



# News and Views

*A publication of the Resident Council at Avila Retirement Community*

*Albany, NY*

*January 2022*

## *SO MANY NEW FACES\**

*By Patricia J. Binzer*

*We walk around smiling  
ready to give a warm greeting,  
not really sure who's  
the stranger we're meeting.*

*It's really okay  
to ask folks for their name.  
Then give them yours,  
make it kind of a game.*

*How long have you lived here?  
Is the usual question we ask.  
Then we start conversations  
right through our mask.*

*You may be reminded  
As you face someone new  
that not long ago  
that person was you.*

*What made you feel welcome  
when you came here to stay?  
Did you feel strange and alone  
on your very first day?*

*Now it's your turn, help someone new  
get to know more about Avila,  
and get to know you.*

*Invite them to dinner,  
or give them a call  
You may need to remind them,  
you met in the hall.*

*Keep track of the move-ins.  
Get their names, where they live.  
Are they eastside or westside,  
and do they play bridge?*

*They could be new to a cottage  
or a Lodge resident now.  
You know they'll fit in.  
We all do somehow.*

*So let's welcome new faces.  
We're so glad that they're here.  
They'll be the "old guard"  
by this time next year.*

*Join us in friendship,  
it won't take very long.  
After a few months  
they'll know they belong.*

*Now it's our turn, help someone new  
get to know more about Avila,  
as we welcome them too.*

---

*\*Read to the cadence of  
"Twas the Night Before Christmas"*

## MEET OUR NEW NEIGHBORS

### VIRGINIA DICKENSHEID

By Ray and Erin Teichman



*Photo courtesy of Avila Admin. staff*

Virginia, known as Ginny, was born in Rye, NY, where she grew up with three sisters. A graduate of Rye HS, Ginny was active in the school newspaper, other clubs and sports and developed a love of poetry. After graduation she worked as an administrative assistant at AT&T.

Ginny met her husband, Al, through mutual friends. They were married 51 years. He was a graduate of Boston College, a WW II Navy veteran, and a graduate of Harvard Business School. Al worked in business administration in the oil and gas industry. They both played golf and tennis; and Al played duplicate bridge. In 1974 the family was transferred to Tulsa, OK.

When they moved, their daughter, Diane, was entering high school which enabled Ginny to pursue more interests outside the home. She was already an avid tennis player and volunteered at the local hospital. As long-time season ticket holders of the New York football Giants, Ginny and Al also travelled to watch the team play whenever they were "near" Tulsa; Kansas City, St. Louis, Dallas; and attended two of their Super Bowl wins in Pasadena and Tampa.

Ginny loved to travel with Al; together they visited almost every U.S. state and many Canadian provinces. They travelled to several European countries and enjoyed a Viking river cruise on the Rhine, Main and Danube rivers. One memorable trip was to France, Austria and Germany with their daughter during her junior year abroad in Paris.

In 1988 she and Al moved to Sarasota, FL. There they continued their volunteer work with the Knights of Columbus as well as a local food bank. Al continued playing duplicate bridge; both continued to play golf and tennis and travel for many happy years. Al passed away in 2009. Although Ginny loves the warm Florida climate, her daughter lives and works in New York. They were looking for a place where Ginny would be closer to Diane. Happily, Diane found Avila. After Ginny visited a few times and experienced the warm, outgoing and friendly residents and staff at Avila, she decided to make the move. She moved here in mid-September, 2021 and is so happy she did. We welcome Ginny to her return to New York.

### ELIZABETH "Beth" FLANAGAN

By Karl Gohlke

Beth Flanagan moved into the Lodge last November, shortly after her husband, John, had died. He had been ill for some time, and she had been his primary caregiver. She had served as a caregiver earlier in her life when her father had become ill.

A native of Watertown, NY, she moved with her family to McKownville when she was twelve. After she graduated from Vincentian Institute, she met John, married, and started her family. John worked as a lineman for Niagara Mohawk and was a "car guy," an avid fan of car racing and other features of cars. She was involved in her community and family activities.

