

News and Views *Avila*

A publication of the Resident Council at Avila Retirement Community

Albany, NY

May 2017

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

SPRING – Nothing says spring so clearly, firmly and loudly as the first crack of the bat in spring training. And for those of us of a certain age, the baseball giants of the thirties and forties immediately appear before our eyes. For me, a “word geek” that means our beloved Yogi Berra. *News and Views* joyfully brings you Yogi’s incomparable words of wisdom. Look for them.

THE ARTS IN THE CAPITAL REGION

JACOB'S PILLOW

Murray Block



Lovers of Contemporary Dance from all over the world come to the Berkshires each summer to Jacob's Pillow to attend performances by such noted dance groups as Pilobolus, the Paul Taylor Dance Company, A Jazz Happening, Ballet Hispanico; just a few of the many dance companies performing this summer at its 85th Anniversary Season.

Jacob's Pillow is on a farm located in a beautiful country setting. It has an interesting history and most unusual name. Settlers coming to the area in the early 18th century saw the switchbacks in the mountains and called this section *Jacob's Ladder*. One settler chose some land nearby on which to set up his farm. While clearing his property, he found an old rock in the shape of a cushion, so he named his farm *Jacob's Pillow*.



The dancer, Ted Shawn, bought the farm in 1931 with the hope of converting it into the place where he could pursue his dream of making dance an honorable career for men. He formed a dance company of men and gave modern dance demonstrations in the barn. Over the years, both men and women gathered here to learn modern dance forms. This mecca for modern dance grew in prestige, comfortable theaters replaced the barn setting, and a Dance School was formed. Jacob's Pillow has since been named a National Historic Landmark, and the New York Times has referred to it as “the dance center of the nation.”

Jacob's Pillow is in Beckett, MA --- an hour's drive from Albany. The Ted Shawn Theater there is easily accessible. If enough of our neighbors are interested in attending performances at Jacob's Pillow, Avila will provide transportation. Please let our program Director know of your interest (Phone 404). You will enjoy a delightful dance program in a most interesting and historic New England setting. And the drive through the beautiful Berkshires in summer makes for a pleasant day's outing.

BILL AND ELAINE CURRAN**Interviewed by Erin and Ray Teichman**

Photograph by Max Tiller

Bill and Elaine were both born and raised in Albany, NY. Bill has two sisters; the older is a Holy Names Academy graduate. Elaine was the youngest of three siblings. Both her brother and sister are deceased.

The Currans attended St. Vincent's grade school and Vincentian Institute although Elaine was a couple of years behind Bill. Some of their grade school classes were held in a former greenhouse. School uniforms were white pinafores for the girls and white shorts and shirts for the boys. Elaine lived behind the school and remembers slipping under the fence on her back onto the convent's backyard when running late for class.

Bill attended Siena College majoring first in accounting and then switching to sociology when accounting theory was not to his liking. Ironically, sometime after graduation he went to work for General Electric where he was employed to teach finance in a GE training program.

Elaine's father died while Elaine was a junior in high school. After graduation, she got a job in an insurance company, and worked there until their first child was born.

Bill and Elaine became acquainted one summer evening at Lake George. Their first date resulted when Bill asked Elaine if her friend (whom he knew) was with Elaine that weekend. To which Elaine responded that she was but had stepped out and would be right back. Elaine knew her friend would not be returning that evening. This left Bill and Elaine together and 63 years later they are still together! It may remind one of the movie, "When Harry Met Sally."

They have four daughters, Faith, Ellen, Sheila and Maureen, who have blessed them with seven grandchildren. Ellen lives closest, in North Creek, NY. Faith lives in Maine; Sheila in Georgetown, MA; and Maureen in Marietta, GA.

Bill started working at GE in Schenectady in 1951. He oversaw the work at other GE sites, but he was able to remain in this area. GE employed 47,000 people when Bill began; now there may be only 4,000.

Elaine did not work outside the home until the girls were older. She was a Girl Scout leader and hospital volunteer (Pink Lady); and then worked at Talbot's dress shop until Bill encouraged her to quit as she was spending most of her salary buying clothes to send to their daughters away at college.

