

The Standard

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Moving memories

He has a new home filled with old memories.

Memories that offer comfort and familiarity in what is, for now, an unfamiliar place.

In June, Cyprien Castonguay left his little brick bungalow on Grosvenor Road in St. Catharines, the place he'd lived for nearly a quarter century, and moved into a retirement home.

In all ways, it was a transition. An emotional and physical process with no distinct beginning and end. Deciding what furniture would fit into his smaller space was only a small part of the transition.

It was about remembering the past. Closing one chapter of his life. And starting another.

He didn't do it alone.

He had the help from two women who have made it their passion to support seniors in the transition from one home to another.

Nancy Campbell and Gay Douglas launched their business, ONESource Moving Solutions for Seniors, this spring. They are senior move managers, specially trained in helping older adults through all the physical and emotional aspects of moving.

They do whatever is required. For some, it might mean simply sorting through a basement. For others, it means handling all the details of relocating, including the organization of a lifetime of memories.

On a sunny morning in August, Castonguay stands inside his new home at The Heatherwood on Scott Street, and talks about that transition.

He looks at the painting on the wall just above his living room sofa. The waves breaking over a rocks could be anywhere. England. The Maritimes. "It reminds me of all the places I've been with my wife," he says.

Florence was her name. They were married in Montreal in 1947. "For 53 years, she had to put up with me," he tells people with a laugh.

Castonguay is 86 now. A man who enjoys telling everyone that he's 68. Many believe him.

He's healthy. Active. Still drives a car.

His friends call him Cas for short. He's a French Canadian boy who grew up in the Quebec Laurentians and served in the air force during the Second World War as a wireless operator. He met Florence, an English girl, overseas. After the war, she joined him in Montreal and they had three children.

They later moved to St. Catharines because he didn't like Quebec politics at the time. Home became the little bungalow.

Florence collected owls. Seems everywhere they travelled around the world, she'd find an owl to buy.

In Venice, she noticed a man making a small owl figurine out of pretty blue glass. She was so impressed, she asked him to make her an entire family.

Another time they were walking by Birks in the Pen Centre. She spotted a tiny crystal owl. "Oh Cas, I want that," she sighed. He bought it.

In the basement, Cas built a model train display that pretty much consumed one room. There were villages. Mountains. Logging camps. He'd get behind the controls and ride the rails from Windsor to Montreal.

Florence died eight years ago. Cas stayed in the little bungalow. He liked it there. He had his train set. Favourite recliner. Desk with adding machine. Everything he needed.

"I learned how to talk to the walls," he says, laughing.

But last year, the little house started to seem too big.

Maintenance was an issue. "I was fed up with having to look after a big house." And all he seemed to make for himself were tomato sandwiches.

He thought about moving.

In fact, he thought about it for a year.

It was only when he read about

Campbell and Douglas that he decided to make the move.

They supported him through everything, and what they couldn't do themselves, found help for him using a list of people they've grown to trust.

Campbell booked a moving company and arranged to have packing boxes dropped off at his house. She drew up a floor plan for his new space, so they knew what would fit. They handled all the change-of-address phone calls and forms.

Costs start at about \$1,000, but vary depending on the amount of work required. They meet the senior for a free consultation, discuss what's needed and draw up a quote that itemizes services and costs.

Leaving the family home -- a place filled with memories of children, celebrations and sorrows -- can be heartwrenching, says Kim Cairns, lifestyle director at The Heatherwood.

A house is filled with memories. Life events. It's a place of safety and comfort. Often, it's something the generation before them never had and something they worked all their lives to own.

They worry about meeting new people and making new friends.

"When I get to my next address, will I feel as safe and cared about?" she says.

"It's a scary feeling."

They may be moving after the death of a spouse. They may have trouble accepting the reality that their children, whom they had silently hoped would take them into their homes and care for them, don't have the desire or time, Cairns says.

In fact, most children don't really want to be part of the physical move -- the deciding what stays and goes, the packing, the moving. "Every time the older person picks up a piece of history to pack, there's a story," she says.

They could spend hours reminiscing, when the children simply don't have the time. Plus, it might be too emotional for them as well.

"The kids prefer to be here to celebrate the new part of the journey."

So, if there's a detached, neutral person helping, it can make for a smoother transition.

Campbell and Douglas did pretty much everything for Cas.

They booked a mover and had packing boxes delivered to the house. They booked someone to clean the house when it was empty, to get it ready to be listed for sale.

And they helped Cas sort through all those memories. Closet by closet. Room by room. They organized everything into keep, sell, toss or donate piles. And they drew up a floor plan for his new space, so they knew how much he could bring.

Campbell put a lot of his '50s-style furniture on the community classified website, Kijiji. Buyers came to his home only while she was there. They sold things like his red velvet sofa and chair, and dining room set.

"What you think is impossible, to her is possible," says Cas.

After everything was sorted, they held a garage sale. Some neighbourhood children bought many of Florence's little owls. That made Cas happy.