In 1980, she went to work as a bookkeeper for DePaul Housing and continued until 2000 when she retired. According to Beth, DePaul was responsible for only one senior housing unit when she started there.

Beth and her husband moved to South Carolina following her retirement and settled in Hilton Head. They enjoyed the area and still have their home. One of her sons lives in that area. Another son lives in Troy, and a third lives in Connecticut. Her daughter lives and works in the Guilderland area. Beth has seven grandchildren.

Beth engages easily and is comfortable with social activities and others. She has adjusted quickly to the Avila lifestyle and should become involved in many of Avila's programs and activities. She has interests in genealogy and sewing.



*Photograph by Karl Gohlke*

## MARGE GRIFFITH

By Pat Binzer



*Photograph by Patricia Binzer*

Marge Griffith introduced herself as a retired elementary school teacher from the Middleburgh Central School District. She taught mostly second and third grade. When assigned to a kindergarten class she was so delighted she wondered why she should even be paid since it was such fun. Her husband, Don, was a physical education teacher and high school coach in the same school district.

Marge and Don made the most of their teaching vacations, traveling all over the country and the world. They took their two sons, Bill and David, with them on these summer trips. They made a game out of making sure they visited the state capitals. By the time they finished traveling they had gone to all 50 states and visited 49 capitals. The only capital they missed was Olympia, WA. They also traveled to 57 different countries.

Marge and Don were committed to the Rotary Exchange Student program and enjoyed having students from the Philippines, Bolivia, Denmark, and Brazil in their homes. This not only enriched their own lives but also the lives of their sons

Each time they went somewhere they ended up having a unique experience. They went to Bolivia on a Road Scholar program and were able to connect with one of their Rotary Exchange students and visit his family. They were taken to the salt flats in Bolivia which was so different from anything they had ever seen. They worked with children in some of these South American countries.

Marge also spent time as a quilter, then moved on to rug hooking. She also likes embroidery, crocheting, and all forms of needlework. She isn't sure if she's going to continue doing more of this at Avila, but she certainly has a collection of all her accomplishments.

Marge sang with the Schoharie County choir, which put on a program at Christmastime and then again in the spring. One year she went to Pennsylvania to the Fred Waring camp and was able to practice singing with the Fred Waring choir. It was a highlight of one of her singing performances. She would love to have a singing group started here at Avila. She admits that she's not as good as she once was but singing for fun is still a wonderful thing to do.

Marge and her husband Don lived in their house in Cobleskill for 53 years while they were teaching in Middleburg, bringing their 100-year-old house and the gardens back to life. She leaves it with fond memories. Her husband became ill in 2021 and passed away at the end of September, which prompted Marge to decide it was time to leave. With the help of her son Bill, and friends, they found Avila.

Marge wanted something that was in a ready to move into condition. Michelle remembered there was a perfect apartment for her on the 4th floor set and ready and that's exactly where she moved in. Now she's ready to start her new life here at Avila.

## REV. JAMES KANE

By Karl Gohlke

The Reverend James Kane arrived at Avila on October 15; the date recognized for the Feast of St. Teresa of Avila. He claims it was an unintended coincidence. He had planned for some time to move to Avila as he wanted to support its charitable purpose and join colleagues and friends who were already residents.

Father Kane is a native of Buffalo. He received most of his formal religious education and training at the former Our Lady of Angels seminary in Glenmont where he completed his graduate degrees in theology and divinity. He was ordained and commenced his ministry in the Ogdensburg diocese. In 1976, he transferred to the Albany diocese where he has served as pastor and other leadership positions in parishes and in diocesan administrative specialties. He has been the director of the Office of Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs since 1982, 40 of the 50 years while serving as a parish priest. His work with individuals, groups, and organizations of different religious orientation has taken him to innumerable state, national and international locations. His contributions have been recognized and he has been the recipient of numerous awards for his service and leadership.

Father Kane's interest in interreligious affairs became apparent early in his ministry. He co-founded the Saranac Lake Ecumenical Council shortly after his ordination. Over the years his ability to work with people who hold often major disagreements regarding faith-based beliefs and other cultural mores and practices is note-worthy.

