

Amazing Aging!

For Seniors and Those Who Love Them

A free publication of the Jayhawk Area Agency on Aging, Inc.
Advocacy, Action and Answers on Aging for Shawnee, Jefferson and Douglas Counties

SPRING 2023



Our Mission

Jayhawk Area Agency on Aging, Inc. advocates on aging issues, builds community partnerships and implements programs within Shawnee, Jefferson, and Douglas counties to help seniors live independent and dignified lives.

- Is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization
- Is funded by tax-deductible contributions, federal funds, under state general funds and funds through local governments
- Does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, sex, national origin, age, religion, or disability



(L) Sherry Sunderman, then SSgt. Sherry Blede, 190th Air Refueling Wing, Kansas Air National Guard and (R) wearing the traditional dress in Saudi Arabia during the Gulf War.

(Story begins on page 3)

A Message from Susan Harris, JAAA Executive Director

Every spring Jayhawk Area Agency on Aging goes through a process known as allocations where a team of individuals determine what services and provider agencies will receive Federal Older Americans Act funding to provide services to those age 60 and older and their caregivers. This year as with many years it is a difficult process determining what services will be funded with the limited funds received each year. The committee meets with providers to discuss what is going well, what needs to improve, and what the future holds for these providers and services. With the increase in the number of people age 60



Susan Harris

and older residing in our service area and the growth of funding not following suit, the Allocations Committee members have a tough job of making sure that services and funding are targeted to specific needs that will benefit the communities we serve. Older Americans Act services are not means tested in any way and they are provided on a donation basis. With that being said, donations are vital to the programs funded by the OAA. The donations received are returned back to the specific service as program income allowing for more services to be provided; the more donations received, the more services that can be provided.

The allocation dollar and service amounts determined by the Allocations Committee are submitted to Jayhawk Advisory Committee for review and recommendation to approve and then presented to the JAAA Board of Directors for approval and incorporation into the annual area plan.

Each May, the Administration for Community Living leads the celebration of Older Americans Month (OAM). This year's theme is *Agging Unbound*,

which offers an opportunity to explore diverse aging experiences and discuss how communities can combat stereotypes. This is an opportunity for all of us to explore flexible thinking about aging—and how we all benefit when older adults remain engaged, independent, and included. Planning, participation, accessibility, and making connections all play a role in aging in place—emphasizing that what each person needs and prefers is unique.

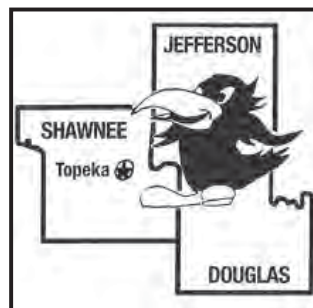


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Marsha Henry Goff, editor



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Amazing Aging strives to provide readers with the information they need to live independent and productive lives. We also seek to feature stories of seniors who are active as workers, volunteers or engaged in hobbies. If you know a senior you would like to see featured in a future issue, please contact editor Marsha Henry Goff at mhgink@netscape.net or write to her in care of JAAA, 2910 SW Topeka Boulevard, Topeka, KS 66611.

Sherry Sunderman: A life of leadership, service, and breaking glass ceilings

By Marsha Henry Goff

Sherry Elaine Sunderman is a remarkable woman whose near lifelong mantra has been *Duty, Honor, Country*. Both of her grandfathers were WWI and WWII veterans and she, too, always wanted to serve her country.

Born in Missouri, she moved to Topeka, married and worked in retail until she decided to join the Air National Guard in 1981 which was ideal for her because — in addition to serving her country — she could live in Topeka and complete her education at Washburn. Her basic training was at Lackland Air Force Base in San Antonio, Texas, where she was Honor Graduate. She also went into

the Guard at an advanced rank because she had one year of college at Southwest Missouri State University.

She returned to Forbes Field in December 1982 where she served as an Administrative Specialist in the Contracting Office for 14 months before becoming Forbes only Military Pay clerk where she processed all military pay and leave documents. She was awarded the Air Force Achievement Medal for developing a new Active Guard Reserve Leave Program. She then worked for three years as Chief of Travel Pay and Accounting.

She worked with the Base civil engineer on a large ramp project and created a Cost Analysis Program. In 1989, she moved to Headquarters where,



Sherry poses with two of the five Active Duty Airmen she supervised as Head of Billeting at Armaska Compound in Saudi Arabia. The gentleman at the left is the Compound Manager who is from India.



