



COMING of AGE

A Publication of the Saskatoon Council on Aging

Council Looks to Future

By Mary Helen Richards

Take a roomful of articulate people and an enthusiastic professional facilitator, ask them to list problems and issues concerning seniors, and a lot starts happening right away. This was the Creative Planning Workshop of the Saskatoon Council on Aging, held at the Frances Morrison Library Sept. 26.

As an introduction, members heard from president Wilma Mollard about what had been accomplished in the past year and a half. Then facilitator Sheila Hawkins took over.

She explained that the purpose of the workshop was to set priorities and directions for the future, with maximum input from participants. Group leaders Nancy Monseler, Dan Swerhone, Mickey MacLellan, Margaret Mack and Wilma Mollard made sure they got that input.

Some wild brainstorming brought forth a wide variety of concerns.

One group's ideas included: self-help; support group for caregivers; find the hard-to-reach and the lonely, perhaps through radio programs staffed by seniors; more senior publications (problem of distribution); more physical activities; a senior fair downtown featuring employment and volunteer opportunities; adopt-a-grandchild program; seniors creating videos, arts and crafts; finding travel partners.

Then the focus was narrowed. A safe and caring community which improved the quality of life for seniors would meet

such challenges as protecting those who are abused, disabled, new to Canada and urban life, and living in poverty. This would mean an accurate portrayal of today's seniors and more awareness of their needs.

OUR RESOURCE CENTRE IS FOR YOU
 For information and referral services for volunteering your skills

Top priority centred around two issues: how to remain independent in one's own home, and how seniors with their many talents could be a resource for their community.

The discussion and findings were noted and passed on to Council's Long-range Planning Committee, which will mull them over and consider what action should be taken.

INSIDE

Dental Health.....2
 A Saskatoon Senior.....3
 Elder abuse4, 5
 St. George's Centre.....6
 Law for Seniors.....6
 Immigrant Seniors7
 Learning the Computer ...8

**240-22nd St. E
 652-2255**



How to Have a Smile for Life: Dental Tips for Older People

By Mary Helen Richards

It's a myth that a toothless grin, along with aching knees and a foggy memory, is an inevitable part of aging. With regular care, permanent teeth should last a lifetime.

However, dental care needs may change as our bodies change. Lips and mouth are drier, teeth get discolored, gums shrink, dentures may rub and irritate and oral medications can affect all areas of the mouth. So regular visits to the dentist must continue.

Regular brushing and flossing are just as vital. Brushing is essential for both natural teeth and dentures to remove plaque, that sticky coating of bacteria-laden film that clings to teeth and tongue. Use a soft brush, work slowly, gently and thoroughly. Replace the toothbrush at the first sign of wear. Regular visits to a dental hygienist for cleaning natural teeth will take away those ugly stains.

Flossing removes decaying food particles as well as plaque. Fixed partial dentures may need a heavier floss or even a length of yarn to do the job of cleaning the wider spaces at the gumline.

For all brushing and flossing activities, gentle is the word.

Fluoride is not just kid stuff. It will strengthen tooth enamel and slow down the accumulation of plaque in people of all ages. For seniors with problems of receding gums, fluorides in toothpaste, gels and mouthwash will toughen the newly-exposed enamel.

Brushing, flossing and a good diet are essential for all ages. Seniors, however, may have dentures or partial plates which need special attention. The day has long gone when getting a full set of uppers and lowers meant goodbye forever to the dentist. Gums and mouth continue to change, dentures loosen and slip; they need professional attention.

For home care, get a denture brush and use it with a cleaner such as soap, baking soda or a commercial product, then rinse and store the dentures in a water-filled container at bedtime. Partial dentures require the same treatment, plus work with a brush that reaches inside those small clasps. Stains can be soaked

off in a solution of one cup of warm water with two teaspoons for white vinegar.

Again, gentle is the word. Hard scrubbing can scratch the fine enamel surface.

A last but most serious concern for seniors is oral cancer. Watch for unusual signs: sores on the face, neck or mouth which don't heal in a few days; swelling, lumps and bumps on lips, gums or inside cheeks; white, red or dark patches or repeated bleeding in the mouth.

Ask your dentist how to examine yourself for these signs. If you find them, see your dentist at once.

If you have no regular dentist, ask your friends for a recommendation. Another resource available to seniors is the Dental College at the University of Saskatchewan (966-5056).

