

News and Views *Ávila*

A publication of the Resident Council at Ávila Retirement Community

Albany, NY

SEPTEMBER 2017

JACK AND THE BEAN STALK

John Wagner

In midsummer, the raised bed garden near the Lodge garages is a carpet of color. The blossoms of the petunias and the various daisies cover the surface of the garden in a multitude of hues. But this year there was a new addition: towering sunflowers. It is not clear where they came from, although many of us suspect it was birds.

In June, small sunflower plants suddenly appeared among the annual plants and they took full advantage of the weekly fertilization of the flowers. The result was sunflowers of such impressive height that some viewers were led to recall the fairy tale of our title.

These plants are unusual in another regard. The typical sunflower plant has a single blossom, usually about a foot in diameter. Last year there were plants with as many as 12 blossoms per plant. This year there is one plant with about 20 blossoms. (The more the blossoms the smaller the heads.

All the sunflowers at the Lodge are descendants of six plants donated by Mildred Ferrone, a former Lodge resident.



Photograph by Max Tiller



Photograph by Karl Gohlke

BASANTA MANJARI DAS**Interviewed by Wilbur Shapiro**

Basanta Das moved to Avila on July 21, 2017 after living in Guilderland for 46 years. Sadly, her husband of 59 years, Professor Tara Prasad Das, passed away just prior to the move. He was a world-renowned physicist and highly respected throughout the world. Basanta was a home maker and supported her husband both at home and abroad as he was in great demand as a speaker and teacher. In addition, Basanta and Tara Prasad raised three children, two boys and a girl: The girl, Puspa, is a PhD. psychologist, the boys Shankar, and Surjya, are medical doctors. Basanta has four grandchildren, three boys and a girl.

Basanta went to a women's college in India and majored in English Literature. She traveled extensively with her husband as he lectured around the world. They went to Germany, England, Romania (every summer) and spent a week in Israel, where Professor Das taught at The Weizman Institute. An impressive itinerary documents their many trips within the United States:

1958, University of Illinois, Champaign, Illinois, (Visiting Professor}

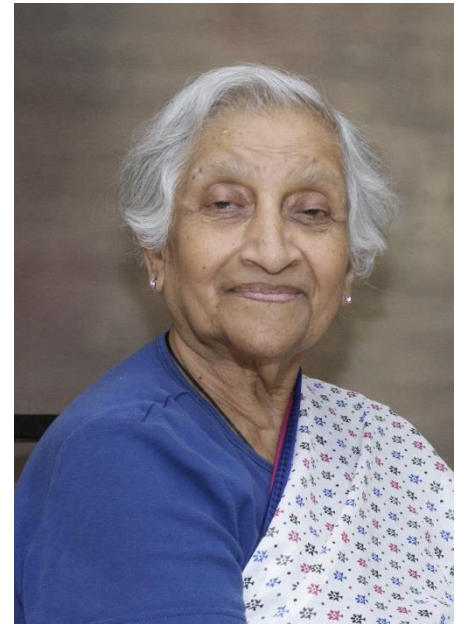
1959, Columbia University, (Visiting Professor)

1960-1968, University of California at Riverside, (Full Professor}

1969-1970, University of Utah, Salt Lake City, (Full Professor)

1971- Onward, State University of New York at Albany, New York, (Full Professor)

Basanta enjoys reading, movies and gardening. She would happily respond if you called her Bami, the name her father called her by extracting letters from her full name. Basanta or Bami has a very friendly personality, is a good conversationalist and is a delightful asset to the Avila community.



Photograph by Max Tiller

ANN KRUG**Interviewed by Murray Block**

Ann Krug is our friendly new neighbor who works diligently on the giant jigsaw puzzle opposite the administrative offices, when she is not busy meeting and mixing with her new neighbors. Ann came to Avila in April, after many years of living in an old house she and her late husband had created from a large old barn. She loved this old house in Hammondsport in the Finger Lakes Region of New York State's wine country. However, the three floors of steps and the care of the grounds were becoming a bit too much for her. Her young granddaughter had been a waitress at Avila several years ago and regaled grandma with stories of the wonderful and friendly people she knew here, both residents and staff. Ann was enchanted with what she found here and decided to move to Avila.

