

# SWELL LETTER

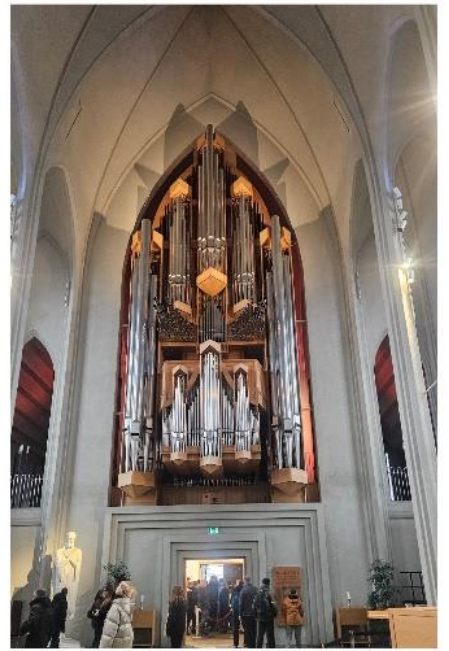
## January 2025 Volume 5, Issue 1

### Errthum's Trip to Iceland

Dale, our daughter, Tina and I went to Iceland from October 27 to November 8, 2024. It was on my bucket list to see the Northern Lights! And Tina planned it for us, which is the best way to vacation. We had a direct flight from Chicago to Reykjavik, Iceland, the land of fire and Ice! We played in the capital city of Reykjavik before going on our 8-day loop tour around the country! We chased waterfalls (there are more than 10,000 glacier waterfalls in Iceland and saw glacier lakes), hiked a glacier and an ice cave, visited black beaches (it's made from lava), visited churches (cathedrals and turf covered) and took in the northern lights for the first time. This unique beauty is packed in a country that is the size of the state of Ohio! On the east side of Iceland, we experienced fjords (the water was so calm the reflections in the water were amazing), lava fields and towers (we saw where they filmed Game of Thrones in the lava fields), and went to four geothermal baths (very relaxing). We saw more Northern Lights (more spectacular than the first night). Interesting facts—it is rare to see trees in rural Iceland, just shrubs. Iceland is a country made of volcanic lava and glaciers. The lava fields are covered in moss which takes 60-80 years to grow. Icelanders do not get upset about much—except when visitors walk on the moss!! We saw where the North American and European tectonic plates meet and the crater lakes of volcano's that had exploded and no longer had a top and was filled with glacier water. We went whale watching and saw 4 whales. Did you know that whale's tails are like human fingerprints, no two are the same. The main business in Iceland is 1) tourism, which has increased significantly in the last 10 years; 2) agriculture, (lamb) and fishing. and 3) geothermal energy research and development. We saw no pigs, cows or McDonald's restaurants. Their food is based around fish and lamb. The beer was pretty good though!! But the water even better—so cold, crisp and refreshing straight from the faucet. Icelandic people heat their homes with geothermal energy. While walking around Reykjavik, we noticed that everyone had their windows open on the 35-40-degree day. When we got to our hotel, there was a note that stated, if we turned on the radiator heat, we should open the windows, so the windows would not steam up!! I don't believe they pay for their geothermal heat!! We did a lot of hiking, had a wonderful vacation and took in the beauty of this place. It was a trip of a lifetime!









## Ruth Lewis, Jerry & Kris Hermsen and Bob & Angie Krall, went to Croatia

48 people, including 5 SWELL members, Ruth Lewis, Jerry & Kris Hermsen and Bob & Angie Krall, went to Croatia and Slovenia for an 11-day trip sponsored by the Telegraph-Herald in October. After doing a city tour and the praying mantis in Zagreb, the capitol of Croatia, we traveled to Slovenia to visit the Postojna Cave. We took a small train 2 miles into the cave, and then walked another mile to view the cave sites. In Slovenia, we visited Ljubljana, the capitol of Slovenia and Lake Bled, touring Bled castle on a cliff 400 feet above the lake. We enjoyed their specialty Bled cream cakes, which were very tasty.



