

2025 BC GATOR SR GAMES & SILVERARTS LITERARY ARTS

Sub-Category			Title	Place
Essay				
	Vivien	Monnie	They Say...	1 st
	Janet	Stiegler	Stop the Wedding Mania	2 nd

They Say...

Vivien Monnie

Silver Arts 2025

Essay: Non-biographical

They Say...

They say "age is just a number." I guess that's true since every year I have another birthday, it's an age I have never been. No prior experience of being a year older. HOWEVER, many times instead of remembering what day it is, it's easier to remember tomorrow we have a dentist appointment. We can all agree we can't believe, "Gosh have we been here that many years" having moved from another part of the world! New friends and neighbors that we met just a few years ago have now already moved and their replacements are just not the same. We all wave to one another, but the closeness is not there. Instead of hopping over to share a cup of coffee, we now need to call to make a social visit.

They say it's "not too late to try something you've always wanted to do." Pictures of eighty year olds skydiving... seventy year olds hiking/biking across Europe. Well, if I didn't want to do those things in my twenties and thirties, I would have to say no thank you and snicker behind my hand. How about taking a walk on a sunny day with just a slight breeze? Certainly not with wind speeds of fifteen miles per hour or higher or no-see-ums attacking me. Every day I sound more and more like my 102- year- old mother. And my friends do too and they've never even met her! I try to halt the conversation when it turns to aches and pains. Don't need to go down that rabbit hole and end up in never never land. We sit around and criticize, "The kids today on those motorized scooters with no helmet!!" Remember when we rode skate boards down hilly streets in traffic? We certainly didn't wear helmets.

They say "eat healthy and limit your alcohol intake." I've been eating healthy all my life. Yes, lots of fruits and vegetables, cutting off the fat on the chicken thighs, cooking with olive oil. To tell you the truth at this stage of my life, sometimes I just crave a juicy medium rare cheeseburger, yes with French fries or maybe even onion rings! Cheetos and Doritos call to me when I'm shopping on Senior Thursdays at the grocery stores. And quite frankly when my friends and I socialize, booze is usually involved. And we socialize a lot! I suspect all of our doctors know we are casually lying about the line "how many drinks do you consume per week."

They say "you should save for retirement". Number one, save fifty percent of every dime you make. Number two, if you can't afford it, don't buy it. Number three, left overs are a wonderful thing. If you're reading this now and haven't followed one through three, it's probably too late. Maybe good lessons for your children and grandchildren. BUT when I receive an email from an airline asking if I could come in for a job interview, I am tempted. Just think, I could travel practically for free. Airline tickets are sometimes the most expensive part of a trip. Then I remember what happens at the ticket counter or departure gate when a flight is delayed or cancelled. Practically a mob scene even though those airline workers are not personally responsible for say a lightening storm or the connecting plane not arriving on time. I would tell 'em like it is- "Go ahead walk down the jetway and see what you've got. Ha, ha, ha, no plane. So what are you going to do now!!" My own version of customer service.

Speaking of customer service, am I the only one experiencing problems with the 800 numbers? And what about those online verification questions? One lack of a capital letter or space, three times and you're OUT, sometimes for days. Which means you have to call the 800 number to get unlocked. Yes, the voice message says "we are experiencing a heavier than normal call volume,

try again later.” Once I tried for three days at various times of the day, nothing. Luckily I’m retired and have nothing better to do than to hold the line for up to thirty minutes, only to get disconnected!

They say “a dog is your best friend.” I can understand that, in fact, any animal can be your best friend. I’ve been fortunate enough to have all at the same time, a dog, three cats, a bunny, a guinea pig, fish and two children (not in that order). I recall an article I read on the world’s weirdest jobs. Hippos are supposed to have killed more humans than any other animal on the earth. And here was featured a man brushing a hippo’s teeth, yes with a rather large brush. Now I have to think he and the hippo had to be “friends”. And the darn hippo seemed to be enjoying the dental care. This gigantic beast could have chomped down on the guys arm any second but no Mr. Hippo is thinking, “Yummy seagrass toothpaste”!

They say “money doesn’t buy happiness”. The only folks I’ve heard agree with that one are either the ones receiving free cell phones, free lodging and free food. Or the one per cent wealthy who take advantage of tax write-offs and loopholes that are not available to we, the middle class. We have worked all our adult lives and sometimes even younger, saved to buy a house, saved for our children’s education, saved for retirement and now will be on waitlists for retirement communities, paying for those with our after tax dollars. But, for the most part, we are pretty “happy”!