Ann is by no means a newcomer to the Capital District. She grew up in Watervliet, is a graduate of SUNY Albany, and was an elementary school teacher in the area. Her husband was also an education graduate of SUNY Albany. When he was later offered a job teaching high school science in Hammondsport, they settled there, to live and raise a family.

Ann has three children, one son and two daughters. Her son is a biomedical engineer. One daughter works as an administrator; the other daughter retired from her position as an Averill Park Psychologist. Ann has four grandchildren. One grandson bought her home in Hammondsport when she moved to Avila. He has decided to keep the old house in the family.

She has enjoyed travel. A trip to Europe, and extensive travel throughout the United States, including Alaska, have been highlights.

In addition to jigsaw puzzles, Ann has enjoyed gardening. She will be a great addition to the crew of neighbors tending the raised flowerbeds and vegetable beds we have on our grounds. Ann also keeps active with swimming and exercise, and enjoys participating in our gym activities.

Ann expressed great enthusiasm for her new life at Avila. In a few short months, she has made many friends and is completely happy as a member of the Avila family. She says her granddaughter was absolutely right---the people here ARE wonderful!



Photograph by Max Tiller

SR. JUSTINE LYON

Interviewed by Karl Gohlke

After a long journey in her religious life, which took her to many cities along the east and west coasts of the United States, Sr. Justine joined her fellow Religious of the Sacred Heart this spring in the Lodge at Avila.



Photograph by Karl Gohlke

A native of Boston, Sr. Justine was raised in the New Haven area of Connecticut. She attended public schools and was among the first students at Newton College of the Sacred Heart in the Boston area. Upon graduation in 1951, she became a lay teacher in the Sacred Heart School in Greenwich CT. while working on a graduate degree in education at the University of Connecticut. She had always wanted to become a teacher like her mother.

In 1955, she answered a spiritual calling and entered the Society of the Sacred Heart. After taking vows, she resumed her teaching career in Society schools where she taught in various locations across the country as teacher, Director

of Studies, and Head of School. After completing her post-graduate work at Harvard, Sr. Justine served as Headmistress in San Francisco for ten years.

Then she made a shift in the focus of her religious life and moved into a developing spiritual life center in Rhode Island where she served as spiritual retreat director for nine years. When that center closed in 1999 she moved to a Sacred Heart retreat center in San Diego where she served another nine years, returning to Boston in 2009 where she continued her spirituality and spiritual direction work.

Sr. Justine feels comfortable in the Avila community and appreciates its programs and opportunities for service. We welcome her and the many assets she brings to us.

LEILA MURPHY (LEE)

Interviewed by Joyce Gibbs

Lee was born in Jersey City, NJ and has one younger brother, Reynold. After graduating from Dickinson High School, she went to work in Manhattan at First National City Bank, known today as Citibank. She retired as manager after 30 years. While working at the bank she met and married John Murphy.

They had been married 20 years when John passed away from cancer. She has one stepdaughter and two grandchildren who live in Florida.

Before coming to Avila, Lee spent three years at the Spinney, a 55+ Senior Community in Castleton, until she could no longer manage the stairs. Friends suggested she check out Avila. Lee liked what she saw, and moved in at the end of March, 2017.

She has traveled quite a bit, making many trips to San Juan, Puerto Rico, St. Thomas, and St. Croix. In 1967 Lee toured seven European countries and has also been to Australia, New Zealand, to Fiji two times and she also enjoyed a vacation in Brazil. Last year Lee spent a week at the Atlantis and is planning a cruise in October.