His train set was more challenging. In the end, Campbell enlisted the help of a trusted friend who had someone carefully dismantle the room and will put the set up for auction.

In some cases, they have photographed a senior's kitchen countertop, living room or desktop so they can recreate it in their new place as close a possible to the way it was in their previous home.

Says Douglas: "Many people will want to find their teapot in the right place."

Often seniors hesitate to move because the process seems to overwhelming, says Campbell.

"They can't fathom how it would happen."

The pair try to help keep the focus on where the senior is going and what things are most important.

"We try to move the heart of the home," says Campbell.

For more information on ONESource Moving Solutions for Seniors, visit www.onesourceforseniors.ca or call Nancy Campbell at 905- 988-8271 or Gay Douglas at 905-321-6664.

Help available for seniors on the move

By Dale Quinn

Arizona Daily Star

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With her cash dwindling, Scottie Bidegain decided it was time to sell her home of 31 years.

"I cried for a week because I really didn't want to sell it, I had to sell it," said Bidegain, 82. "It just broke my heart. I lived there longer than I lived anywhere else."

She put it on the market expecting it to stay there several months. It sold in four days.

Suddenly, she had to clear out of a house packed with three decades of memories. Bidegain's situation is common to many seniors who face difficult decisions as physical, mental and financial limitations make keeping their home impossible.

With this in mind, Tucsonans Cat Belue, 46, and Jenny Bergdoll, 33, decided to tailor their business venture, which they launched in February 2008, toward helping seniors in just that position.



Cat Belue and Jenny Bergdoll help Dottie Stabler, 89, move from one room to another at Friendship Villas at La Cholla, an assisted-living facility on North La Cholla Boulevard. Belue and Bergdoll operate Cupboard to Closet, a business that helps senior citizens who are making transitions in living arrangements.

Belue and Bergdoll, the co-owners of Cupboard to Closet, said they can act as a neutral party as seniors pare down their belongings to make the move into an assisted-living facility or to prepare for in-home care. Family members can have emotional attachments that complicate decisions about donating or dividing up those possessions.

The business owners emphasized that listening to clients and family members is crucial to ensuring everyone is comfortable with all decisions that get made. As is sensitivity to their privacy. "We're going through and touching their belongings and memories," Bergdoll said.

Suzy Bourque, a caregiver specialist with the Pima Council on Aging nonprofit service agency, said companies like Cupboard to Closet can provide a valuable service when a senior is making the transition to assisted living or in-home care.

She advises any senior or their family members to do homework on a moving company before hiring it and to check with the Better Business Bureau. Cupboard to Closet is a BBB-accredited business.

Often, an assisted-living facility can recommend movers with whom it has had a successful relationship, Bourque said.

Along with the emotional hurdles of transitioning to a care home, dealing with material possessions can be an added strain.

"One of the huge challenges for most people is making decisions about what they can take with them and saying goodbye to stuff they've accumulated over a lifetime," Bourque said.

Belue and Bergdoll launched their company after a friend of theirs lost a loved one. They started it as a business that would help a family collect and distribute belongings after a death.

Often when a person dies in an assisted-living facility, grief-stricken relatives must quickly go through their loved one's belongings, they said.

Belue has a degree in nursing and was a registered nurse in Alabama. She also worked as a design consultant. Bergdoll's background is in accounting and business management.

A few months into the new business, they decided to refocus it and to help seniors trim down their belongings during moves in the later stages of life.

That can mean invoicing most of a person's belongings, deciding what goes to family members, what gets donated, what stays with a senior and, sometimes, what gets put into storage.

Belue and Bergdoll also help seniors prepare their homes for in-home assistance, clearing out clutter and making sure there's room for a wheelchair or a gurney. Basically, they said, they make sure there are no safety hazards that could pose a threat to a live-in caregiver.

Sometimes they'll help a resident in an assisted-living home move from one suite into another.

Such was the case Thursday when the women helped 89-year-old Dottie Stabler move her belongings from one room to another at Friendship Villas at La Cholla, an assisted-living community at 6505 N. La Cholla Blvd.

Stabler said Friendship Villas staffers recommended Cupboard to Closet for a previous move she made within the community, and she was happy with the results.

"They are perfectionists," Stabler said.

Beth Montgomery, a registered nurse and director of administration at Friendship Villas, said Cupboard to Closet is helpful for seniors with adult children who live in different areas who might not be able to help make the move.

"It's less work and hassle on the family because it's a very big adjustment," Montgomery said.

Montgomery couldn't think of any other local companies that offer services just like Cupboard to Closet.

Belue and Bergdoll suggest that even if seniors don't consult them when making transitions, they should consider what types of care options will work for them before an accident or other incident occurs that could make such a decision imminent.

Bourque, the Pima Council on Aging caregiver specialist, agrees. It's important for seniors to know what kind of care they might want and options available to them, she said.

