



“Musing from the Hill” by Susan Crossett

as seen on the *Dunkirk Observer* on Fridays
and the *Jamestown Post-Journal* on Saturdays



Why Us?

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Trust me, dear reader, I know nobody likes to listen to anyone else describe their ailments and maladies. It's quite acceptable to go on (and on) about our own – that no one else wants to have to listen to. Got it?

I do. BUT

Twice this year I have ended up in Westfield at their hospital's Wound Clinic. It was the last resort after doing everything I could to heal what, in each case, was just a “simple” cut. (They are marvelous there, by the way.)

The first came from a scratch of a dog's toenail through a heavy knee sock and heavy corduroy slacks. The clothing wasn't damaged. It was only when I noticed blood running down my leg that I paid attention.

Neosporin, Merthiolate, petroleum jelly, Hansaplast (my favorite after it quickly healed a leg infection in Italy – I've ordered it in this country since). Nothing worked this time. My doctor is very reluctant to prescribe antibiotics which, in this case, did work . . . almost. Time for Westfield, the last resort.

While gardening (probably not too recently) I whacked my leg on the bucket I was carrying, raising a very impressive blood blister. It shrank, formed a new scab and all was well. . . I thought. It wasn't too many days until I could see that the scab looked great but nasty things were going on underneath. I didn't need a referral this time to return to the W.C.

A gardening accident and here it is, just days away from Christmas, and I've now had three skin grafts which should eventually speed up the recovery.

Candidly, I'm tired of the commute and my dog, Molly, would far prefer I spend my days home with her. Wish I could. I'm extremely cautious about what's going on and, just when I was thinking of despair (not something I ever do), the November 9 issue of the *New Yorker* answered my questions. It isn't my body going crazy – it's my age!

“Older gymnasts tend to be less agile. The same goes for the immune system, which is why COVID-19





disproportionately affects the elderly. The already high case fatality rate for sixty-five to seventy-four-year-olds more than triples in people seventy-five and older. The age distribution is unique to the coronavirus.” (You're sorry you're reading this, right? Yes, I know.)

“The difference of risk and profile, young versus old – I don't think anyone has seen an infectious agent behave quite like this before,' Richard Hodes, the director of the National Institute of Aging, part of the National Institutes of Health, said, of the coronavirus.

“The lopsidedness of the virus means that vaccines might not be as effective in older patients, even with double the dose, or after repeated inoculations. . . What we have learned so far suggests that it isn't just that being older makes you weak, and that COVID-19 preys on this weakness; the disease's mechanism of action is actual magnified in the aging body.

“Getting older sucks. Everything breaks down even at the simplest levels.”

I suspect this article contains enough dismaying news but I went ahead anyway and checked the internet as well, finding “Why Covid-19 is so dangerous for older adults.”

“Our bodies get worse at fighting foreign invaders, including viruses like SARS-CoV-2, which causes Covid-19.

“In older adults, the number of white blood cells that find and help eliminate infections can decline. The cells also become less adept at identifying new pathogens to fight. In the case of Covid-19, the virus causes damage to the immune cells that might otherwise overcome the virus. If there are fewer of these cells to begin with and they're also weaker than they once were, an illness can do more damage.

“When a response to infection kicks in, an older person's immune system faces a higher chance of dangerous overreaction known as a cytokine storm. Cytokines are proteins that serve as signals to the body to ramp up its infection-fighting machinery.

“But during a storm, these cytokines are overproduced, which causes severe inflammation, high fever and organ failure. . . The cause of death of this virus is, No. 1, respiratory failure, and then No.2, probably the cytokine storm.”

Well, the authorities (as of late August) say it'll be gone by the end of 2021. Let's pray.

Need a way to pass some time? A very old Readers Digest says there are 293 ways to make change for a dollar. See how many you can find while you're twiddling your thumbs safely at home.



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