Cheering crowds at Forbes Field welcome the ten planes carrying troops of the 190th Air Refueling Wing, Kansas Air National Guard, taxiing on the runway as they return from the Gulf War.

in addition to other duties, she filled in as Executive Assistant to the Base Commander in the absence of his regular secretary. She worked for five Base Commanders during a 20-year period.

In the summer of 1990, Iraqi Armed Forces invaded Kuwait, claimed it as a province and began a buildup on the Saudi border. As the 190th Air Refueling Wing, of which she was a member, prepared to move both personnel and equipment to the Persian Gulf in less than five days, Sherry volunteered to go for an unknown duration and was the only enlisted person to stay the entire seven and a half months, earning her the Overseas Short Tour Ribbon. On

August 10, 1990, she was on the first aircraft to leave Forbes Field and the first to touch down in Jeddah the next day.

They were quartered at Armaska Compound enclosed within high concrete walls and she was given the responsibility of being in charge of billeting 4,500 troops with Guard and Reserve rotating in and out every two weeks. She had developed a reputation for successfully handling any task she was given and supervised five young Active Duty Airmen whom she praises as the “best team ever.”

She quickly realized that they needed a computer locator program where every person could be located at any time. She met

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with the Compound Manager who was from Egypt and told him what she needed and he quickly delivered it. In addition to being in charge of billeting, she handled all mail and care packages and issued two large water bottles to each person every day.

The terrorist threat was always present. Someone once asked her if she was scared while she was there and she replied that she “did not have time to be scared.” One night she was awakened at 2:15 a.m. and informed that one of their buses had been attacked by five terrorists. Fortunately, the bus was not fully loaded, containing only the driver and a couple of passengers, and no one was hurt. The terrorists who were from Saudi Arabia, Yemen and Pakistan were caught and beheaded.

Whenever people from the compound went into town on

business or on leave, the women had to be completely covered with an abaya, the traditional dress of Saudi women, and Sherry was in charge of ensuring that they were. She was not allowed to drive the entire time she was in Saudi Arabia and when she left the compound she had to be escorted by a male.

Women were definitely regarded as second-class citizens in Saudi Arabia, but the Saudi Liaison Officer stationed in her office had the chance to observe how competent she was at her demanding job and how much respect the five airmen on her team had for her. One day, three top Saudi military officers came into her office. She greeted them in their Arabic language which she had been studying. They presented her with a box containing a beautiful black abaya and a lovely black beaded scarf. She thanked them in Arabic and was gratified that the word had apparently spread of how highly respected she was in her role as Head of Billeting.

Sherry recalls with clarity



Sherry stands with members representing all branches of military service at the Veteran's Day Wreath Laying Ceremony at the Veteran's Memorial at Washburn University which she coordinated.



The big American flag in Hangar 662 is the backdrop for the ceremony welcoming the troops returning home from Jeddah, Saudi Arabia.

the night the war started. She walked outside and began reciting the 23rd Psalm, grateful that she had her strong faith to sustain her. Earlier that day, about 5 p.m. the Chaplain from her base had knocked on her door. He told her that they were flying that night and asked her, if he did not come back, to go to his room and find a letter he had written to his family in a specific book in his bookcase. She agreed, but told him to come back safely.

On February 28, 1991, Iraq announced it would accept all UN resolutions and on March 3, a cease fire was negotiated which effectively ended the war. The 190th began packing up 265 Guard members, supplies and equipment to return home. Sherry was one of only three people from Forbes who had been in Saudi Arabia since day one and she was the first woman to lead a billeting operation in a wartime setting.

On March 14, 1991, ten planes flew in formation over

the Kansas capitol building arriving at Forbes to a large cheering crowd, flags flying and yellow ribbons everywhere. It was a warm welcome that all of them would long remember.

The ten years after returning from the Gulf War were busy ones for Sherry. She immediately enrolled in summer school at Washburn and continued her education (receiving her BA in Psychology in May 1996) while serving full time with the Kansas Air National Guard. She worked with Col. Duane Ellington, a former Forbes Base Commander, on the State Partnership for Peace Program where states from the former Soviet Union were partnered with states in the USA (Kansas was paired with Ukraine). Sherry handled all the administrative work and wrote articles for the National Guard newspaper. She and the Colonel met with Ukrainian officers training at McConnell Air Force Base in Wichita and sent hundreds of

Chief Master Sergeant Maurice Smith

(Editor's Note: When I interviewed Sherry Sunderman at JAAA, she was accompanied by Maurice Smith and I realized that he, too, had served his country well and asked Sherry if she would write about his service for Amazing Aging.)

