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# LIFE



For Yee Hong Centre residents Bo Ngan Lee, left, and her husband, Yuk Yum Lee, mah-jong can be a reminder of youth.

## Helping mom feel at home

### Elderly parents who don't speak English face multi-year waits at ethnic nursing homes

**MICHELLE KAY**  
SPECIAL TO THE STAR

When Ken Lee's mother, Bo Ngan, fractured her leg at a nursing home in Scarborough, Lee, the youngest of four children and his mother's favourite, was furious. The home provided no explanation and no incident report was written. His 88-year-old mother, an immigrant from China, spoke little English and wasn't able to communicate with staff.

Lee was already stressed about his mother's failing health. She had suffered a stroke and could no longer live on her own. He had wanted her to go to a Chinese nursing home, but the waiting list was so long, he had no choice but to move his mother into a "western-style" facility.

The three years she spent there were horrifying, says Lee. His normally cheerful and social mother became increasingly unhappy and isolated. "We could tell she was starting to give up hope," says Lee. Despite attempts by the staff to provide adequate care, the language barrier proved too much. Frustrated and guilt-ridden, Lee eventually secured a spot for his mother at Yee Hong, a network of four long-term care facilities for Chinese Canadians in Toronto.



Tam Chun Tang, left, and Hoi Tang in the Yee Hong Centre's Snoezelen room, where fibre optics are used to create a controlled multisensory environment that both stimulates and relaxes.

He says he noticed a change immediately — she was more relaxed and no longer had a scared look on her face.

Unfortunately, in some cases, the wait is far longer.

Faina Mileikovskaia, a 105-year-old North York woman, has been on the waiting list for a nursing home with Russian-speaking staff members for 10 years.

She was last told that it would be another two years, but after the Star published a story about her situation on Thursday, a meeting with a Russian-speaking manager from the Community Care Access Centre (CCAC) was arranged for Friday.

CARE continued on L3

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## Bionic woman now a holistic healer

**ISABEL TEOTONIO**  
LIFE REPORTER

Growing up in a home plagued by domestic violence, Lindsay Wagner internalized her pain and didn't speak about the abuse. She rarely cried. And there was much to cry about.

By age 19, the budding actress was suffering from a severe case of ulcers. The pain, she says, was "eating its way out of my stomach."

Slated to undergo surgery, Wagner had the great fortune, and "blessing," of being introduced to a doctor and minister who approached her care in a holistic manner. After six weeks of fasting, visualization and meditation, combined with prayer, the ulcers had disappeared.

"It was just such a profound experience for me that I wanted to learn more, and it began a life of study for me," recalls the 63-year-old actress in a recent telephone interview. "My whole life I've been studying this. It's been my real passion."

Many remember Wagner as one of the most popular TV stars during the 1970s, particularly her Emmy Award-winning portrayal of Jaime Sommers as the *Bionic Woman*. But her real passion, nurtured by more than four decades of studying with doctors, scientists, healers and spiritual leaders from around the world, lies in the holistic healing of mind, body and soul.

One of the greatest lessons Wagner has learned is that her perspective of a situation actually caused more suffering than the situation itself.

But once she shifted her perspective, the experience of what she was going through changed.

"Our experience of many life circumstances is a function of our personal perspective and not the circumstance itself," says Wagner, who in recent years has gained attention for her healing workshops.

Wagner is currently in Toronto presenting a three-day experiential workshop to people living with HIV/AIDS. The workshop, called "Quiet the Mind & Open the Heart," is in collaboration with Fife House, Canada's largest provider of supportive residential programming and housing services for those living with HIV/AIDS.

Wagner has presented in various countries, such as Canada, the United States, Mexico, England and Ireland, but this is the first time that she is doing a workshop in Toronto.

Twenty of Fife House's clients — men and women who range in age — are participating in the event, which wraps up Saturday.

WAGNER continued on L7

# Customs, traditions key to happiness

CARE from L1

The CCAC is the provincial agency that manages long-term care and looks to find the most suitable facilities for those in need of care. Whenever possible it tries to keep couples together, which can sometimes make it easier for a spouse to secure a spot in an ethnic nursing home, although there are no guarantees.

Bo Ngan's husband, Yuk Yum, was able to join her at Yee Hong last year, but the couple, who have been married for almost 70 years, are currently residing on different floors, waiting for a room to free up so they are able to live together again.

