early to know whether the pandemic will lead to a surge of prolonged, dysfunctional grief, but said restrictions have made it harder to do some of the things that typically help the bereaved, such as spending time with loved ones and returning to social and physical activities.

It is possible that the normal grieving process will take a little longer, some said, but there is also reason to worry that the traumatic nature of some COVID-19 deaths will make it harder for some family members to grieve in a healthy way. They could need help adjusting to their losses.

A pandemic of grief

So far, there's sparse data on the long-term effects of the pandemic on grief. A study from the Netherlands last year found that deaths from COVID-19 caused higher levels of symptoms than those from other "natural" causes. "We predict that pandemic-related increases in pathological grief will become a worldwide public health concern," the authors wrote.

Sherman Lee, a psychologist at Christopher Newport University in Virginia, is one of the few to ask bereaved people in the United States about their experiences. Lee, who studies negative emotions, and Robert Neimeyer, director of the Portland Institute for Loss and Transition in Oregon, surveyed 871 people in the early stages of COVID-19-related grief — an average of three months after the death — about their feelings in November 2020.

Two-thirds were classified in the "clinical" range, which means they were experiencing such high levels of grief that they are not able to function normally and "could probably benefit from some form of pro-

fessional support," Lee said. Nearly three-quarters had symptoms of depression and anxiety while 64.5% were functionally impaired. Forty-three percent had already sought professional help. The survey, the authors wrote, "raises the specter of a second pandemic in the shadow of the first ... characterized by widespread intense and problematic grief ..."

Lee, though, is reluctant to say that grief for COVID-19 victims has been worse than grief over other deaths, and it is hard to tell who among early grievers will still be preoccupied by thoughts of a loved one or unable to work and take care of themselves months later.

Still, he said, research consistently shows that losing a spouse is a top stress event, with the loss of a close family member or friend not far behind. "Losing a loved one ... is just simply bad," he said.

While ritual is not important for everyone, he said, what matters is that a lot of people felt especially bad because they could not be present for a loved one's death, could not have a funeral, could not hug their relatives. "Those people that felt like they needed that suffered," he said.

Others point out that the deaths occurred during a period of economic and social disruption, which adds to stress. Plus, news coverage of the pandemic meant constant reminders of death for the bereaved. "I think what made this particularly difficult was the global nature of this," said Dina Goldstein Silverman, a psychologist at Cooper University Hospital. "It was everywhere."

So far, though, she has not seen unusual manifestations of grief. "I'm seeing more of what I've always seen," she said.



Alexis Washington holds a framed photo of her late father, at her home in Aldan in Delaware County. Washington's father, Lanxton, a pastor, died in May 2020 of COVID-19.



Alexis Washington and her mother Deborah, shown here at their home in Aldan, lost two family members to COVID-19 in 2020, including Lanxton Washington, father of Alexis and husband of Deborah. One of Alexis Washington's great aunts also died. Alexis and her mother both got sick, but did not need to be hospitalized.

**JOSE F. MORENO PHOTOS,
THE PHILADELPHIA INQUIRER
VIA TRIBUNE NEWS SERVICE**

Complicated grief disorder

Kathy Shear, a Columbia University psychologist, was among the first to study what was initially called complicated grief. It is now transitioning to a new name: prolonged grief disorder. She directs the soon-to-be-renamed Center for Complicated Grief. Under normal circumstances, 7% to 10% of people developed prolonged grief. This means that, more than six months after the death, they're still feeling intense grief and having trouble working or maintaining social relationships. They may be fixated on aspects of the death or loss. Some avoid doing anything that reminds them of their loved one.

Prolonged grief is twice or three times as common when people are grieving for someone who had a violent death, such as an accident, murder or suicide. Natural disasters also increase risk. Shear thinks COVID-19 deaths should probably be included in this higher-risk category.

Grief researchers and therapists often don't see people who are struggling with prolonged grief until two to four years after the death. New patients have not yet flooded Shear's center, but she thinks that's because "we're still pretty early in the grieving process."

Shear said COVID-19 may cause more difficult grief because the deaths were often sudden and unexpected. There was a random quality to who got really sick and who sailed through. Family members, who often tested positive, too, may feel responsible. Some may become preoccupied with their inability to offer comfort in person as a loved one was dying. Certain psychological factors, such as previous experience of

traumas, multiple deaths or a history of mood disorders, also raise risk.

It's too early to know whether families will react differently to the current rash of deaths among the unvaccinated, deaths that could have been prevented.

Whom to be angry with?

Alexis and Deborah Washington both say they struggled with their grief, but are doing much better now.

Deborah Washington said 2020 was "very, very, very hard." Her friends couldn't visit and, at first, her cough was so bad she had to limit time on the phone. But she has kept in contact with her husband's best friend and his wife and talks frequently with a friend who was widowed before her. By the time her mother died, she wondered how much more she could take, but she just dealt with issues as they arose. She thinks it helped that she quickly accepted that her husband was gone. "This is the way it's going to be," she said. There was no point in anger. "You don't know who to be angry with," she said.