By Sherry Sunderman

Maurice Colin Smith, significant other to Sherry Elaine Sunderman, had a long and distinguished career in the United States Air Force and the 190th Air Refueling Wing Kansas Air National Guard.

He enlisted on 9 October 1962 in the United States Air Force and attended basic military training at Lackland AFB, San Antonio, Texas. He then attended Aircraft and Recip Engine School at Wichita Falls, Texas. He was assigned as a Green Rope in charge of a two-story barracks.

After technical school, he was assigned to Rhein-Main AFB, Germany, for a three year tour and was a Crew Chief on a C-54 aircraft. He was honorably discharged from Active Air Force on 12 May 1966.

Sgt. Smith joined the 190th at Hutchinson, Kansas Naval Air Station on 15 August 1966. Three months later he was assigned as Crew Chief on the 457 A-model. At this time, Sgt.

Smith was also Assistant Flight Engineer with Ken Cornelius on the C-47 Support Aircraft and after two years got his permanent wings.

Sgt. Smith was on the Site Survey Team that came initially to look at Forbes Field. In 1992, he was promoted to MSgt. He was assigned as Deck Chief over B-57G, B57E and B57C. In 1978, MSgt. Smith was assigned to Job Control and was promoted to Senior Master Sergeant. In 1979, SMSgt. Smith was assigned to 190th Group as Maintenance Liaison and in 1990 he was promoted to Chief Master Sergeant over Maintenance Control.

CMSgt. Smith deployed to Jeddah, Saudi Arabia in support of Desert Shield/Desert Storm in December 1990. He has been a member of Battle Staff at Forbes Field and also Battle Staff member in Desert Storm and served as Technical Aircraft Superintendent in charge of 115 KC-135 Tankers and over 1000 Maintenance Crews, 12 hours on, 12 hours off, seven days a week for the duration of the war.

During his years with the Kansas Air National Guard, he was on the first ANG Team to go to All Army and competed from 1967 to 1972 in small bore rifle and from 1972 to 1982 in pistol. He won second in All



CMSgt. Maurice Colin Smith, 190th Air Refueling Wing, Kansas Air National Guard.

Army two times and third in 1980 and second individual. He was awarded the Army Expert Medal by winning second at All Army.

CMSgt. Smith retired in October 1993 with 30 years, 11 months and 24 days. He was Technician with the ANG for 27 years.

JAAA thanks our active-duty military & veterans!

Caregiver Support

From Hospital to Home

By Michele Dillon
JAAA ADRC Supervisor

After any hospital stay there is usually extra care and support needed. This extra care usually falls on the caregiver. Here are some tips to help the transition.

Confirm discharge instructions. If there are dressings or personal care that needs to be done make sure that you are taught what to do and when it needs to be done. Some questions to ask the medical team include:

- Can the care recipient be left alone?
- Can they move or walk on their own? DO they need an assistive mobility device?
- Are there any concerning signs to look out for?
- Are there any changes to diet or meds?
- Who can I call if I have additional questions?

Once home you may want to create a temporary schedule. There will be lots of new information and the routine has been upended. A schedule can help the care recipient get back on track. Follow up appointments, medications schedules and in home therapies should be placed on an easy to see calendar. You could also include a meal schedule and nap times. Connect with their pharmacist to have them review their regular medications with what the hospital prescribed. Many times

the hospital does not have the current list so contraindications can occur.

Finally do they need any additional equipment in their home? Temporary equipment can help for a smooth transition and lessen the risk of readmission. Consider a bath bench and hand held shower or a raised toilet in the bathroom. Maybe a bedside commode or a rollator (rolling walker) will help until their strength has improved. Move everyday items so they are easy to reach. Consider meals on wheels and have them avoid stairs.

Make sure you use additional supports. In-home therapy, home health, respite services and family and friends. Lots of times friends and family want to help but don't know what to help with. DO not hesitate to say what you need.

