

News and Views *Ávila*

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AN OLYMPIC ADVENTURE

Claire Stahler

It was 1974 when my husband, George, was assigned to help the Lake Placid Olympic Organizing Committee (LPOOC) with its efforts to prepare for the 1980 Olympic Winter Games. At that time, he worked for the New York State Department of Transportation (DOT) designing highways and undertaking special projects. In the mid 1970's, together with other DOT personnel, George began traveling to Lake Placid on a regular basis for meetings with the LPOOC.

To facilitate his Olympic planning work, he was sent to the 1976 Winter Olympics in Innsbruck, Austria, to the 1976 Summer Olympics in Montreal, Canada, and to the 1978 World Nordic Ski Championships in Lahti, Finland. I was able to accompany the LPOOC deputation to both the Innsbruck and Lahti games.

By 1977, it became necessary for George to relocate from the Albany area to Lake Placid. The whole family (George, Claire, son George, and daughters Carolyn and Beth) moved into their Lake Placid home on July 1, 1977. We were immediately smitten with Lake Placid, and subsequently lived there for 25 years.

While George was involved in various aspects of planning for the games, I was a part of a team that produced all the floral decorations for the Opening Ceremony, medalist bouquets, International Olympic Committee members' guest rooms, and more. Both our daughters volunteered at the Athletes Housing and Olympic Arena venues. Son, George was off to college at the time.

The trip to Austria inculcated both of us with the "Travel Bug." Over the years, we hosted two exchange students, one from Germany and one from Finland. Daughter Carolyn was an exchange student in Switzerland during her senior year in high school. George and I travelled to those three countries several times, to visit our exchange students' families, as well as our daughter's Swiss host family. We also researched and found several Stahler family relatives in the Hassloch and Neustadt an der Weinstrasse locale.

With our zest for travel firmly engaged, we visited Ireland, Southern England, Northern France, Denmark, Italy, Turkey, Canada, Mexico, and the Bahamas as well as 25 states from Alaska to Florida and California to New England (including the Navajo and Hopi Reservations). As native New Yorkers, we enjoy being able to get to New York City and to our beloved Adirondacks.

So, what began as an Olympic adventure, morphed into a passion for understanding other cultures and people in this country and around the world. It is amazing that our exposure to the Olympics, in a tiny Adirondack community, helped shape our lives, and blessed us with a wonderful extended family. However, it has done just that!

We always watch as much of the Olympic Winter Games on TV as possible. Lake Placid has become part of the DNA of these two Class of 1955 graduates of Albany High School.



ELEANOR AND RICHARD KRAKOWER**Interviewed by Karl Gohlke**

Photograph by Max Tiller

When Eleanor and Richard Krakower moved to Avila, they knew many of the residents and were generally familiar with the community. Eleanor's sister, Helen Scherzer, lived at Avila a number of years until her death earlier this year. Ellie and Dick had often visited and dined with her.

The Krakowers are native Albanians and attended the Albany public schools. When they began to date, they were surprised to learn that their mothers had been girlhood friends, who were thrilled when their children eventually married. Each had been married before. Together they brought six children into their blended family, all of whom completed college, married and now have children of their own. The Krakowers maintain close ties with their extended family, including 12 grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.

Dick had completed two years in an engineering program when he joined the Marine Corps during the Korean conflict.

When he returned to civilian life, his job involved working on the team that conducted the engineering survey for the section of the Northway between Glens Falls and Warrensburg. Thereafter, he entered into the business world in a partnership that distributed builders' hardware. After 15 years he went out on his own. He established a new distributorship specializing in millwork specialties. Eleanor joined him in this business and they worked together until their retirement.

The Krakowers have been active in the Albany business and social community. Dick belonged to a number of trade and fraternal organizations. They established a second residence in Bolton Landing where they lived the last few years. They also wintered in Sarasota, Florida.

Dick and Ellie Krakower have integrated quickly into the Avila community; reestablishing old friendships and participating in Avila's rich menu of activities. They are outgoing and easy to engage.

MY LIFE IN FLORIDA**Beatrice R. Cohen**

It's an easy drive on flat streets with parallel lines formed by protective palm trees. Rainbow colors reflected in the mirrors of my condo are only an appetizer for the awesome sunsets: deep purple, orange and blue skies meet pale yellow, pink and sheer blues; then meld with voluptuous white clouds looking down at the canals and the vast ocean.

