



Addicted to Americana: Celebrating the Classic American Lifestyle Fred Wright, Tuesday, December 1 at 7:30 pm



This talk will be a celebration of Mid-Century Modernism in architecture and lifestyle along with glimpses of growing up in the 50s and 60s.

WN member Fred Wright is a lifelong Wellesley resident retired from full-time teaching Marketing and Sales in the College of Business at Northeastern University. He currently teaches one on-line class a semester. Fred was on Wellesley's Recreation Commission for nine years, and he's a member of the Rotary Club. He is a Babson College graduate and received his MBA from Suffolk University.

Two Recent Talks: From Chameleons to Telomeres

In mid-November, many members enjoyed two speakers on Zoom. On Sunday afternoon, November 15, there was "My Life as a Chameleon (Assignment Photographer) for the New York Times," by Tony Cenicola. Hosted by the Villages of the Berkshires, it was the first collaborative program offered by and for the 17 operating Massachusetts villages.

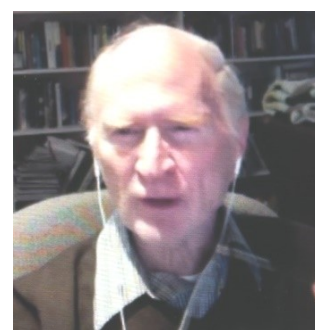
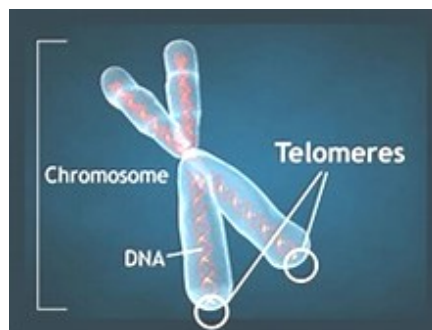
On November 16, just for us, the WN Health Support Committee presented a program on telomeres, which cap the ends of our chromosomes. After a video of a TED talk by Dr. Elizabeth Blackburn, members discussed her findings that 1) telomeres shorten as we age but that 2) we can potentially influence this process and increase our "health span." The natural shortening is aggravated by chronic or extreme stress, and we can minimize stress in many ways.

Guiding the discussion were three WN members who are psychiatrists: Bob Ferrell, Jerry Gans (below, left and

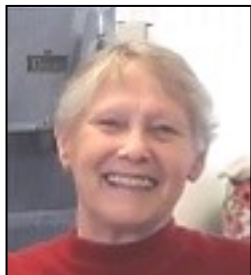
right) and Sara-Jane Kornblith. To highlight their remarks: Jerry said that managing stress takes mindfulness (living in the moment), movement (exercise), mastery (of our mind), and maintaining relationships (the main focus of WN).

Bob stressed that improving these things takes practice and patience. It helps to establish routines—to create a new habit--and to be happy with even small gains. Sara-Jane said that whatever we do or don't accomplish, we can try to accept our situation with grace and ingenuity. If a coping mechanism no longer works, seek to find another one.

Meditation is one way to raise mindfulness and lower stress. Others suggested by various members were "learning something new," "walking outside," and "choosing to enjoy every interaction." It's not easy to change your mind, but each step in the right direction has cumulative benefits. ***L..P.***



From the President: The Power of Our Own Thinking



The video about telomeres we watched together, and then discussed, reemphasized what we grew up knowing, and see exemplified around us every day: that our own attitude has the power to shape our health and our life. It has been said to us in many ways: our mother telling us “not to put on that sulking face, it might stick that way”... the song from “The King and I” telling us to ‘Whistle a happy tune’ and, more importantly, that “When we fool the people we meet, we fool ourselves as well.”

And now we know why! It is simplistic to say that attitude alone will keep our telomeres healthy and long, protecting our chromosomes from fraying and causing aging earlier than necessary. But the four “Ms” pointed out by Jerry Gans ---mindfulness, maintaining meaningful connection, movement, and mastery of mind---all seem to me to spring from attitude. In turn, these promote long telomeres, which in their turn promote health. And, at least for me, Wellesley Neighbors has offered a platform through which I find and maintain connection, even if lately I see my WN friends in boxes on the screen. And keeping my mind active is easy through our varying activities and lectures.

