

Exotic travels, memorable places for Sheridan man

BY LOIS BELL
SHERIDAN SENIOR CENTER

SHERIDAN — Asked about his most memorable trip, Tommy Conley will tell you it was a trip he took this year around South America.

"I would have to say that trip is number one and it's hard to say what my second favorite trip is," Conley said.

Conley is living his retirement dream. The traveling bug snagged him when he was younger but he began traveling the world later when he was still working.

"My first (international) trip in 2002 was one week in New Zealand and then a week in Australia," Conley said. "Ever since I was seven years old, I wanted to go to Australia."

He tacked his vacation time to the Christmas and New Year holidays.

"I saw the 2003 New Year's Eve fireworks over Cairns, Australia," Conley said.

Prior to that trip, Conley's traveling was in the United States, Canada and Mexico.

"I used to go to Las Vegas when you could get a room for \$20 a night and an all-you-can-eat buffet for \$5," Conley said. "You could see big entertainers like Don

Rickles, Roy Clark, Rich Little and Sammy Davis Jr."

Between shows, he played golf. "I would throw my golf clubs in the car and go," Conley said.

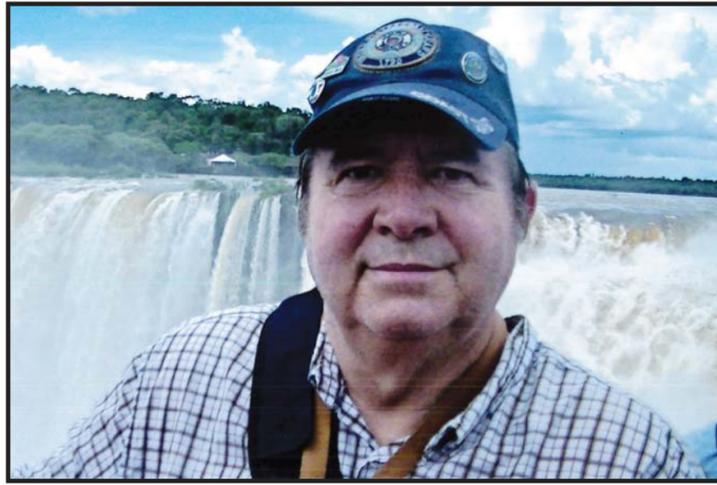
He worked five more years and continued to travel within the United States. His domestic travels include recognizable locales such as Branson, Philadelphia, Boston, Martha's Vineyard and New England. Some of his trips were with travel groups and some on his own.

The experiences have stayed with him. Conley can tell you that he spent two and half days in a museum on Vancouver Island, British Columbia, Canada, the numbers of many of the highways he's driven, and that he has golfed on the northernmost golf course in the United States, eight miles north of Fairbanks, Alaska. He has traveled via car, train, airplane and cruise ship.

When Conley retired in 2007, the international travel bug flared up again. Conley estimated he has visited approximately 25 countries.

"It's not that many considering there are about 190 countries in the world," Conley said.

Conley kicked off 2016 with a South American cruise trip. His 2016 trip included Costa Rica



COURTESY PHOTO

Sheridan resident Tommy Conley poses by the Iguazú Falls in Argentina on a trip around South America that started 2016 for him. Conley estimates that he has visited 25 countries since he began traveling internationally in 2002.

and crossing from the Atlantic to the Pacific Oceans through the Panama Canal.

"From there we visited Ecuador, Peru, Chile (I think we stopped five different stops in Chile), and Argentina," Conley said. "The mountains on southern Argentina remind me of the Grand Tetons."

The ship stopped at Cape Horn

and Antarctica, the Falkland Islands and Uruguay.

"The Falklands are British territory but Argentina thinks the Falklands still belong to them," Conley said. "So you can't go directly from the Falklands to Argentina."

While in Argentina, Conley took an excursion to the Iguazu Falls.

"The size and the scope of them are just massive," said Conley. "It's hard to describe. It should be on any body's bucket list to go see the Iguazu Falls."

A few port stops along the coastline, Conley cruised to Rio de Janeiro, then up the Amazon River, Barbados, then to the U.S. Virgin Islands.

"And that was the end of that 67-day trip. That was all," said Conley.

It wasn't long after he was traveling again with a group from the Senior Center to Washington, D.C., Monticello and colonial Williamsburg in April.

Conley listened early in life to advice about saving and planning for retirement. He followed through and is now living his dream.

He has more trips in his sights in the near future including northern Europe, the fall colors in New England with the Sheridan Senior Center and another Pacific cruise in the near future. Travel plans after that will be what catches his imagination.