I delight in the fun of looking for sea shells and exceptional pebbles. I fill my pail with these treasures as I dig my toes into the cool white sand just before twilight approaches.

The late dinner-time hour draws me to the mouthwatering smells of the Pastrami Club. Later at night we dance to the rhythms of the rumba and the samba.

NANCY NITZBERG**Interviewed by Wilbur Shapiro**

Photograph by Max Tiller

Nancy left her home in Albany to grace the halls of Avila in October 2017. She had lived and worked in Albany all her life as had her parents. Her husband, David had a dental practice in Albany. He died some ten years ago.

Nancy, a reading specialist, retired from the Albany city school system 12 years ago. She had taught mostly inner-city school children for 23 years. Her parents were also school teachers in Albany. She earned a BA in English History from SUNY Albany and later enhanced her education with two Master's degrees; in Reading and in Elementary General Studies.

Nancy's three sons live in New York State. Chuck is a successful artist, who exhibits and sells his work at various professional showings. Nancy has some of his work in her apartment. Andy is a lawyer and his wife Barbara is a public relations specialist. William is a successful business man and his

wife Tina, a PhD, is a teacher and author. Tina is presently on a book tour. Nancy has two grandchildren, aged seven.

As a teacher, Nancy had summers off from work and traveled extensively. She went to Europe, frequenting Paris. She visited Israel three times. Her volunteer work includes teaching English to Russian immigrants, and supervising student teachers. She received awards for her reading teaching skills. Her hobbies include swimming, bridge and her book club.

Nancy's energetic and vibrant personality is a welcome addition to our Avila community.

SOME TRUTHS ABOUT AQUATIC TRAINING (adapted)**Carlos Reyes****Submitted by Barbara Howansky**

1. Excellent for weight loss.
2. Improves tone and strength. Using equipment combined with the resistive properties of water improves strength and endurance.
3. Enhances flexibility and balance. Flexibility is improved by incorporating basic stretching techniques with elastic bands to improve the stretches. Balance is improved by holding poses in the water and challenging the base of support (how wide or narrow one stands in a fixed spot.)
4. Improves movement. Practicing the five essential functional movements (squatting, single leg, pushing, pulling and rotation) in the safe resistive water environment reduces the risk of injuries significantly.
5. Great for rehabilitation. Training in the water allows participants to continue their recovery in the safe resistive and compressive water environment.
6. Perfect for chronic conditions. The natural resistance of the water cushions joints, avoiding significant discomfort or pain.
7. Heart Rate. Due to the compressive nature of water one can work harder in the water without compromising your heart rate.



BREAST CANCER AWARENESS MONTH**Joyce Gibbs**

Back in October of 1995 when my Mom and I went for our mammograms, we made it a day of celebration because we were doing something good for ourselves. I had no indication when the phone rang the next morning that this would be the day that changed my life forever. I was asked to come back the following day for another exam because they could not get a good reading from the x-rays taken the day before. I was to meet with a surgeon and an oncologist who would explain everything to me in depth.

My first thought was "Oh! My God! I have cancer. I don't want to go through chemo or radiation." It turned out those treatments were not for me. My cancer was so deep and encapsulated that radiation and chemo would not touch it. I guess I was lucky because surgery was the only option, but first the doctors needed to do a biopsy to make sure it was cancer and not just calcium deposits.

I told them that I had to put it on the back burner for now because my husband was facing open heart surgery in November and we had to get him through that first.

I had the lumpectomy in December. The cancer diagnosis was confirmed and I had a bi-lateral mastectomy on January 22, 1996. I have been cancer free for 21 years.

Although you and I celebrate Breast Cancer Awareness Month in October, I am thankful that I can tell my story every month of the year. Since men can get breast cancer too, everyone needs to be checked.

Make October your Special Month too. And if you missed it, start the new year right. Do it now.

**GIVING THANKS****Basanta Manjari Das****(Means "Spring Bouquet" in India)**

Dear friends,

At this time of Thanksgiving, I would like to say THANK YOU to all of you, my AVILA FAMILY. Your kindness, your welcoming ways, your concern for my well-being and the love and respect you extend to me has touched me profoundly. I hear my husband's words to me, and family and friends in time of difficulty and pain, "You are not alone, learn from your experience and immediately 'take the next step'." That is what all the residents and staff here are helping me to do.