He has assimilated easily into the Avila community and has become involved in a number of Avila's activities. He engages easily and should provide enrichment to the Avila community. His sense of humor is one of his many assets.



*Photograph by Karl Gohlke*

## MILDRED KOESTER

By Rod Correll



*Photo courtesy of Avila Admin. staff*

Mildred "Millie" Koester is one of several new residents at the Lodge. She moved here in late November from a home located in Glen Rock, NJ. Millie was born and grew up in western Pennsylvania. She graduated from Margaret Morrison College at the Carnegie Institute of Technology in 1952 and, a year later, married and moved to Rochester, NY. She and her husband Charles lived there until he finished his PhD at the University of Rochester. Following his graduation, the couple moved to New York City, where Charles became a professor at Columbia University. Besides teaching, Charles engaged in ophthalmological research and, in the process, inventing and perfecting the laser technology that is used today in cataract surgery. Meanwhile, until all their children were of school age, Millie was happily engaged in being a fulltime mom. With that goal realized, she began a long and successful career in 1967 as a hospital administrator at Columbia Presbyterian Hospital.

Millie is the mother of four children: Jeff, who lives in nearby Scotia; Nancy who resides not far away in Warwick, NY; Jim who is about one-and-a-half hours away in Elizaville, NY; and David, who lives in Paris, France. She has five grandchildren, Erin, Jared, Alex, Michael and Nicolas and feels lucky that she will be able, here at Avila, to see and be with many members of her family.

Millie has a variety of interests, many of which she hopes to pursue in her new surroundings. She is an avid bridge player and has maintained an online game with dear friends for years. She looks forward to playing bridge here as well, both contract and duplicate. Millie also enjoys playing card games like cribbage and Play 9, and word games like Quiddler and Scrabble. She would also be interested in taking painting classes and in meeting residents who might share this or one of her other interests.

## GORDON AND YVONNE SIMPSON

By Wilbur Shapiro

The Simpsons graced the halls of Avila on October 1, 2021. The word that describes their careers best is education. Not necessarily their own but what they disseminate to others. Gordon graduated from SUNY and became a full professor at SUNY Albany and SUNY Cobleskill. His subject matter was business administration. He formulated the challenging task of online instruction, enabling many to obtain a college education which otherwise would be denied. Gordon was also involved with the NYS Department of Corrections prisoner education program, with the aim of making constructive citizens out of criminals when they returned to society. Gordon traveled to Brazil and Germany to discuss and teach international business.



*Photograph by Karl Gohlke*

Yvonne was the assistant business manager of a local school. After 24 years Yvonne moved to Christian Brothers Academy to work in the guidance area. She grew up in Brooklyn and attended the Chandler School for Girls, a private girl's school.

The Simpsons have two daughters, Sharon and Lisa. Sharon is a real estate agent in Albany and a successful sales consultant. Lisa works at NYS Higher Education. The Simpsons are immensely proud of their grandson Tyler. Tyler attended Sienna College and received an MBA from the College of St. Rose. He works for Stewart's Corporation as a commercial real estate development manager.

The Simpsons bring with them a wealth of knowledge and are welcome additions to the Avila community.

## FOCUS FEATURE: AVILA'S FINE STAFF

*A huge thank you to Dining Services for their return to meal delivery for all residents during this current Covid closing of our dining rooms.*

*Erin Teichman*

*"Last week I misplaced a diamond ring. Esther Ford found it under a cabinet in the kitchen and returned it to us. We are very grateful for her honesty and thoughtfulness."*

*Mary Ellen Bendick (November 22, 2021)*

*"Ann Coyle is one of those exceptional staff who is always responsive to your needs and is able to perform many roles in the administration support team to keep the operation running smoothly."*

*Karl Gohlke*

*At the January general meeting of the Resident Council, several residents praised the maintenance staff for getting the ice off residents' cars following the icy weekend. They performed a great job under difficult conditions.*



*This fine fellow was strutting his stuff outside our photographer's window. Fred just had to take this picture.*