She loves animals and has two cats; a female called Babe and a male called Sweetie who loves to sit on the window sills watching the chipmunks run around. Sadly, her adored Shiatzu, Sunshine, passed away.

Lee loves doing crafts and has made crystal glasses with Christmas designs, created ceramics, and sewn quilts that fold into pillows called quillows. She enjoys playing games, especially Pokeno.

As I was finishing up the interview I noticed a fish hanging above the doorway to her kitchen and when I asked whether she liked to fish, she replied "I love fishing and as a matter of fact that fish up above the kitchen doorway was a fish I caught in Texas at Lake Texoma." She went on to explain that her friends had had it stuffed for her.

Lee is very happy at Avila and appreciates the great staff, and finds the residents friendly and especially nice. We extend a warm welcome to this creative, vibrant woman.



Photograph by Max Tiller

A CHILD'S FLAG

Alice Begley



*Earliest memories of the Flag
From a little child's eye
Are three bold colors stretched aloft
And flying in the wind,
As soldiers marched abreast
To the Battle Hymn.*

*Or in a theater dark and grand,
Old Glory on the stage
Sent shivers up a tiny spine
At yet, this tender age.*

*Small hand held over heart
With love, respect and awe
As shining eyes, so full of pride
Watched the Flag unfurl.*

*Today, the Flag is still as bright,
Colors not marred by time
But fervor's dimmed
I know not why,
Why does the world not see
That the lovely Flag of long ago
Is still the same to me.*

*With eyes not dry
My heart still pounds
When Old Glory comes on show
And my patriotic fervor swells
As it did so long ago.*



CARROT FESTIVAL

Maxine Koblenz

The annual Capital District Carrot Festival evolved from a modest farmer's market almost 40 years ago into the mega food fair and carnival of today.

It was 1978 and Congregation Agudat Achim in Niskayuna needed to pave their parking lot. A small group of volunteers raised the needed funds with the first Carrot Festival. Today the Festival draws over 3,000 people from all parts of New York State and the surrounding area.

Many volunteers begin months in advance to plan the logistics, cook the food, organize games, and contact vendors, crafters, and community groups who contribute to the entertainment.

Visitors socialize at shaded tables and listen to music as they sample the delicious variety of carrot based food; juice, cakes, cookies, *kugel*, soups, salads, pies and 300 pounds of carrot *tsimmes* – a traditional Jewish sweet stew made from carrots and dried fruits. Chicken and brisket dishes are also available. Everything can be bought in single serving or family size portions to be eaten on site or enjoyed at home. Gluten free, vegan, dairy and Kosher diets are accommodated.

It is a delightful day for the whole family with activities for all ages. *The Divine Kosher Cuisine Cookbook*, available on-line, has many Carrot Festival recipes to enjoy all year, and also gives us these

Fun Carrot Facts

- 900-1000 AD-Purple and yellow carrots from Afghanistan to the Mediterranean.
- 1300-These carrots come to China and Western Europe.
- 1600-Yellow carrots in are introduced in Japan.
- 1700-White carrots appear in Europe; orange carrots in the Netherlands.



AFTER VESPERS

Patrick Hallinan (our driver)

*Not everyone could be there
But we continued
In the measured pace.*

*After Vespers,
The chit-chat wasn't electric
Still it satisfied on
A balmy summer eve.*

*The end of another day,
Quiet memories put away.*

*Such is the time
After Vespers.*

MY FIRST (AND LAST) PERFORMANCE AT CARNEGIE HALL

Don Stauffer

It was not a solo recital. I was singing with about 200 others.

Since 2012 I have been a member of the Jubilate Singers, a 100-voice choral group, based at Bethlehem Lutheran Church in Delmar. We give one concert a year, which some Avila residents have attended in the past. Last April we changed our venue to Troy Savings Bank Music Hall, and the funds raised by that concert were donated to two Christian groups, one made up of Guyanese immigrants, the other of Pakistani immigrants.