The family vacationed annually in Maine. After retiring, Bill and Elaine wintered in Hilton Head, SC. At one time, they tried to sell their Albany home to move closer to their daughter, Maureen, in Atlanta, GA. However, that did not work out.

They looked at several senior independent living places in the area, including Avila, about five years ago but because they still had a lot of friends and an active social life in the community they opted to stay in their home. When Bill became ill and stairs became a problem, they decided to move to Avila. They both remarked how welcoming and friendly Avila residents have been and are happy they came.

SISTER ELEANOR FOX, RSHJ

Interviewed by Erin Teichman

Sr. Eleanor Fox became a most welcome addition to our Avila community on August 25, 2016. Born in New York City, the only child of school teacher parents, Benedict and Florence, she grew up in Jamaica, Queens and Rockville Center, Long Island.

In first grade Sr. Eleanor attended the public school where her father was principal and her mother's best friend taught first grade. When she and another first grader, the assistant principal's daughter, began boasting about their parents' positions, Mr. Fox decided it would be better for Eleanor to go to a different school; so from second grade through high school, Sr. Eleanor attended St. Agnes parish school in Rockville Center, where the Fox family lived. At St. Agnes she was taught by the Dominican Sisters. Upon graduation she received a scholarship to RSHJ's Manhattanville College which was located in

Harlem at that time. During her junior year the school moved to Purchase, NY. Her major was math, her "worst" subject in high school. She also worked in the college library.

"I knew I wanted to be a nun from way, way back," Sr. Eleanor said. In 1954 she was accepted as a novice in the Society of the Sacred Heart. For ten years she taught, in her words, "practically everything" to the girls attending various RSHJ high schools including those in Detroit, MI, Greenwich, CT and Kenwood in Albany NY. She became a professed nun in Rome in 1964.

For almost 30 years Sr. Eleanor taught at the Convent of the Sacred Heart school, E 91st Street, Manhattan. In 1966 she became head of their Social Studies program. Sr. Eleanor took a sabbatical year in 1996 at Baruch College, part of the City University of NY, to study English as a Second Language. Prior to coming to Avila, she worked for 15 years in a CUNY program tutoring students in need of preparation for entry to community college.

Members of her community often remark on her extraordinary sense of humor, and especially on the love and respect her students have shown, acknowledging her positive impact on their lives.

SISTER PEGGY McDONNELL

Interviewed by Karl Gohlke



Photograph by Karl Gohlke



Photograph by Max Tiller

Sr. Mary Margaret ("Peggy") McDonnell, RSCJ, has joined the Society of the Sacred Heart sisters already in residence at the Lodge. She worked for many years in a variety of settings pursuing her calling to assist others in navigating the complexities of the healthcare system.

A native of Fair Haven, NJ, Sr. Peggy entered the Society of the Sacred Heart after graduating from the College of Mount St. Vincent with a BSN (Nursing). She taught in the Society's schools until the order uncloistered. At that juncture, she moved to the Boston area and became involved with the Harvard Community Healthcare program, the earliest health maintenance organization in the nation.

She became a Nurse Practitioner and obtained her master's degree in ethics at Harvard Divinity. Her work with the Harvard HMO and Newton College prepared her to work with individuals and organizations committed to improving the quality of care and the delivery of health care services to the public.

Sr. Peggy eventually settled in Techy, IL, a suburb of Chicago, where in 1996 she founded The Center for Ethics and Advocacy in Healthcare, a non-profit organization entirely donor supported.

The Center functioned "to help people make wise decisions as they move through our present healthcare institutions...It envisions a society that preserves and enhances personhood and dignity in illness and dying...so that the individual becomes part of his or her own healthcare decisions..." She and her staff worked with individuals, families, and providers to resolve any barriers, misunderstandings, or other conflicts that might present in the personal, familial and institutional decision making processes. In its 17 years of operation the Center sponsored 46 student interns from a variety of backgrounds. Three of the applicants were Fulbright Scholars. The Center received a major portion of its financial and governance support from a bank and a healthcare foundation.