The State of Kansas passed the CARE act. What is the CARE Act? The CARE Act assists patients and their family caregivers when they are transitioning home from the hospital by requiring hospitals to:

- Provide patients the opportunity to designate a family caregiver
- Attempt to notify the caregiver before the patient is discharged back home
- Instruct the caregiver on the medical tasks—such as medication management, injections,



Michele Dillon

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JAAA gets around! Look for us!

Caregivers' Support Groups

Shawnee County

Topeka and Shawnee Public Library

First Monday of each month, 2:00 p.m.

May 1 June 5 July 3

Topeka and Shawnee Public Library

Second Monday of each month, 3:30 p.m.

May 8 June 12 July 10

Topeka and Shawnee Public Library

Third Thursday of each month, 2:00 p.m.

May 18 June 15 July 20

Douglas County

Baldwin Methodist Church

708 Grove, Baldwin

1st Wednesday of the month, 1:00 p.m.

May 3 June 7 July 5

First United Methodist Church

946 Vermont Street, Lawrence

2nd Tuesday of the month, 10:00 a.m.

May 9 June 13 July 11

First Southern Baptist Church

4300 W. 6th Street, Lawrence

4th Monday of the month, 3:30 p.m.

May 22 June 26 July 23



Events and Presentations

Grey Wolves in Meriden, United Methodist Church,

Third Tuesday of each month, 11 a.m.

May 16 June 20 July 18

Enjoy Older Americans Month

By Marsha Henry Goff

Sixty years ago, the month of May was designated Older Americans Month. It was meant to acknowledge and honor the contributions and achievements of older Americans. This year's theme is *Aging Unbound* which "offers an opportunity to explore a wide range of aging experiences and to promote the importance of enjoying independence and fulfillment by paving our own paths as we age." If you guess that I didn't write the quoted verbiage, you are correct.

All of my older role models have their own way of living life to the fullest with interest in the world around them and viewing it with humor and spunk. Two of those role models are ladies who remind me of my late grandmother because of their humor and interest in current events. They are avid Jayhawk fans, played softball in their younger days and enjoy watching KU and Chiefs games today.

I do not recall Grams watching sports on TV or anything

else except the news, but she was active like these ladies. In her 80s, when we visited her in her small town of Sabetha, we found her nailing shingles on the roof of her home. My husband Ray quickly took her place over her objections and our young sons and I followed her into the house and saw how busy she had been inside. She had refinished her wood floors and painted her kitchen. Later, when we took her to a park so the boys could play on the swings and slide, she also barreled down the slide. She had as much fun as the boys did.

Many older individuals discover latent talents in their 70s, 80s, even 90s. Kansas's own Elizabeth "Grandma" Layton earned widespread fame for her art in her 70s. She only began drawing when she was 68 but she quickly earned national fame and held a one woman show at the Smithsonian Institu-

tion. Frank McCourt began writing at the age of 65. He won both the Pulitzer Prize and National Book Critics Circle Award for his book *Angela's Ashes* which was later made into a movie.

And how about Colonel Sanders? The Colonel developed Kentucky Fried Chicken in his 60s and served it from his gas station. I actually knew the Colonel because the businessman who lived across the

street from Ray and me owned several restaurants and had the KFC franchise for Kansas and Wyoming. He

hired me to be the secretary for his corporation and the Colonel frequently came to visit, staying with my boss and his family. Every time he spent the night with them, they would awaken to find him in the kitchen happily making breakfast while dressed in his trademark white suit.

In his 70s, he sold KFC in 1965 for \$2 million (\$19,100,952.38 in today's money). He was hired by the new owners to continue serv-

ing as the face of the company, but Sanders believed the quality of the food was lower and began criticizing it by calling the gravy "slop" and saying the mashed potatoes tasted like "library paste." He even opened a competitive restaurant dubbed "The Colonel's Lady's Dinner House" which he intended to franchise. He eventually sued the new owners for \$122,000,000, but finally settled for \$1,000,000 and the opportunity to give the owners cooking lessons. The Colonel had spunk!

One of my favorite stories is about a spunky 100-year-old woman whose older doctor retired and a younger doctor took his place. Upon examining her, her new doctor asked, "Just how long do you expect to live?" She replied, "Well, I've already outlived three doctors and I may outlive you."

So enjoy Older Americans Month. You've earned it, but remember this: It's never too late to do what you want to do! Work if you want, play if you want and laugh a lot. If I had chosen the theme for this month, it would have been *No Limits!*



Caregiver support

CONTINUED FROM PAGE SIX

wound care and transfers—that they will need to perform at home. Don't let your loved one or yourself be discharged without knowing what is needed for success.

