



# CAREGIVERS

VOLUNTEERS ASSISTING THE ELDERLY

Spring 2000

Volume 17, Number 2

## The Lighter side of life: the role of humor in well-being

Special to CAREGIVERS by Laine Waggoner, MA, MS

**T**he role of a sense of humor and laughter in reducing stress, anxiety and pain is well documented.

Many scientific studies have indicated that an optimistic outlook and the development of effective coping skills can help you to cope with life's downside. This is because laughter increases your pituitary gland's production of the helpful endorphin, a morphine-like secretion

which helps to moderate stress, influences memory and concentration, relieves pain and increases work and athletic ability.

**"Laughter is an instant vacation."  
—Milton Berle**

Because endorphins also strengthen your immune system, laughter is often considered one of the best medicines for a variety of ills.

In their excellent book on "Living Creatively with Chronic Illness," Eugenie Wheeler and Joyce Dace-Lombard in 1989 said that: "Laughter can shatter pre-tension, bestow humility, restore a

sense of balance, strengthen, compassion and bring you to an inner comfort zone." When you can laugh at yourself, you are reflecting your sense of being separate from the sad or tragic event or the illness.

### **Humor and Aging**

I share the late Bette Davis' view that "Old age is no place for sissies." I find I look for the humor in the annoying aspects of life and I need to laugh about the problems of aging, as I deal with ever-increasing "twinges in my hinges" and "senior moments."

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## Volunteer Spotlight: Betty Duke & Joan Hogan

by Carol Basralian

**B**etty Duke (89) was born in Brooklyn, New York. In 1931, she met and married her husband Ray and packed up and headed west. Ray, a small business owner for many years, eventually landed a job at Lockheed Aviation where he worked until he retired in 1973. At that time, they were living in the Los Angeles area and had been coming to Ventura on vacations.

Betty had always loved the ocean and looking at the water, so they bought a home on the lake at Marina Park in Ventura. Twenty-seven years later, she is still there enjoying the view and the water fowl that inhabit the waterways. Unfortunately, Ray died just two years after they moved to Ventura.

In February of 1997, her daughter, Barbara Sharpe, contacted us. She advised us that her mother needed a little assistance, as she was experiencing worsening



*(l-r) Betty Duke, Joan Hogan*

eye problems and had recently sold her car.

**J**oan Hogan became a CAREGIVERS volunteer in April of that year. From New York City, she had recently retired as marketing director for Condé Nast Publishing Company. Joan had heard about us at a meeting of the American Association of University Women and thought it was something that she would enjoy doing. We immediately matched her with Betty and they have been fast friends ever since.

They see each other every Tuesday and go to doctors appointments, lunch or shopping. Sometimes they just visit and enjoy each other's company in Betty's sunny living room overlooking the beautiful duck pond.

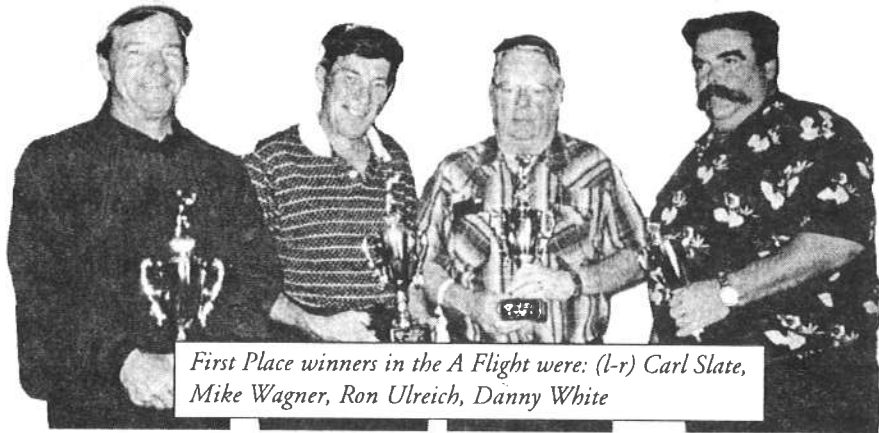
After three years of togetherness, Betty says, "I look forward to Joan coming. She has a lot of patience. I'm so grateful for all her help and the service from CAREGIVERS." Joan interjects, "CAREGIVERS performs a marvelous service for this community and I have great admiration for Betty and what she's been through. She's always smiling and happy. We laugh and it's just wonderful."