Mindfulness, it seems, is something I try to practice in most of what I do, although I know that proper meditation, with its quietness, would probably have more effect on my blood pressure. But I try to put movement and mindfulness together in caring for my community garden (I harvested chard, two kinds of kale, lettuce, and cilantro today!!! Mid-November!) and the acreage surrounding my house. Saturday we all raked and blew leaves, piling them all on my home vegetable garden, three feet high: I will experiment in spring by planting among the then-matted-down leaves. Movement on steroids.

Guess I will need to go into the woods for winter walks soon, as the hard freeze is coming. Being aware of how much this bolsters the telomeres’ length, I am determined to do so...while smiling.

Catherine

From the Executive Director: The Holiday Season

The term “holiday season” is one we in North America are familiar with as the time between Thanksgiving and New Year’s Day. In the United Kingdom and many other European countries, people talk about the “festive season.” Whatever we call it, the season will be different this year, as many of us will spend most of it at home. We’re fearful that we may get the virus, upset about the divisiveness in the country, worried about the economy, or just plain angry about everything.

The season, however, offers us an opportunity to reflect on our blessings. It’s a time to remind ourselves that the pandemic will end; issues will be resolved one way or another; unforeseen problems will arise, and we will survive and hopefully thrive. As J.R.R. Tolkien wrote in *The Fellowship of the Ring*, “The world is indeed full of peril; and in it there are many dark places; but still there is much that is fair, and though in all lands love is now mingled with grief, it grows perhaps the greater.”



Joyce

November Service and Support

Service requests: 3 (medical alert system, handyman, garage door repair)

Support requests: 1 (grocery shopping)

To request service or support, call Joyce at 781-283-0417, ext. 1.



Meet the New WN Treasurer

When Richard Lansing was in fourth grade in Rochester, New York, a city-wide hearing test revealed that he could distinguish pitches far better than most people. At first, this distinction proved a curse not a blessing, because he was pushed into violin lessons that, as he saw it, were nothing more than a diversion from baseball.

Because his aptitude in school was in math and science, he did not at first realize how his hearing skills would influence the direction of his life. He had intended to major in sciences in college, but when he got to Columbia, exposure to the Great Books won him over to The Humanities. One of his professors led him rather serendipitously to major in Italian—making use of his auditory talents.

After getting his BA, a chance remark about a new program in Comparative Literature at Berkeley led him to apply and to be accepted. Before starting there, he traveled in Europe and stayed at the Goethe Institute (a cheap place for poverty-stricken students), which further brought home to him his gift for languages.

Not only did Richard earn his PhD at Berkeley, but, more important, he met his wife Margot. His first job involved more serendipity: he'd accepted a position at University of Chicago but received a telegram from Brandeis—on his wedding day—with a more attractive offer. It would allow them to remain in Massachusetts, where Margot was on the University of Massachusetts faculty.

Over the next 40 years in the Brandeis Department of Romance Studies, Richard taught Medieval Italian,

Comparative Renaissance, and Epic and Romance. He developed a life-long love of the literature of Dante Alighieri—his style, his brilliant use of metaphor and simile.



Richard's resume lists many publications, grants and honors. His book *The Dante Encyclopedia*, representing 140 scholars from twelve different countries, was the Choice Outstanding Book of 2000. It quickly became a best-seller and a standard reference work in the field. Since retirement, he has continued publishing literary criticism and translations of works by Dante and other Italian poets.

Not surprisingly, Richard is an avid reader and a member of a men's book club. A love of music runs in his family: his father was an organist, and he himself studied organ at Columbia. At Berkeley, he sang with the university chorus. Today he enjoys playing piano and listening to J.S. Bach. He and Margot have traveled extensively in Europe, with a special fondness for Lago di Como and the Chianti hills. At home they enjoy the nearby family of their daughter Suzanna and her two daughters.

On January 1, 2020, Richard will bring his aptitude for math to the position of WN Treasurer. He also brings experience with Quick Books and 15 years of serving as Secretary-Treasurer of the Dante Society, which began as America's oldest literary society and is now an international organization.

C.M.