Friendship is of the utmost value to me. I feel "The Fabric of Friendship is God's own design, it touches your heart strings and binds them to mine."

Happy Thanksgiving

God Bless You

Love, Bami

DEATH AT THE OPERA

Murray Block

I have always been an avid opera-goer. There are many charming comic operas. However, by far the more preferred works are dramatic tragedies, often ending with the death of the hero or heroine, or both, or even mobs at the same time.

On rare occasions, an opera has come to a close by the actual death of a performer in mid-performance. I was at one such suspended performance at the Met in January 1996.

A busload of us from the Siena College Opera Club had gone down to the Met with the College's bus to see the Leos Janacek Czech opera, "The Makropulos Case," starring Jessye Norman, and playing there for the very first time that night. The house was packed. We had come to the Met to see a new opera by the great Czech symphonic composer, and to watch the fabulous Jessye Norman take on a new role.

The libretto is based on the legend of Elena Makropulos who was supposedly 337 years old. Her father had created a secret longevity formula, which his daughter took when she was ready for "renewal" under a different name. The opera begins with Elena's expected arrival at her solicitor's office, where the miraculous formula has been stored over the centuries. She is ready to start yet another lifetime.



The opening scene contains massive file cabinets lined up from floor to ceiling at the left back of the stage. A huge ladder maybe 20 feet high is being moved on gliders by Richard Versalle, the middle-aged tenor singing the role of the clerk. He is alone on stage and is relating the legend of Elena, who is expected soon. He moves the huge ladder to the appropriate spot in the bank of file cabinets, opens a gigantic drawer and pulls out a file. He sings a short passage and suddenly drops about 10 feet to the stage floor. We all gasped, but thought it was some trick of staging. We soon learned better when people rushed in to him, calling his name. The curtain came down abruptly.

The last words he sang while relating Elena's legend were: "Too bad you can only live so long..." Most prophetic last words.

At first it was announced that the performance would continue after a 20-minute pause. After an additional 20 minutes, the General Manager came out to report that Richard Versalles had died of a heart attack. He then announced the cancellation of the rest of the performance. He also told us that this was only the third time since 1960 that a performance at the Met was cancelled during a performance. In January 1988 a performance of Verdi's "Macbeth" was cancelled after a patron committed suicide by jumping from one of the upper balconies—fortunately not hitting any other patrons.

If not for a snowstorm in the Midwest, I would have been present at the first of the three closings mentioned by the Met official that evening. I lived in Manhattan in the 1960s, and had a Friday evening season subscription. I was at a conference in Louisville that week, but had tickets to fly back early Friday to get to the Met on time. A nasty snowstorm closed the airport there, and I had to return home by train, thus having to miss the performance. My teenage nephew was to go with me, so I called him and told him to take a friend, instead. He relayed the events of the evening to me.

It was an all-star performance of Verdi's "La Forza del Destino". Two of the male stars were tenor Richard Tucker, and baritone Leonard Warren. Act III ends when the baritone rushes off to battle, but first, the tenor sings of his friendship for him, the baritone sings of his chances of surviving, and then rushes off as the curtain falls. This is what happened that evening, except Leonard Warren fell as if he tripped as the curtain came down. Most in the audience were shocked to learn it was a heart attack, and the famed baritone had just died.

Here too, there were prophetic words in the final moments. Leonard Warren was about to sing his final words before going off to battle. Richard Tucker sings a brief aria of his concerns about his friend going into battle. His opening words of this short aria are: "Morir! tremenda cosa!!" "Death! What a tremendous thing!"

TREMENDOUS, INDEED!

As a postscript, it might be noted that another performance was cancelled after only the second act quite recently. The matinee performance of "William Tell" was cancelled after the second act on the last Saturday in October 2016, when a man was caught sprinkling two bags of a suspicious white powder into the orchestra pit during the second intermission. The police were called and the rest of "William Tell" cancelled. The performance of the opera scheduled for that evening was also cancelled, in order to cleanse the Met of the mysterious and possibly toxic white powder. It was only after interrogating further that it was learned that the young man seen by some to be sprinkling the powder had told some people in the lounge earlier that he was a music student who was attending that day to honor the memory of his late music mentor. Little did the thousands who were sent home early realize that they, too, were honoring his mentor's ashes.