*Photograph by Fred Seltzer*

## BLOOPERS

By Don Stauffer

As a professor of literature, I have read literally thousands of student papers, and occasionally—occasionally—I find what we in the profession call bloopers. Here are a few specimens gleaned from my files:

- Robinson is the transitory poet between two centuries.
- The father of naturalism is Emile Zola and the novel Madame Baudelaire stands at the head of the naturistic movement.
- Salinger does not go to the boring bibliographic techniques of Dreiser or Farrell.
- Novels are concerned mainly with violence or sex, both of which are morally indecent.
- Man cannot exist on strict morality and lawfulness alone.
- As the assigned quote stands, I ascertain it to have been written by a person of low intellect, and should not even have appeared in print.
- The average citizen has been plummeted with tales of hate, fear and murder.
- We can transgress the mundane and experience the extraordinary.
- A murder on the television may abhor people.
- The majority of the people in the world are average.
- She [Isabel] is a prisoner in the dark despairing House of Fiction.
- The character portrayals of Hester, Dimmesdale and Chippendale of The Scarlet Letter.
- Sibelius truly loved his homeland of Denmark and I believe describes it in Finlandia.
- Socrates held a theory that death is the sole released from the body.
- Another point of confusion for Socrates was concerning the migration of the sole.
- Socrates did not even consider Hell because he had remained a true Christian throughout his life.
- Dante's bitterness against the Roman Catholic church—because he was an Anglican.
- The Greek stage was surrounded by tears that went around in a semicircle.
- In the play Oedipus Rex King Oedipus is met with a terrible disaster. That of losing his wife and mother and that of gorging out his own sight.
- Marginal note in student's copy of The Canterbury Tales:
  - Wife's heresys
    - 1. Wife should wear pants
    - 2. Better to be married than to be chased
- An Epic is a long Arabic poem.
- Personalities are like teeth, everybody has one.
- Adolescents are halfway between childhood and adultery. [true!]
- Although the writers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were colorful, truly effective writing did not come into existence until after World War II.
- "The Man Who Visited Hapsburg" [by Mark Twain]

## WHALERS ON THE HUDSON

By Steve Rotter

In 1690, some people on Nantucket Island began expeditions in small boats to pursue the "right whale," so called because they were of moderate size, slow moving, easy to catch and passed close to shore on annual migrations. The sperm whale lived in the deepest parts of the ocean so, in 1715, the Nantucket men began offshore trips of fifty miles or more but had to stay close to shore to process whales on shore—not yet able to do so on the ship. By the mid 1700's larger whale ships were built that became sea-going factories and could process the whale and store the products on the ship. The work a whale ship did maneuvering in high seas and then rendering the giant whales on board was extremely rough on the ship. Even the best-made craft lasted no more than five voyages and had to be scrapped and rebuilt.



The years 1771 to 1774 were very profitable for the whaling merchants that saw 360 whaleships leave the New England coast. The ports along this coast brought back roughly 45,000 barrels of sperm oil, 8,500 barrels of whale oil and 75,000 lbs. of whale bone. Colonial whale men were considered the envy of all other whaling nations.

In 1774, the British passed the "Coercive Act," four laws passed by the British parliament to punish the New England colonies for the dumping of tea in Boston harbor, when the Sons of Liberty boarded three British ships in Boston harbor and dumped 342 crates of tea into the harbor to protest the Tea Act. One of the four laws closed the port of Boston until the tea was paid for.

In 1775, to further punish the colony, the British proposed the "Restraining Act," that restricted the trade of the New England Colonies to Great Britain, Ireland and the British West Indies. This Act also prohibited the colonies from fishing off Newfoundland or any other place in the North Atlantic. An exemption was accorded to Nantucket from this act that raised suspicion about the allegiance of Nantucket to the colonies. Virtually all of Nantucket's whale products went to England and most of the goods it needed to survive were supplied in return. After the battle of Lexington 60 Loyalists from the mainland sailed to Nantucket to find haven. Despite all this Nantucket was not teeming with Tories. Most islanders were neutral and sympathetic to the colonial cause.