If your loved one is hospitalized, call me and we can start the process of discharge right away and I can work with the hospital Social Worker to find

out what is needed. Many times the hospital will say that they are in the hospital under observation. This can be confusing if they are in the hospital several days but will prevent your loved one from going to a rehab facility, if needed, because Medicare will only pay for rehab after a 3-midnight hospital stay and observation does not qualify. Let me help you navigate the system and prepare for a successful transition.



Caregivers, please remember that the key to being a good caregiver is to take care of yourself so you can take care of your loved one.

It is overdue for the Governor and Legislators to help seniors who are being forced from their homes by high property taxes

By Marsha Henry Goff

“While there’s no place like home, I wouldn’t be surprised to hear that Dorothy (and ToTo, too) fled Kansas when she retired to avoid the state’s high taxes.” So says Kiplinger which lists Kansas Number 3 on its 10 Least Tax-Friendly States for Retirees, noting among other taxes that real estate property taxes are above the national average and the taxes on certain hypothetical houses are the 13th highest in the U.S.

I recently learned about a retired Lawrence gentleman who is selling his home not by choice but because he is forced to leave the home he loves because he can no longer pay the excessive property taxes. I am sure he is not the first — nor will he be the last — to lose a home because of inaction by our state elected officials.

In Texas, property taxes are frozen when a senior who meets certain qualifications reaches age 65. In New York if you are 65 and have an annual income of not more than \$29,000 as of 2019, your appraised value is slashed in half, meaning your taxes are also halved. In Washington, if you were 61 the previous year and have a household income of less

than \$35,000, you may qualify for a standard, partial or full exemption. Oklahoma and Rhode Island have a property tax freeze and an assessment freeze program.

Our son in Missouri lives in a home comparable to the one Ray and I built on our hillside southeast of Lawrence 28 years ago. He has one more bedroom than we do and lives in a lakeside community, yet last year his real estate property taxes raised \$4 while ours raised \$661.48. My sister in California pays much less in taxes on their lovely home purchased in 1996 than we do. That is because Prop 13 limits property taxes in California to no more than one percent of a home’s assessed value. Furthermore, assessments of property values cannot rise by more than two percent per year, unless a property was sold, in which case it can be assessed at a new value.

Something is drastically wrong when Kansas allows property values and taxes to rise so dramatically. The governor and legislature need to make the real estate property tax more fair for everyone, but seniors, with incomes which are effectively declining, need help and they need it now.

Almost every state recognizes



that seniors need help, especially in this period of rampant inflation, but there is a reason that Kiplinger and other entities measuring the tax burden of 50 states rate Kansas as among the worst for helping seniors. The Safe Senior Act may help some indigent seniors but it does not allow for the unprecedented rise in property valuation, thus forcing seniors — who would otherwise qualify for relief — from the homes they have lived in for decades.

The chart at left references an honesty gap for the counties served by JAAA. The honesty gap is the difference between the actual tax increase and the change in the mill rate. The county in Kansas with the largest honesty gap is Douglas. You may see the honesty gap for every county in Kansas by going to <https://tinyurl.com/mrym5nn4>.

Douglas County raised property taxes by 474% between 1997 and 2022 but the county mill rate went up 87% creating an honesty gap of 387%. How many times

have you heard local elected officials say they are holding the line on taxes by keeping the mill levy level? Smoke and mirrors. The appraised values allow them to rake in hundreds of thousands of taxpayer dollars while they claim they are not raising taxes.

On the last day in session in 2020, the Kansas Legislature passed a Truth in Taxation law but Governor Kelly vetoed it with no chance to override. However, the bill was reintroduced early the next year and, despite strong opposition by cities and counties, passed with overwhelming bipartisan support (30-5 in the Senate and 120-3 in the House). With no choice, Governor Kelly signed it into law.

It will help to improve the honesty gap, but property tax relief for seniors is an absolute necessity. Call or write your representatives and ask them to put a Constitutional Amendment on the ballot that will allow Kansans to vote to provide relief for seniors.

County	1997-2022 Tax Change	1997-2022 Mill Change	1997-2022 Honesty Gap
Douglas	474%	87%	387%
Jefferson	203%	17%	186%
Shawnee	185%	34%	151%

Sunderman

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pounds of books to children in Ukraine.