Then to the Croatian coast to stop in Zadar and see and listen to the Sea Organ. We spent 2 days in Split, first visiting Diocletian's Palace, built in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century! Then hiking Forest Park Marjan to a lookout tower with spectacular views. Next stop was Ston, which has the oldest active saltworks in the world, and what's known as the Great Wall of Europe.



## Then to Dubrovnik,

Where their pedestrian only Old Town (pop. 1700) has defensive stone walls up to 80 feet high in some areas, built between the 13<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, encircling the city. The 1.5 mile walk atop the walls was fascinating. Final stop was beautiful Plitvice Lakes National Park, with its 16 lakes and over 90 waterfalls.



It's good we've been faithful SWELL members as we walked and climbed more than a few 20,000 step days. The parks, castles, and ancient coastal cities were more beautiful than expected. Certainly, a trip to remember.





## SWELL Hat Contest and Non-Record Setting Day.



**Oh, what a jolly good time we had!** SWELL members filled the CRWC, decked out in the most creative hats imaginable, all while Burl Ives's classic "A Holly Jolly Christmas" filled the air with holiday cheer.

The hat competition was fierce! Countless hours of crafting and planning went into each masterpiece. "The moment of truth arrived! Gary and his 3 elves faced the impossible task of selecting the top 4 hats from a dazzling array of entries. After a grueling process of narrowing down 20 incredible designs, the final four emerged. "And the winners were..."

- **Third Place:** Dale Errthum, who transformed into one of the Whos from Whoville.
- **Second Place:** Debbie Link, a mischievous elf straight from the North Pole to see who was naughty or nice

**First Place:** Judy Kulb, whose Barbie family was ready to work-out dressed in SWELL clothes, dumbbell weights, and doing sit-ups.

• **Most SWELL Hat Award:** Claudette Bees amazing display of SWELL's year-long fun. Transparent Christmas ornaments filled with memories from our events were a delightful touch. As we laughed, smiled, and reminisced, we felt like kids again, full of holiday wonder. We also said goodbye to Hunter Snyder, an incredible intern who made a lasting impact on SWELL.

While we may not have broken the SWELL record for attendance, we definitely broke the record for fun and camaraderie. We're a group that knows how to celebrate, and



this holiday gathering was no exception! The Golden Rooster made a surprise visit AKA Nancy Cooper wearing her homemade rooster mask.

--Gary







Three elves and the top hat judged all the wonderful Christmas hats.



# AARP BULLETIN

## A Perfect Day of Not Aging

TODAY!



**6–8 a.m.**

**WAKE UP.** Waking up between 6 and 8 a.m. is generally in sync with your body’s circadian rhythm, which is the internal clock that regulates your sleep and wakefulness. The American Academy of Sleep Medicine recommends that you wake up no less than seven (and no more than nine) hours after you went to bed.



**7–9 a.m.**

**MORNING WALK.** Be sure to get some sunlight in the morning, which helps your body produce vitamin D that may slow the aging process. Make a habit of walking the dog or doing light chores outside first thing in the morning, before the demands of the day trap you in your house, car or office.



**9–10 a.m.**

**BREAKFAST.** Start with a protein smoothie with mixed fruit. A high-protein breakfast is critical for maintaining muscle mass as we age, according to numerous studies. Research shows that getting 25 to 30 grams of protein in the morning is effective in preventing age-related muscle loss, also known as sarcopenia.



**Noon**

**MEDITATION.** Any calming activity, such as yoga or prayer, can help reduce the risk of cognitive decline by activating the prefrontal cortex, an area of the brain that is diminished in those with cognition difficulties. A study in the Journal of Alzheimer’s Disease found that just 12 minutes of meditation daily could make a difference.



**1 p.m.**

**LUNCH.** Have a mixed salad with salmon. A Mediterranean-style diet that is abundant in fruits and vegetables and omega-3 rich fish such as salmon can reduce inflammation, a culprit in biological aging, according to a review of studies in the journal Nutrients. Eating a wide array of plant foods boosts the microbiome, the master controller of gut inflammation.



**3 p.m.**

**EXERCISE.** Afternoon exercise may reduce the risk of premature death even more than morning or evening workouts, according to a study of more than 90,000 men and women published last year in Nature Communications. Walk briskly for 30 minutes or get some kind of cardio exercise at least five days a week, and use weights on the other two days.



