



MEMORIES MUSINGS

By Cheri Sims

Cheri lives, writes and gardens in Charleston.

I can't tell you how good it feels to get outside and play in the dirt! I am not complaining about being inside so much this last year; I have had plenty of projects to do but sometimes you just want fresh air. I feel fortunate to have had so many things to keep me busy and interested. My friend, Judy, has also put her time to good use; she has been playing in her attic too and we have had many fun discussions about lost and found objects and pictures from our past. Since she has been downsizing her years of treasure hunting she has deemed the coffee girls worthy of becoming new keepers of said treasures and I am thrilled that I now have an attic in which to play and house some of her treasures.

Now it is time to turn my attention to the exterior for a while. I did not garden when I lived here many years ago so it is exciting to put into motion many of the ideas Hubby and I had so many years ago. I have a new friend, a squirrel, who has discovered that he/she can climb onto the garage, sit in the gutter and stare at me through the bathroom window. I discovered my friend while applying my makeup as I looked into my mirror and saw its reflection in the mirror. The window is directly opposite the mir-

ror and at first I was startled and thought the squirrel was in the house. My cats jumped up into the window so my first thought was not as odd as it may sound. It scared me to think that the squirrel was in the house but as I turned quickly I realized that it was not as close as I first thought. My friend has learned my routine and I have seen it on the garage many times this past couple weeks. There are a couple squirrels, who are eating at the bird feeder but this one seems to be the biggest of the group and obviously more agile.

Mitten kitten and Pitou are continuing to enjoy their sun porch condo which is tall enough for both of them to see out the windows. The wrap around windows allow them three sides of the house to see out into the yard and when they are not playing in the attic they can be found bird watching on the porch. The neighborhood cats have found the windows too and one of them sits on the outside porch railing and talks to the inside cats; that is when he has not climbed up into the bird feeder.

Mitten kitten and Pitou also like to sit in their condo and watch me garden. I feel a little guilty that they can't come outside but we have developed a new routine;

now that the grass is growing; I bring in fresh grass for them to eat and play in and they are pretty happy about that. I can't forget the grass and if I do they dance around my feet and I simply have to turn around and go back outside to fetch their grass treat. I have discovered that Pitou enjoys mint and Mittens likes' thyme. At first I was concerned about them eating the herbs but a bit of research led me to information stating that some cats do like herbs as long as they are not toxic. Parsley, sage, rosemary and thyme are safe for them too. Pitou has very fresh breath now that we have discovered she likes mint.

I also have another new friend from the house on the other side. He is a big puppy pit bull named Blue and I have had the pleasure of making friends with him. He is really smart and already has many tricks to show me. I am now the proud owner of Milk Bone treats for Blue and we enjoy interacting with his owner supervising. "Pepper" puppy lives to the north and "Blue" puppy lives on the south and my larder is filled with Cheerios and dog bone treats to pass out. Life is good!

Between playing with all the cats and dogs I have managed to get in a little gardening and my herbs are doing quite well. I visited the old house the other day and was able to get a start of tarragon, which was a Canadian seed import from our last vacation so I am excited to have that back in my garden again. Tarragon has a distinct licorice taste and is popular in French and Canadian French

cooking and Hubby liked it which was odd because he did not like many herbs. A little tarragon goes a long way so one must be careful not to over season. It is especially good when used with fish, carrots and beets. The Canadians make a sauce with tarragon and serve over many recipes. I am sharing the basic sauce recipe for you to try over chicken or fish.

If you ever have the good fortune to travel the back roads of Maine and Quebec Province you might be treated with "Tarragon Custard" as a light dessert in many of the smaller family owned restaurants. We were introduced to this delight in Tadoussac, Quebec, Canada. The owner's wife had a beautiful herb garden and she provided all the fresh herbs for their recipes. Tarragon custard is one of the few herb desserts Hubby and I jointly agreed was a winner in our books.

I discovered a great website "Thyme and Tarragon" with recipes using tarragon and also gluten free recipes. I have tried a couple of the recipes from this site and it is well worth your time to investigate it. (<https://thymeandtarragon.com/gluten-free-skillit-brownies/>)

A friend sent a suggestion and a link for creating a Potpourri garden and I thought you might like to read what the author has to say about Potpourri gardening. The site is "Potpourri Garden Plants: Creating A Potpourri Herb Garden" at (<https://www.gardeningknowhow.com/>). I have read some of the pages and the site has valuable information for herb gardening.