Although Sr. Peggy has retired from organizational management, she plans to continue her advocacy and contributions to the improvements of healthcare for people. Her grounding in ethics and spirituality is integral to all her work in this very complicated societal area. An outgoing person, she has engaged easily with other residents and has been involving herself in the communal activities at Avila.

WELCOME TO OUR NEW PROGRAM DIRECTOR

Interviewed by Murray Block



Photograph by Max Tiller

Avila is most fortunate in its selection of Tammy Treen to fill the position of Program Director recently vacated by Eileen Fox. Eileen's decision to retire led to a search to find a replacement in this most important and complex staff position. Tammy was able to spend several weeks in training with Eileen to learn about the many activities, programs, and trips that she now must provide, organize and coordinate for this very busy social and cultural aspect of the Avila experience.

Tammy is not a newcomer to Avila. Many of us have benefitted from the fitness classes she led when she was a member of Barbara Howansky's Fitness Center staff.

Tammy is a lifelong "Upstater." She now resides in Colonie, but she was born and raised in Millers Mill, a small town just east of Utica. She completed Associate Degree work at both Herkimer and Mohawk Valley Community Colleges, and received her Bachelor in Education from SUNY at Oneonta. She also holds a Master's degree from the University of New England.

Tammy spent 10 years teaching grades 7 through 12. However, she wanted to work more with adults and pursued further training and licensure to help move in that direction. She is a Licensed Personal Trainer in Physical Fitness and has certification in Senior Fitness. She also became a Licensed Aesthetician, specializing in skin care. However, her proudest accomplishments are probably her twin sons, now turning 25.

Tammy is excited to have this new assignment. She feels that Avila's people, both staff and residents, are wonderful and friendly. If you have not yet met Tammy, drop into her office to say, "Hello and Welcome!"

PATIO PLANTINGS: A LABOR OF LOVE

Joy Harding



Photographs by Max Tiller

Spring is here! Soon, the four raised beds and the patio pond garden behind the Living Room of the Main Building will be awash with color and beauty. Although the landscaped beds surrounding our buildings are the responsibility of Avila’s conscientious staff and professional landscapers, the planning, planting, and maintenance of the raised flowerbeds in the Patio, and the garden surrounding the pond have been a labor of love for your neighbors who serve on the Patio Garden Committee.

About ten years ago, former resident Carmen Privatera was the first member to turn this soil; planting tomatoes in June and tulip bulbs in

autumn. Then Gloriana Clark started one raised bed for perennials. Soon after, others joined, and so the Patio Garden Committee was created. Our current membership includes: Eleanor Alland, Mary Ellen Bendick, Gloriana Clark, Joy Harding, Shirley Jordan, and Don Stauffer.

The committee would love to have your help for this season and for other seasons to come. Help us plan what to plant, select these plants at Gade’s Farms, transport them to the Avila greenhouse, and then gently set them in their appointed places. The work usually occurs in mid-May, depending upon the weather. During the rest of the season, Committee members take turns caring for the lovely gardens with the necessary watering and weeding.

The work is not very complicated or too time-consuming. We follow a flexible maintenance schedule throughout the growing season. If you love flowers and plants, as most of us do, and want to keep Avila beautiful and homelike, just contact me, Joy Harding (phone 556) or anyone on our committee---and join us in our “LABOR OF LOVE”.



VEGETABLE GARDEN

If your interests tend more toward growing vegetables, Avila has a raised bed for growing vegetables behind the Main Building garages that back up to the Pine Bush. This garden, too, is planned, planted, and cared for by your neighbors. As the season progresses, the Vegetable Garden Committee members share in the “fruits” (OK –vegetables) of their labors. They too welcome additional members to share in the joys of gardening. If interested, call Bob Fazio (phone 724.)

Nothing tastes quite as good as a sun warmed tomato just in from the garden.

THE LODGE GARDEN TEAM

Mary Farley

A winter blizzard was howling outside my window. Could there be a better day to think about spring and beautiful flowers and our wonderful Lodge Garden team!

When we moved into the Lodge that first summer several people wanted to adopt the two raised beds – one near the greenhouse, the other near the rear patio. Our growing space has now expanded to include seven large urns; two at the front door, two on the front porch, and three on the patio, as well as a small plot next to the greenhouse.



