



50+Living our best lives now and in the future!

Quality of Life is Something You Give Yourself”

MarshAnne Landing [Winery founder](#), Greg Cramer, identified what quality living looked like for him and then took steps to make his dreams a reality. A positive mental attitude, an ability to dream, a sense of adventure, and a commitment to staying active have been essential elements for creating his best life.



The Power of a Positive Attitude

“I find that a positive mental attitude has helped me steer my life without getting caught up in the impossibilities or whether I might fail. Focusing on the positive rather than the negative seems to empower my vision of better outcomes.”

Forty years ago, Greg faced a personal crisis that helped him see beyond his immediate circumstances and envision the life he wanted in the future. After receiving his Ph.D. in Chemistry and working five years on a food safety contract, he suddenly found

himself unemployed. He had no plan for his future and was also getting divorced from his graduate school wife. “I felt sorry for myself for an hour or two and then got out a pad of paper and started outlining my strengths, experiences, and desires. I updated my resume, got out job applications, and then thought about who I wanted to be ten years from then.”

Applying his knowledge of chemistry while waiting for his next job opportunity, Greg began reading books about winemaking and talked to some home winemakers. “Friends soon joined in with trips to local vineyards to pick grapes and then come home and stomp them in a tub—and even doing a Bavarian dance while I yodeled along.”

His Adventures Were Just Beginning

After a demanding stint as a toxicologist for a consulting firm, Greg spent the next 20 years working for the U.S. Food and Drug Administration in food safety. “I worked across the street from the National Mall with its parade of art galleries and the Air and Space Museum. I became known as a ‘culture vulture’ visiting exhibits and lunchtime lectures. Soon I joined a couple of local singing groups before auditioning for a chorus that performed at the Kennedy Center. I met wonderful friends, sang at Renaissance festivals, and went on an amazing concert tour of France, Switzerland, and

Italy. The tour included a concert in St. Mark's Cathedral in Venice, Italy.”

In 1989, Greg met his future wife, Fran Sutherland. One of the couple's adventures involved sailing. They sailed with “the Annapolis Sailing Club up Sir Francis Drake Channel in the British Virgin Islands. We owned a sailboat for ten years and really enjoyed our time on the Chesapeake Bay.”

Oregon Wine Country and a New Dream

To help make one of his 84-year-old father's dreams come true, Greg and Fran took a trip to Oregon. His father's dream was to climb Mt. Hood with his three sons. “This seductive adventure left us wanting more of Oregon.”

“After returning to D.C., we contemplated returning to Oregon to grow grapes and open a winery—even though we had never grown grapes, had never been in business, and had never lived in Oregon.” Six months later, Greg and Fran purchased a 109-acre ranch in the Umpqua Valley of Southern Oregon—a region they determined would be ideal for growing Rhone varietals. “Four years later, we retired from our day jobs and moved to Oregon.” Once settled, the Cramers established MarshAnne Landing Winery.



More Than a Winery

As their winery expanded, Greg and Fran began showcasing local artists' work in their “spacious tasting room.” After staging a successful outdoor concert, Greg started searching for other performers and eventually hooked up with the Eugene Opera and a chamber music ensemble. “We felt that our niche in the local winery music scene was cultural tourism at its best with events held in a beautiful setting, unlike any in the local area. “One remarkable concert had a cello professor from Peabody playing Pablo Casal's 300-year-old cello...”

One evening Greg got to sing opposite a “beautiful diva” with Eugene Opera. “I decided that the visiting talent was so good that I should retire as a singer after that concert.”

Living the Dream

“We sold our winery business one year ago and are finally retired. No longer working ‘eight’ days a week, we finally have time to figure out what we want to do for the rest of our lives.”

Both Greg and Fran are now making new dreams a reality. They soon found their dream house, a lodge-like home overlooking the Umpqua River. “I believe that dreaming is really important, and having passion is necessary for making those dreams a reality...”



“We try to live a stress-free life, staying healthy and happy.” Greg and Fran take daily walks with their dog, Tanner, around a recreational pond. “Staying fit is so critical to growing older and is such a part of our commitment to each other and our relationship.”



A Winemaker's Recommendation

“We drink wine just about every night. Of course, our favorites come from the wine I made at MarshAnne Landing Winery. The Cote du Umpqua is a Rhone-style wine made from Grenache and Syrah. The bright fruit of the Grenache lightens up the heavier style of Syrah. Together, they provide a full-bodied wine, light in tannins and delicious with a wide range of foods.”

“Quality of life is something you give yourself.”

Quality of Life

Connie Zweig, Ph.D, has shared some insightful and engaging stories and excerpts on her [website](#) from her forthcoming book, *The Inner Work of Age*. The following thoughts about quality of life are from a post titled “What is Old?”