I got to the Met later that week to see this opera myself. The only excitement was watching William shoot the apple off his son's head.

IN PRAISE OF OLD NOVEMBER

Marie Shore

*My grandpa had the notion that each child should write a poem.
The topic was "Months of the Year", then left them on their own.
My mother sighed, as she had drawn November as her theme
For suddenly the task was not as easy as it seemed!*

*Oh me. Oh my. how hard she'd try to find a good thing to remember
Oh me. Oh my, how hard she tried to sing the praises of November.*

*She found a motif that she used to fill her assignation.
It became the closing comment to catch each stanza's iteration.
No matter how she struggled, warm feelings to engender
She simply could not find a word of praise for old November.*

*So Grandpa wrote a verse about the harvests he'd recall
Of chilly nights, crisp mornings too, and of the first snowfall.
Yet still my mother searched for something pleasant to remember
Oh me, oh my, how hard she'd try to find some praise for old November.*

*April and May held thoughts of spring and so were warmly greeted.
June, July, then August meant summer had not retreated.
September and October brought the vivid hues of fall
Then November's rain and snow came pelting down upon us all.*

*Though it was hard, she still would try to eulogize November!
For in its wake came long awaited Christmas in December!*



COLOR ME HAPPY**Pat Connally**

Photograph by Max Tiller

How do you rid yourself of stress? We all know about exercise, tai chi, yoga, meditation, Pilates, and on and on.

"These methods are too strenuous," I hear you cry. But wait! Here is the newest, most enjoyable, fun way to relax. It can be done anywhere, anytime, alone, with friends or strangers, after purchasing easy to find, inexpensive supplies at any art and craft store.

The only tools required are a coloring book and crayons, colored pencils or felt tipped pens. Individual pages are easily removed from the books for sharing. No special talent is needed, just desire and enthusiasm.

Join us in the Craft Room on Friday afternoons at 2:30 p.m. Feel the quiet calm as you color your cares away.

WATCHING GOD'S BEAUTY UNFOLD***Joyce Gibbs***

Snow falling to the ground,
Shimmering crystals all around,
I sit watching God's beauty unfold,
A snowy winterland I behold.

Not marred by man nor beast
As you look to the west and east.
Moonlight shining ever brightly,
Snow crystals keep falling lightly.

Ever so softly touching the ground,
Whispering a delightful sound.
God's beauty is a wondrous sight
On this moonlit winter night.



Photograph by Max Tiller

BOO! GUESS WHO??

JIM'S GEMS

James Leonard

Nature Study Haiku

Violets love sunshine
Roses seem to like it too
But cloudy days yuck.

When the moon is high
And the stars are blinking
Walk slow in the park.

Spring is a-springing
All the birds a-singing
Sinuses are a-stinging.

Glint of gold through trees
Trembling, moving semaphore
Tiny message of spring.

Sounds of summer rain
Vertical assault on tin
Paradiddle flams.

Hey Nonny Nonny

Nonny has opened a gate
and the idiots have come out to play
with ATMs and CBMs and AK40s
and all.

Play the music to accompany their dance
Feel the pulse of anger
Slam a wall
Break a window.

Now's the time to do it
The music is in tune
The rhythm is engaging
The center is in retreat.

Who will join the fray
Who will come and play
Who will enter the carnage
Who will say no.

Hey nonny, nonny

HAPPY THANKSGIVING



WRITER MEMORABILIA REMEMBERED

Alice Begley

Every aspiring writer dreams of interviewing an author who has made it "big." Many, many years ago, this aspiring young writer landed a long sought-after interview with Mickey Spillane, creator of TV's popular Mike Hammer and author of mystery thrillers that sold over 180,000 books.

Spillane was born Francis Morrison Spillane in Brooklyn in 1918. His father called him "Mickey" but his mother called him "Babe." The tough guy grinned when he told me that. He became a professional swimmer in his youth. At Fort Hayes Kansas State College, Spillane quarterbacked the football team. He proudly pointed to the black and gold jacket adorning the office door.

After a stint as a pilot in the Southeastern Training Command during World War II, he returned to New York City and started a comic book business. Spillane's background was a natural for collecting story ideas. He was an actor, parachutist, deep-sea diver, dirt-track driver, did police reporting and did feature stories.