She celebrated her son's graduation from seminary in June, and her faith was a great comfort. She became missionary president at the church. She's planning to visit family in Denmark in August.

Alexis Washington thinks she's had a harder time than her mother and considers her grief prolonged. She had trouble finding the support she needed. "Being so young, my friends, they were there, but none of them had gone through what I had gone through." Now, unfortunately, more of them have. She has also found others with similar experiences. After some time on a

waiting list, she found a good therapist.

She still really misses her father some days, but the worst is behind her. "I'm definitely in acceptance and trying to find ways to honor him and give back," she said.

She did a chaplaincy internship at Lan-

kenau Medical Center and is considering a career change to some sort of spiritual care. She and her mother have both become advocates for vaccination in the Black community. Their church, which has not yet reopened, will be a vaccination site this fall.

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A cantankerous AIREDALE that bit nearly everyone ‘is getting his due’

HOLLY ZACHARIAH
The Columbus (Ohio) Dispatch

COLUMBUS, Ohio – In a special spot under the shade of an ancient tulip poplar tree, the two men carefully lowered the 2,200-pound block of granite onto a spot they had dug specifically for it, this stone that bears a fairly unflattering epitaph:

“Nobody knew exactly what was the matter with him.”

But then again, those who know the story of Muggs – the infamously cranky dog that belonged to the family of Columbus’ beloved humorist and cartoonist James Thurber – would have been surprised if this long-delayed monument placed recently in the Thurber/Fisher family plot in Section 50 of Green Lawn Cemetery said anything nice at all.

Because let’s face it, Thurber’s short story, “The Dog that Bit People,” (from a collection compiled in 1933) didn’t make the Airedale terrier seem very endearing. It tells us how Muggs bit pretty much everyone in the family in the 11 years that Thurber’s mother, Agnes Mary “Mame” Thurber, had him – except for the matriarch herself. He bit the iceman. And the garbage man. And the mailman. And the vacuum-cleaner salesman. And apparently a mayor of Columbus.

You get the idea.

But when Muggs died in 1928, Mame Thurber was adamant that he would be buried in the family plot. Thurber wrote that he convinced her that was illegal (whether or not that was true at the time, modern-day cemetery officials don’t rightly know), so instead, Thurber buried Muggs alongside some local road whose location has been lost to time.

Although Muggs is long gone, a chance meeting two years ago at Green Lawn between Thurber’s relatives and Randy Rogers, voluntary president of the board of the Green Lawn Cemetery Association and its only paid employee as executive director, led to Muggs’ monument. The life-sized bronze statue of him, patterned after Thurber’s cartoon drawing and created by local sculptor Renate Burgyan Fackler, was unveiled in August.

“It was clear from the writings that Muggs wasn’t wired quite right, but Mame really wanted him in that cemetery,” said Sara Thurber Sauers, James Thurber’s 66-year-old granddaughter from Iowa. “It’s kind of nice to know that Muggs is getting his due.”

Sauers and her 89-year-old mother, Rosemary Thurber, hoped to be in Columbus for a special unveiling and festivities on Aug. 28. Proceeds from the Thurber 5K Dog Trot were split to benefit Thurber House and to help cover the \$2,000-plus cost of the granite. The \$6,200 cost of the Muggs sculpture was



“Nobody knew exactly what was the matter with him.”

FRED SQUILLANTE PHOTOS, COLUMBUS DISPATCH VIA TRIBUNE NEWS SERVICE

Workers prepare a location for a statue of James Thurber’s cantankerous family dog, Muggs, at Green Lawn Cemetery on Aug. 10. Jay Biddle of the monument crew, left, and monument crew head Justin Shumway, right, level the base.



At Coopermill Bronzeworks in Zanesville, Ohio, foundry manager Josh Becker, left, pours molten bronze into a mold that is part of artist's Renate Fackler's sculpture of Muggs on April 16. Sculpture Renate Fackler created the monument of writer James Thurber's mother's dog Muggs. Thurber often wrote about how mean Muggs was, and when Muggs died, Thurber's mother wanted the dog buried at the family plot at Green Lawn but the family refused. The cemetery is using donated funds to install the sculpture on site.

covered by donations to the nonprofit Green Lawn Cemetery Foundation.

Rogers was long familiar with the story of Muggs, and he first got the idea about a monument about four years ago. It would be a nice touch, he thought, but also would be practical. James Thurber's unassuming grave is among the top two visitors most often ask for directions to (World War I flying ace Eddie Rickenbacker is the other), but it can be difficult to find. A highly-visible Muggs will no doubt make that easier.

So Rogers noodled the idea around in his head, but nothing much came of it. Then, one spring day in 2019, he was planting trees atop a hill in the cemetery and saw some people at Thurber's gravesite. He went down to chat and found that it was Rosemary Thurber and Sauers.