Many people have old-fashioned views about assisted-living communities and don't realize seniors can have greater independence living in one of them than they would living alone, Bourque said.

In the later stages of a person's life, their home — once the symbol of attaining the American dream — can isolate the senior from the outside world, said Valerie Boatner, an elder-care coordinator in Tucson with the firm Morris, Hall and Kinghorn, which specializes in estate law.

Bidegain, who sold her home of 31 years, said the transition has been tough. She moved from the six-room house where her grandchildren played to a much smaller residence.

The holidays, she said, will be especially hard because her family traditionally gathered at her house, and there won't be enough space at her new home.

Bidegain said having someone help with the move was crucial for her. She uses a wheelchair to get around and wouldn't have had the energy to go through a life's worth of belongings before leaving her home on the northwest side.

Belue and Bergdoll went through each room and Bidegain indicated whether she wanted to keep or get rid of all her belongings.

"I cannot imagine how broken up I would have been if I had to do that myself," she said.

Deseret News

Moving on: Senior citizens and their families face tough choices

By Jennie Nicholls
July 26, 2009

It's never easy to move, even under the best of circumstances. But for senior citizens struggling to keep their independence, moving out of their longtime residences can be a huge adjustment, especially if they don't want to leave.

So how do you determine when it's time for mom or dad to move? "The leading sign for moving mom and dad is an unnecessary fall," said Ken Venables, public relations coordinator for Salt Lake County Aging Services. "Intervene before it becomes a bad fall. Falling is the leading cause of losing independence."

For those looking into safe, senior housing, multiple options are available. There are senior-friendly living communities that provide ground-level apartments?— with no stairs. Or there are assisted-living facilities with professional care to meet the personal needs of each resident.

Skilled nursing homes are also viable options. Transferring loved ones into independent, senior-friendly homes first is ideal, said Chantelle Knudson, spokeswoman for Highland Retirement Living in Salt Lake City. Then, if necessary, make the move to assisted care.

When considering care, Knudson said it is important for family members to ask themselves this question: "Is their quality of life going downhill in one form or another?" Highland Cove Retirement Community resident Addi Yo Soy, 77, moved into one of the

facility's independent apartments about a month ago. Yo Soy's daughter, Lore Acevedo, said she noticed her mother was losing her capacity to care for herself. "She needed more care than I could give her," said Acevedo. She recognized her mother was having



memory lapses and knew moving her would be the best option at that point.

Carol Kostic, a family friend of Acevedo and Yo Soy, said it's easier to make the first move to a senior-friendly facility, which will allow for an easier transition later on if more care becomes necessary. "It's so important to not wait until it's a 'have-to,'" said Kostic. After looking at eight locations, Acevedo and Yo Soy decided on Highland Cove because of its gardenlike surroundings and social opportunities.

For those looking to move a parent, Acevedo suggests listening to the needs and wants of the parent when choosing a housing facility. "We understand this journey is a difficult one, but we want her to feel respected in the process," said Acevedo. Aside from personal preference, the level of care a parent requires must be factored when choosing a new home.

Ginny Echevarria, Highland Cove's director of marketing, said that there are three levels to consider. Level one includes independent seniors who may choose to downsize and move to a senior-friendly community. Some senior citizens can choose independent housing even if they require medical care, depending on the health care the facilities provide. Or they can hire home medical help.

The second level of care is assisted living, with senior citizens in this group falling into two categories depending on their mobility. The first group includes those who can recognize danger and remove themselves from it without help as well as get out of chairs and use the restroom unassisted.

The second group includes those who need assistance to get around.

If more than one person is required to move the senior citizen, a skilled nursing facility would better fit their needs — the third level of senior living options. Serious medical needs and those with limited mobility are more likely candidates for skilled nursing facilities.

After selecting the appropriate level of care, the moving process can begin. However, moving a lifetime of possessions can be a daunting task.

Acevedo said the hardest part of moving her mother was letting go of things that were no longer useful. "I learned to not resist. I think I resisted most my life," Yo Soy said about the moving process.

Professional movers, specialized in orchestrating senior moves, can simplify the process. Across the country, movers are beginning to tap into this growing market, with some offering complete packing, moving and unpacking services.

Professional organizer Cheryl Chandler of TAOrganize is just getting her feet wet in the senior-moving industry.

"There is a bigger and bigger need for help for these seniors to move and downsize," she said.

Chandler is in the process of orchestrating her first senior move. Chandler is the only mover in Utah certified by the National Association of Senior Move Managers, according to the NASMM Web site. "The training is basic. You get an understanding of why people hang onto things," Chandler said. "Every situation is so different. It is so personal."

Chandler said she'd advise someone preparing to move a senior that they should focus "on downsizing and de-cluttering to decide what to take to the new location and make the best use of space." Senior move managers can come in handy during the de-cluttering process because of their outside perspective. "It can be an overwhelming task to take on," Chandler said. "Coming in as an outside person, not attached and not in the family dynamic, I can serve as a safe, neutral mediator."