Early in the year Ralph Schultz, our director, announced that plans had been made for a celebration of the 500th anniversary of the beginning of the Reformation by Martin Luther. We were asked to volunteer to sing at the Hymn Festival with a group of over 200 singers from Concordia College in Bronxville and elsewhere, mainly in the New York area.

On the weekend of June 24-25, I joined a group of about 50 Jubilate Singers at Concordia for an all-day rehearsal with orchestra on Saturday, slept in the dormitory that night, and went to Carnegie the next morning for a run-through rehearsal before the afternoon concert. It was great fun to wander backstage, to see what the auditorium looks like from the stage, and to feel a sense of history with all the great singers, pianists, violinists and other musicians who have performed there.

The program was divided into two parts: the first was sung by another group of 200 young people. Our own part was much the same as we had performed in Troy, with Bach's Cantata 80, based on the great Martin Luther hymn, *A Mighty Fortress is Our God*, as the centerpiece. The audience in the packed house joined us in the several hymns on the program: a stirring sound of hundreds of singing Lutherans!

It was an experience I won't soon forget. In the close-up, that's me sitting in the front row, third from the right, behind the trombone.



THE TAPPAN ZEE BRIDGE

Stephen Rotter and John Wagner



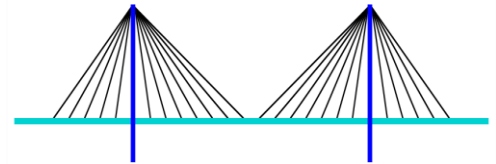
Photo Credit New York State Thruway Authority

The pressure to replace the old Tappan Zee Bridge grew from a national concern about the integrity of our aging infrastructure. It was heightened by the 1987 failure of the Thruway bridge over Schoharie Creek and the collapse in 2007 of the I-35W bridge over the Mississippi River in Minnesota.

The old bridge was built as part of the new State Thruway, a highway from New York City to Buffalo. Opened in 1955, the bridge construction was affected by the shortage of construction materials due to the Korean conflict and so had a design life of only 50 years.

The name reflects the area's history. The region had been the home of the Tappan, a native American tribe that enjoyed fishing here. The early Dutch settlers thought the river wide enough to be called a sea. Thus, the bridge was named the Tappan Zee Bridge in 1956 but in 1993 was renamed the Governor Malcom Wilson/Tappan Zee bridge, although it generally continued to be called the Tappan Zee.

The new Tappan Zee bridge consists of two spans, one for each direction of travel. Each span will have four lanes of traffic, a dedicated bus lane and a lane for emergency vehicles. There will also be a lane for pedestrians and bicycles with several overlook "mulligans" (porches). The design life of the new bridge is 100 years. The cable stay design will be employed for the spans over the river channel used by vessels traveling to and from the Port of Albany. Cable stay bridges are unusual in this part of the country, but are widely used in southern states. This design is lighter, less costly, and more tolerant of minor earthquakes.



The bridge will be erected using pre-fabricated sections of roadway. The use of several companies to build these sections makes their construction cheaper and faster. Building them on land is safer and more accurate. These sections are over 300 feet long and weigh thousands of pounds. When complete, they are floated to the bridge site where a special crane lifts them into place.

Efforts to make the new bridge "environmentally friendly" appear both high and low. At the top of the towers, nesting boxes were built for the peregrine falcons that lived atop the old bridge. (Video cameras provide close-up views.). To minimize the effects of pile driving on the local marine life, screens were placed in the river around the piles to dissipate the energy in sound waves generated by the hammering.

As of August, the project seems to be on schedule and on budget. The westbound/northbound span has been completed and opened to four lanes of traffic on August 28, 2017. The eastbound/southbound span is still incomplete, needing work at the towers and at the shores. (See June 9th photo below.) The official opening of the new Governor Mario Cuomo/Tappan Zee bridge is scheduled for April, 2018. When the old bridge is removed, the 50-foot-long concrete deck panels that make up roadway sections will be given to the State Department of Transportation to be used in the repair of washed-out bridges around the state.