Our Garden Team consists of Edith Collopy, Mary Farley, Janet Hudecek, (Chair), Mark Jordan, Eleanor Miller, Sister Betty Shearman, and Rosemarie and John Wagner.

We each have our own interests and specialties. John and Rosemarie take care of the bed near the greenhouse and the pots at the front of the Lodge; Mark and I tend the patio

plantings; Edith plans and plants the small greenhouse plot. Sister Betty and Eleanor too, are willing to get their hands dirty and are a great help at planting time.

As winter turns slowly into spring, we begin to count the days to seed planting time. Three years ago, we gathered the seeds of the Spider plant (cleome) in the fall, saved them all winter, and planted them in small pots in the greenhouse in the spring. We have had wonderful results. It has been very satisfying to see the beautiful flowers on the sturdy plants which grew from our seeds.

Photograph by John Wagner

Mark also saved sunflower seeds. He planted his crop of seedlings in front of the greenhouse and along the walkway to the "big house."

Each fall, I take cuttings from various varieties of coleus and winter them over on my porch. In the spring I plant them throughout our gardens for additional color.

Every year we look forward to our annual trip to Gade's Farms to make the difficult choices as to which plants will best fill out our Lodge garden beds and containers.

WHY "AVILA"?

John Wagner

How is it that our retirement community is named after a small town in Spain?

The answer begins about 50 years ago. In the 1960s, the Roman Catholic Diocese of Albany decided to build a nursing home in the area and purchased a tract of land along Washington Avenue Extension on which to build it. The Diocese enlisted the help of the Carmelite Sisters of the Aged and Infirm to administer the facility, since this order administered a number of similar institutions around the world. Appropriately, this nursing home was named

"Teresian House, after a famous member of the Carmelite order, St. Teresa of Avila. St. Teresa was a medieval mystic (1515 - 1582) whose spiritual writing showed tremendous theological insight. Teresa was born in Avila, entered the Carmelite order there, and, as a reformer, founded the first of many convents governed by the Primitive Rule of St. Joseph.





St. Teresa was canonized in 1622 and in 1970 she and St. Catherine of Siena were the first women to be awarded the title of "Doctor of the Church." A painting of St. Teresa hangs on the wall outside the Great Room in the Main building.

Avila, a town of 60,000 people, is located in the rolling hills of central Spain, about 50 miles northwest of Madrid. It is encircled by an intact city wall, complete with crenelated towers and gates. The wall was built in the early Middle Ages to protect its inhabitants from the seemingly unending wars fought around them.

The Albany Diocese and the Carmelite Sisters share an ongoing commitment to support senior housing. About 20 years ago, the Diocese elected to build a retirement facility for seniors of means. The Diocese chose to build it on its tract of land adjacent to Teresian House. Sister Pauline, then the Administrator of Teresian House, and a member of the Carmelite leadership team were members of the planning committee and of the Board of the new corporation. It seems very probable that these Sisters suggested the name, Avila, for the new facility. In the early stages of the planning, it was proposed that the two facilities share some services, such as food and maintenance. This proposal was soon discarded, but was echoed recently when a cook at the Lodge had been trained by her father, a cook at Teresian House. Both Avila and Teresian House are sponsored by the Albany Diocese and have maintained good relations. The linking of their names serves as a commemoration of St. Teresa of Avila. Thus, today, we have our name, Avila, the Teresian House bank account into which our rent checks are deposited, and an unofficial commitment by Teresian House to expedite the entry of Avila residents, recently demonstrated in the prompt admissions of two Lodge residents.

MY TRIP TO ISRAEL

Wilbur Shapiro

Jerusalem can be described in three words: Stone, Religion, and Tourism. In the Old City, remaining from ancient times, all structures are limestone. Religion abounds, and orthodox Jews, in their black hats and suits, and curly earlocks falling past their ears, are everywhere. Buses, filled to the brim with tourists, surround the hotels.