Getting both his parents into Yee Hong was an exercise in patience and persistence for their son Ken, whose situation is far from unique. Like many ethnic groups, the Chinese culture values the elderly and tradition calls for children to care for their parents.

Because this is not always possible, however, immigrant children turn to seniors' homes and long-term care facilities that cater to specific cultural groups, offering traditional cuisines and activities, and employing staff who speak their mother tongues.

About half of Toronto's 2.6 million residents are born outside of Canada, speaking a first language other than English or French. With more than 140 languages and dialects spoken in the GTA, the city is a language mosaic.

Toronto already has a number of long-term care facilities that cater to specific cultural groups such as Yee Hong and Mon Sheong for the Chinese population, Hellenic Home for the Greek community, Villa Colombo in North York for those with Italian heritage, Suomi-Koti in Leaside for the Finnish population and Baycrest Centre for the



At the Hellenic Home, Kalamitiano, a traditional Greek dance, is performed almost daily. Seniors, even those in wheelchairs, wave scarves around and clap to the music.

Jewish community, just to name a few. Yet seeking a home according to language and ethnospecific care is still challenging because demand is greater than availability.

The waiting lists at Yee Hong and Hellenic Home are so long, it can take years until a spot is available. Helen Chan, a retired school teacher, is currently looking for a home for her 92-year-old aunt. She counts her lucky stars that both her parents were able to get into Yee Hong in the beginning. With specialized facilities, including a Snoezelen room, otherwise known as a controlled multisensory environment that both stimulates and relaxes, Yee Hong can be especially helpful for residents with dementia.

"We are lucky in Toronto because (Yee Hong has) four centres, but we are still short on beds," says Chan. "The wait time is really crazy. I need a backup plan."

At Hellenic Home, to get a spot in a standard room takes approximately four years. The home says its reputation for offering excellent care has helped it grow but not fast enough. Hellenic Home, like Yee Hong, has activities that are geared specifically to its community. Kalamitiano, a traditional Greek dance, is performed almost daily. Seniors, even those in wheelchairs, wave around scarves, clapping to the music. Men gather in the common space to socialize, drink Greek coffee and play backgammon while women make Koulourakia, tradi-

tional Greek cookies, honey balls and dolma with staff in a kitchen on the second floor. Such activities are designed to engage seniors, some of them with Alzheimer's and dementia, allowing them to smell, taste and touch materials while reminiscing about their past. The idea is to remind residents of their youth, encouraging feelings of happiness and belonging to their community, as well as spirituality.

"Faith is very important to Greeks," says Hellenic Home's President, Peter Xenias, "which is why we have a chapel and priest on site. We want to meet all our seniors' psychosocial needs." Dora Karoubas, the activation manager in charge of activities and programs, says she incorporates a

Montessori style of care, asking seniors questions and giving them hands-on activities. "Greeks are proud people," she says. "Well-being is not just dependent on physical well-being. Doing something (such as knitting a scarf or even folding clothes) gives the seniors a sense of pride and accomplishment."

Homes such as Hellenic Home and Yee Hong keep ethnicity and culture in mind when determining everything from menus to fundraisers to daily activities. The aim is to provide an atmosphere that is both comfortable and familiar to the seniors. Residents at Yee Hong do Chinese calligraphy and play mah-jong, activities they participated in when they were young. Once a year, Hellenic Home even turns its gardens into a petting zoo, bringing in sheep and other animals. "Back in the old country, many people were farmers. They had sheep, donkeys, chickens, they produced cheese," says Kosta Kostouros, Hellenic Home's CEO. "Bringing in the animals has a therapeutic purpose."

"In Greek, there is a saying," says Kostouros, "If the elderly request, the children provide." While the onus is on the children to ensure that their parents are taken care of, culturally specific homes like Yee Hong and Hellenic Home help take some of the stress off the children. Knowing their parents are receiving ethnically-oriented care, from staff who understand specific customs, traditions, language and spiritual requirements, helps give both children and their parents peace of mind.

