

Mid-Life Adventure Inspired Artist

Jane Minnick was in her mid-50s when she made a major change as an artist. She let go of her preferred medium of oil painting to learn Japanese brush painting. Everything about it was new to Minnick: the theory, the strokes, the rice paper. Starting out, she used only ink that she ground herself. “The whole thing was very, very different,” she says.



Artist Jane Minnick works in her Pilgrim Haven apartment home.

Why change after a lifetime in oils? Minnick and her husband had recently moved from Massachusetts to California when an advertisement for a Japanese brush painting class caught her attention. “I wanted something entirely different,” says

Minnick, who today blends Japanese and Chinese techniques in the studio space she set up in her Pilgrim Haven apartment. “It was an adventure,” she adds. “After all, California was an adventure.”

She chose a difficult style. When painting on rice paper, an artist can easily ruin a piece before finishing it. “It takes a lot of patience,” she says.

It took five years for Minnick to earn her artist’s name, or “chop,” as it’s called in brush painting – the red signature stamp placed on all works. Her teacher retired and asked Minnick to take her place. She gave Minnick her own artist’s name, a Japanese phrase translated as “big mountain,” signifying strength and dedication.

Minnick is certainly dedicated to her art. She taught for 18 years. During that time, she gave artist names to only four students who persevered in the brush painting style. “It isn’t everybody who really goes for it,” she explains.

For a number of years, she joined other artists in a Los Altos co-op gallery and only recently stopped working there. “It was keeping me so busy I was missing



a lot of what was going on here,” she says.

Minnick and her late husband had two daughters, both of whom live nearby. One daughter, Judith Content, is an acclaimed textile



artist who specializes in a Japanese dye technique. Her work is exhibited at the M. H. de Young Memorial

Museum in San Francisco, among other places.

Minnick always has a new work in progress. At Pilgrim Haven, she finds a community that appreciates her art, “which of course makes me want to paint more because I’m happy,” she adds.



A Mind-Stretching Class

A Mid-Life Change

Inside . . .

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Los Altos Landmark

Located in the quaint village of Los Altos, Calif., Pilgrim Haven has been a local landmark for 59 years. The continuing care retirement community offers comfort, security, and a quality lifestyle on an idyllic garden campus.

For more information about Pilgrim Haven, contact Marilyn Sell at 650-948-8384, ext. 103.

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American Baptist Homes of the West

Founded in 1949, Pilgrim Haven was the first retirement community for American Baptist Homes of the West, one of the most respected senior living providers in the U.S. A nonprofit, non-sectarian organization headquartered in Pleasanton, ABHOW operates 11 continuing care retirement communities — including Pilgrim Haven and The Terraces of Los Gatos — and 19 affordable housing communities in four Western states.

insight

Perspective

From the Executive Director

You might think creating a retirement community where people flourish would be a monumental task, given our culture's deeply ingrained belief that aging is a period of inevitable decline. But flourishing is the natural way of being at Pilgrim Haven.

Surrounded by beautiful gardens and spirited neighbors, Pilgrim Haven residents choose to embrace the metaphor of growth. Our introduction of Masterpiece Living, a national wellness program rooted in successful aging research, underscores what we already believe at Pilgrim Haven: Retirement living means thriving.

Residents embody this belief by the initiative they take. They branch out on their own for activities rather than waiting for management to provide something for them to do. Wanting to watch movies that are "light, romantic, and fun," a resident took charge. These movie nights are a big hit – complete with popcorn! Another resident feels our beautiful roses should be shared with neighbors in the Health Center who are unable to get outside. So she is organizing a cutting and delivery group to provide beauty and company.

Researchers attribute successful aging to a capacity to maintain a low risk of disease, high mental and physical function, and active engagement with life. A fourth factor seems equally important – a positive outlook. Every day at Pilgrim Haven, I see evidence of this perspective as residents live the belief that aging means flourishing.

Karen Jenney

Community Embraces Masterpiece Living

Marge Speidel covers arts and entertainment for the Palo Alto Weekly as a freelance writer. She also tutors at a local school and is part of a monthly book group. Several times a week, she works out at the YMCA. And she walks her dog a mile a day.



Marge Speidel, a new Pilgrim Haven resident, says she wants to "keep as active as possible for as long as possible."

When a two-bedroom apartment becomes available at Pilgrim Haven – the extra room will double as her den and office – Speidel will make the campus her home: a base for an engaged lifestyle.

"I would like to keep as active as possible for as long as possible," she says.