Our tour group explored important sections of the old city, such as the Western Wall, which is what remains of the Second Temple destroyed by the Romans. Many pray at the wall and leave messages on notepaper stuffed into the open cracks. I said a memorial prayer for my deceased wife, Muriel, and left her a note along with the thousands put there by other visitors. Near the Western Wall there are tunnels inviting further exploration with experienced tour guides. The architecture and construction of these tunnels are amazing, with stairways extending deep under the earth.

Many significant remains were dug up and displayed in the Jerusalem Architectural Park. Intricate floral designs were carved into the stone indicating an advanced artistic ability for an ancient civilization. Walking up from the old city we stopped for a falafel lunch at an outdoor market. I believe that falafel is the hamburger of Israel, with the flat dough filled with sundry goodies selected by the eater. On Friday afternoons, the markets are packed with people buying food for the next day's Sabbath

We visited a school that was conducting a social experiment. They mixed Israeli Arabs and Jewish students in their classes. They had to learn each other's languages, and study together. I am happy to report that the experiment is working very well.



The visits to two museums in Jerusalem were truly memorable. The first was the Holocaust Museum, which traces the rise of the Third Reich under Hitler. It explores the history of the Holocaust thematically and chronologically. A long passage is separated into sections, each tapering down in space until the exit is reached. Each chapter is divided into subchapters, with explanatory texts, photos, video testimonies, documentary footage, artifacts, and art. It was not an easy visit. It is so very hard to believe the inhumanity of man. Afterwards, at the Museum's superb gift shop, I bought some books for my friends back home, including one about the Pope's visit to the museum, which I gave to our resident Sisters at Avila.

The Israel Museum is awe-inspiring. It contains the Dead Sea Scrolls - a marvel to behold. A complete and accurate model of the Old City is available in an outdoor setting. We walked around the walled city, among model homes, and feasted our eyes on a complete structure of the temple.

When our stay in Jerusalem was over, we headed south toward Eshkol where the Israelis turned the Negev Desert into green meadowland. The Israelis are miraculous farmers, growing all kinds of fruits and vegetables with reclaimed water. They make freshwater out of salt water. There is a place called "The Salad Walk", where their produce growing methods are demonstrated. Best strawberries I ever tasted.

It is rather eerie to visit the Gaza border, an area monitored by balloons and drones, with not a soldier in sight. A reserve army officer, who lives nearby, was our guide here. He said his community does not want any more wars, and they hope for peace.

We took the cable car to the top of Masada, the incredible mountain top fortress overlooking the Judean Desert. History tells us that many Jewish citizens escaped to here to avoid the occupation of their homeland by the Romans. Under siege by Roman Legions for two years, and realizing that defeat and death were imminent, the Jews atop Masada drew lots to kill each other, since the Jewish religion does not condone suicide. They would rather die than live as slaves to the Romans.

The city of Akko, along the coast in northwestern Israel, held the British Prison, which was used to imprison Haganah underground fighters who faced death by hanging during the years of the British Mandate. We stopped at a kibbutz that hid an underground ammunition factory. It was interesting to learn how they produced bullets under the noses of the British.

In Haifa, we had a panoramic view of the beautiful gardens, the bustling city, and the port filled with cargo-laden ships.

In Tel Aviv, with its modern skyscrapers and views of the Mediterranean, we visited Independence Hall, where Ben-Gurion proclaimed the birth of the state of Israel on May 14, 1948. The British ended their mandate and separated the land into Israel and Palestine. Israel accepted the partition but the Palestinians did not. Israel easily won the ensuing war. In 1967, Egypt, Jordan and Syria attacked Israel. They were defeated in six days, and Israel claimed Jerusalem, the Golan Heights and the Sinai Peninsula.

How do you describe Israel in one word? The word I would choose is *Dichotomy*. The *Dichotomy* of biblical times and the modern era, the *Dichotomy* of science and religion, the *Dichotomy* of orthodox and secular, the *Dichotomy* of war and peace, the *Dichotomy* of desert and garden. Israel is vibrant with unending activity. My intuition tells me she is destined for great things. Recently the computer chip giant, Intel, bought an Israeli company, Mobileye, for 15 billion dollars, to assist in the development of driverless cars. Warren Buffet has also invested in the country.

Israel is the land of my forefathers, it is the land of my faith. This trip was my pilgrimage, and I know I cannot go again. I am so very glad I went.