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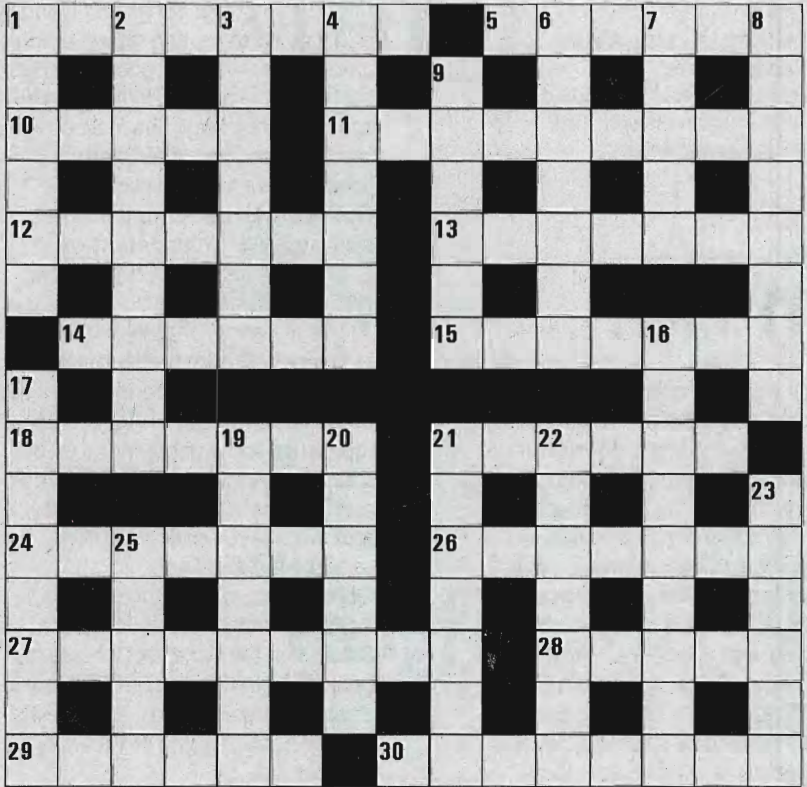
## THE CRYPTIC

(1530) BY CAROLINE ANDREWS

- ACROSS**
- 1 Fuel blew up! Sail gone! (8)
  - 5 Stretch initial response in "Dishonor" (6)
  - 10 Name in Bhopal or Nagpur (5)
  - 11 No mail? No trouble! Getting \$1000 from Asian (9)
  - 12 Unprotected and late, punk sped around circle (7)
  - 13 One no-good judge and one who shows no appreciation (7)
  - 14 Single out Nicholas, say, for outing (6)
  - 15 Changes "must eat" arrangement (7)
  - 18 Country song about broken leg (7)
  - 21 Standard or unusually good? (6)
  - 24 E.g. "Hair Spray", "Mid-Way" and "Love, Look Back" (7)
  - 26 Chirp and giggle around water's edge (7)
  - 27 Bring about new giant site (9)
  - 28 Excessively (to #1) obvious (5)
  - 29 Small shelf in vehicle (6)
  - 30 Mixed nut fete; restricted but free (8)
- DOWN**
- 1 Something bitter; half the whey in vessel (6)
  - 2 Stout son to work out around supply center with German (9)
  - 3 Affair in novel: "A Lion Is" (7)
  - 4 Rocky, Mia, Don with cold vagabond (7)
  - 6 Considered time, laughter and, yecch! last diet (7)
  - 7 Christopher in evacuated area, somewhere in Japan (5)
  - 8 Point to semi-neon bouquets, I hear, in "Trumpery" (8)
  - 9 Trendy business is not healthy (6)
  - 16 Handling third of trunks and ten tame bats (9)
  - 17 Fancies some Nov. agar (i.e. seaweed) (8)
  - 19 Violating about fourth of laws to get scraping (7)
  - 20 Article: "Florida Cereal is drifting" (6)
  - 21 Short time with "X" catching river bird (7)
  - 22 Disgusting omen is broadcast around October (7)
  - 23 Old car and second truck in huge hole (6)
  - 25 Girl returning from palace is ordinary (5)

### SOLUTION TO CRYPTIC No. 1529

- ACROSS**
- 1 Casket
  - 4 Lozenges
  - 10 Terminals
  - 11 Usage
  - 12 Popcorn
  - 13 Scandal
  - 14 Liege
  - 16 Hedgehop
  - 19 Protests
  - 21 Sperm
  - 23 Inspire
  - 25 Adviser
  - 27 Stark
  - 28 Ascertain
  - 29 Resorted
  - 30 Clutch
- DOWN**
- 1 Catapult
  - 2 Strip
  - 3 Episode
  - 5 Ousts
  - 6 Emulate
  - 7 Grandiose
  - 8 Snells
  - 9 Paunches
  - 15 Etruscans
  - 17 Distance
  - 18 Amaranth
  - 20 Thinker
  - 21 Several
  - 22 Kissier
  - 24 Elate
  - 26 Scant



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