



# WALT SHURDEN LAW

May 2016

611 Druid Road East, Suite 712 • Clearwater, FL 33756

## What is Going on in the Lives of Visually Impaired Seniors?

By Walt Shurden

Martin, 74, was visually impaired and lived alone in his own home. He was excited when his daughter, Janet, moved back to Clearwater with her family. He loved being able to visit with his grandchildren more often and to be present at school events and family gatherings. But tension developed over what Martin felt was Janet's meddling in his affairs. She wanted to overhaul the interior of his home with an eye toward safety. Martin had fallen at home once before but now he felt that Janet's fear of him falling again was causing her to be authoritative and patronizing toward him.

As it turned out, the only thing that Janet accomplished was to cause Martin to be defensive during the time they spent together.

What was it that Martin was holding onto so steadfastly? A March 2016 study titled "Seniors' Self-Preservation by Maintaining Established Self and Defying Deterioration – A Grounded Theory" conducted by Jeanette Källstrand Eriksson, PhD, Cathrine Hildingh, PhD, Nina Buer, PhD & Hans Thulesius, at the School of Health and Welfare, Halmstad University, Halmstad Sweden, attempted to explain how seniors living independently in the community resolve issues influenced by visual impairment and risk of falling. The researchers interviewed 13 visually impaired seniors who had each fallen at least one time while living independently in the community. They also interviewed six visual instructors with experience from hundreds of relevant incidents from the same



group of seniors. Their findings were as follows:

- The Group of Seniors Sought to Maintain Their Established Self
- The Seniors' main concern was about preserving their sense of self-identity as the person they used to be and the life they used to have before age-related deterioration began. With satisfaction, the seniors depicted the high points of their adult lives and told career stories, which indicated these were still key to their self-identity.
- Relating to their past self was enhanced by preserving their home as it used to be and not making changes to the interior design. Removing rugs, mats

*Continued on page 2*

### Our Goal

*To provide exceptional legal service to our clients.*

# Bette is on a Disaster Response Team!



Bette and some other members of the West Pasco CERT Team.

Community Emergency Response Teams (CERT) are citizens like you who receive special training to help their communities after a disaster. CERT is coordinated by FEMA and local government offices of emergency management.

The training is important! It covers disaster recovery skills like first aid, CPR, and importantly, how to mark the doors of homes with injured or deceased inhabitants. Properly marked doors save the professional emergency services time when they finally arrive.

Pasco and Pinellas Counties both provide free CERT training. Pasco County summer basic training will be in July. For information on how to sign up, call Steve Sumner at 727-847-8137.

Pinellas County basic training is scheduled for June 10, 11, & 12. For more information, contact David Moore at [david@activeindisaster.org](mailto:david@activeindisaster.org)

If you have a little time and a desire to help your neighbors, contact your county's CERT program.



Thanks for the patience of our clients who were inconvenienced by the workers constructing our new wheelchair ramp. We believe this will be advantageous to many in the future.

## *What is going on...* (Continued from page 1)

or moving furniture was like removing memories. But preserving the home enhanced their sense of security. Each item on a shelf in the home can have independent significance and help elicit memories of close relationships with children, relatives and friends.

- Many of the visually impaired seniors claimed they knew every inch of their sometimes cluttered environments. They still wanted to make their own choices and if a fall occurred, they would accept that it was because of their own negligence.

- The seniors put up facades to hide impairments instead of exposing their vulnerabilities. They did this to protect their power of self-determination.

- The Group of Seniors also Took Action to Defy Deterioration.

- The seniors engaged in this behavior to preserve themselves by compensating for deterioration that reduced their quality of life.

- Moving, Adapting and Networking were three actions the seniors took for self-preservation.

- "Moving" involved maintaining past activities, sometimes including hobbies and driving that now present increased risks. Moving also includes using mobility devices like walkers, canes and scooters, although seniors were concerned about the stigma of using these devices.

- "Adapting" involved doing old things in a new way like listening to audio books and listening to radio instead of television.

- "Networking" with old friends, family and new friends defies deterioration by helping the senior identify as his old self.

The study participants indicated that paternalistic approaches like interventions by family and professionals were viewed as insulting. The study gives us insight into Senior Citizens self-preservation strategies.

- Advice for the Person Trying to Help

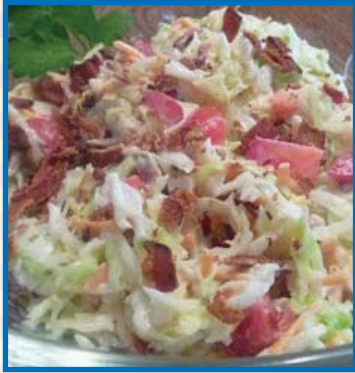
- Acknowledge the value of those things in the house that add to the Senior's identity.