"Sure I could sit home and while the days away but why not travel now while I can?" Conley said. He wishes he had started earlier in life but hasn't regretted a moment.

CENTER STAGE

Feeling negative? Stop and think of a happy memory

The human heart: what is it really? Most people think of it as just a muscle that pumps blood in the body. While true, research of the last few years now clearly paints a bigger picture of the heart and what it really does in and for the body. Research by various institutions, including the leader in the field, HeartMath© (www.heartmath.org) have found and published some interesting facts.

First, the heart has its own electrical system, makes its own hormones, combined with what seems to be its own nervous system. Secondly, its beat and pumping action carries the heart's electrical, hormonal and nervous system

response to every cell, organ and system of the human body. Thirdly, because of its "total coverage," it makes it one of the most important organs of the human body. Lastly, the heart, just like all of the organs, is influenced by emotions and emotions determine how the heart will function and beat.

Next, one might ask, what are emotions? Aren't they feelings? Yes and no, is the answer. Emotion is the biological experience that happens in the body when something occurs, from outside of the body or from within. This physical experience is a neurochemical chain of hormones excreted by various organs. An example would be the sense of fear one might get from adrenalin excreted by the adrenal glands when something a little scary happens, like slipping on ice. A feeling on the other hand is the name we give to the experience, such as "scared" or "scary."

So how do emotions, these neurochemical chains affect

the heart? Well, it depends on whether the emotion is positive (and "good-feeling" hormones are excreted in the body) or if the emotion is negative (and "bad-feeling" hormones are excreted in the body). Think of a scary memory that has happened to you and notice what happens in your body. Do you feel a little scared? If you do, then the neurochemical chains of the scared memory are excreted in your body, and your body responds. Now think of a happy memory. What do you notice in your body? Good emotions? Maybe you can even name them, like "happy" or "pleasant."

An important thing to know about emotion is that it affects several things, including attention, memory, recall, comprehension, reasonability, creativity, task performance, decision making, social interaction and learning, to name a few. Good-feeling emotions, like appreciation, love and compassion, help the heart to work better and in turn, help the whole body and mind. Negative-feeling emotions, like anger, anxiety and frustration, often called "stress" affects the body and mind negatively. When the body stays in stress emotions too long and over a long period of time, it takes a toll. The long-term results of negative emotions can lead to heart disease, cancer and other similar conditions

and diseases.

What to do? Know that there are ways to help your heart do its best job. The body and mind like harmony best. Here is a suggestion. When you're feeling a negative emotion, stop, put your hand on your heart and think of a happy or pleasant memory. What should follow is a "good" emotion or feeling. When that occurs, the "good" chemical chains are already in body your body, bringing it back to harmony. It sounds simple, like "how could this possibly work!" It just does! Really, research shows that it happens and works that fast!

Another suggestion: Put your hand on your heart and imagine you're sitting in the sun. Make it feel like you're really sitting in the sun. When you do this, you are again activating those "good" feeling chemical chains that are already moving through your body.

Lastly, practice these good feelings — do one of the above ten times for the next seven days. Then it will automatically work in your body when needed without being asked. Great for the heart and you!

LYNN GORDON, MS, LPC, NCC, RYT, has granted permission to re-run this column first published in the Sheridan Press on February 25, 2012. Center Stage is written by friends of the Senior Center for the Sheridan Community. It is a collection of insights and stories related to living well at every age.



LYNN GORDON

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SENIOR CENTER HAPPENINGS

• **Summer is a great time to explore and travel!** The Senior Center is offering some "big" trips this summer:

— Big Horn Basin Tour: Lovell/Kane, Heart Mt. Confinement Site, Red Canyon Wild Mustang tour and Cody. Tuesday - Thursday, June 28-30, 2016. \$375.00 per person. Cost includes two nights motel, admission fees, one lunch and transportation. Reservations and payment required by June 14. Details available at Sheridan Senior Center at 211 Smith St. or by calling Jean Harm at 672-2240.

— So fun we're offering it again! Take in the experience called the "Branson of North Dakota!" — the Medora Musical! July 25-27. Trip includes coach bus transportation, lodging at the luxurious Roughrider Hotel, a \$20 gift card to be used for shopping or dining in Medora, the Pitchfork Ribeye Fondue dinner, a tour of the Theodore Roosevelt National Park and the famous musical show. If you are registered with the Senior Center, bring a roommate and pay in full by June 6 the cost is \$620 per person. Rate available for single travelers, too. Details available at Sheridan Senior Center at 211 Smith St. or by calling Lois Bell at the center, 672-2240.