"Care of Potpourri Gar-

dens Most of the herbs used in a potpourri garden are Mediterranean in origin and fairly easy to grow, preferring sun, well-draining soil and a moderate amount of watering. Many of the annuals incorporated in the potpourri garden are of similar ilk with a slightly more frequent need for fertilization. Roses may require a bit more work to tease out perfect blooms, but are well worth the effort. Once your potpourri garden plants have established themselves, the ideal time to harvest is on a dry day; a couple of days after a rainfall. Allow a few hours to lapse once the sun has come up to let the dew dry but before the sun dries the essential oils. Once harvested, most recipes call for drying the flowers and herbs. There are a multitude of methods for drying, and many books or online sources are available where you can learn additional tips and combinations for a homemade potpourri that is all your own."

Enjoy some fresh air!

Tarragon Sauce

- * 1/4 teaspoon salt
- * 1/4 teaspoon pepper
- * 1 tablespoon butter
- * 1 tablespoon olive oil
- * 1 shallot, chopped or onion
- * 3/4 cup heavy whipping cream
- * 3 teaspoons minced fresh tarragon, divided
- * 2 teaspoons lemon juice

Fry shallots or onions in a small pan with butter or oil of choice ; cook and stir over medium heat until tender. Add cream, stirring to loosen browned bits from the pan. Increase heat to medi-

um-high; cook until slightly thickened. Stir in 2 teaspoons tarragon, lemon juice and remaining salt. Serve with meat or veggies. Sprinkle with remaining tarragon.

Tarragon Custard Ingredients

- * 1 1/2 cups whole milk
- * 1 tablespoon coarsely chopped fresh tarragon
- * Nonstick cooking spray
- * 4 eggs
- * 1/8 teaspoon salt
- * 1/8 teaspoon ground white pepper

Step 1

In pan combine milk and tarragon. Heat to simmer; remove. Cover; let stand 30 minutes.

Step 2

Meanwhile, lightly coat four 6-ounce custard cups with cooking spray. Place custard cups in square baking dish; set aside. Preheat oven to 325 degrees F.

Step 3

In bowl whisk together eggs, salt, and pepper. Whisk in milk mixture; divide among prepared cups. Place baking dish on oven rack. Pour boiling water in dish to 1 inch depth.

Step 4

Bake for 40 minutes or until knife inserted near centers comes out clean. Cool cups on rack 30 minutes. Cover surface of custards with plastic wrap. Chill 4 hours. Run knife around edge of cups; invert. Makes 4 servings.

<https://www.bhg.com/recipe/desserts/tarragon-custard/?printview>



REAL LIFE WELLNESS

By Dr. Bill Hemmer

How to Age Gracefully

I just had another birthday. This time of year always makes me think back and be thankful for all the memories and the people that have made me who I am. But this time of year, also smacks me in the head and reminds me that time waits for no one and getting older isn't optional. So, the next few articles will provide you with the outline

of what I'm doing to age as gracefully as I can.

The first thing I have come to realize is you must address your entire lifestyle to slow the aging process. Mental, Chemical and Physical lifestyle behaviors can never truly be separated. One area affects the other two. This is why I call it the Triangle of Health. So, to age

gracefully, you need to take inventory of your behaviors on all three sides of the triangle.

Mental lifestyle behaviors include your dominant thoughts, social interactions, sleep and your spiritual life. The most common example of your dominant thoughts is your general attitude. Is your cup half empty or half full? This distinction is very important. Everyone has a different view of the world around them.

Your social interactions also contribute to your Mental health. Who are you hanging out with? Are they a positive or negative influence on you? Do they make

you a better person because you are around them? Are they helping you grow, or are they bringing you down? Choose your social interactions wisely.

Another extremely important part of your mental health is your ability to get quality sleep. I have not put as much effort into sleep quality until three years ago. The more I have focused on it, the more important it has become for me. Quality sleep literally cleans your brain. When you are in deep sleep, special valves open up and allows lymph fluid to bathe and clean your brain. A clean brain is essential for graceful aging. But, if you never cycle

into deep sleep, your brain doesn't get cleaned properly and you age quicker.

Finally, your spiritual life is also an extremely important part of your Mental lifestyle behaviors. My faith has been my foundation since I have started my professional career. Holistic Integrative healthcare isn't the popular choice for most people. Our current healthcare system is symptom based, therefore healthy lifestyle behaviors take a back seat.

Choosing Chiropractic insured that I would be swimming upstream to educate people about alternative healthcare options for my entire career. I have an un-

wavering belief that the body has the God-given ability to heal itself without the use of drugs or surgery. This belief, while not common, will never go away completely because it is true.

