

{ AGING with an Attitude }

Navigating the “Golden Years”



By Dorie U. Sugay

Dorie Sugay is the Executive Director of Visiting Angels, a company that provides living-assistance services to seniors and adults-in-need who wish to stay in their own home or receive one-on-one care within a facility.



Everyone wants their later years to be “golden.” But sometimes, one finds that it just isn’t so golden. The challenges seniors face “chip at the gold” and find a “rusty orange reality” underneath.

How can one prepare for that chapter in life? One needs to simply:

- PLAN
- EDUCATE YOURSELF
- GET ASSISTANCE

Recently, I overheard a conversation in a parking lot and was amazed at the depth of the dialog between two middle-aged ladies who were discussing the amount of planning that went into the purchase of the one lady’s new car. As I listened, I thought how nice it would be if people entering their 60s put that much thought into how they wanted to live out their later years.

Thankfully, there are many more options for seniors in this day and age than there were many years ago. Living in the home you have grown to love is always the ideal option, but for most, it is not a realistic one. Assisted-living facilities, independent senior housing, and downsizing to a smaller home can be great options as well.

I will not address all the specific options in this article as I really want to discuss the type of assistance available to help you choose one of the many options available to you and the services that can help you make the appropriate choice for you or your loved one.

Once a tech savvy senior (most likely a baby boomer) decides a change is inevi-

table, they may head for the computer and Google various facilities, realtors and other resources that come to mind. If the circumstances dictate that a senior live in a nursing home, often the family makes arrangements to check out options. The process can be daunting and stressful – it is, after all an emotional time, a life-changing step - and not all options are equal.

In recent years, a new service that can be a sanity-saver for families has emerged. Experts, who know the area and have familiarized themselves with the various senior options, provide information and assistance to those who have decided to leave their home and/or work with home health care agencies. If a senior is ready for a change, these companies will not only take the senior for a free tour of facilities and/or look at smaller homes or nursing homes, they will gladly sell the home, even pack and move what the senior wishes to bring, hold auctions to sell the things they can part with and, if desired, arrange to have boxes unpacked in the new place.

These companies are invaluable to busy families who cannot just drop everything to help their parent(s). These professionals have done their research (they know where to take Mom or Dad), they do the scheduling, they will pick them up and show them their options. If you want to be involved, all you need to do is show up! If your Mom or Dad are resisting the change, they may feel less threatened if someone else picks them up. They will feel more in charge of the situation. When

someone else points out the benefits of assisted-living, a sensitive, sentimental senior may hear it without putting an emotional interpretation into it — as they might if you were pointing out the benefits of giving up their big house for a smaller house or an independent senior housing situation.

I know a senior who has a beautiful cottage at Village Green. She had a big home a few hours away from Gilroy and her son, who is so dedicated to her, drove to see her regularly. After a time, he decided that it would be best if she moved closer to him. He moved her to Village Green, a stone’s throw from his home. She loves her cottage, but “it is much smaller” than the home she had. Her son now has a five-minute drive, not a few hours’ drive. He is more at peace because he can check in on her more often. He is now even able to “have a life,” arranging for a Visiting

Angels caregiver to spend time with her a few times a week. The move presented a change in lifestyle. But what she gained – being nearer her son, overshadows what she gave up in square footage. Her son is very organized and efficient, and could afford the time it took to get her settled in Gilroy. Most people do not have that luxury – and that is when a service can be the answer.

In this area, one service company, which is based in San Jose, comes to mind – Tailored Transitions. They specialize in working with seniors and their families. Headed by Stacy Busch, a realtor from San Jose, and Brent Mardesich, a former property manager who was a resident of Gilroy, their staff includes a nurse with a Master’s degree in Gerontology and of course, they have licensed realtors and certified relocation and transition specialists.

Another option is to work with a trusted realtor in the area. They also have trusted resources to refer you to and would be more than happy to take you on facility tours. In this area, there is Sheila White and Susan Jacobsen of Starritt Realtors, as well as Susan and Rick Patereau of Intero Real Estate – all with many years of experience dealing with seniors.

The difference is that when you go to a service like Tailored Transitions –even though they subcontract services (like packing and moving to other companies) — you only deal with their company. If you chose one of the trusted realtors in the area, they will oversee your dealings with other vendors and make sure you are OK, but you will have to choose which resources you wish to deal with, the subcontractors work for you directly.

BOTTOM LINE –

There are people — people who will help you and your loved ones through the challenges of the “golden years,” and help ensure that they are smiling as they enter this new chapter in their lives!

THE MILIAS RESTAURANT

Take a step back and dine.

Sunday Brunch
(10 am - 2 pm)

Lunch
(11:30 am - 2 pm Tues-Fri)

Dinner
(5 pm - 10 pm Tues-Sun)

- Steaks
- Seafood
- Fine Cocktails

Like us on facebook for a live music schedule

themiliarestaurant.com

7397 Monterey Street • Gilroy, CA 95020 • 408.337.5100