*Continued on page 3*

# New Pizzaz to Memorial Day Coleslaw

## Ingredients:

1 cup crumbled blue cheese  
1 16 oz. pkg. of shredded cabbage mix  
1/3 cup of mayonnaise  
2 Tablespoons lemon juice OR cider vinegar  
Salt & pepper to taste



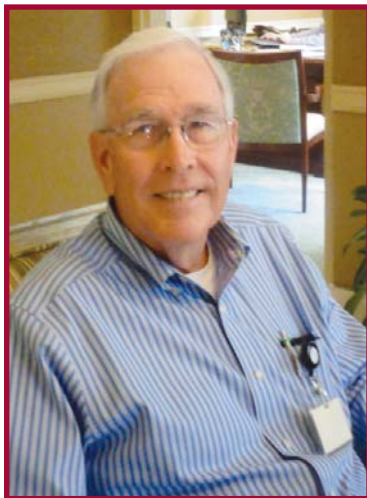
Other ingredients people like to add: thinly sliced celery; blue cheese dressing; cherry tomatoes; pre-cooked bacon pieces; seedless grape halves and/or shredded carrots. Mix the dressing ingredients together and then mix in shredded cabbage mix. You may want to sprinkle more blue cheese crumbs and/or bacon on the top.

## This Month's Spotlight

### John Fitts

Chaplain at Westchester Gardens

John Fitts has been the volunteer chaplain at Westchester Gardens for a little over a year. He counsels residents, families and sometimes the staff. He visits the residents to learn their story and help them with their transition.



John has been the chaplain for Hospice, Morton Plant Hospital, North Bay Hospital, and Bayview Gardens Retirement Community. He was also the chaplain for the Blue Jays and Phillies in Dunedin for 17 years as well as a student mentor at East Lake High School. He started volunteering in the late 80's and is very passionate about helping people.

He and his wife Patty have been married for 50 years and have three children and ten grandchildren. They published an inspirational book titled Grace Drops, which Patty illustrated.

## What is going on... (Continued from page 2)

- Give credit for positive actions taken to defy deterioration by the Senior's movement, adaptation, and networking.
- Speak with respect. Don't answer for your parent if they can.
- Stop and think how you would want to be treated.
- Keep things as positive as possible.

Remember, the most important thing as our parents age, is that we maintain loving relationships. Good relationships come from being understanding, patient, empathetic, and making the most of our time together.

## What Clients Are Doing

**Mr. A** made a decision to try to get a pension from the Veterans Administration. He is concerned about his ability to pay for his long term care expenses. He will transfer assets to an irrevocable trust controlled by his children. He served honorably in World War II.

**Ms. B** is considering changing her Will to include some local charities. She is concerned about making a positive impact with her monies. She asked our office to identify several organizations for her consideration. We were happy to do so.

**Mr. and Mrs. C** created a trust for a grandchild whom they are raising. They were concerned about the age difference between them and their grandchild and wanted to be prepared.

**Mr. D** applied to Medicaid for assistance paying his nursing home costs. He had fallen at home and was critically injured. An adult caregiver living in the home was intoxicated and unable to provide him assistance. He is concerned about improving his health and returning to a safe living situation.

**Mr. E** revoked a power of attorney for one person and named another. Mr. E is a vulnerable adult who is concerned about what happened to a lump sum of money he received.



# WALT SHURDEN LAW



**WALT SHURDEN**  
Board Certified Elder Law Attorney

PRSR STD.  
U S POSTAGE  
**PAID**  
TAMPA, FL  
PERMIT NO. 2032

611 Druid Road East, Suite 712  
Clearwater, FL 33756  
P: 727.443.2708  
F: 727.255.5004  
www.waltshurdenlaw.com  
Walter B. Shurden, P.L.

## Legal Term of the Month

**Pro Se** – A Latin phrase meaning for “yourself.”  
Representing yourself in a court case.

## How to get off the Newsletter List

If you would like to have your name removed from our newsletter list, please email your request to [firm@shurden.net](mailto:firm@shurden.net) or call our office at 727-443-2708.

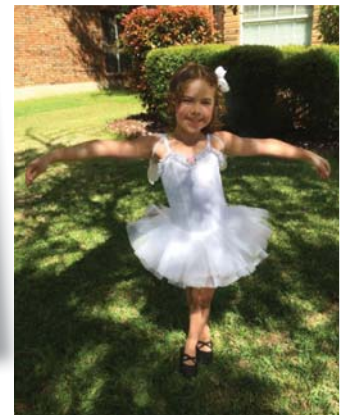
### May 25th – National Tap Dance Day



**Sophie Grant –  
Kathy Gibbons’  
great niece.**



**Morgan Lobisser  
– Kathy Gibbons’  
niece.**



**Leila Washburn – Bette’s  
granddaughter.**