Volunteers are stars that twinkle and brighten up other people's lives. Mother Teresa said, "It's not how much we give, but how much love we put into giving." ❖

# Golf Tournament Raises \$22,000!

We are sincerely grateful to all the individuals, businesses and organizations that supported our 8<sup>th</sup> annual "Wearin' o' the Green" golf tournament on St. Patrick's Day.

Special thanks go to our Title Sponsor, **AT&T Wireless Services**; to our Banquet Sponsor, **Fair Consulting, Inc.** and to co-sponsors **Santa Barbara Bank & Trust, Beazer Homes, Pacific Bell, Avenue TV Cable, City National Bank, E.J. Harrison & Sons, and Mazda North American Operations.**



*First Place winners in the A Flight were: (l-r) Carl Slate, Mike Wagner, Ron Ulreich, Danny White*

Clive Salmon & Theresa Perales; Seabreeze Cleaners Oxnard Shores; See's Candies; Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet; Tommy Slater; State Farm (Dennis Watson); State Farm Agency Field Office; Berta & Allan Steele; Trader Joe's; Vance, Thrift & Biller-Andy Viles; Ventura Suburban Kiwanis; Wadeco Property Management; The Hon. Henry J. Walsh; Wedgewood Banquet

Center; Norm Weitzel; Wood Ranch Golf Club; Yolanda's.

This annual tournament, our main fundraiser of the year, would not happen without the hard work of many volunteers. We are especially grateful to the following people for their help on the big day: Angelica Adame, Chuck Brady, Ginny Camarillo, Russ Campbell, Tina Killion, Donna Kimber, Jerry Mikuls, Mike Nemeč, Luther Tolo, Martha Tovias, Keith York, and Mary Yoshioka.

Thanks also to the tournament planning committee: co-chairs Lisa LoVullo and Jack Collings, Ron Ulreich, Norm Weitzel, Tommy Slater, Cecilia Macias, Jack Tingstrom, Andy Killion, and Judy Frazier. ♣

Please let all these folks know that their support for CAREGIVERS is appreciated. In addition to the above, donors include the following:

A Better Club; AllCable; Andria's Seafood Specialities; Automobile Club of So. California; Barber Ford-VW-Isuzu; Barkerductions; Blocksgaard, Glick & Weitzel; Buenaventura Golf Course; Buenaventura Sr. Men's Golf Club; Buratto & Associates; Café Scoop; Ginny Camarillo; Carefree Travel; Carol Basralian; College Square Cleaners; Community Memorial Hospital; Crown Custom Pool Tables; Cucina D'Italia; Custom Awards & Engraving; Dunbar/Collings Architecture; Dynamic Computing; El Torito; First American Title; Five Points Car Wash; Franky's Place; Judy Frazier; Councilman Jim Friedman; The Gas Company; GRD Construction; Gulp, Inc.; Hungry Hunter; The Image Source; Island Packers; Jim Hall Kart Racing School; Kampai Japanese Restaurant; Supervisor Susan K. Lacey; Lisa LoVullo; Cecilia Macias; Magic Mountain; Marquie Dinner Theater; The Melonas Family; Lauren Meredith; Pat Meredith; Jay & Jean Midgley; Morgan Stanley Dean Witter-Andy Killion; New West Symphony; The Oaks at Ojai; Ojai Valley Inn & Spa; Olivas Park Golf Course; Pete's Breakfast House; Pierpont Inn; Pioneer Hotel & Gambling Hall; Pro/Motion Silk Screening; Drs.



*(l-r) Ramon Zalamea, Joe Diacuna, Frank Diacuna, Dennis Zalamea took First Place in the B Flight.*

## A Message from Judy Frazier, Chairperson

As you may know, our wonderful Executive Director, Pat Meredith, has retired as of March 31, 2000. She led our organization through eight years of growth and struggle with a steady hand, a great sense of humor and a quiet strength that often went unrecognized because it was so quiet. Pat is the ultimate lady. She dealt with staff, board and volunteers on a daily basis and kept everything running smoothly. As a board member for eight years, I will miss her leadership tremendously. I know that the same sentiment is shared by all of our board members.