Many of Spillane's suspense thrillers have been made into movies. He wrote the screenplay about his best known fictional character, Mike Hammer, and in 1951 he played the leading role of his hero. Spillane also played a major role in "Ring of Fear" starring John Wayne.

Spillane had a treasured white Jaguar on the side of his home lawn that was given to him by John Wayne for rewriting the script. The car and card arrived tied in a red ribbon and simply read "Thanks, John." When this eager reporter thought how great a picture that would make for her story and asked Spillane if she could take his picture in it, his reply was, "Well let's go down to it!" By the Jaguar, he refused to get in it and insisted that this reporter stand by it and HE took the picture.

When asked about advice for aspiring authors, Spillane's sage, straight forward words, "If you are going to write, sit down and write. If you are an actor you can be out of work, but you can't be an out-of-work writer. If you have a typewriter you should be writing!"

Spillane didn't write for the critics, he said he wrote for the people who read his books and paid his income, "since that is what keeps the smoke coming out of the chimney."

The general public sometimes confuses Mickey Spillane with his TV hero, Mike Hammer. They picture him in a trench coat with an upturned collar wearing a fedora. But folks in Murrells Inlet saw this "tough guy" in white duck pants, navy sweatshirt and a blue baseball cap driving a white pick-up truck to the local hardware store. A paradox of images? Not really. Read a Spillane mystery thriller; you'll notice the tough guy hero is a softie underneath too!



AGE FRIENDLY COMMUNITIES

PAT BINZER

A few years ago, the World Health Organization (WHO) was evaluating its progress in helping communities around the world become more "livable cities" for older citizens. AARP joined the conversation and adopted the term "Age Friendly Communities" concentrating on adults over 50 years of age. It developed a plan for counties, towns, villages, and

neighborhoods in the United States striving to make changes in every local community to earn the designation "Age Friendly Community."

Leaders in Albany County decided that becoming an Age-Friendly County was not only desirable but achievable. In the fall of 2016, County Executive Daniel McCoy appointed Tom Scarff as Project Director and Pat Binzer and Mike Burges as Co-Chairs of Age Friendly Albany County.

What should an Age-Friendly community look and feel like? WHO and AARP determined that regardless of size, there were common ingredients which were deemed most important. The challenge for the Age Friendly Albany County team is to apply these descriptions to each municipality in the county and prepare an Action Plan to suggest changes which would improve the health and well-being of each community's older citizens. I'm grateful that we were given five years to complete the task.

We will form work groups of stakeholders to investigate what improvements need to be made to improve life for all Albany County citizens. To meet our obligation to WHO and AARP, Keith Chan, PhD, from UAlbany School of Social Welfare will conduct the required Needs Assessment data collection for a scientific evaluation of the success of our initiative. We will also form a Community Council with representation from each Albany County municipality providing each with a voice in developing Age Friendly Albany County.

Let's see how Avila would rate as an Age Friendly Community:

Rating for Avila	WHO/AARP Ingredient Descriptions	Availability at Avila
A+	There is a need for outdoor spaces to gather and easily accessible buildings .	Avila has ample walking areas. The center courtyard has ample seating. The building entries all have door openers for easy access.
A+	There is a need for transportation to appointments, entertainment, shopping, or just taking a ride	Avila provides transportation to appointments, events, shopping, plays, concerts, movies, out-to-dinner nights and just going for a ride and ice cream.
A+	There is a need for housing that is designed or modified to meet the needs of an aging population .	Each apartment can be modified to meet the needs or desires of residents.
A+	Opportunities should be available to avoid loneliness and isolation .	Many daily activities, within Avila and the outside community are planned for the residents.
C-	There should be provision for intergenerational activities .	Avila has just begun a "pen pal" relationship with a high school class in North Colonie. It's a beginning with room to grow.
A+	There should be opportunities for people to become	Residents are encouraged to join in to activities on a daily

	involved in community life.	basis.
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A+	There needs to be a process to help everyone stay connected without dependency on the internet or smartphones	There are notices of upcoming events placed in everyone's mailbox. There is an in-house TV channel listing all events, classes and meetings. There is a monthly calendar describing planned meetings, activities and events.
A+	It is important that community and health care services be available nearby that residents can access and afford.	All residents are provided with a lifeline to call for help; a 911 response team within a 1 to 2-mile radius and 24/7 response Two major hospitals and two major rehab/nursing homes are located within a few minutes of the community.