**4–6 p.m.**

**SOCIALIZE.** Maintaining social connections is one of the pillars of antiaging, according to several studies. Social isolation in older people can increase the risk for dementia by about 30 percent, according to researchers at Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine and the Bloomberg School of Public Health.



**6 p.m.**

**DINNER.** Dine on vegetable tacos with brown rice and beans. Eating during an eight- to 12-hour window of the day and fasting for the remaining 12 to 16 hours (including sleep time) has been shown to have numerous advantages associated with longevity and decreased incidence of disease, including cancers. Lean heavily on vegetables, fruits, nuts, grains and legumes—then close the kitchen until morning.



**10–11 p.m.**

**BEDTIME.** A U.K. study found that going to bed between 10 and 11 p.m. may reduce heart disease risk, especially in women. Other research indicates that deep sleep, which occurs from the hours of 10 p.m. to 1 a.m., represents the optimal time for the brain to clear out debris and reorganize itself, reducing one’s risk of Alzheimer’s disease.

**Ed & Deb Norman**

We just joined Swell this fall after waiting many months for an opening. We are happy that we were able to join up! Ed is “mostly” retired but still does specialized work as an international foodservice design and management advisory consultant. Ed has been an independent fee-based professional consultant for 28 years. Deb retired from the Dubuque



Community School District in 2019 just before Covid broke out. She worked 25 years in the district. She stays busy keeping Ed in line and enjoys making specialized greeting cards as a hobby. Both Ed & Deb enjoy golf, travel, and time with friends and family. We have three grown children: two in Dubuque and one in Milwaukee, three grandsons, and one great granddaughter.



## Meri Hirsch



Hello, my name is Merideth Hirsch; but to family, friends and well-wishers I enjoy being referred to as Meri. I was blessed to meet the love of my life in college, and can say without a doubt, I've been married to my best friend for 56 years. Together we created a fulfilling life that includes our 4 children, bonus spouses and 8 grandchildren. We are fortunate that, while our children have all left the nest, they all continue to live close enough that we can get together often. We never miss an opportunity to gather for holidays, special occasions, to celebrate achievements, to support one another in the hard moments, and for our annual summer vacation trip as well, which we all fondly refer to as our "Hirschcation." One of my greatest joys has been to watch the bond our family shares as we continue making memories together.

From small trips to big ones, Steve and I have always enjoyed traveling. On our first trip to Germany, I initially invited my neighbor. Steve said, "What about ME?" So, we decided to take him along. What ensued was many years of traveling to many countries—to Poland for our son's wedding (and yes, it IS a 3-day affair), to Ireland and Australia for our daughter's study abroad programs. We've continued to enjoy traveling to many countries since then.

Beyond my first loves of family, travel, and wellness; I have always been passionate about being of service to others. I spent the majority of my professional career as a pediatric occupational therapist first with Keystone AEA and after retiring another 10 years working at the Finley Hospital's pediatric outpatient clinic. I finally "hung up my hat" in 2015.

Since retiring, I've been involved with groups and activities that I am deeply interested in. During my mother's latter years, I became involved in a Caregivers group. This group, along with my husband, family and friends, gave me the support and strength I needed to be ever present for my mother's journey and goal of living to be a 100. I continue to be an active member of this group, even after my mother's passing one month after turning 100. I feel an immense sense of responsibility to continue to support and share with others from my perspective and experience.

My husband and I enjoy ushering at the Heritage Center and being election officials. I also look forward to monthly activities with my service sorority, reading, and being there for anything and everything when it comes to my kids and grandchildren. In '22 I became a certified instructor of Tai Chi for Arthritis and Fall Prevention and now teach classes at the Dubuque County Library.

My mantra in life has always been to maintain a positive attitude. My daughters can still recite an early morning cheer I used to do when they were teens preparing for their school day. "Attitude...it's all in your attitude... A-T-T-I-T-U-D-E!" I love continuing to grow and evolve as a person and have continuously made that a very conscious life choice.