In 1995, she attended the Air National Guard Non-Commissioned Officer Academy and was Distinguished Graduate. That same year, she started the first all-women's VFW Post and was Commander of Post 11555. She became involved with the VFW nationally as well as statewide and was chosen All-American Post Commander Department of Kansas 1996-1997. She has the distinction of being the only woman All-American and was awarded the red hat. That same year, she stood vigil at the Eisenhower tomb on the eve of President Eisenhower's birthday, an honor she performed for three years and each time received a 5-star pin.

Sherry coordinated the first ever wreath-laying ceremony at Washburn University where all branches of the military were

included. She worked tirelessly on behalf of the VFW and was nominated and then selected to serve a three-year appointment on the VA Advisory Committee on Women Veterans at the VA in Washington, D.C. The committee was composed of top military women and one man — Doug Russell, a retired Command Sergeant Major who was President of the American Military Society in Falls Church, Virginia — from throughout the U.S. Serving on the committee required copious work and travel to tour VA hospitals, Veterans Centers, and outpatient clinics. The committee members acted as advisors to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs and testified multiple times before the Veterans Affairs Committee on Capitol Hill.

Sherry Sunderman retired as a Master Sergeant from the Kansas Air National Guard, 190th Air Refueling Wing on October 4, 2001 after a long and decorated career where she learned a lot, contributed much and made lifelong friends. She best



Sherry wears her prized red hat which was awarded when she was chosen All-American Post Commander VFW Department of Kansas 1996-1997. She is the only woman to win that honor.

describes her service: "It was the greatest honor of my life to have served my country in so many ways. God bless America!"



Sherry stands vigil at President Eisenhower's tomb at the Eisenhower Library in Abilene on the eve of his Birthday, October 13, 1996. She was honored to do this for three years.

**Call Kevin at
(785) 841-9417 to place
your display ad in the
SUMMER 2023 issue of
Amazing Aging!
Deadline is July 15.**

Cataract surgery? Eye-yi-yi!

By Marsha Henry Goff

*Cross my heart,
Hope to die,
Stick a needle in my eye!*

That rhyme made me keep my promises during my entire childhood. It wasn't the dying part so much as the thought of a needle piercing my eye. And yet eight years ago, Dr. S, retina specialist, did exactly that . . . twice.

My exuberance over that long ago cataract surgery—and my near 20/20 vision—lasted a week and a half. Then the vision in my left eye became progressively blurred. Two days of blurry vision sent me back to my excellent ophthalmologist Dr. L who, after documenting my vision was 20/50 and performing an eye scan, diagnosed me with CME (cystoid macular edema), increased my steroid eye drop to 4 times daily and added an anti-inflammatory eye drop.

My vision continued to decrease which resulted in a panicky Sunday call to the on-call ophthalmologist who increased my steroid eye drop to every two hours. It didn't work. My vision decreased to 20/100 and the eye scan showed further swelling of the macula prompting a referral and subsequent visit to Dr. S. He ordered more tests, including one where dye was injected—remember I hate needles?—into my hand, a bright light flashed into my eye while what looked like 3-D color pictures were taken of my

eyeball. For about 10 minutes post dye injection, everything was bathed in a red glow . . . even people.

The diagnosis was Irvine Gass Syndrome, the name for CME that is caused by cataract surgery. Who knew? Depending on which doctor you talk with and what website you visit, the condition is rare . . . or not. Smart too late: I learned that preoperative treatment might have prevented I-G. Studies are precious few, but those that exist show that an anti-inflammatory drop in the eye a day before surgery and continuing for a few days after resulted in no I-G Syndrome for those in control groups receiving the drop, while I-G Syndrome occurred in varying percentages in control groups without the drop. Dang!

At that time there was no protocol for preoperative treatment for cataract surgery patients who had no risk factors, such as diabetes. Treatment was considered expensive: \$183 with coupon (I checked). But some surgeons routinely pre-treated by giving patients samples of the drop. As a patient who paid \$750 out-of-pocket for laser surgery because I read it was safer than a blade, in retrospect I would like to have had the option to decide for myself whether to have the preoperative drop.

Sure would have been better than the two injections I had in my eye. However, if a needle in my eye restores my near 20/20 vision, I'll be a happy camper. Consider this posting a public



Marsha: Eye-yi-yi! The day after cataract surgery, you will look like a pirate.

service message to all of you who may one day be candidates for cataract surgery. It is the article I wish I had read before I had mine.