Thanks to Caroline Yelland and the Canadian Dental Hygienists' Association for background materials.

The Saskatoon Council on Aging has been recognized by Revenue Canada as a registered charity, no. 088791909. Official receipts will be issued for donations, and can be used for income tax purposes.

Coming of Age is published by the Saskatoon Council on Aging, P.O. Box 7091, Saskatoon S7K 4J1, with the assistance of a grant from the New Horizons program, Health and Welfare Canada. Opinions expressed are those of the authors, and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Saskatoon Council on Aging.

.....

Publications ChairmanMary Helen Richards
Publications Committee.....Delores Dzubin, Margaret Mack,
.....Wilma Mollard, Nancy Monseler, Patricia Zipchen
Editorial Consultant.....Jenni Mortin
PhotographyMary Helen Richards, Jenni Mortin

Getting to Know One of Saskatoon's Seniors

INGER DeCOURSEY

By Ginnie Lawman

Inger DeCoursey is an artist. Her home is filled with paintings – lots of paintings – all with different stories to tell. Some were done by friends, some by former students.

She and a friend taught an art class together for 25 years. A high percentage of their students were seniors, some of whom had no previous experience. Inger says the progress some of them made was incredible. One little old lady with Parkinson's disease came to the class as a withdrawn, tentative person. Gradually, through experimenting with painting, she displayed a sharp wit which had at last found an outlet. Her self-confidence blossomed.

Although Inger no longer teaches her art class, she is still an active painter with a head full of ideas. One idea that appeals to her especially is to take painting, with its freedom of expression, to disadvantaged children. And she goes further: She wants to have a mix of youth and seniors painting together. She points out that so many young people today have no positive role models, and some time spent with seniors — both age groups learning together — could have some very positive outcomes.

Inger was an only child, and she used to amuse herself by "drawing stories". She says she has come full circle as she is drawing stories again now. She likes to paint out in the

community — "to be part of the whole". A lot of her paintings are street scenes which she sketches on location.

Getting older has meant that she can't sit outside for long, but she works around that by taking photographs to help her re-create the scene in her studio. Her pictures are sold through a gallery and she says she sells enough "to support her habit".

Inger feels that painting is something people of any age can take up. Seniors have a lifetime of memories and experience to paint from — some lying in the unconscious, just waiting for a chance to be expressed. To illustrate her point, she showed a delightful picture of two puppies playing; a picture so full of life and mischief that it was a surprise to learn that it had been

painted by an elderly man in the Veterans' Home who could sit for only half an hour at a time. The optimism and humor of the painting shone through despite his physical discomfort.

You don't have to be "good" to get pleasure from painting, Inger points out. Many things decline with age, but the creative ability continues to grow, given the necessary stimulation and energy. Painting is communication, and seniors can leave a legacy of stories on canvas that their families can treasure.



'Stories on canvas': Inger DeCoursey

Another Ugly Secret:

By Jenni Mortin

Probably it was inevitable, after the ugly truth about marital abuse and child abuse, that facts about elder abuse would begin to surface across Canada.

"There has been an explosion of interest" in this area, says Eliot Paus-Jenssen of the Geriatric Assessment Unit at Royal University Hospital, one of several Saskatoon agencies helping seniors abused in their homes or special care homes.

The Saskatoon Crisis Intervention Service is called to one or two cases a month which may involve some elder abuse, says executive director Bob Sims. With cases seen by city hospitals, Home Care, the YWCA and police — part of a committee with the SCIS — the total might be five or six a week, he says.

"We took the lid off and people are now admitting it happens and talking about it," says Shan Landry, executive director, Home Care Saskatoon and District, whose nurses, homemakers and personal care workers "are part of caregiving in a way that puts us on the front lines."

They are trained to identify abuse, relieve the stress that can lead to it and teach how to prevent it.

Vulnerable, dependent seniors can experience:

- Financial abuse, often involving property and wills ("basically oriented in greed," says Mr. Sims).
- Emotional/verbal/psychological abuse
- Physical abuse and/or neglect.

All of these have been seen by Saskatoon agencies. All can be precipitated by poverty, by alcohol and substance abuse, by family dynam-

ics which include a history of violence, or by health problems, such as the demands of caring for someone with Alzheimer's disease.

