

Creativity with Cindy Sue

By Cindy Sue Blair

Sunlight glistened on the floating globes. A light breeze blew the sparkling bubbles across the yard. Joe, a curious hound, tilted his head as they drifted by him. He sniffed the bubbles as they passed over his head. Suddenly one landed on the tip of his nose.

Joe sprang into action. No bubble was going to taunt him and then disappear. As Tom and I continued to blow bubbles, Joe chased them with puppy abandon.

Our laughter brought the bubble blowing to a temporary halt. It is impossible to blow bubbles and laugh at the same time. Who would have thought that my dollar investment in a bubble bottle with a wand would have such an entertaining dividend?

Researchers are studying the effect of laughter on the body and mind. Laughter might be responsible for increased relaxation, better sleep, improved blood sugar levels and boosting the immune system.

How do we bring more laughter into our lives?

1. Set aside time each day to make a list of the positive aspects of your life. Positive reinforcement allows us to see the joy in our life.
2. Smile at your family, friends, neighbors and coworkers. Your happiness quotient increases with every smile.
3. Make a date with yourself or include the family. Mark your calendar right now for "Fun Time" and choose a creative pastime to enjoy.

Whether you spend a lazy afternoon in the backyard blowing bubbles or sign up for a class, laughter is only moments away when you learn to tap into the joy of life that is floating all around you.

Cindy Sue Blair is an internationally syndicated columnist. Her articles appear in publications throughout the US, Canada and Europe. Read her blog and listen to her radio show at www.ExploreTheMidwest.com.

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Anybody who thinks money will make you happy hasn't got money. — David Geffen

Get A Slice of Swiss Railway History...Continued from page 12

heritage list. This makes the Rhaetian Railway only the third railway worldwide to be considered "universally outstanding" by UNESCO. The two unique railway lines blend harmoniously into the enchanting landscape with spectacular constructions such as spiral tunnels and viaducts. On the Bernina line (built in 1903), the railway crosses 52 bridges and 13 tunnels. The Albula line (built in 1910) leads even over as many as 144 bridges and through 42 tunnels.

The two historic railways are unique in the entire world: The Rhaetian Railway (RhB) is the highest-altitude trans-Alpine line in Europe, and a line with one of the steepest gradients in the world without the use of rack and pinion technology. An excellent example of a mountain railway from the "Golden Age" of railroad architecture.

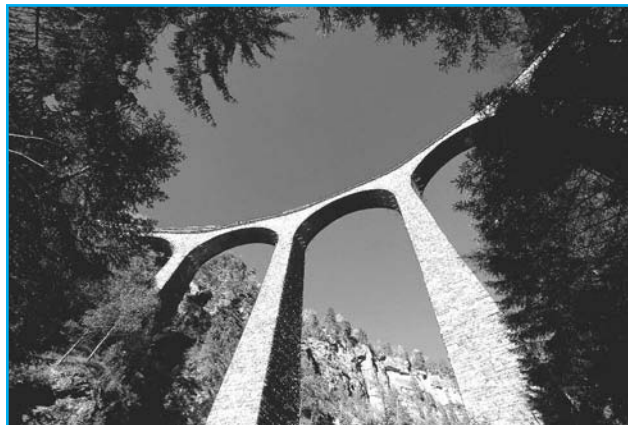
To make traveling in Switzerland by public transportation easy, you only need to get a single pass to take advantage of the whole system. The different Swiss Passes not only offer access to all trains, buses, boats and public transportation in the cities, but are at the same time a Swiss Museum Pass, which gives you access to more than 400 museums. If you travel with children up to 16 years old, you can request a complimentary Family Card for free travel. Whether it is to discover Switzerland's hidden treasures, experience local culture or to visit the charm of Swiss cities, the train pass gives you all the flexibility you need. With an efficient transportation system and a huge diversity on a small scale, Switzerland is a perfect place for day excursions.

The highlight of any visit to Switzerland is a trip on one of many scenic routes. Through the panoramic windows of trains or buses, or from the decks of boats, you will enjoy breathtaking views, by far the most comfortable way of enjoying Switzerland's stunning scenery. The Glacier Express, the Wilhelm Tell Express, the Bernina Express or the panoramic trains of the GoldenPass Line—all provide a memorable travel experience. A Swiss Pass offers unlimited travel on all panoramic routes; in most cases a seat reservation is required.