Even though that bolus of steroids injected into my eye eliminated the I-G Syndrome, I had double vision in my left eye if I held my hand over my right. That lasted for four months and then my vision was great. Still, when my right eye required cataract surgery, I delayed it for eight years. Remember I'm scared of needles which proves that the mug I was given emblazoned with the words "Marsha the Brave" is a big fat lie.

EIGHT YEARS LATER: OOPS, I DID IT AGAIN!

Before cataract surgery on my right eye, I was aggressively pre-

treated with a regimen of two anti-inflammatory drops along with prednisone for three days before having the surgery done in Topeka by a different ophthalmologist because I wanted a new surgical location. It wasn't easy asking my Lawrence ophthalmologist for a recommendation but she understood my reason and knew I'd return to her care after the surgery was completed.

This time a blade was used, not because I was too cheap to pay for a laser, but because my current research showed there was no difference in outcomes between a laser and a blade. My eye wasn't paralyzed to keep it from moving as it had been for the previous surgery. Instead, they placed a cover over my entire face with a circle cut out

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Cataract

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for my right eye and I was told not to move my eye. Trust me, a team of horses couldn't make me move it. When they covered my face, I remember saying, "Now I know why you put a cannula with oxygen in my nose. It was so you wouldn't smother me." I continued the drops four times a day after the surgery and added an antibiotic drop.

My latent hypochondria kicked in when I saw some bright rings in my vision making me fear I might have a detached retina. After asking him a couple of times if he was absolutely confident that I did not have a detached retina, Dr. H did a quick test to show me I had no worries on that score., His actual words before dilating my eye and examining it were, "Miss Marsha, I think you will sleep better tonight if I dilate your eye and check." Perhaps I should address my trust (make that lack of trust) issue. Nah!

For about a week and a half, my bad eye was my good eye and I was seeing great out of it, but wait . . . I can't catch a break. My vision in my operative eye

began decreasing! Aggressive pre-treatment didn't work. More macular swelling; vision in right eye went from 20/30 to 20/60. Not good. Emergency appointment with Dr. E in Topeka who referred me to Dr. S likely for another needle in my eye. Ouch! I never saw that coming!

No shot this time because the medicine without preservative for injection in the eye is unavailable until fall or later. Say WHAT? I'm guessing it is made in another country. The option was an injection in my eye socket with a medication with preservative, reverting to what they used years before. Oh yeah, and it might make my eyelid droop. So I'm in a holding pattern, hoping the steroid and anti-inflammatory drops will work. I have even cut back on candy (my sweet tooth hates me) which is said to cause inflammation.

I'm told that macular swelling without a risk factor is uncommon (about two percent) so if you need cataract surgery, my suggestion is that you don't delay. Of all my family and friends who have had cataract surgery, only I have had this rare problem. I guess I should buy a lottery ticket.



Doris Didde Foster, 101-years-old, poses with her great-granddaughter Phoebe Libby on a recent trip to Alaska.

What 101-year-old would turn down the opportunity to fly to Alaska for a two-week visit with family? Not Doris Didde Foster! Her grandson-in-law flew her around Anchorage to see the sites from altitude and she had a marvelous time. Now she is looking forward to a road trip to Colorado to visit other family. You go, Girl!

Meet Doris Didde Foster



The pretty cover girl above has just turned 101 and is still going strong! You may read more about her and her remarkable life in the current **Topeka Family Magazine** which is contained in the Spring edition of **Topeka Magazine**.



Medicare Mondays

Topeka Shawnee County Library

New to Medicare?

Learn about Medicare and the many options available. We will provide unbiased information about the Medicare options available to you to assist you in determining what Medicare options will fit your needs and work for you.

Monthly: First Monday of every month at 1:00 pm
Topeka Shawnee County Public Library

Quarterly: Second Monday in March, June, September, December at 6:00 pm
Topeka Shawnee County Public Library

Want to understand how to compare Part D plans and Medicare Advantage Plans on Medicare.gov? Join Jayhawk Area Agency on Aging for

Medicare D.I.Y

Learn how to navigate Medicare.gov and understand the information provided to you about Medicare Part D plans and Medicare Advantage Plans.

Third Monday of the Month at 1:00 pm
Topeka Shawnee County Public Library

