

The 16 Commandments of Growing Old

- #1 - Talk to yourself, because there are times you need expert advice.

#2 - Consider "In Style" to be the clothes that still fit.

#3 - You don't need anger management. You need people to stop pissing you off.

#4 - Your people skills are just fine. It's your tolerance for idiots that needs work.

#5 - The biggest lie you tell yourself is, "I don't need to write that down. I'll remember it."

#6 - You have days when your life is just one tent away from a circus.

#7 - These days, "on time" is when you get there.

#8 - Even duct tape can't fix stupid - but it sure does muffle the sound.
- #9 - Wouldn't it be wonderful if we could put ourselves in the dryer for ten minutes, then come out wrinkle-free and three sizes smaller?

#10 - Lately, you've noticed people your age are so much older than you.

#11 - "Getting lucky" means walking into a room and remembering why you're there.

#12 - When you were a child, you thought nap time was punishment. Now it feels like a mini vacation.

#13 - Some days you have no idea what you're doing out of bed.

#14 - You thought growing old would take longer.

#15 - Aging sure has slowed you down, but it hasn't shut you up.

#16 - You still haven't learned to act your age, and with luck you never will.

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**PHILOSOPHY**  
IS LIKE BEING IN A DARK ROOM  
AND LOOKING FOR A BLACK CAT

**METAPHYSICS**  
IS LIKE BEING IN A DARK ROOM AND  
LOOKING FOR A BLACK CAT THAT ISN'T THERE

**THEOLOGY**  
IS LIKE BEING IN A DARK ROOM AND  
LOOKING FOR A BLACK CAT THAT ISN'T THERE  
AND SHOUTING I FOUND IT!

**SCIENCE**  
IS LIKE BEING IN A DARK ROOM AND  
LOOKING FOR A BLACK CAT USING A FLASHLIGHT



**Take the Shuttle!**

For those arriving to the Gilbert's party fashionably late, you can park on the main access road and take the FREE air-conditioned shuttle to and from Gilbert's on Saturdays and Sundays from noon-8pm.

Conch Artist Spotlight On...

Rita Szopinski:  
Every Picture Tells a Story

by Marilee Free



Rita Szopinski paints watercolor likenesses with heart and soul. With her intense color and robust story behind every creation, it's not surprising she has won coveted awards from the Florida, Miami, and Gold Coast Watercolor Societies. Her spirit shines in her expression of people, nature scenes and real-life images of Keys scenes and pictures taken while traveling. I thought one must be a photograph, it was a watercolor of Park Ranger Shep. He's climbing to retrieve a flag torn from the 'Spirit of Pennecamp' glass bottom boat, that had blown into a tree with salt-sprayed, broken, branches, barren of leaves after Hurricane Irma. It grabbed me, I stopped, and admired the bravery portrayed. Resilience in a time where the Keys might have taken a tough blow, but the determination to rebuild shined through. #Keysstrong

With her new-found passion for painting Rita discovered in 2007, she used the expression of watercolors to stay strong and beat the obstacles in life. Through her hard work and dedication, she was named the President of the Florida Watercolor Society in 2017. Currently, she is Communications Director for FWS and helps



Rita and her husband, Ranger Dan.

to organize the Annual Art Convention. She sends email blasts and prepares the quarterly newsletters. I perused a FWS art catalog, very impressive, beginning with a quote from Vincent Van Gogh, "I Dream of Painting" on the front leaflet, "and I Paint My Dream," on the back. The art between those pages was full of color, imagination and brilliance. The Florida Watercolor Society's annual event for 2020 is in St. Petersburg. For more details go to [floridawatercolorsociety.org](http://floridawatercolorsociety.org).

BJ Royster and Rita are teaming up to paint sea creatures on a mural that can be seen at John Pennecamp



State Park. She displays some of her masterpieces at the Coconut Grove Art Gallery.

Dearborn, Michigan is where Rita grew up. Her father was in the auto industry. We share an admiration for Henry Ford. After she graduated, she began working at Detroit Metro Airport in ground service (she's tough, brrrr!) and customer service. Opting for warmer winters, she moved to Miami in 1981, and later to Ft. Lauderdale. She met her husband, Dan in the airport industry. They have lived in the Keys for over four years. Rita is a most recently a retired dental hygienist.

This September is Rita and Dan's 39th wedding anniversary. Cheers to your love and dedication! Ranger Dan is a featured musician at the Legion 333's Thursday Jam Night. He protects and patrols the parks by day, and we thank him. Their two grown sons are living in the Los Angeles area. The youngest, Alex, got Dan's musical gene and Rita's eye

for art. He is a 3D Environmental Artist in the gaming and movie industries and paints with acrylics. Their eldest, Sean, is the rocket scientist with a degree in Aerospace. He is a lead game designer at a top gaming company. With his wife, Erin, and their 4-year old son, James, they keep Rita and Dan busy traveling to the west coast often to visit their family.



Spirit of Pennecamp

Some of Rita's natural ability to paint stems from her uncle, a professional artist. But her true-life changing inspiration came when she was diagnosed with breast cancer in 2006. She credits Gene Wilder for creating Gilda's Club, a worldwide support group with a center in South Florida. Gene created cancer awareness and support centers in memory of Gilda Radner's fight with cancer. Gilda's Club offers support to anyone whose life cancer affects. Rita's therapy was painting, and with her paintbrush, the support from a loving husband, family, friends, her doctors, and Gilda's Club, she is a survivor.