SERENDIPITOUS TRAVEL BITES**Erin Teichman**

Serendipity is defined as "a seeming gift for finding good things accidentally." In our travels, Ray and I appear to have done that; all musically related.

In October 2010 we spent a week in Florence, Italy. During one of our daily walks around the city we stopped in the Church of Orson Michele to view its art, and to rest our tired feet. While there, a group of students came to the front altar rail, formed a semi-circle, were given their note and sang a cappella, a sublime "Ave Maria."

Later in the week we climbed to the Church of San Miniato built atop a Roman temple. The organist was practicing for Sunday Mass. Ending practice, he played Bach's "Toccat & Fugue in D."

In March, 2015, while in Paris, France, we took a day trip to Chartres Cathedral. As we were viewing the stained glass windows, a woman urged us to be seated for a short concert presented by the high school choir from Keller, Texas. The acoustics are so good in the Cathedral we were able to hear clearly every word of "The Yellow Rose of Texas" as we were leaving.

These musical travel bites really enhanced our travel memories.



- ***WE MADE TOO MANY WRONG MISTAKES.***
- ***YOU CAN OBSERVE A LOT BY WATCHING.***
- ***I USUALLY TAKE A TWO-HOUR NAP FROM ONE TO FOUR.***

INQUIRING REPORTER**Maxine Koblenz Asked:**

1. "Considering the variety of programs and activities Avila offers, please comment on those in which you participate and how they satisfy your needs."

ELEANOR ALLAND - 12-year resident, east wing



Fitness activities such as Balance, Stretching and Aerobics provide the opportunity to maintain my posture and agility. It's good having a variety of instructors. They vary the workouts and levels of difficulty, as well as keep my brain thinking.

Knitting Group helps me meet different people as well as getting lots of help with my projects.

LYNN ALTONIN – 6 Year Resident, Lodge

My time doing layouts for *News and Views* allows me to use the skills learned in previous endeavors. *News and Views*, an important asset of Avila's communication network, is well received by our residents.

I enjoy my time on the Program Committee. Ideas are always welcomed and I am pleased with the vast variety of programs which were so well organized by Eileen Fox. I look forward to some new programs that will highlight the Albany area, particularly for those of us not from the Capital District.

I enjoy all the Game Activities. The extensive variety offers something for anyone. Everyone is invited to participate which creates a very friendly atmosphere. .



Photograph by Max Tiller

PAT AND HANK BINZER – 1 Year Residents, west wing



Photograph by Max Tiller

The LifeLong Learning programs are an important part of our life at Avila. We hope they will increase in number; explaining history, current events and news related to the issues of aging. We have wonderful resources both among Avila residents and from local colleges from which to draw presenters.

We look at the Fitness Program not as an activity but as a necessity to keep us upright and flexible. Fitness Director, Barbara Howansky, is educated and well trained. We are glad that she can offer both a variety of group classes, as well as private individual sessions.

2. What message would you like to leave for Fran Foley, our CEO?

ELEANOR

- Continue to roam the halls listening to residents.
- Consider reducing guest suite fees.
- Consider up-dating residences with carpeting and paint after a certain number of years.
- Develop a blueprint to guide residents in planning for a 'higher level of care' before the need arises.

LYNN

- Consider the changing needs of residents as they age; both entertainment and activities offered.
- Consider an exercise "buddy system" as an incentive to get more residents exercising.

HANK AND PAT

- Consider incentives to encourage "younger" people to move to Avila.
- Consider support groups coordinated by the Resident Services Advisor.
- Undertake a review of the musical programs offered in-house. Consider limiting repeat performers, and inviting musicians out of the popular main stream.



 HAIKU

Jim Leonard

Surly oak leaves rest

On crest of silver diamonds

Second day of spring.



WHAT'S IT ALL ABOUT?

Don Stauffer

We were sitting in a little Italian restaurant one afternoon in Old San Juan. It had just opened that day, and the manager was chatting with guests at a nearby table. "Where are you from?" she asked them. "New York," they replied. "New York City?" "No—a little town near Albany."

Our ears pricked up.