I was thrilled to be invited to join SWELL this past September after being on the waiting list for 2 years. SWELL's 3 days a week structure has helped me stay active, achieve my walking goals, and interact with a wonderful group of people in a very welcoming environment. The genuinely friendly atmosphere brings joy to my day as I'm frequently greeted with a, "Hi!" from Gary and other SWELL members. It is my hope that every person I meet and life I touch stays positive, focused, true to themselves, continues to grow and learn and of course maintains a positive **ATTITUDE!**



## **A Year of SWELL: A Retrospective**

### **January: Energized Beginnings**

The year kicked off with renewed vigor as SWELL members committed to continued fitness gains. We welcomed two new interns, amped up our routines with Arnold shoulder presses and martial arts-inspired balance exercises increased to 10 second poses. Extra calf stretches were added to prevent achilles tendon strains, especially crucial for our avid pickleball players.

### **February: Mindful Movement**

February brought insights into tension release and meditation for dementia, inspired by a remarkably fit 93-year-old.

### **March: Springtime Adventures**

Spring arrived with a playful twist as Gary Conlon, Kris, and Jerry Hermsen were caught "Praying Mantis" style during their vacation. John Richey shared Dr. Oz's wisdom on the importance of balance. The A-Team, led by Karen Knepper and the dynamic Jaidyn Williams, shone brightly. The SWELL program received well-deserved recognition with the 365 Impact Award.

### **April: Optimized Performance**

April focused on optimizing workouts for maximum recovery and benefits. We enjoyed a delightful performance of "Godspell" by the University of Dubuque Fine Arts department.

### **May: Telomeres and Triumphs**

Karen Knepper enlightened us on the wonders of telomeres and their role in anti-aging. A visit to the Galena Center of Arts showcased the stunning still life paintings of Barbara Heitman. Izayah McKinnie was awarded SWELL Intern of the Year. Chuck Andracchio guided us through the Little Maquoketa River Burial Mounds. We bid farewell to the exceptional Jaidyn Williams and celebrated 35 SWELL members as the "Navy Seals" of the program during a challenging workout on the 35 degree football field.

### **June: Fasting Facts and Fabulous Seniors**

June brought a dose of reality with the American Heart Association's findings on the risks of Intermittent Fasting. We celebrated Gary Player's impressive golfing prowess at 88 and acknowledged the dedication of volunteers at the Julien Dubuque International Film Festival, including Chuck Andracchio, John Waldmeier, and several SWELL members at the Dubuque Arboretum & Botanical Gardens.

### **July: Zen, Zest, and Green Onions**

July began with an exploration of Zen and the benefits of Tai Chi for those over 50. Gardeners rejoiced with tips on growing green onions fast. Karen Knepper shared insights on how good nutrition can combat Alzheimer's.



## **August: Community Connections and Clover Cup Champions**

August saw SWELL members join the Sisters of the Presentation at Community Days, recognizing the contributions of Margie Reidy, Carol Wyatt, Judy-Zahren Kalb, Carrie Breitbach, and Kris Hermsen. SWELL workouts found a new home at Gary's house when the CRWC was closed. Three generations of Andersons shone at the Clover Cup. Bob Knepper shared nostalgic memories of growing up in Crystal Valley, WI. Paul and Sue Schramm shared an article emphasizing the importance of flexibility and balance. Congratulations to Mel and Theresa Harvey on their 57th wedding anniversary!

## **September: Adventures and Accolades**

Gary Sewell captivated us with tales of his Isle Royale National Park and RAGBRAI adventures. John Richey and Roger Ruden achieved the astronomical feat of shooting their age for 18 holes of golf. Dr. Mosali Reddy celebrated Indian Independence Day with SWELL friends at the Multicultural Family Center. Wess and Barbra Heitzman hosted 55 artists at Bluff Strokes Paint Out. Hunter Snyder joined as our new SWELL intern, and Jean Delaney's inspiring testimonial showcased how SWELL helped reverse her osteoporosis.

## **October: Cultural Immersion and Comprehensive Wellness**

Ted Wittman and Janet Zehn presented a moving documentary about her grandmother's experiences in communist China. We explored the concept of SWELL as a comprehensive wellness program. Enrique Santamaria shared Mexican culture through a delicious meal prepared with SWELL friends at the Multicultural Family Center.

