The QUINTESSENTIAL GENTLEMAN'S GUIDE to Assisted Living

PART 3

It was difficult remembering conversations from weeks or months past, but when the marketing packets, brochures and whirligigs started filling my mailbox it all came back. So many pictures of bouncy joyful seniors holding newspapers and laughing over coffee. If everyone at a senior living community was excited about walking down a side walk or a plastic flower arrangement, I wanted in.

We arranged a plethora of visits to various facilities, communities, condos, neighborhoods, pods, fortresses, or the like. You know, pop, cola, soda, coke, pretty much the same thing. I feel like the term "community" covers just about any setting, but I found myself waiting until the tour guide made a self-reference, then simply mimicked their vernacular. Don't take offense if I say retirement community when I really mean Assisted Living. I didn't take offense when I read that the 2-bedroom apartments were spacious, when in fact, my plants needed more room than what was afforded in some of these nooks.

I'll admit it... I WAS NERVOUS

during the first several tours.

Stepping foot in each community felt very committal, even though I repeatedly told myself we don't HAVE to do anything we don't want. Accompanied by a deluge of disobedient emotions, we ventured into this new chapter.

During our explorations we were influenced by inviting aromas, similar to Christmas morning's past, and conversely, a few odors so disingenuous we didn't speak about.

Cleanliness was easy to spot, pun intended. Unfortunately, imperfections tend to occupy my attention, shoving the niceties to the peripheral. **If not for multiple tours, I'd never realize the careful thought and vision behind some of the design decisions.** The choice and placement of lighting, the particular patterns, colors and movement of wall coverings, carpet, furniture and subtle decor. Clearly these communities weren't pieced together from discount remnants.

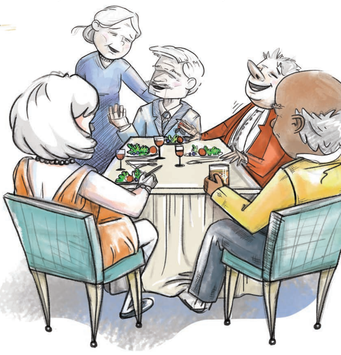
I DIDN'T TAKE OFFENSE WHEN I READ THAT THE 2-BEDROOM APARTMENTS WERE SPACIOUS,

Managing eccentric personalities must be an intrinsic superpower for Advisors, **negotiating rational thoughts with salty men** and their unwavering need for control. I speak from experience. It's not my grilling prowess where I earned my nickname Dr. Seasoning. Most Advisors were polite and informative, answering questions I hadn't thought of, not only about the community, but of our journey. It helped me to envision our lives in a new setting. Payments, rules, boundaries, legal stuff, fun stuff, new stuff, boring stuff, it was all explained.

I prefer a conversation to reading the verbiage and legalese in paragraph XLVIII.

We took particularly good notes on dining, as **having friends and family over for dinner is a favorite of ours.**

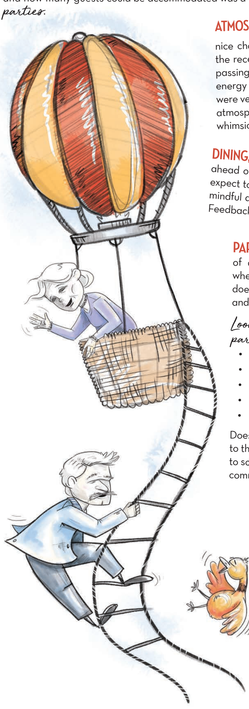
We devoured an exceptional signature dish, gnawed through rubbery chicken, complimented a chef or two and ignored others. It was a good experience, though one meal does not tell the entire story.



Investigate

- *daily menus*
- *specials*
- *off-menu options*
- *pricing*
- *delivery options*
- *staff*
- *and even the chef.*

Attentiveness of staff, overall satisfaction of the Members and presentation was a focus. Ask questions specific to your needs and preferences, whether it's a dietary requirement, food allergy or intolerance. Food variety, how often and how many guests could be accommodated was a bullet point *cause we like them dinner parties.*



ATMOSPHERE: The atmosphere is more than a nice chandelier and upscale tile. It is everything from the receptionist's demeanor, to the smiles shared from passing members. The music in the background and energy exuding from the community. Some communities were very similar in looks and dress, but very different in atmosphere. I refer to it as tangible glee. It's contagious, whimsical and honest.

DINING, REAL DINING: Not what is prepared ahead of time for your special tour, but what you can expect to experience daily. Attentive & friendly servers, mindful and skilled chefs. Options and choice are key. Feedback is available to be provided.

PARTICIPATION & ACTIVITIES: The presence of active happy members. Living in a community where everyone stays in their homes like hermits doesn't give you the opportunity to meet new friends and neighbors.

Look for communities with active participation in

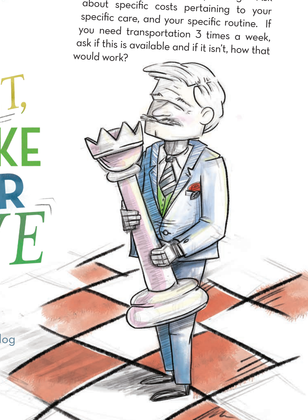
- *social events*
- *clubs*
- *hobbies*
- *trips*
- *conversations.*

Does someone coordinate the events or is it left to the Members? Having a full-time social director to schedule out activities can ensure that the community is active and continually trying out new

CALENDARS & EVENTS: Is it the same every day, every month? How creative is it and does it make sense? I can't go mountain biking so if I see hiking and rope climbing as Monday's activities, I know something is wrong. There should be events for all skill levels and abilities.

COSTS: Pricing can be a blurry area, and trusted guidance is the key. **All-Inclusive doesn't always mean everything is included.** I've seen the term used very very loosely and blatantly wrong. Ask about specific costs pertaining to your specific care, and your specific routine. If you need transportation 3 times a week, ask if this is available and if it isn't, how that would work?

The BOARD IS SET, ...MAKE YOUR MOVE



Senior-Living-Communities.com/Blog

Part 4 Coming Soon