"You've never heard of it." "Well, what's its name?" "Altamont," the woman said. We turned and peered through the dimly lighted room. It was the Melies, who lived down the street from us and had also come down for a holiday.

We were walking back one evening to our apartment in the Friendship Hotel in Beijing, when in the darkness, we heard the voice of an American woman explaining to a group of tourists about their accommodations. There was something unique about the voice: it was unmistakable in its pitch and tone quality. Only one person could have possessed that voice: our Albany friend, Rezsine Adams. Yes, she was the one leading a group on a tour of China.

We were mingling with family and friends in a church basement at our son Andy's wedding reception in Vienna, Virginia when a man my age approached and asked if I was Don Stauffer and had I grown up in East Orange, New Jersey. I said I was and I had, and he told me he was my old friend, the other "Donnie," who had lived across the street before his family moved away 45 years ago, and whom I had not seen since. He was a member of that church and a friend of the bride's family. He recognized the name, and when he saw our son he was sure I was the same guy. We've never seen him again.

We were attending a fall festival event in the Altamont village park in the fall of 1970. Crossing the grass was a woman who looked vaguely familiar to Morag. She turned out to be her old teenage pal Nancy with whom she had grown up in Rockville Centre a quarter century ago. She and Nancy had lost track of each other. Nancy was visiting mutual friends in Johnstown, and when they told her they were going to see someone named Morag, she was pretty sure she knew who she was. They have remained in touch.

When I moved to Washington, DC to work for the Pentagon, the housing bureau found a room for me in a pleasant section of Northwest Washington near the National Zoo. The home was owned by a retired Army major and his wife. That evening after I settled into the front room I saw someone emerging from another room down the hall. Surprise! It was Hugh, my fraternity brother from college, whom I had not seen or heard from once during the four years since graduation. We soon decided to move into an apartment together.

I was bringing back some drinks to my family, who were sitting in the square near a pub outside Canterbury Cathedral, when someone called my name. It was Debby, my colleague in Albany, who happened to be passing through for the day on a tour of England.

Unusual? Uncanny, yes. Surprising, yes. But are these coincidental meetings unique to me? I doubt it. I'm sure many readers can match or top them.

What are they then? Fate? Providence? Divine intervention? The six degrees of separation? Nowadays, when people move easily around the globe, are chance encounters even more unlikely than they would have been in earlier times? Or in the past, when most people in the world seldom traveled more than a few miles from their own village, were such things even more rare? Still, whatever the case, chance encounters, reunions, recognition scenes have always been a part of our lives--and part of our culture, as writers have known for centuries, from the Greek tragedians to Shakespeare to Thomas Hardy and beyond.

They give all of us good stories to tell!



- **NEVER ANSWER AN ANONYMOUS LETTER.**
- **NOBODY GOES THERE ANYMORE. IT'S TOO CROWDED.**
- **YOU SHOULD ALWAYS GO TO OTHER PEOPLE'S FUNERALS, OTHERWISE THEY WON'T COME TO YOURS.**



Photograph by Karl Gohlke

BOCCE LEAGUE starts again May 16, 2017 at 9:30 a.m. Join Stella Dempf, Bob Balander, Edith Collopy and Captain Mary Farley – four of last year's stalwarts. You can start practicing or set up your own game as soon as the court is dry enough. Sign out the bocce balls at the Lodge reception desk.

THE PERSONAL COMPUTER

John Wagner

Today we are surrounded by computers, in our dens, in our cars, and in our cell phones. But it wasn't always that way. Fifty years ago, you had to be a big corporation to own a computer. You kept it in your office in a special room where several employees sat at their desks, using computer terminals to time-share the computer as they did their daily tasks. That changed in 1977, when, at a consumer electronics show, three small "personal" computers were introduced.

The invention of the transistor made this possible. In 1948, scientists at the A&T Bell Telephone Laboratories discovered a way to make a semiconductor device which could switch or amplify electrical signals. Computer designers at that time recognized the value of such a "transistor"; it could be a replacement for the vacuum tubes used in the early computers, such as UNIVAC.

