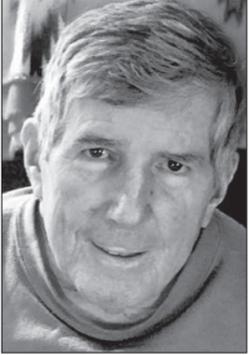


North Country Notebook

The thing about a nursing rehab home is, you get to meet some pretty nice people



By JOHN HARRIGAN  
COLUMNIST

There is a device, made of a piece of plastic and a piece of rope, for putting your socks on if this is a major challenge in your life. There probably is a professional name for this contraption, but I just call it my sock-putter-on'er. If only I owned the patent.

About two months ago, I disappeared from most people's radar screens, unable (or even unwilling) to answer e-mail. A detailed explanation for this isn't really necessary. Suffice to say that it involves a hip surgery gone terribly awry.

The sock device enables me to get my socks on without too much effort, and slide my feet into the warm embrace



JOHN HARRIGAN

Millie the fierce guard dog takes a moment off from vigilance to relax amid flowers on the front lawn. Both she and the lawn need one more haircut before the next hard frost.

of a pair of moose-hide moccasins. Writing this column is sort of like that, as comfortable as an old shoe. It'll be good to slip back into it.

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The lion's share of my obscurity was at Country Village in Lancaster, from which I emerged on Sept. 7. I now have been a guest at two of the North Country's major long-term care and rehabilitation facilities, and can say that the food and housing are pretty much the same.

What makes a place stand out it its people. At Country Village, there are dire situations all

around, yet visiting and laughter abound. It is, to understate things, a good facility with a fine crew.

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Long-term recuperation leaves you with three main sources of entertainment: television, books, and the company you keep. The usual cast of characters sought me out, Baker Bob chief among them. Their familiar faces peering around the doorway were a sight to gladden the heart.

Even a good book or two, plus magazines and the like, get tiring to hold, and anyway, you

can read only so much. That leaves television---way too much television. To say that TV, particularly daytime TV, is a vast wasteland is a vast understatement, with apologies even to the word "wasteland." An item or two:

--Television programmers have cut the time between ads from a second or two to almost non-existence. This may well save up to several minutes of time that station owners can sell (think "squeezing a rock"), but it's a bit disconcerting to be watching a car ad one moment, and penguins in the Antarctic the next.

--Spiro Agnew's main attorney, Martin London, appeared on a news show to liken the current White House situation to "rats leaving a sinking ship." This reminded me of that time so long ago, when five bells ringing in the Wire Room signaled the resignation of Richard Nixon. I took part in an interview with Agnew back when

he was the Vice President, and I can still see him standing there, hair all slicked back and his demeanor and delivery as smooth as silk.

--Alaskans, I know, are thoroughly embarrassed by shows such as "Alaskan Bush People," and when asked what's wrong with this particular stripe of tripe don't know where to begin.

--Everything seems to be breathless "breaking news" these days, to the point where this has become a watered-down phrase and means next to nothing. And astute viewers may have noticed that producers hardly ever say just where the latest disaster has occurred--so they can keep viewers hanging on into the next (or the next) "segment" (think ad dollars and ratings).

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Back in the days when I was helping Rudy Shatney guide clients on a hunt, it wasn't unusual, of course, for someone to shoot and miss. We

generally hunted thick cover, by the way, and for anyone to even get a crack at a deer was an occasion.

Often, we'd look for hair, on the off chance that a shot had scored. Shatney could tell you where any hair we found had come from--back, belly or legs.

Elder daughter Karen was taking me down to Dartmouth-Hitchcock the other day when two deer suddenly appeared smack in the middle of Interstate 91. She did an excellent job with steering wheel and brakes, and avoided an accident I thought was inevitable.

It was close enough that I wanted to get out and look for hair.

(This column runs in a dozen newspapers covering the northern two-thirds of New Hampshire and parts of Maine and Vermont. Letters, with town and telephone numbers in case of questions, are welcome via campguyhooligan@gmail.com or Box 39, Colebrook, NH 03576.)

SUMMIT BY MORRISON AND THE MORRISON ASSISTED LIVING AND SKILLED NURSING CARE

Building your retirement nest egg



By SHANNON LYNCH  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

WHITEFIELD – We all want to enjoy our retirement. Pursue the hobbies we never had enough time for while we were working. Take a vacation to the places we always wanted to visit. Spend more time with the grandkids. This is how we envision our golden years.

But saving for retirement is not always easy. You have a mortgage, car payment, college tuition. It doesn't always leave you enough to build that nest egg. How are you preparing?

Planning for retirement

Depending on what stage you are at, there are different ways to put together a realistic retirement plan. The average age to retire in the United States is 63 as of 2017.

Most financial advi-

sors will tell you that you should put aside 10-15 percent of your income starting in your 20s if you want to retire comfortably. Of course, living comfortably means different things to different people, so the first thing you should start thinking about is what retirement looks like to you.

Do you plan to explore your hobbies or travel? Do you want to move to someplace warm year round? Or, do you expect to stay close to home to enjoy your golden years? All of these factors influence how much money you should save down the road.

Consider your long-term healthcare needs. What Medicare benefits will you qualify for? Do you have an individual health insurance policy lined up?

Fine tuning your plans

If you are less than five years away from being eligible to retire, it's time to fine-tune your plans and project your retirement income. Check into the health of your investments and start making a budget.

Consider your pen-

sion plan options and learn what government benefits you are eligible to earn. Check out www.ssa.gov to understand when you are eligible for full benefits. The earliest you can begin collecting Social Security is at age 62, with reduced benefits.

The state has a great resource for retirement planning at: www.retirementplanning.net/new-hampshire.html, offering specific New Hampshire-centric retirement plans, helpful articles, a retirement plan calculator and contact information for financial advisors near you. AARP (www.aarp.org) is another good resource.

Retirement is a lifelong process and you can never begin planning too early or save too much! Remember, you get to decide how you spend this time in your life.

Let's focus on local energy, lower rates, local jobs

Editor's note: The following guest commentary was submitted for publication by State Rep. Herb Richardson and State Sen. Dan Feltes.

From the senior on a fixed income of Social Security in Lancaster, to the small business owner in Henniker, to the family in manufactured housing in East Concord, affording energy is often an ongoing battle. They all expect and they all deserve bipartisan compromise

and problem-solving on energy.

Unfortunately, that's the exact opposite they have gotten from Gov. Sununu. He has opposed three common sense, bipartisan energy bills, from House Bill 559 advancing energy efficiency, to Senate Bill 365 bolstering biomass energy, to Senate Bill 446 increasing the per project net metering cap. It is a failure to recognize that the cheapest unit of energy is the one you don't use,

it is a failure to recognize promoting local energy and local jobs is consistent with lower rates in the long run, and it is a failure to work in a constructive, bipartisan fashion on one of the most important issues facing New Hampshire. Indeed, Governor Sununu's failed approach on energy is the major reason one of us recently switched political parties and became a Dem-

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ATTORNEYS AT LAW

125 MAIN STREET  
PO Box 70  
LITTLETON, NH 03561

STEPHEN U. SAMAHA T (603) 444-7778  
of Counsel  
MARK C. RUSSELL F (603) 444-2552  
JODY A. HODGDON E info@nnhlaw.com  
NIKOLAS K. FRYE W nnhlaw.com

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