The funding for the bridge is not fully determined. The original plan was to issue 40-year bonds and retire this debt using the bridge tolls. However, this would require an increase above the current \$5 toll. Estimates indicate that the new toll would have to be close to 13 dollars. To postpone debate on this subject, the State Legislature ordered that tolls be kept at the \$5 level.



Photo Credit New York State Thruway Authority

*AT 18 OR 80**Claire Stahler*

At 18, George was well dressed with every hair in place. He was fun, handsome and always a gentleman. At 80, it is still the same.

At 18, George was caring, thoughtful, kind and generous. He sent flowers, and held doors open. He never stumbled over his ego. At 80, it is still the same.

At 18, he was "My Boyfriend." We enjoyed "growing up" together, learning and discovering what life can be. At 80, it is still the same.

At 18, I could only dream of a life together. He had work to do, and so did I. We were getting ready for our lives just ahead. At 80, it is still the same.

At 18, how could we know what life would deliver to us: our wonderful children and grandchildren, the heartbreak of losing our parents and siblings, all the challenges of being.

At 80, we cherish our families more than ever, and we cherish each other as true life partners. We walk life's paths together, stumbling at times, holding each other often, and grateful to God that we still are.

Thank you for all that you have given to me in love, patience, kindness, generosity, and so much more. You believe in me, and that is the greatest gift of all.

*ODE TO A WEED**Pat Healy*

*I came an uninvited guest
And so, I did my very best,
To give a bird a place to rest.*

*Grew straight and tall
Even climbed a wall!*

*Summer will end and so will I
No flower no bee –*

*Thanks for letting me
be me!*

FLYING HIGH

Lore Scurrah

On July 26, 2017, our own Walter Arnold ticked one more item off his personal 'bucket list.' Walter, a paratrooper in the 82nd Airborne Division, Fort Bragg, N.C from 1961-1963, wanted to jump one more time.



Now 73 years old, Walter consulted the Internet to find out how to make this happen. And so, on a perfect July morning, he, wife Sandy, son-in-law Adam Stallmer and eight-year-old granddaughter Katie left home at 7:00 am for the one-hour drive to Morse State Airport, Bennington, VT to meet jump instructor , Alex. Adam planned to jump too.

The small Cessna plane waited while Walter and Adam completed four pages of release forms alerting them to the fact that in the event of injury or death the company bore no responsibility.

Alex gave the jumpers 10 minutes of instruction for the tandem jump and then it was time for Walter to board the plane and to hook the two harnesses together.

The plane rose easily through the early morning skies. The weather could not have been better; clear, windless, and comfortably cool, although the open door did make it noisy. As they reached the middle of their ascent at 5,000 feet Alex asked Walter if he had any second thoughts, Walter's grin loudly proclaimed he was eager and ready to go as he remembered telling Sandy he'd see her soon, in this life or the next.

He swiveled around to place his feet at the open door, and whoosh – he felt himself airborne. The 30 second free fall was unbelievably exhilarating and Walter wished it could be longer. But with a sudden jolt Alex pulled the rip cord, releasing the parachute, and they floated silently over the beautiful Vermont countryside below. Then it was Walter's turn to pull the rip cord which brought them into a brief spiraling descent.

It was over all too soon, only about two minutes, when Alex said, "knees up, feet out," as he brought them to a smooth, easy sit down landing.

A jeep, driven by Katie with help from Dad, brought them back to where Adam was waiting for the plane to land for him to take his jump. Interestingly, he would land on precisely the same spot as Walter had.

Go to Green Mountain Skydiving Walter Arnold to watch a wonderful four and a half minute YouTube video of Walter's flight.



ENJOY THE BEAUTY OF FALL