Speidel's aspiration represents a seismic shift in how retirement is regarded. Gone are the days when

retiring meant checking out, when aging was associated with inevitable decline. Today, retirement represents a stage of life when the potential for growth is just as real as in earlier years.

"Pilgrim Haven residents are independent, engaged, and curious about what's next," says Karen Jenney, executive director of Pilgrim Haven, which has felt the rumblings of this big shift for several years and has implemented major program changes built around

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Residents enjoy the intellectual stimulation of on-campus classes such as *Historical Perspectives*.

the philosophy of successful aging. “Retirement is now regarded as a season of stretching, a time for flourishing,” Jenney adds.

Under the umbrella of Masterpiece Living, a national wellness program emphasizing successful aging, Pilgrim Haven has introduced a variety of new activities. Neurobics, a six-week course that explores memory retention and recall, follows on the heels of the Posit Science Brain Fitness Program, a computer-based course that increases brain-processing speed. (See story, next page.)

Lisa Bartlit, who manages Masterpiece Living as Pilgrim Haven’s lifestyle coordinator, says residents have been embracing the program since its launch last fall. “It’s really coming along nicely. We are trying to balance things we offer here on campus so that we have something in all four areas,” she says, referring to the physical, intellectual, social, and spiritual growth domains. “We already had activities in each of these areas; now we’re trying to build on that.”

For example, the community has added off-campus walking tours, often led by resident Ruth Buneman, a lifelong hiker. In April, residents celebrated Major League Baseball’s opening day with a demonstration of Wii, the Nintendo game console that is catching on with older adults. Through virtual baseball, bowling, golf, and

tennis, residents can socialize, have fun, and work on their balance, Bartlit says.

All the activities are optional, she emphasizes. Having the freedom to choose is also part of successful aging. “Residents will participate more readily when they’ve made their own choice,” she adds. “Putting the ball in their court is what’s going to give them the tools for successful aging.”

Residents who are not signed up for Masterpiece Living may still join all the activities and “reap the benefits of the program,” she says.

Those who do participate in Masterpiece Living meet one-on-one with Bartlit to develop their own wellness goals – a personalized Masterpiece Living plan. Three areas are assessed: a lifestyle review to identify a resident’s values and interests; a simple test to evaluate mobility; and a health assessment administered by the world-renowned Mayo Clinic. Reviews will be conducted annually to track each resident’s progress.

Bartlit encourages participation in Masterpiece Living by sharing information. “I like to make sure the residents know all their options, but ultimately it’s their choice,” she says. Pilgrim Haven is discovering that Masterpiece Living is “a little contagious,” she adds, as residents share their experiences with neighbors.

Such organic growth is consistent with Masterpiece Living’s philosophy. “If a community can provide the kind of environment and culture that believes in the growth of the resident, the resident will respond to that,” says Masterpiece Living President Dr. Roger Landry in a promotional video. “That’s what Masterpiece Living communities are all about. That’s what the philosophy of Masterpiece Living is about. It’s a belief in growth, a belief in the research that tells us that this growth is possible in all areas of our lives – and achieving this potential.”

Resident June Nielson-Cademartori is a natural ambassador for Masterpiece Living. “I keep building it

up,” she says. Having completed the Posit Science and Neurobics classes, she notices an improvement in her memory. “Oh, it’s better. And of course my health is better,” she says.

A teacher and speech therapist by training, Nielson-Cademartori shares her expertise at Pilgrim Haven by teaching English as a second language to employees. And she joins Bartlit’s Monday through Thursday exercise class, Shape Up With Lisa.



Roger and Muriel Willey take advantage of Pilgrim Haven’s fitness program.

“I think the atmosphere at Pilgrim Haven is fantastic,” she says, noting that her perspective on life predisposes her to the community’s emphasis on successful aging. “I have a positive attitude anyhow, which I came with.”

She sums up her perspective this way: “I’m retired but I’m not a retiring person.”

Neurobics Class Jogs the Memory

In 30 seconds, how many cities and rivers can you name starting with the letter “D”? The clock is ticking. Yes, there are Denver and the Danube, Detroit, Dallas, and . . . Time’s up!

If you were stumped, don’t fret. It takes regular exercise to keep the mind sharp. That’s what 10 Pilgrim Haven residents learned through Neurobics, a six-week course that’s part of the community’s Masterpiece Living Program, which engages residents in strengthening their physical, social, intellectual, and spiritual health.

All Neurobics participants are graduates of the Posit Science Brain Fitness Program, Pilgrim Haven’s computer-based course that improves memory and brain-processing speed. Neurobics takes a different tack to strengthen the mind.