## **November: Vertical Gardens and Vibrant Gatherings**

November brought tips on creating a vertical garden. The SWELL picnic set a new attendance record with 119 participants. 67 SWELL members enjoyed the BritBeat concert at the Heritage Center. Dave Assmus shared the Mayo Clinic's emphasis on improving balance.

## **December: Holiday Cheer and Heartfelt Farewells**

Ellec Armstead signed on as the 2025 Spring SWELL intern. We celebrated the importance of friendships and social connection. The SWELL community mourned the loss of Phyllis Hoerner, Lisa Wittman's mother. Hunter Snyder bid farewell. Dale Errthum, Debbie Link, Judy Kulb, and Claudette Bees were crowned champions in the creative Christmas hat contest. We concluded the year with reflections on a "perfect day of not aging."

**"Thank you, SWELL members,** for the incredibly thoughtful gifts and the heartwarming card. Reading all your names brought such joy to my heart, and I couldn't help but picture each of you with a big smile. I feel so incredibly blessed to have such wonderful friends in my life. You are the epitome of the kind of citizens we all aspire to be, the role models our younger generation needs. "We express our sincere gratitude to Karen Knepper for her dedication helping instruct SWELL."

Wishing you all a year filled with peace and happiness as we strive to embrace a youthful spirit and continue our journey towards a healthier lifestyle." Love you all, Gary



## Healthy Recipe by Mary and Emma Ingredients for Healthy Bran Muffins “Improved”

- 1 and 1/2 cups **whole wheat flour** (spooned & leveled)
  - ¼ cup of Bob’s Red Mill Wheat Brand flower (**extra fiber**)
  - 2 cup **Full Circle Market Organic Brand Flakes**
  - 2 teaspoon **baking powder**
  - 1/2 teaspoon **baking soda**
  - 1/2 teaspoon **salt**
  - 1/2 teaspoon **ground cinnamon**
  - 1 large **egg**, at room temperature
  - 1/2 cup **pure maple syrup**.
  - 1/3 cup **coconut oil**, melted.
  - 1/3 cup **unsweetened applesauce**, at room temperature
  - 1 teaspoon **pure vanilla extract**
  - 1 cup **nondairy milk\*** (or dairy milk), at room temp. **I used unsweetened vanilla almond milk.**
  - 1 and 1/4 cups **raisins\***
  - 1 and 1/4 cups **walnut pieces\***
  - **Use Double recipe for 12 jumbo muffins**
- 
- **They are very moist and tasty, everyone liked them,**
  - **These muffins will have extra fiber.**
  - **Remember jumbo muffins take longer to bake.**
  - **I asked John Richey for a rating. ★★★★★**