The nascent semiconductor industry developed ways to embed other circuit elements in silicon and the first "transistorized" computer appeared in 1953. The industry continued to reduce the size of the circuitry and the chip containing it. By 1970, they had put the core elements of a computer on a single chip called the "microprocessor". But a number of custom circuit boards were still needed to convert the microprocessor into a computer with its inputs and outputs.



At this point, the 40 cabinets of the first UNIVAC computers had been reduced to the size of a large refrigerator. These computers were still expensive because of the needed custom circuit boards. But in the 1970s the semiconductor industry was able to put the microprocessor and its needed circuitry on one chip. The mass production of these "computers on a chip" dramatically reduced their cost, making a consumer product feasible. At the 1977 Consumer Electronics Exhibition, three small "personal" computers were unveiled: The Apple II, the Commodore PET2001, and the Tandy Corporation (Radio Shack) TRS 80. You could buy one of these "personal" computers, bring it home, set it on a desk

in your den and play games or write letters at your leisure.

Memory units were expensive and still needed miniaturizing. (My Apple II computer came with 24K of internal memory.) Hence these first personal computers (PCs) used an external disc drive. These "floppy" discs stored the basic operating system (OS), the application programs ("apps"), and the user's data. When you turned on the computer, the OS was read in ("booted up") and the various folders were listed on the monitor screen. These DOS systems (disc OS) used command line control. The keyboard was used to select a folder, another keyboard stroke to open it, and two more to select and open a document in the folder. The Apple II also offered an early spreadsheet, VisiCalc. The Apple II was a very successful product; for the next decade Apple's market share was exceeded only by that of Commodore. With this demonstration that there was a significant market for such products, IBM, the dominant producer of the large main frames used in business, decided to enter the personal computer business. IBM commissioned Bill Gates and Microsoft to prepare the software for its IBM PC. The software was not protected; it was released as "open source", which allowed other companies to create apps to run on that OS; the resulting flood secured IBM's role in this market.

The next advance came with Steve Jobs and Apple's Macintosh computer. This computer introduced the graphic user interface (with its desk top Window, Icon, Menu, Pointer) and the mouse which controlled the cursor on the screen. (This is the technique we use today.) This computer had an internal hard drive holding 20M bits of information. The monitor was a color CRT (cathode ray tube) and Apple's proprietary architecture was designed to give the machine its excellent graphics capability. The product was very successful and it prompted Microsoft to develop its Windows OS. IBM used its extensive business contacts, the multiple apps written for Windows, and the higher price of the Macintosh to significantly reduce Apple's market share.

Unfortunately, IBM's hardware base was also not protected and it became the standard for others to manufacture PCs. The appearance of the PC "clones" led IBM to bow out of the PC market. Today the major players are Apple, Dell, Hewlett Packard, and several Japanese and Korean companies.

The most recent advance is the development of operating systems for mobile devices. Created primarily for the computers in "smart phones" such as the iPhone, these OS have allowed the use of radio links such as WI-FI, enabling the use of cordless devices like tablets.

The functional ability of today's PCs can be augmented by the "Cloud", a set of computers at a remote site with special programs. For example, the Apple Cloud can store data from one device and make it available to other devices. Thus, your desktop computer, your tablet and your iPhone can share the same calendar, contact list and drafts of documents. Software in this Cloud can also convert dictation into text. The Kespry Cloud can convert a drone's digital data into selected images for the system user.



Much of this magical technology is based on Artificial Intelligence (AI). This software can recognize patterns and implement tools to recommend strategies. Today's Internet search engines and on-line retailers employ AI. It has also been embedded in a medical system to assist doctors in diagnosing illnesses. All this has led some people to ask if computers can think. A British mathematician, Alan Turing, answered in this way. "If a computer's written response to written questions cannot be distinguished from the response of a human, then the computer can be said to 'think'." This may have been adequate 40 years ago, but today's IBM Watson suggests that a more insightful answer is needed.



- **WHEN YOU COME TO A FORK IN THE ROAD, TAKE IT.**
- **I ALWAYS THOUGHT THAT RECORD WOULD STAND UNTIL IT WAS BROKEN.**
- **THE FUTURE AIN'T WHAT IT USED TO BE.**

