



LOCAL NEWS

Dennis McCarthy: Curiosity trumps age on this trek



Sarah Whelchel, 80, coming ashore in Kangamut, Greenland in the Arctic. (Courtesy)

By DENNIS MCCARTHY |

PUBLISHED: July 21, 2016 at 10:15 pm | UPDATED: August 28, 2017 at 6:15 am

Sometimes you get lucky and meet the most fascinating people in the most unlikely places.

I'm sitting on the pontoon of a Zodiac off Greenland in the Arctic last week, freezing my tush off and hanging on for dear life, when this sweet, little lady across from me offers a comforting smile.

"Another day, another adventure," says Sarah Whelchel, an 80-year-old retired school teacher coming down the homestretch of back-to-back-to-back Arctic expedition cruises with Adventure Canada.

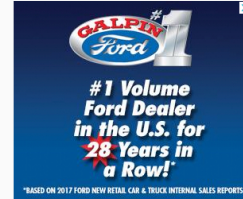
Three in a row. She'd go for a fourth if she didn't have to get home to Vito, her dog.

I don't know if you've ever been on one of these expedition cruises, but they can be pretty physically challenging, if you want. You're up early every day donning a life jacket and rubber boots after breakfast, and jumping into a Zodiac, a big rubber boat, in 40-degree weather to head off for a wet landing on another island for another adventure.

Visiting small Inuit communities and historical sites, hiking across mushy tundra and over rocky hills in remote areas, hoping to spot a polar bear, but not too close.

Sarah left her home outside Port Angeles, Washington on June 9 and won't return until Aug. 2. She'll do a little gardening for a few weeks then pull her small RV out of the garage to take a road trip camping along the coast with Vito.

"I just can't sit still," she says.



Get the latest news delivered daily!

SUBSCRIBE

Follow Us



SPONSORED CONTENT

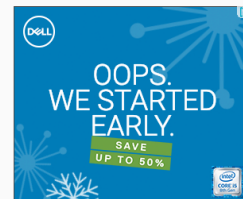


Transfer your debt to a card with 0% interest until 2020

By CompareCards

MOST POPULAR

- 1 VIDEO: Kayvon Thibodeaux picks Oregon live on ESPN – Daily News
- 2 5 impressions of the new version of Fleetwood Mac and its first concert at the Forum – Daily News
- 3 Lakers C JaVale McGee may not play vs. Hornets tonight – Daily News
- 4 NASA says it's ready for groundwater cleanup at shuttered Santa Susana Field Lab in Simi Valley – Daily News
- 5 Rams safety John Johnson has fulfilled teammate's preseason prophecy with stellar season – Daily News
- 6 Three suspects charged with murder of a teenage girl who was found dead in San Gabriel Mountains – Daily News
- 7 Be careful with Apple Watch's new electrocardiogram app, doctor warns – Daily News
- 8 Restaurants closed due to health hazards, Nov. 11 to Dec. 8, in the San Fernando Valley area – Daily News
- 9 Damage from Woolsey fire closes Leo Carrillo State Park, one of California's most popular campgrounds



Next to her in the Zodiac are Elizabeth Fleming, 90, and Mickey Thomas, 87. They can't sit still either.

grammarly

Fix Your Writing with AI.

Texting typos

Grammar mistakes

Punctuation errors

Get Grammarly. It's free.

I'm looking at 257 years of adventures life walking up the gangway to get back on the ship Ocean Endeavor, and wondering what makes these people tick?

Whatever it is, I want some.

"I don't have all the answers, but I think it's a matter of attitude and curiosity, as well as being fortunate enough to have the financial resources," Elizabeth says, over a glass of white wine in the lounge later.

She spent a career as an executive secretary in and out of government, and lives in Washington D.C. when she's not traveling the north looking for more Eskimo art to add to her collection.

"I had a hip replacement a few months ago, and when I told my doctor I was going off on another adventure, all he said was bring your cane."

Attitude and curiosity.

She's traveling with the group Road Scholars, formerly known as Elder Hostel until too many customers said they didn't necessarily like the elder part. So they became Road Scholars, and now the problem is too many other passengers on board are snubbing them.

"They think we're Rhoades Scholars and snooty," says Evan Price, who leads the group. "We have to tell them it's just a play on words.

"About half the 14 people in our group are retired school teachers. They've been promoting lifelong learning in their classrooms for decades, and now they're able to live it themselves.

"These Adventure Canada expedition cruises are great for the single traveler, who wants to be with like-minded people."

Waiting in the lounge by the window for the Zodiacs to return from another morning trip, Joyce McKusick, 86, talks about her boyfriend Mickey Thomas, 87.

He owns a department store – an old five & dime – in Osceola, Iowa, a few towns over from where Joyce, a retired physical education teacher, lives. They're high school friends who kept in touch over the years and finally hooked up at a small class reunion a few years ago after both their spouses died.

She gets around with the help of a walker, and hasn't been physically able to ride into shore on the Zodiacs, but Mickey gives her a first-hand account over dinner every night of what she missed.

"You're only as old as you feel, and Mickey and I don't feel our age," Joyce says, waving to her boyfriend as he disembarks the Zodiac after another day, another adventure.

"When we see something we like, like this trip, we just run for it."

Sometimes you meet the most fascinating people in the most unlikely places.

Dennis McCarthy's column runs on Friday. He can be reached at dmccarthynews@gmail.com.

Want local news?

Sign up for the Localist and stay informed

Enter your email to subscribe

SUBSCRIBE



Dennis McCarthy



SPONSORED CONTENT

10 spectacular cards for those with excellent credit

By CompareCards

comparecards

The banks are fighting harder than ever to win customers with excellent credit. Our credit card experts have...

0 Comments

a - Los Angeles Daily News (LDN)

Login

Recommend

Tweet

Share

Sort by Best

Start the discussion...

LOG IN WITH

OR SIGN UP WITH DISQUS

Name