From 1775 to 1779 colonial whaling on Nantucket and other colonial ports was virtually halted due to the Revolutionary war. The British navy attacked coastal communities to rid the coast of privateers that were attacking British ships. The British navy attacked New Bedford and looted stores and warehouses of guns, gunpowder, rum, rope, coffee, wine, and tobacco, along with other items that were loaded on British ships. Buildings, wharfs and a small flotilla of the ships that made New Bedford a vital colonial port were torched. The British then sailed for Martha's Vineyard for a repeat performance, six ships and twenty-three whaleboats were destroyed and sheep, cattle and a variety of arms and ammunition were taken. Martha's Vineyard was spared the agony of being torched due to a storm that lashed the island with high winds and rain. After three days of waiting for the weather to change the British ships were ordered to New York City and Martha's Vineyard, along with Nantucket, were safe. Fleets were still left in shambles at Provincetown and Newport.

After seeing the British destroy their ships and ransack their towns during the war, the whaling merchants were exploring how they might continue their business—one option was to leave the island. They wanted to settle in an area that would not be an easy target for foreign invasion and still allow them to make a living. A group had already faced this question some years earlier and decided to settle about one hundred miles from the mouth of the Hudson.

The journey began in 1783, to a little hamlet called Claverack Landing on the Hudson River. A group of 18 whale men, artisans and businesspeople from Nantucket, Providence and Newport decided the time had come to relocate. A direct link to the ocean was a necessity to establish shipping and trade routes and Claverack Landing seemed to be a perfect choice, it was a small village of 10 families and about 150 people. Thomas Jenkins of Nantucket was sent to purchase land along the river and soon Nantucket people were sailing up the river to start a new life. Claverack Landing was given a new name—Hudson. The city of Hudson was a big success as dozens of whaleships left the port and returned with oil and whalebone.

In 1833 there were 11 whaling ships that sailed from Hudson with tales promoting Hudson as the greatest and largest port, but it still could not compare with Nantucket with 60 ships and New Bedford with 329 ships in 1857, roughly half of the entire American fleet. New Bedford was then considered the nation's whaling capital. The whaling ship *Rebecca*, out of New Bedford, one of the first American whaleships to round Cape Horn noted that of the 40 whaleships sighted during its 1791 voyage to the Pacific one was out of Hudson New York. The prosperous times for Hudson were from the mid 1780's to the early 1800's and over by the end of the war of 1812. The last whaling ship out of Hudson, the *Harriott*, sailed from Hudson in 1818-1819 and was lost on the coast of Brazil with 900 barrels of oil on board.

After seeing successful whaling ships work out of Hudson, just up the river from Newburgh, some local businessmen felt they also could succeed as a whaling community. After all, they also had a deep-water port with a busy network of docks, wharfs and warehouses so they incorporated the Newburgh Whaling Company. The years from 1832 to 1837 saw Newburgh send three whaling ships around the world from the wharfs at Water Street until an economic depression and the discovery of coal oil for lamps, replacing whale oil, ended the Newburgh Whaling Companies venture. Newburgh continued to be a busy shipping port on thru the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the old wharf and warehouse of the whaling company transitioned to use for other commodities.

The Poughkeepsie Whaling Company was established in 1832 and the Poughkeepsie based Dutchess Whaling Company established a year later provided six vessels to pursue whales. One such vessel was the *Newark*. This vessel's second voyage lasted from July, 1840 to June, 1841 and pursued whales in the Pacific Ocean, a rather popular destination.

Whaling in the Hudson Valley only lasted 60 years. It started with the demise of the Poughkeepsie Whaling Company in 1837 and the Dutchess Whaling Company in 1848. But they were very remarkable years to think merchants would come up the Hudson for 130 miles to start a whaling company and be a success for this length of time.

Sperm whales are the largest of the tooth whales and have one of the widest global distributions of any mammal and were the primary whale that whalers were looking for from 1800 to 1987 because of the substance called "spermaceti oil" found in their heads. This head cavity averages two feet in diameter and six feet deep, containing upward of a hundred gallons of this superior oil.

After the revolutionary war domestic demand for whale oil was on the rise. Many who had switched to the use of tallow candles were now returning to oil which was increasingly being burned in better designed lamps that gave off more light and less smoke.