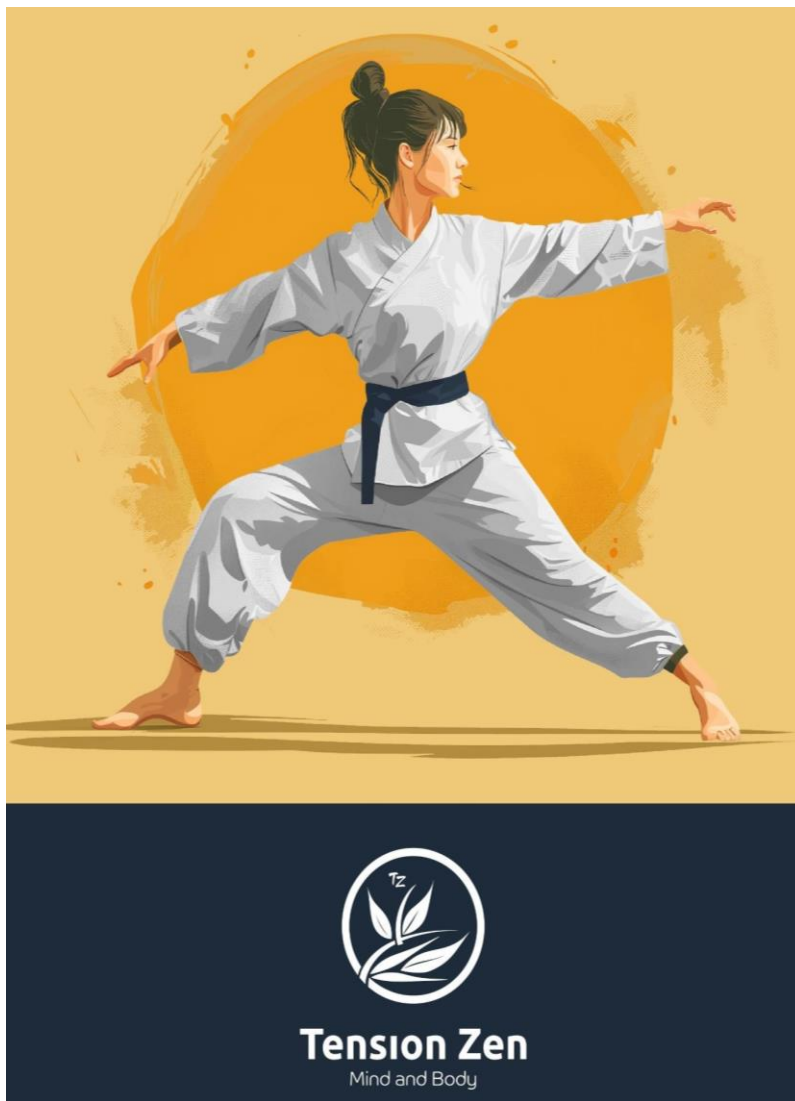
### Instructions

- Preheat oven to 425°F. Spray a 12-count muffin pan with nonstick spray or use muffin liners.
- Whisk the Wheat flour, wheat bran flower, baking powder, baking soda, salt, and cinnamon together in a large bowl until combined. Set it aside.
- Whisk the egg, honey, melted coconut oil, applesauce, vanilla, and milk together in a large bowl until combined. Pour the wet ingredients into the dry ingredients and whisk to combine. Switch to a rubber spatula or wooden spoon and fold in the raisins, walnuts (or other add-ins).
- Spoon the batter evenly into liners, filling them all the way to the top. **Very important \*Bake for 5 minutes**



**at 425°F, then, keeping the muffins in the oven, reduce the oven temperature to 350°F Bake for an additional 14–15 minutes for jumbo 15-25 minutes.**  
**Spring test:** gently press on the top of a muffin; if it springs back, it’s likely done. This worked best for jumbo muffins. The total time these muffins take in the oven is about 20-30 minutes, give or take. Allow the muffins to cool for 5 minutes in the muffin pan, then transfer to a wire rack to continue cooling.





According to a study published in the Journal of Alzheimer's Disease, practicing a specific type of meditation, called Kirtan Kriya, for just 12 minutes a day could potentially have a positive impact on cognitive function and may help reduce the risk of Alzheimer's disease by improving memory and reducing stress levels; highlighting the potential benefits of even short daily meditation sessions.

"Our study involving 128 college students has demonstrated significant cognitive enhancements and improved sleep quality within just 7 weeks of practicing Tension Zen meditation. Participants have reported experiencing heightened cognitive function throughout the afternoon, followed by deep and restful sleep. Encouragingly, many students are continuing their meditation practice beyond the class, utilizing our dedicated Tension Zen meditation app available on Patreon."

For a modest monthly fee of just \$2, you will unlock a treasure trove of resources designed to enhance your physical and mental health:

- **Dynamic Workouts:** Continue your fitness journey with invigorating routines inspired by our University of Dubuque live classes.
- **Serene Tai Chi:** Experience the profound benefits of Tai Chi through our step-by-step video tutorials.
- **Deep Relaxation:** Immerse yourself in guided meditations and healing imagery to promote tranquility and rejuvenation.

By harnessing the power of mind-body harmony, you can return to our community in the spring, refreshed and ready to embark on a new chapter of personal growth.

<https://www.patreon.com/TensionZen>



**Saturday, March 22<sup>nd</sup>, 7:30 PM Heritage Center Spring Musical Theatre Production of "Assassins"**



## **THE STAFF**

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**Feature Writer ..... Bob & Angie Krall**  
**Article Submitted..... Chuck Andracchio**  
**Feature Writer ..... Gary**  
**Improved Healthy Recipe .....Mary and Emma**

**Thanks to those who submitted wonderful articles to our SWELL newsletter.**