Pat has had a great reputation in the non-profit community for many years. In her work with the Ventura County Symphony, United Way and as a former councilwoman for the City of Camarillo, Pat came in contact with many people who came to know her as someone reliable and honest who gets the job done. She is retiring after a long and distinguished career in the county. Because she has been so busy these last few years, I cannot imagine that she will fade into the sunset. I hope—no, I know we will continue to see Pat in our community, especially here at CAREGIVERS, for many years to come. ♣

## Adieu, Pat


by Carol Basralian

I wish you the best of luck and happiness as you travel down the retirement trail. We've had a fruitful eight-year relationship and you have successfully catapulted the CAREGIVERS program into the next millennium! When you were hired, CAREGIVERS was struggling with finances. Our funding was down and the prospects of staying alive past three years was doubtful. But we got lucky—a benevolent benefactor and your management and grant-writing skills have brought us to where we are today. Thank you for all your support and for extending a hand of encouragement when emotions ran high. You'll be a hard act to follow. So, enjoy yourself. Best Wishes, Carol. ♣

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And, I laughed out loud when I received the Senility Prayer from a friend:

*God grant me the Senility to forget the people I never liked anyway, the good fortune to run into the ones that I do, and the eyesight to tell the difference.*

*I finally got my head together; now my body is falling apart.*

*Funny, I don't remember being absent minded.*

*I spend a lot of time, these days, thinking about the hereafter: I go somewhere to get something, and then wonder what I'm here after.*

*If God wanted me to touch my toes, he would have put them on my knees.*

*It's not hard to meet expenses—they're everywhere.*

*And, when I'm finally holding all the cards, why does everyone else decide to play chess???*

### **Humor and Hearing Loss**

Very little is written about the value of humor when dealing with hearing loss, which is my special interest. I have been living with my own profound hearing loss for 42 years. Early on, I discovered that a sense of humor can serve as an invaluable antidote to the inevitable stress, frustrations and anxiety that come with the frequent misunderstandings and communication breakdowns.

People who live successfully with hearing loss must develop the ability to laugh at their mistakes. This helps to make family, friends and co-workers feel more at ease. Using self-deprecating humor to relieve tension and laughing with others is a wonderful expression of kinship or social bonding.

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**YOUR DONATIONS MAKE IT POSSIBLE FOR US TO GIVE A HELPING HAND TO THOSE WHO NEED IT. THANK YOU! (January - March, 2000)**

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We are able to provide this vital help to the frail elderly in Ventura County only because of the generosity of people like you. Contributions, gifts to our Endowment Fund, memorial gifts and gifts in honor of a special person or occasion may be sent to our Ventura office. Every gift will be promptly acknowledged. All donations are tax-deductible. Please make checks payable to **CAREGIVERS**. Call us at 658-8530 for more details.

*Continued from page 3 - HUMOR*

In the support groups and workshops that I lead, I frequently use humor to lighten the atmosphere. I always get laughs with the jokes and cartoons from "Do You Hear Me?" by Maxwell Schneider, a delightful, laugh-filled book of humor for the hard of hearing, by the hard of hearing.

Schneider relies on his own sense of humor as a lifesaver, so he dedicated his little gem of a book to the millions of other Americans who are hard of hearing, "because their pursuit of happiness is made much more difficult due to their disability."

My clients and I particularly enjoy Schneider's so-called "Positive Aspects of Being Hard of

Hearing" such as:

*You find you really don't hear what you used to pretend you didn't hear.*

*Your friends will trust you with a secret. What they don't know is that you probably didn't hear it in the first place.*

*People appreciate that they don't have to talk about you behind your back; if they keep smiling, they can talk about you in front of your face.*

*When a 300-pound bully insults your wife at a bar.*

*If your home is under the flight path of a major airport.*

*If the teenager next door digs hard rock with 18-inch speakers.*

*When you are asked to mow the lawn, wash the car, clean the garage, take out the trash, etc.*

Among the thousands of Internet web sites on humor is one belonging to "Dr. Humor," actually Dr. Stuart Robertshaw, professor of psychology and education at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse.