"By happy coincidence, Randy Rogers ... came over to introduce himself. During our conversation, he mentioned the possibility of a Muggs sculpture as an addition to the plot. I am so glad that it is now happening. We are particularly pleased with the resulting sculpture," Rosemary Thurber wrote in an email from her home in Michigan. "And more than that, we know that my Grandmother Thurber would be so very happy!"

Meg Brown is director of children's education at Thurber House literary center, where the Thurbers once lived, at 77 Jefferson Ave. She said the Muggs monument is perfect.

"The Thurbers always loved dogs and had many dogs over the years. But Muggs has

his whole own story," said Brown, who uses Muggs a lot in her programming to teach about personality and personification and the like. "There is this deep sense of humor and a kind of snarkiness to the dog. His story is fun and funny and relatable."

Muggs was not, however, an easy project to pull off, Fackler said. Taking a drawing of a curmudgeonly Airedale with a sour expression on his face and a cartoon-style body and turning him into a 3-D sculpture proved, well, challenging.

"One leg is shorter than the other and even his ears don't match each other," said Fackler, who owns Chrysalis Sculpture Studio in New Albany. "But we aren't trying to make it realistic. We are trying to make it Muggs, the drawing. Everyone who came by and saw it in my studio couldn't help but smile."

As crews set the stone and did a test run with Muggs so that they could drill the holes where the bolts will go to hold him down just before the unveiling, Fackler and Rogers stood there with prideful grins, kind of like parents watching their kid take the stage for a performance.

Of course, it's easy for them to be happy because, after all, Muggs never bit them.

The other line carved into the monument, "Cave Canem" comes from the end of Thurber's story, where he writes that after Muggs was buried, Thurber used an indelible pencil to write that phrase on a board there at the site. The Latin phrase means, appropriately enough, "Beware of dog."

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80 YEARS ON AIR

Amateur radio group provides emergency communications

TIM GRANT
Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

PITTSBURGH — After eight decades of providing emergency backup communications on a volunteer basis during some of this region's worst storms and disasters, members of the Steel City Amateur Radio Club hit the airwaves in August to sing their own praises.

The club of about 60 members hosted a special event station each day at their clubhouse in Collier, Pennsylvania. They spent the week taking turns sending messages to other amateur radio operators around the world, sharing the news of their 80-year anniversary.

"Our club is capable of provid-

ing emergency communication services to the community if the need arises," said Bob Mente, 56, emergency coordinator for Allegheny County Amateur Radio Emergency Service. "We have state of the art radios and antennas at our clubhouse and have a backup generator to provide power if the main electrical grid goes down."

The Steel City Amateur Radio Club is an official relay station for Allegheny County Amateur Radio Emergency Service in Pennsylvania. Its partner agencies are the Pittsburgh Red Cross and the National Weather Service office in Moon.

Amateur radio — also known as ham radio — is a hobby that brings people, electronics and communications together. People use ham radios to talk across town, around the world, or even in space, without using the Internet or cellphones.

While these amateur radio operators are hobbyists, they provide extremely important communica-

tions, especially during and after emergencies. Most recently, Steel City operators played a role in transmitting messages that helped weather officials during a severe storm a couple of weeks ago, which included at least one tornado that hit Allegheny County.

John Jennings, 66, of Green Tree, got involved in that weather emergency when he heard mobile ham radio operators report flooding near Banksville Road and near the Galleria shopping center in Mt. Lebanon.

"I contacted the National Weather Service in Moon Township by telephone and reported that information," Jennings said.

Club member Joe Fenn proudly remembers making his biggest contribution to public safety in 1977 when Johnstown experienced a severe flood.

"The local Red Cross woke me out of a sound sleep to help get in touch with someone in Johnstown that they were not able to reach," he



EMILY MATTHEWS, PITTSBURGH POST-GAZETTE VIA TRIBUNE NEWS SERVICE

Bob Mente, left, a member of the Steel City Amateur Radio Club and an emergency coordinator for Allegheny County, and Carl Pastorak, another member of the club, look at a Drake 2-C receiver at the Steel City Amateur Radio Club's W3KWH club station in Carnegie, Pa.

said. "Communications were down and we had no idea how bad things were.

"I put a message out over the radio and hams came out of the woodwork helping to get food and supplies to the right places. I was even relaying medical information between patients and doctors. That

was very rewarding."

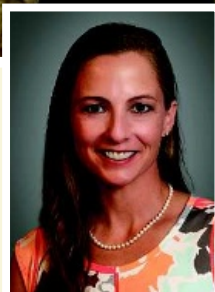
For his role in that emergency effort, Fenn received a certificate from the Red Cross and Conemaugh Valley amateur radio operators.

Karl Pastorak, 69, took up the hobby at age 13. He lived near the Steel City Amateur Radio Club's W3KWH clubhouse in Collier.

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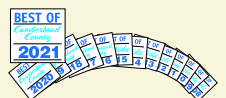
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