Spiritual life for me includes prayer, gratitude, outdoor natural beauty, church, positive group activities and family. If your spiritual cup is always full, you can weather any storm because of your faith and hope for the future is secure. We all need to have more of that in our lives.

I will continue next week with the Chemical lifestyle behaviors I'm using to age as gracefully.

Baby BFFs: best friends give birth seven minutes and one room apart

Mara Hutchcraft did not plan on getting pregnant at the same time as her best friend, Kaitlyn Standerfer, but life does not always go as planned. A couple of weeks after Kaitlyn announced that she was expecting, Mara discovered that she too was pregnant.

"Our partners thought we had planned it. They still don't believe us," Kaitlyn joked. "But we were pumped!"

The pair later learned that their due dates were one day apart, and they noted how crazy it would be if they delivered their babies on the same day. And on February 5, Mara and Kaitlyn did just that. They gave birth to their baby girls just seven minutes and one room apart in the SBL Women & Children's Center.

The women met in 2015 while working together at Mac's Uptowner in down-



town Charleston. One day, they went to a winery together, and from there, their bond grew.

"We just clicked right away because we have the same sense of humor and similar life goals," Kaitlyn said.

In 2017, Kaitlyn, who works as a health inspector, married her husband, Bill Standerfer, a teacher at Charleston Middle School. The couple had their first child, Weston, a year later. Mara was there for Kaitlyn's milestones, including being a part of Kaitlyn's bridal party. Mara began dating her partner, Marc Murphy, in 2019. Both Mara and Marc work in car sales.

Kaitlyn had been talking about having another child with her husband, but Mara and her partner were sur-

prised when they discovered that they were expecting.

"Mara was one of the first people I told. Besides my husband of course," Kaitlyn chuckled.

Kaitlyn and Mara bonded even further as they went through their pregnancies, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. Celebrating holidays was an ongoing concern. Instead of going out on New Year's Eve like many of their friends did, the two opted for a home gathering with ice cream.

"It was so much nicer to have someone to call to talk to about exciting things—or even to discuss our appointments. We were going through pregnancy at the same exact stage, after all," Kaitlyn said.

In October, Kaitlyn and Mara did a maternity pho-

toshoot at Douglas Hart Nature Center, donning pumpkin-themed shirts and black skirts. The pair used pink smoke bombs to reveal that they were expecting girls. After the first ultrasound, Mara thought she and Marc were having a boy, but the second ultrasound showed otherwise. "That was a fun phone call to Kaity. We wanted them to be the same gender, so we were so excited," Mara said.

Kaitlyn and Mara bounced names off of each other, so they would not choose the same one. Sharing a birthday would be enough, so they did not want their girls to have similar names.

On February 4, Kaitlyn and her husband went to Sarah Bush Lincoln to be induced at midnight. Mara's water broke that evening, so she and Marc quickly followed behind. When they were able, the pair Facetimed and Snapchatted each other to soothe and encourage. By going back and forth between the rooms, SBL nurses helped the two communicate about where the other was in the labor process.

"They got to know our situation pretty quickly," Mara said of the birthing team. "We both wanted to deliver first. They kept us posted on who was 'winning the race.'"

Mara and Marc's little girl, Remi, came into the world at 11:51 am. The Standerfers welcomed their little girl, Emsley, seven minutes later. One of the nurses

grabbed their cell phones to snap some photos of the girls in the nursery, which touched the families.

"Remi and Emsley met before we even got to meet each other's baby," Mara said. "They had a spa day together for their first bath at the hospital, and were placed next to each other in the nursery. Our nurses were amazing. They made it feel like a personalized experience."

Remi and Emsley's moms anticipate that their girls—dressed in matching, gold-embossed "Girl Gang" shirts and onesies—will grow up to be best friends, just like they are. Bonding through this experience brought the two even closer.

"I think we both appreciate each other more as friends now. She is stronger than me in some places where I may be weak, and vice versa, but we complement each other and have each other's back," Mara said.

While the COVID-19 pandemic prevented Kaitlyn and Mara from seeing each other as frequently during their pregnancies, they kept in constant contact by calling and texting.

"I think with the pandemic—and everything being so hard, and people feeling so isolated—it's really important to keep your good friends and family close by," Kaitlyn said. "It really opens your eyes to how important it is to have a best friend."

TERMITES



BE PROACTIVE!

Call **Crist Termite & Pest Solutions, Inc.**

David Crist
217-543-2890
207 N Oak Street Arthur, IL 61911
<https://cristtermite.com>