Like me, he is on a crusade to reduce "humor-impairment" in people. Dr. Humor's prayer is a good guide for all of us:

*"God grant me the laughter to see the past with perspective, to face the future with hope, and to celebrate today—without taking myself too seriously."*

**Humor Prescription**

Help your body, mind and spirit to maintain and enhance your health and stimulate your

*Continued on page 5*

**CAREGIVERS Benefactors**  
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*Continued from page 4 – HUMOR*

healing endorphins by following these tips:

Train yourself to be more optimistic by pinpointing your negative thinking and replacing it with a positive, "can-do" philosophy.

Use the power of self-talk. Say "I'm healthy and full of energy" to yourself at least 20 times a day. If you cannot do this on your own, seek the guidance of a counselor or therapist.

Take a brisk walk. Recommended for those age 70 and up, are at least 20 minutes of aerobic exercise at least three or four times a week.

Smile and laugh as much as possible. Watch funny movies or TV shows.

Sniff or eat some chocolate, a peach or cinnamon.

Try to avoid those things that lower endorphins such as poor posture, poor physical condition, poor sleep, worry, chronic pain, stress and negative, draining people.

Laine Waggoner, MA, MS, is director of the new Hearing-loss Education and Assistance Resource program at Morbrook Institute and a pre-licensed Marriage & Family Therapist supervised by Dr. Karen Florey, MFT license # 32992. She uses the knowledge and skills gained from her 42-year personal experience with hearing loss in her caring counseling. Her free support group meets on the first Thursday of the month from 2:30-4:30 p.m. Phone 484-7868 for a reservation and directions to 333 Lantana St. at Daily Dr., Camarillo. ❀

**A Farewell from Pat Meredith**

*There is a destiny that makes us brothers;  
 None goes his way alone.  
 All that we send into the lives of others  
 Comes back into our own.*

*Edwin Markham*

I quoted these lines in my first newsletter message back in April 1992, and, for me, the truth of this sentiment has only increased with the years. I am so grateful for the time I have spent at CAREGIVERS, for the special people I have met and worked with, people who every day send love, respect, hope, and kindness into the lives of the elders that this program serves.

I leave with very mixed emotions, for I feel privileged to have been a part of this wonderful mission of service for the past eight years. I have to admit, however, to looking forward to retirement and having the time to pursue some long-standing personal interests, such as painting, gardening, learning Italian, traveling and reading more than



*Pat Meredith*

five pages of a book in one sitting! Volunteer service is also a part of my retirement plan, for I would like to be able to say, at the end, that I lived a useful life.

Camarillo resident Barbara Weinberg has been named to the executive director post. You will read about her in the next issue of this newsletter, but I hope, in the meantime, that some of you will call and welcome her

to CAREGIVERS after she comes on board May 8<sup>th</sup>.

I thank all who have contributed to this program with your time, money and moral support, especially those whom I've had the privilege of working with personally. You all make such a difference in our community, and the care and love you give to others can't help but come back to you, multiplied. ❀

*Please help to ensure that this program will continue into the future by remembering CAREGIVERS in your will or trust.*

**For Your Information**

An ongoing Hearing Loss Support Group meets on the first Thursday of each month from 2:30 to 4:30 p.m. at the Morbrook Institute, 333 Lantana Street, Suite 102, Camarillo. Contact Laine Waggoner for more information: voice mail: 484-2285; e-mail: [lainew@dock.net](mailto:lainew@dock.net). ❀

# Coming Events:

**Board Meetings**  
 Thursdays 7:30 a.m.  
 May 25, June 22, July 27

**Ventura Police Block Party**  
 Saturday May 6, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.  
 Come by our booth and say hello!

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CAREGIVERS is sponsored by the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet and is grateful for the support of Trinity Lutheran Church, Ventura; First United Methodist Church, Ventura; Sisters of the Holy Cross; National Council of Jewish Women; First United Methodist Women, Ventura; First Presbyterian Church, Santa Paula; Ventura County Church of Religious Science; and the Aid Association for Lutherans.

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