Women, more than men, are the perpetrators, says Shan Landry, because they are more often the caregivers. Stress occurs as they juggle responsibilities as spouse, parent, employee and child/caregiver. When they feel their juggling effort is failing, the stress grows; something has to give.

"That's why we say abuse can occur in an environment of loving," Ms. Landry says. The caregiver gets to the point of feeling "I can't give any more," says Eliot Paus-Jenssen.

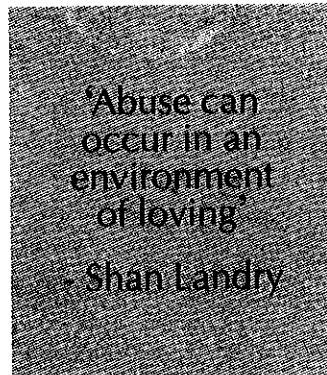
The only major survey done in Canada found that four per cent of seniors surveyed (less on the prairies) reported abuse, particularly emotional/verbal/psychological abuse. If denial of

access to grandchildren had been included as abuse, the figure would have been seven per cent.

Mrs. Paus-Jenssen suspects those figures are low because people with Alzheimer's, for example, could not have participated in the telephone survey. Abusers would not have let their victims participate.

Many seniors don't report abuse for fear of more abuse, humiliation and loss of their family caregiver. They fear being moved to a special care home. They fear family honor is at stake. They may lack assertiveness.

A family member could suspect abuse if the explanation for an injury doesn't fit the injury, if there is repeated bruising, evidence of overall poor care or dehydration, if the caregiver won't leave the senior alone with the visitor.



Seniors Are Being Abused

Wherever possible, the senior's dependency and isolation should be reduced, says Mrs. Paus-Jenssen, and the caregiver get more support. Home Care staff "try to make the living environment work better for everyone involved," says Shan Landry.

It is important to realize that anyone can be abusive, says Cheryl George, director of education at Sherbrooke Community Centre, "a loving family member or a caregiving staff member. We can all lose it."

At a special care home entrusted with people's care, "for us as professional caregivers to break that trust is the biggest sin," she says, and many people in long-term care don't want to admit it could happen in their facilities.

Sherbrooke has developed an education program to teach staff what it considers abuse and drawn up a clear reporting mechanism, and she gives workshops for other facilities and their staffs.

Staff are required to report any abuse they see to the vice-president, residential services. If they feel they might abuse a resident, they are urged to go to their supervisors; they can be moved to another area of the facility.

"They must realize they can't give and give." Staff burnout is a predictor of abuse; so is staff-resident conflict. Long-term care response training helps staff identify the potential for conflict.

Staff may be abused by residents too, particularly those with dementia. The answer may be to move them, Ms. George says, or limit their assignment with the abusive resident.

Elder abuse has a lot of parallels with child abuse, says Bob Sims of the Crisis Intervention

Kinds of abuse

- Financial
- Emotional/verbal/psychological
- Physical/neglect

Service, but one big difference: most provinces - including Saskatchewan - have no laws governing abuse of elders.

Nor are there many resources available to those trying to help abused seniors, he says. Crisis Intervention Service staff may spend eight to 10 hours on a case, trying to put together a support network for senior and caregiver.

The Seniors Secretariat is gathering information in this area for the Senior Citizens Provincial Council, says Brenda Righetti, executive director; programs and services may follow. The Council favors the positive approach: letting seniors know their rights, and helping caregivers and government departments recognize this as another form of family violence.

The Department of Social Services is looking into the possibility of services, which would involve the Family Foundation and probably other agencies, says David Macknack. The University of Regina is beginning an elder abuse prevention project.

In Saskatoon, Nightingale Home Help and Saskatoon Home Support Services will put caregivers into a home. Home Care sends nurses, homemakers and personal care workers. Support and self-help groups for family caregivers would be valuable.

"Often the relationship where there is abuse is the most important relationship a senior has," says Eliot Paus-Jenssen. "We must support that."

Try first to reduce the dependency and isolation

- Eliot Paus-Jenssen



PEOPLE

St. George's Club

By Jean Saranchuk of St. George's

St. George's Senior Citizens' Club began 16 years ago through the initiative of parishioners of St. Georges Ukrainian Catholic Cathedral, under the spiritual guidance of Mitrat Volodymur Iwaszko and Mitrat John Olenyk, and a committee created by its Ukrainian Catholic Women's League.