“Our quality of late life is lived individually, not as a group. It can be more than adaptation. It can mean overcoming past fears, developing fresh aptitudes, cleaning up toxic relationships, living more in the present moment, and transcending the ego, allowing it to take a backseat so that life opens to an intuitive flow. It can be a time of mining the gold from the dark side, reclaiming unfulfilled dreams and expressing unrealized talents.”

Dr. Zweig’s newest book will be published in September 2021. After reading some of the excerpts on her website, I know this book will be on my “must have” list after it becomes available.

Brighten Your Day During a Dark Winter



Studies have suggested that simply getting outside and enjoying nature can be **beneficial** for most of us. Spending time outside—especially when coupled with physical activity can:

- Decrease stress levels and help us relax
- Regulate our emotions and decrease depression
- Support our immune system
- Help us experience greater gratitude

Even if it is raining and cold outside, we can still grab a coat, an umbrella, and head outdoors. Who knows, we just might see a rainbow on the horizon.

Resetting Positivity

Having a positive mental attitude is **related to** resilience—our ability to bounce back when we face challenges. Yet sometimes life’s challenges and related stress can lead to a negative attitude.

In such circumstances, Greg Cramer believes we need to rescue ourselves through self-nurturing or “finding ways to minimize the influence of negativity.”

Greg suggests stepping back from too much activity, practicing meditation, engaging in physical activity such as jogging, getting away (such as taking a trip to the coast), or reaching out to others for support and understanding.

Be kind to yourself!

Optimistic Mindset Linked to Lower Risk of Heart Attack.

A December 15, 2020 [Knowridge Science Report](#) summarized the results of research involving the review of 15 published medical studies examining the link between optimism and pessimism related to cardiovascular events.

The studies reviewed were based on reports and evidence from 230,000 patients. Researchers “found that those with optimism had a 35% reduction in risk of heart attack, stroke, and cardiac death when compared to the pessimistic subjects in the study.”

Poetry Benefits: Well-being and Mental Stimulation

Some recent studies have suggested that **poetry** can improve well-being and benefit our memories. “When a person reads or listens to poetry, MRIs have shown that certain regions in the brain’s right hemisphere that are linked to reward and emotion

light up” after being activated. Results from other MRI studies have revealed that poetry can help support our memory.

As reported in a 2007 *Issues in Mental Health Nursing* journal from the University of Tennessee, writing poetry as a form of creativity can be particularly beneficial as we age. Based on a study involving older adults, findings suggested that writing poetry can provide “a positive sense of accomplishment” and “a feeling of connectedness with others” who also wrote and shared their poems.

In addition to positive subjective outcomes, research also has suggested that creative activities like writing poetry can help stabilize “blood flow, heart rate, and hormone levels.” Such creative activities can also “stimulate the release of endorphins” that can improve our immune system's function and positively affect some brain cells.

A Poet’s Journey and Advice

Nancy Nowak began writing poetry in the 4th grade. When she was in college, she discovered the poetry of Anne Sexton. “Her voice and the choices she made in her work moved me and showed me a way to write honestly as a woman. I’ve been reading, studying, writing, and publishing poetry ever since.”

Nowak’s advice to others who want to explore writing poetry is to get started and to discover tools that work for them. She suggests getting started by reading the works of contemporary poets. She recommends visiting websites for the [Poetry Foundation](#) or the [Academy of American Poets](#). She hopes that others will “think of writing poetry not primarily as a way to express their emotions but as a path taken to engage with others and the world through the words they have chosen.”



Nancy wrote the following poem in response to the way people often talk about “invasive species.”

Acclimated by Nancy Nowak, MFA

This flock, nebula
interweaving above

dry grass along the interstate
lands to greet, open-billed, its
minute of earth, descendant

of Hotspur’s threat to Henry the king:
*I’ll have a starling shall be taught to speak
...to keep his anger in motion*

and the 1890 crate of Europeans
released in Central Park, Manhattan
to illustrate a prosperous German
immigrant’s love of Shakespeare.

Emigrating south or over the plains
and Rockies, scores of birds
in resolute parties accumulated into

thousands succeeding
native species or else
with no dispute
living among them. Despised. Yet

if this were the last field of them, how
lonely, how ivory

our praise would be for lustrous
black feathers, sunlit green and violet
flecked in winter

with white, sprung
yellow bills, the sometimes chatter, purr
or scream, voices at times mimicking
hawk, sparrow
accusingly, our song.

Wisdom of the Elders

“Wise elders have learned from their scars. They have not been taken over by their wounds, nor have they become obsessed with escaping from the pain of imperfection. They have learned to get in touch with their true selves.”

Darcia F. Narvaez Ph.D.

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