Who are these “They” people? Yes, there are always the names posted on articles, what they have done, education, et cetera. But have you ever spoken to them? Have “They” called, texted or emailed to know your history or opinion? My friends and relatives also have not been contacted. I don’t know these “Theys” and they don’t know me.

So I guess I’ll just mosey along doin’ what I’ve always been doin’ enjoying life and my friends and whatever else comes along...

Stop the Wedding Mania

(Essay)

by Janet Stiegler

Stop the Wedding Mania

Weddings today have gotten totally out of hand. When I got married (over 40 years ago!), we didn't have bachelor and bachelorette weekends or multi-day, destination weddings. My cousin hosted a wedding shower in her backyard, and my parents splurged to throw a reception at a local venue with a DJ. Our honeymoon was a week at a motel in Nags Head, the most we could afford just out of graduate school.

Today, young people hold events for a year before the big day, often at quite an expense to them and those they invite—engagement parties in Napa Valley, bachelorette escapes to Niagara Falls or showers at the Ritz Carlton. Weddings are now multi-day affairs. The ceremony takes place on one day, of course, but because guests are coming from out of town, the hosts entertain the invitees at gatherings held on days before (a brewery or bar for mingling) and after the event (brunch). After all, since guests are flying in to attend your wedding in Banff, Canada, and paying several hundred dollars for a hotel room at the Fairmont, you must treat them well.

But why blow all your money on a big wedding? The average cost per plate now ranges between \$150-\$200. Much depends on the location and venue, the type and complexity of the cuisine, how it is served (buffet or plated), and whether you have an open bar with top-shelf liquors. But figure on spending a year's salary once everything is added up.

Sometimes the wording of the menu alone can add dollars to the cost. Do you offer steak and fish or “cast iron-seared filet mignon” and “bourbon-glazed Akura salmon”? Fancy adjectives add ten dollars to each plate; if those descriptions are in French, tack on another five. (*Haricot verts* sound fancy, but you’re just getting plain ol’ string beans.) Add to that a band or DJ, the photographer and videographer, flowers for the tables and bridesmaids, gifts for the wedding party, hotel accommodations . . . cha-ching, cha-ching, cha-ching. Wouldn't all that money for a day or weekend of festivities be better invested in a new home? Or your future children's education? (Today's cost of a college education is a subject for another day.)

And think about the *stress*? Sure, you can hire a wedding planner (another cost), but the more you invest, the more the day must be perfect. *You* have to be perfect. And that means getting up at o'dark thirty to have your hair and make-up done for the “big reveal.” Here is something that also has become popular over the past decade: the groom sees the bride in her gown *before* the nuptials so that the photographer can take pictures all afternoon on stone bridges, sandy beaches, or abandoned railroad tracks around town. My son and his wife hired a tram to take the wedding party to some stony outcrop among the mansions in Newport, Rhode Island. One of the groomsmen almost broke his ankle, but hey, they got several thousand great photos, most of which are taking up space in my hard drive.

Don't get me started on fog machines. These are often used during the newlyweds' first dance to give the effect of “dancing on a cloud.” If done right, it can look dreamy, but it

could also cause you or your asthmatic guests to have a coughing fit, which would have an adverse effect on the image you hoped to create. I also once saw these machines emit what appeared to be giant sparklers around the dance floor's perimeter. One tipsy man paying homage to the flames had to be steered back to his seat lest his tux caught fire.

Another problem with big weddings is that you are often obligated to invite relatives you hardly know or see anymore. Your parents feel compelled to reciprocate for the one they attended several years earlier at the invitation of some obnoxious uncle they've since defriended on Facebook. Unless you are footing the bill (and sometimes even if you are), this can mean fewer of your friends and work colleagues.

A small, more intimate affair would allow you to limit the guest list to only those people who are most important to you. My niece and nephew had small ceremonies in my sister's backyard and at a local park overlooking a lake. Decorate a rustic pergola with wisteria, drape the ceiling of a gazebo with white sheers, and sprinkle around some twinkly lights, and you've got a romantic and memorable atmosphere for tying the knot.

Finally, I have made an admittedly unscientific observation that there is an inverse relationship between the extravagance of a wedding and the long-term happiness of the couple. Sadly, in at least three lavish affairs to which I was privy, the couples were divorced within a year. So, keep it simple and focus instead on each other and your commitment before God and your closest family and friends. Or better yet, elope.