Through lectures, the class explores the latest research in memory – how memory works, its relationship to nutrition and stress, and how it can be improved. Through group activities – puzzles, teasers, and other memory-jogging games – class members stretch their capacity to retain and recall information.

The class was fun and informative, says instructor Lisa Bartlit, Pilgrim Haven’s lifestyle coordinator and manager of Masterpiece Living. “I got a lot of positive feedback,” she adds.

June Nielson-Cademartori said the class is already benefiting her. She notices, for example, it’s easier to remember phone numbers now. The 83-year-old resident sometimes hears her peers complain that they can’t remember things. “Well, that’s ridiculous,” she says. “You can if you work at it.”

The latest research supports her claim.



Lisa Bartlit, Pilgrim Haven’s lifestyle coordinator, chats with Neurobics participant June Nielson-Cademartori.

Neuroscientists have discovered that, with training, the brain can retain, even regain, cognitive abilities.

A recent study by the Posit Science Company shows that those who have completed the Brain Fitness Program made remarkable gains in memory and other cognitive abilities – equivalent, on average, to 10-plus years of improvement.

Also, the National Institutes of Health recently determined that mental exercise sessions could have lasting benefits for older adults. NIH’s large, carefully controlled ACTIVE study, the first of its kind, found such exercises can delay a decline in thinking skills and possibly help retain the ability to perform everyday activities.

Memory strategies, like the ones shared in the Neurobics class, help as well. Class participants discussed techniques for remembering, such as acronyms (NATO); acrostics (My Very Early Morning Jam Sandwich Usually Nauseates People, the first letters of each word triggering recall of the order of the planets); and rhymes (In 1492 Columbus sailed the ocean blue). External aids, like appointment books, to-do lists, and pillboxes, also help people remember.

Nielson-Cademartori reminds her peers that forgetfulness is not an inevitable result of aging. “You do remember a lot,” she says. “You have to be sure you’re not downgrading yourself.”

Meet Pilgrim Haven Advisory Board Members

You'll hear a common refrain when you ask Pilgrim Haven Advisory Board members why they serve: It's hard to say no to friends.

That's what hooked Frank Verlot and Tim Groves, both new board members. Verlot and Groves have known about Pilgrim Haven for years, but their friends' recruiting got them on the board.

In Verlot's case, Jane Reed, who served on the Los Altos City Council with Verlot, and Will Corkern did the asking.

With Groves, Corkern was the recruiter as well. The two were college roommates at University of the Pacific. "So I couldn't say no," Groves explains. But believing in the mission of Pilgrim Haven made it easy to say yes.

A 32-year resident of Los Altos, Verlot served on the city Planning Commission before his election to the City Council in 1982. He served two terms on the council, including a stint as mayor. "I think Pilgrim Haven is a real strong community asset," Verlot says.

As a city leader, Verlot knew residents at Pilgrim Haven and attended campus events. He gained an appreciation for Pilgrim Haven's place as a "community within the community,"

a neighborhood campus with strong ties to Los Altos.

Graduate studies at Stanford University brought Verlot to the area in the early 1960s. He worked as a mechanical engineer in the aerospace industry, focusing on rocket technology. His handiwork was part of the Apollo space program.

Verlot retired in 2002. He and his wife, Marian, a retired educator, live about two miles from Pilgrim Haven. Verlot has been



Verlot

an advocate for Pilgrim Haven's planned renovation. "With the aging population of Los Altos, Pilgrim Haven plays an important role in meeting the need for assisted living and memory support services," Verlot says. And he believes the renovation will fit well in the Pine Lane neighborhood. "Pilgrim Haven is, and wants to be, a good neighbor," he says.

Groves has spent a lot of time on the Pilgrim Haven campus. A Cupertino resident and retired pharmacist, Groves was a consultant in skilled nursing for 20 years and visited Pilgrim Haven frequently. "Pilgrim Haven is one of my favorite places to

go," he says.

Groves opened a pharmacy in Southern California after earning his degree at University of the Pacific. He directed an Oregon acute-care hospital pharmacy before becoming a consultant. His work took him to many retirement communities, and he was impressed with Pilgrim Haven. "I always thought Pilgrim Haven was about the best there is," he says.

Groves' wife, Marilyn, is a full-time pharmacist. She grew up in Los Altos, and her mother continues to live in the same home.



Groves

Groves calls himself an advocate for people who are "medically disadvantaged." Serving on the Pilgrim Haven board gives him an opportunity to ensure that residents receive the highest quality of care. "It's a real privilege to work with the board," he adds.