Your questions and suggestions are welcome as we go forward to create an Age Friendly Albany County.

CARING FOR CAREGIVERS

Karl H. Gohlke

Many of us have been caregivers at some time in our lives. At first, parenting required our concentration and time. Later, parents or other loved ones needed assistance. Today, many Avila residents are functioning as caregivers.

Caregivers experience substantial stress as they try to manage all the tasks required for this responsibility, as well as having to satisfy the many other demands for their time and attention. It is often exasperating.

There is clearly a need to support those who are caring for others. The residents of Avila have the capacity to establish such a group which could assist caregivers in helping themselves. These empathetic residents would reach out to a caregiver and share some of the burdens they face, lessening the stress with which the caregiver is coping.

The ability to be an active listener, and to help someone else resolve problems are the two abilities needed. Solution focused support is the goal for such a "care for caregivers" support group.

If you are interested in participating in the development of this service for Avila residents, contact Karl Gohlke, the new Chair of Avila's Outreach Committee at x211. An organizational meeting will be scheduled in January.

THE RAGING CANAL

Paul Ward

July 4, 2017 marked the 200th anniversary of the Erie Canal (1817-1825). There have been many programs and displays marking the event. However, very few know of the terrible storms that threatened the destruction of barges and possible drownings that "canallers" faced plying their trade.

Paul Ward submitted this account which P. Morris, composer and lyricist, put into verse form from an 1844 storm. A much longer version performed by the Golden Eagle String Band can be enjoyed on YouTube.



*Come listen to my story ye landsmen one and all,
I'll sing to you the dangers of the Raging Canal.
For I am one of many who expects a watery grave
For I've been at the mercy of the wind and the wave.*

*When we left New York harbor it was the middle of the year
We put our helm hard a port and for Buffalo did steer.
But when we got in sight of Albany we met a heavy squall,
And we carried away our mizzen mast on the Raging Canal.*

*She minded her helm just like a thing of life,
The mate got on his knees uttering prayers for his wife.
We threwed the provisions over board it was blowing such a squall,
And we put on short allowance on the Raging Canal.*

*It seemed as if the Devil had work in hand that night,
For our oil it was all gone, and our lamps they gave no light.
The clouds began to gather and the rain began to fall,
And we had to reef our royal on that Raging Canal.*

*Loud roared the dreadful thunder, the rain in deluge showered,
The clouds were rent asunder, by lightning's vivid powers.
The bowsman gave a bellow, and the cook she gave a squall,
And the waters run mountain high on that Raging Canal.*

*The captain came on deck and then began to rail,
He bellowed to the driver to take in more sail.
The driver knocked a horse down and then gave a bawl,
And we scudded under bare poles on that Raging Canal.*



THE FIRST DIGITAL COMPUTERS

John Wagner

The age of digital computers began with the development of two enabling technologies. The first was the realization that the binary logic used in computers could be implemented in Off-On devices like electromechanical relays. In the 1930s, several special purpose computers were built using such relays.

The other development involved vacuum tubes, first invented by Lee DeForest and Ambrose Fleming. The wireless telegraphy system of Guglielmo Marconi used radio waves to transmit Morse code signals. Vacuum tubes made it possible to send audio signals over the radio and led to the first radio broadcast in 1920. The growing popularity of voice radio prompted firms such as RCA (Radio Corporation of America) to develop vacuum tubes that could enhance the performance of both civilian and military radios. This set the stage for the first electronic digital computers.

In 1942, the first electronic, all-purpose digital computer was created¹. The U.S. Army Ballistic R&D Laboratory gave the University of Pennsylvania a contract to build a machine to generate artillery firing tables. The machine was called ENIAC, (Electronic Numerical Integrator and Computer). Based on vacuum tubes, it was very large by today's standards. It occupied 1800 sq. ft., weighed about 27 tons, and used 150 KW of power. It was a modular device, with each module hard-wired to execute a specific mathematical function. The input data was put on Hollerith (IBM) cards, which were also used for the output data. An IBM printer provided a readable hard copy of the results. When completed, ENIAC could do in 20 seconds what it would take a human being 20 hours to do.