At the January 1975 founding meeting, 34 seniors elected a board with Steve Patola as president — a position he held for seven years, followed by William Blocka, Bill Romanosky, John Olesko and now Olga Krawchuk.

The membership grew rapidly to 300-plus, and New Horizon

grants kept the club operating at a better-than-average pace. At first, it used St. Georges Parish Hall, but later built a recreation centre across the street on the old Avenue L skating rink site, with the help of municipal, provincial and federal grants, and donations.

Over the years, members have been active in drama, Ukrainian dancing, choir and orchestra, performing at the Centre and elsewhere. The club — non-denominational and open to all ethnic groups — has an extensive program.

Social events include dine and dance, games, parties and

special occasions. The centre has a bowling alley. There are crafts, educational events, tours and picnics, including the traditional Seniors Week handicapped and shut-ins picnic.

Contact with youth is maintained. Young people take part in the Variety Night and the Ukrainian-English bilingual class from St. Goretti School entertains.

A Pioneers Cookbook was printed in 1980; there is a memorial album and archives and an active program of social assistance, including visits to members in hospital and birthday visits at St. Joseph's Home for the Aged.



PLEA Has Information on Seniors' Legal Concerns

By Kerry O'Shea for PLEA

Aging brings changes in a person's responsibilities and seniors may be concerned with how the law applies to their changing health, family and economic circumstances. Learning about rights and how to protect them can help ensure self-sufficiency and dignity.

The Public Legal Education Association of Saskatchewan (PLEA) helps seniors and others find answers to their general legal questions. It has free publications on legal topics and refers people to organizations which can help with specific problems.

Seniors and the Law (a PLEA booklet available at the Saska-

toon Council on Aging resource centre) covers many legal issues. Some, such as consumer rights or wills and estate planning, are relevant at any age. Others, such as power of attorney, guardianship and custody of grandchildren, may be of special interest to seniors.

Seniors who go south each winter or who have trouble getting around may be interested in the section on power of attorney, which enables a person to deal with another's property, bank accounts or investments.

The section on guardianship explains its difference from power of attorney. A court can

grant guardianship, on application by a family member or friend, when an adult is not mentally able to manage personal or financial affairs.

Grandparents are often distressed when grandchildren's visits stop after a separation or divorce. A section on custody and access to grandchildren suggests how the law may help a grandparent continue the relationship.

(This article is intended for general information only. People needing advice should see their lawyer or other professional. For general legal information, contact PLEA, 210 - 220 Third Avenue South.)

HUGE LANGUAGE BARRIER

By Jenni Mortin

Immigrant seniors face many problems in Saskatchewan, a study is finding, but the major one is clear: their lack of English is an enormous barrier.

Because of that barrier, they can't get access to services or may not know what is available, says Ila Sarkar of Saskatoon, president of Immigrant Women of Saskatchewan.

The organization received \$24,000 from Health and Welfare Canada for the study and needs assessment, which is being conducted by its chapters in Saskatoon, Regina, Prince Albert and Yorkton.

As immigrants, these seniors are not entitled to some of the services other seniors can get, says Mrs. Sarkar. Those sponsored by their families cannot get pensions or social assistance; the families must promise to support them for 10 years.

"So they feel very dependent — monetarily, physically and emotionally."

The study report early in 1992 will include recommendations which respond to the needs immigrant seniors have discussed with the interviewers, Mrs. Sarkar said.

There are not many immigrant seniors in Saskatchewan, she says, but the number is growing and will continue to grow. They would like to socialize with other seniors, but they feel intimidated without English.

They need a program in survival English for seniors, she says. The occupational language courses for new immigrants aren't useful for people not going right into the workforce.