Welcome to new member Alison Partridge, who has moved to Wellesley Green from the Cape, where her late husband Ray had a rheumatology practice. They spent many years in Massachusetts but were both born in London and met at an Edinburgh medical center where she was a social worker. Their four sons include an ER physician who has spoken to WN about touring with the BSO. Alison volunteered for the Cape and Islands Chapter of the Red Cross, helping at three natural disaster sites. Her interests include drama, and she'd like to find or found a play reading group. She has ten grandchildren.

Virtual Feasts in November and December

As this newsletter went to press, many members had registered for the Zoom Presidents' Lunch at 12:15 on November 27, the day after Thanksgiving. The event page asked guests "to sign in a few minutes early, and Zoom will sort us automatically into tables of six people for some good conversation." (Your "table" might include old friends or people you'd like to know better. You can bring lunch or not, whatever is comfortable.) **A similar format will be used for a holiday lunch at 12:15 pm, Tuesday, December 29. Mark your calendar!**

Thoughts on Covid-19

Last month Curt Martin invited us to share thoughts on the epidemic. They're still welcome and may be sent to Curt (whaleman1841@gmail.com) or the WNN editor(lucyphi@outlook.com). To date:

Janet King writes, "I feel in a bubble because I am luckier than people who cannot work from home and need public transportation. To compensate I try to help others who are outside the bubble." (Ed. Note: Our age may put us at high risk, but we are at low risk compared to the millions who must work regardless of the danger.)

Joel Slocum says that two quite different thoughts popped into his head. First was "the Biblical injunction regarding 'clean hands and a pure heart,' I'm not sure about the purity of my heart, but my hands sure are clean." Second was "The Plague" by Albert Camus, which Joel hopes to reread for its philosophical reflections. (See Wikipedia for a brief account of the novel.)

Rosalie Gimeno (above) has been learning and teaching through WN events on Zoom, but she expresses mixed feelings about the technology in what she calls:

A Limerick Gone Wrong

There's an "in" application called Zoom
that locks each guest in a room.

They can chat; they can dance;
They can even be in France
while wearing fragrant perfume.

They can laugh; they can sing;
They can hear their cell phones ring.
Coronavirus has created a boom.

They can scream; they can pout;
but their host won't let them out
since breathing together spells doom.

Happenings



After it snowed all day on October 30, who would have guessed we'd have a WN lunch in the sun on November 10? Three tables were occupied at this third WN lunch at Papa Razzi in its sheltered patio with heaters.





December Zoom Events

Tue. Dec. 1, 7:30 pm—Speaker Fred Wright (see page 1)
Wed. Dec. 2, 5:30 pm—Women's Night Out (In)
Thu. Dec. 3, 12:30 pm—Men's Lunch
Fri. Dec. 4, 3 pm—Afternoon Tea
Tue. Dec. 8, 4 pm— Fan Favorites, Boston Ballet
Fri. Dec. 11, 5 pm—Cocktail Hour
Wed. Dec. 16, 4 pm—Spanish Artist Joan Miro
Fri. Dec. 18, 3 pm—Afternoon Tea
Tues. Dec. 22, 3 pm—European Christmas Customs: a Rick Steves video tour plus contributions from WN members who've spent holidays in France, Norway, Germany, England and Spain
Tues. Dec. 29, 12:15 pm— Holiday Lunch

Early January Zoom Events

Wed. Jan. 6, 5:30 pm — Women's Night Out (In)
Thurs. Jan. 7, 12:30 pm— Men's Lunch
Fri. Jan. 8, 5 pm—Cocktail Hour

On Your Own

As the pandemic continues to keep us more housebound than ever, the Activities Committee is offering members suggestions for ways to fill the long winter days. Go to the WN website and click on "On Your Own," just above the "Upcoming Events" list on the right side of the home page. One click and you'll find museum exhibitions, music, virtual visits and more.

There's no registration through Wellesley Neighbors and no schedule. You're "on your own" to explore at any time of the day or night. The list will be continuously updated. Have fun!

December 2020

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| 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 | | |



Our Zoom cocktail hours are not just for cocktails. At the last one, November 13, people shared poems, and Maureen Donlon showed how to make an easy holiday decoration (above, filled with raw cranberries and water that's changed every week or so) plus a Jill Biden recipe for oatmeal cookies.

«Town, State, Zip»

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«Name»

December Newsletter

Wellesley Neighbors
888 Worcester Street Suite 260
Wellesley, MA 02482

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