The number of streetlamps in America's cities like Boston, Philadelphia and New York were eager to keep up with the trends in London and Paris. Spermaceti was used in oil lamps, lubricants and candles because it has a clear and perfect flame. The whaling ship *Sarah*, out of Nantucket, came back in 1830 with a record, for the island, of 3500 barrels of sperm oil. Another oil that whalers were looking for was whale oil that was obtained by boiling whale blubber, this blubber can be up to 19 inches thick depending on the type of whale.

In 1987, the International Whaling Commission placed a moratorium on commercial whaling to allow the sperm whale to increase in population and it appears this is happening. The main duty of the IWC is to keep under review and revise the measures to conduct whaling throughout the world. These measures provide for complete protection of certain species, designate whale sanctuaries, set limits on the numbers and size of whales which may be taken and prescribe open and closed seasons.

## A TRAVEL VIGNETTE

By Fred Seltzer



In New Orleans for a medical conference, I stayed over for the carnival. One day the Olympia marching band came down the street with people dancing behind it. I followed and it led to a private home. Inside jazz musicians were playing and money was being collected. A musician had died, and funds were being raised to pay for his funeral.

## WINTER IN THE COUNTRY

By Joe Shapiro

In the country, down the road, a commercial dairy invited locals to purchase on the honor system. Walk into the unlocked cooler, select, sign, and depart.

One winter day, the outdoor temperature was thirty below zero. The cooler was warmed by two kerosene heaters! Cellphones had not yet been invented and I did not have a camera with me to record one of life's incongruities: When a cooler had to be heated!

Brrr. It was cold.



## AVILA RESIDENTS HAVE KEPT BUSY SINCE OUR LAST ISSUE

*Celebrating Veteran's Day...*



*Photograph by Fred Seltzer*



*Photograph by Karl Gohlke*

*...paying tribute to Mary Farley, the Lodge's  
"Commissioner of Games"*

*In December there was a Hannukah celebration..*



*Photograph by Fred Seltzer*



*Photograph by Fred Seltzer*

*...and our annual Christmas songfest.*

*In January residents began a series of bridge classes to teach  
beginners and to help experienced players hone their skills.*



*Photograph by Karl Gohlke*

## VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!

### **SERVICE CORPS**

The Service Corps group at Avila is recruiting volunteers in two new service areas:

- Tutors to assist residents develop the ability to access medical portals, websites, and other information or service providers which require use of smartphones, tablets, or other computer-type tools.
- Persons capable of providing compassionate assistance to residents who require the help from a friendly neighbor. Training and supervision will be provided to the volunteers

Residents interested in these positions should contact Karl Gohlke at ext. 211 or [kgohlke@aol.com](mailto:kgohlke@aol.com).

### **SHOWCASE DISPLAYS**

We are looking for residents who would be interested in forming a committee to help manage the display cases in the Grand Lodge. This could include creating ideas, contacting residents who may have items to display, and helping to place the items in the cases. If you are interested, please contact Lynn Altonin at ext. 185, put a note in her mailbox (253 at the Lodge), or email to [lynnaltonin@gmail.com](mailto:lynnaltonin@gmail.com).

### **ELEVATOR LOBBIES FLOWER ARRANGEMENTS**

Joyce Gibbs is requesting help in preparing the flower arrangements in the elevator lobbies at the Grand Lodge. They are changed seasonally, so help is needed four or five times per year. Please give Joyce a call at ext. 664 or drop a note in her mailbox for Apt. 414. Your help will be appreciated.

## MARK ME WELL

*By Marjorie Jacobs*

*Just as the meadowlands have their golden waving shafts;*

*As the starry nights have their shooting stars;*

*As the mountains have their dens misty mornings where a  
hiking explorer can still see the sunlit sights;*

*As the seas have their complexity, enticing danger, and  
their well-won yet turbulent majesty,*

*I have my love for you, for it is also a thing of beauty  
and you inspire in me an enthusiasm I thought I had lost  
and forged in me a new sense of completeness, every day.*

♥ Happy Valentines Day ♥