In theory, ENIAC was a general-purpose computer, but not so in practice. Two people changed that. The first was John von Neumann (1904-1957), a mathematician at Princeton's Institute for Advanced Studies. In 1946, he proposed a computer architecture that had internal memory, used binary digits (rather than decimal ones), and could store program instructions for a specific equation in the internal memory. This proposal was incorporated into the design of the UNIVAC (Universal Arithmetic Computer), the first commercial computer. These machines were much in demand. (At the time, I was working on an Army contract and was using the UNIVAC in midtown Manhattan to evaluate a radar design. Once a week, I was allotted a 15-minute window at 2:30 AM.)



The second person to make such computers practical was Grace Hopper (1906-1992). A mathematics professor at Vassar, she joined the Naval Reserve in 1942 and was assigned as a programmer to the Mark I relay computer at Harvard. Once, having trouble with a program, Grace traced the problem to a moth caught in a relay. Her report on the problem described her efforts as "debugging". The term caught on and ever since, program problems have been called "bugs". During a later assignment to the UNIVAC staff, Grace pushed for a programming language that was "English-like". Her peers claimed that machines could only understand the numerical codes then being used. So, Grace

created a "compiler", a program that converts "English-like" commands into the numerical machine codes. She developed several programming languages, one of which became the basis of COBOL (Computer Business Oriented Language). She strongly promoted its use and is often

¹¹¹ The courts later awarded the basic computer patents to Professor John Atanosoff of Iowa State University, rather than the ENIAC designers.

called the "mother of COBOL". The language was widely accepted and about a million lines of this code are still in use today.

Grace Hopper retired as a Vice Admiral at age 79, the fourth oldest officer on active duty in the history of the U.S. Navy. Her legacy continues; 1994 saw the first of an ongoing annual conference series, the Grace Hopper Memorial Celebration of Women in Computing.

The computer industry grew with many start-ups; it was dominated by IBM and was characterized as "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs". Many of the "dwarfs" developed special computers, e.g., the Burroughs Company created machines designed for the banking industry. These vacuum tube computers, now called "main frames", occupied many cabinets and required cabling to connect them. Installation of these main frames required both a false floor (some six inches up, to accommodate the cabling), and an air conditioning system (needed to remove the heat generated by all the vacuum tubes). These computers were expensive and IBM, their dominant supplier, sold or leased them to large companies. Later, the operating systems were upgraded to allow "time-sharing" where several people could run different application programs at the same time. For many companies, this justified the expense.

The next advance came with the invention of the transistor (trans-resistor), a solid-state device that could act as a switch. This made it possible to build a computer without vacuum tubes or relays. The first transistorized computer appeared in 1953. Soon there were many desk size computers. As the semiconductor industry continued to miniaturize the circuitry, minicomputers, the size of our microwave ovens, became available.

The last 40 years have seen the emergence of the personal computer (PC). Pioneering efforts by Apple and Microsoft have put PCs in most homes and schools. Today, the communications industry has become the largest user of digital computers, employing them in smartphones and the Internet.

Are computers aiding the start of the next phase of evolution? Pierre Teilhard de Chardin (1874-1955), a Jesuit paleontologist, considered evolution as a cosmic phenomenon and envisioned it in three phases. The first involved the material world of stars and planets. The second phase was that of the biosphere, the world of plants and animals. The third phase, which he termed the "noosphere" (an intellectual analog of the biosphere), was marked by the emergence of a global consciousness. Today's computers have enabled the growth of social media which facilitate the creation and sharing of information and ideas around the world. Could social media signal the beginning of the global consciousness?



FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

Lynn Altonin has compiled an index to the biographies published in *News and Views* from 2007 through 2017. Some articles highlighting special talents or accomplishments of Avila residents were also included. Each citation provides the person's name, the date of the issue containing the article, and additional information, where applicable.

The Index will be posted in the Main Building mailroom and on the bulletin board in the Lodge. A written request for a copy of a particular profile may be addressed to the *News and Views* editor, Box 131. The request should include your name, mailbox number and/or email address, enabling us to give you either a photocopy or to send it to you via email. You can also access recent issues of *News and Views* by going to Quick Links and clicking on *Resident News and Views* at www.avilateretirementcommunity.com.