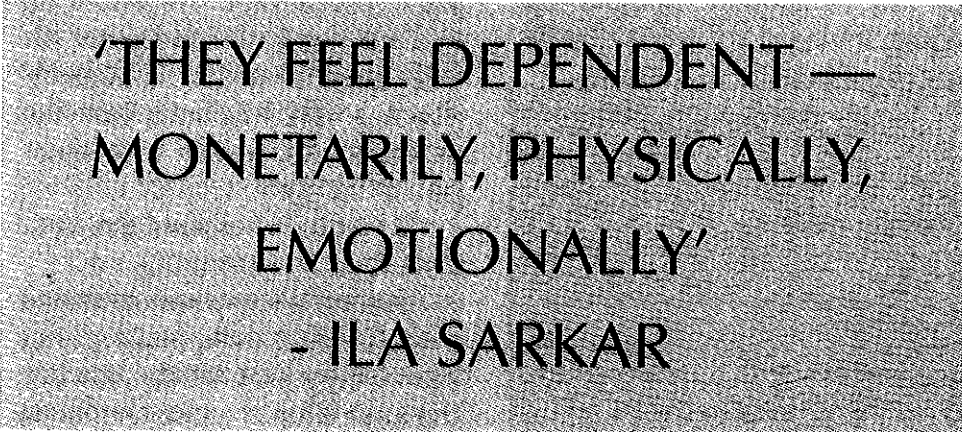
"We argue, How can they be independent without language? This is a basic test of independence."

The Saskatoon Open Door Society is trying to help that independence with its New Canadian Friends, Fellowship House and Settlement Language programs.

New Canadian Friends matches an immigrant senior with a volunteer, sometimes another senior, for friendship, informal conversation practice and language tutoring, says Dolores Braun, the society's settlement and language program co-ordinator. There are 125 pairs, and a waiting list of 40.

Many seniors go to Fellowship House on Twenty-Fourth Street East for a language and orientation program offered year-round with continuous intake. It drew 60 students this summer. Volunteer teachers teach three levels of English as a second language; two retired school teachers have been volunteering for years, Ms. Braun says.

The Settlement Language program is for immigrant women who don't plan to immediately enter



'THEY FEEL DEPENDENT —
MONETARILY, PHYSICALLY,
EMOTIONALLY'
- ILA SARKAR

the workforce. Its classes start with basic beginner English, and transportation and child care are provided if necessary. Some grandmothers bring the grandchildren they care for every day, Ms. Braun says.

Seniors may take several years to find the courage to come to the classes, she says, and some think they are too old to start over.

She agrees with Mrs. Sarkar that special language classes for seniors would help. The society's literacy classes have proudly produced two books: Remembering Grandmother and Remembering Grandfather. Both are available at the Saskatoon Open Door Society on Second Avenue.

Learning to Compute



Council's Computer Classes a Hit

by Jenni Martin

The blue skies outside hadn't a chance of distracting the 11 people in the classroom in the Gathercole Centre. Their eyes were glued to 11 bright blue computer screens.

They were in the second session of the six-hour computer course for beginners sponsored by the Saskatoon Council on Aging, loving every minute, wishing there were more minutes.

Some were writing letters on the screen. Others were consulting their neighbors on an unexpected problem: "Why did it do that?" Instructor Alan Reichert was explaining to one woman why her list of names and addresses didn't appear in two columns. Others listened avidly.

This was the class's first hands-on session. The first session was devoted to a tour of the Apple IIGS which gave the tourers a chance to get used to the mouse and other computer basics, says Mr. Reichert.

Today they learned to write on the screen, to print what they wrote, and to save their work for retrieval at the next class.

Max Stockvis has printed the letter he wrote, and is "amazed at the things I'm learning" in just



Instructor Alan Reichert and his beginner class

the second session. He signed up to learn about the computer his wife gave him for Christmas, which so far has been just "an expensive hangman and chess game," he says.

"I wanted to expand my horizons and it's working."

Jeanne Walters has never had contact with a computer and has lots of questions for the teacher. Her grandchildren use computers in school and she has wanted to learn to use one.

This course is fun, Delores Dzubin, Mildred Novak and Alice Tastad agree. "I could stay here till midnight tonight," says Mrs. Novak. "The time just flies," says Mrs. Tastad, who does the accounting and financial planning in her family and wants to learn if a computer could assist her.

Mrs. Dzubin hopes there will soon be a computer in her home

but says volunteers can use one in the Council office.

For Leo Monseler, the most important part of the class is that it destroys a myth: "There are some who think if you're over 25, you can't learn any more. Age is no barrier to learning."

Alan Reichert knew that, but this first class with seniors after a public school teaching career and now, in retirement, his own educational computing consulting firm, has reinforced it. He was amazed at their adeptness in the computer tour in the first session, he says.

Some are learning to keep up with their grandchildren and all are eager to learn as much as they can, he has found.

"Hopefully, at the end of six hours, you know what you don't know," he says — which is the beginning of knowledge.