Also do not miss taking a culinary trip through Switzerland. Eating and drinking in Switzerland is a voyage of discovery, which can be perfectly combined with a train excursion. Enjoy a slice of railway history as well as a gastronomic adventure at the same time. The Rhaetian Railway offers you a choice of ways to enjoy top Alpine cuisine in atmospheric period restaurant cars and the giant "Jumbo" restaurant car (60 seats). If the timing is right, you can enjoy your starter in Engadin, savour your main course in the valley of Albulatal and round your meal off with dessert in the Rheinschlucht Gorge.

Railways exercise an endless fascination on people. Even more so, when you can be in the driver's seat! For many railway lovers, this is a dream fulfilled. Guided by a professional, it is now possible to travel in the driver's seat of a Rhaetian Railway locomotive over the highest crossing in the Alps or through the wild and picturesque Albula Valley. See the Alps from a train-driver's standpoint and book yourself a guided trip—in the driver's seat.

For further information visit www.myswitzerland.com or contact 1-877-794-8037. (To learn more about the public transportation system and where you can buy Swiss Passes go to: www.swisstravelsystem.ch and www.raileurope.com)



In Praise of Solitude

By Joan Z. Shore

Life is not always a bowl of cherries, or a merry-go-round, or a cabaret.

There are, inevitably, periods when we are quietly, unhappily alone. There are times when we lose touch with our friends, when our family is far away or otherwise occupied, when the telephone doesn't ring, and even the Internet is devoid of personal messages.

We are thrown into a void, a vacuum. And it is self-perpetuating, because our unhappiness can turn into depression and resentment and anger, and then we retreat into a shell of withdrawal and detachment.

Still, the solution is not to flail wildly about and push ourselves into some frantic social activities. There may be a lesson in this alone-ness: Do we need to rest? Do we need to retreat for a while and focus on ourselves? Do we need some time out to build up our energy and our flagging enthusiasm?

Some of the dictionary definitions of solitude are: isolation, seclusion, remoteness, privacy, retirement. I like privacy and seclusion especially—it sounds like a well-deserved, well-thought-out retreat. The challenge, then, if we don't actually get away to an ashram or a convent, is to turn our home temporarily into that place of calm repose.

This is so easy to do when you're alone!

You can sleep or awaken whenever you want, eat whatever and whenever you choose, wear anything or nothing, soak in the tub for an hour, and indulge all your secret desires—

Ben and Jerry's chocolate fudge, Mozart's Requiem or Tony Bennett classics, afternoon soaps on the television or DVD's of Alfred Hitchcock. There is no one else in the world who could pamper you so outrageously!

You might actually find yourself upset when a neighbor rings the bell. You might actually snap at the delivery man who interrupts your siesta.

A period of solitude, whether imposed by circumstance or decided upon deliberately, can be used for a specific purpose: catching up on some reading, cleaning out the cupboards, practicing the piano, writing some poetry, trying out some new recipes, finishing an old project, or starting a new fitness regime.

But it can do more than that. The Italian writer, Umberto Eco, has said "Solitude is a kind of freedom." And indeed it is. It can be empowering and enriching, because being alone allows us to escape the noise and distractions of the outside world, which bombard us constantly.

We need others, we need human contact and love, but we also need time alone to think, to hear our heart beat, and to discover who we really are.

Joan Z. Shore lives in Paris and Ft. Lauderdale and is the author of "Saging—How to Grow Older and Wiser" which is available at Books & Books (Coral Gables), the Classic Bookstore (Palm Beach) and by e-mail: joanzshore@yahoo.com



Joan Z. Shore

*"Solitude is a kind of freedom."
—Umberto Eco*

You can always find reasons to work. There will always be one more thing to do. But when people don't take time out, they stop being productive. They stop being happy, and that affects the morale of everyone around them.

— Carisa Bianchi

Do you have a loved one in a nursing home in Florida, or who will soon need nursing care?

Many people needlessly spend their life savings to pay for nursing care. With proper guidance, you may be able to obtain Medicaid benefits before you lose everything.

Be sure to seek professional advice!



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Joseph S. Karp, CELA, Attorney at Law

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