

Avila News and Views

A publication of the Resident Council at Avila Retirement Community

Albany, NY

April 2021

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK



Welcome to spring and a new beginning. Thanks to Shawn Hall for getting vaccinations for the residents. As a result, we are once again able to dine with each other, play games, attend exercise classes, and hold meetings. Although we are not quite back to normal yet, at least we are getting closer. Late last month, for the first time in a year, my neighbor and I were able to come over from the Lodge, go to exercise class, have lunch, and play Mah Jongg with friends at the main building. So normal, and yet so exhilarating!

News and Views was also affected by the pandemic. We had few new residents, and it was difficult to photograph and interview those who were able to move into Avila. Hopefully, these problems will not recur in the future.

PROJECT LINUS

The Project Linus organization gives blankets to seriously ill or traumatized children. The blankets, which may be knitted, crocheted, or quilted, must be new and made in a smoke-free environment. They are donated freely and become part of that child's possession.

Avila residents display the quilted blankets they made for the Linus Project. Pictured here, left to right, are Sue Minnie, Mary Ellen Bendick, Pat Loudis, Millie Connolly, and Marilyn Seidenberg. Shirley Jordan and Rosemary Kehoe also worked on the project.



Photograph by Max Tiller

FRANK HAMMER

By Erin and Ray Teichman



Photograph by Karl Gohlke

Frank met his wife, Elizabeth, while they were both students at Florida State University. They married immediately after graduation and moved to Michigan for graduate school. This April they will celebrate their 54th anniversary.

They have four children and four grandchildren. Their oldest son, Erich, and his wife, Penny, an occupational therapist, live in Albany. Daughter Mercedes lives in Washington, DC and works for the State Department. Son Garth and his wife, Lauren, live and work in Manhattan. Their youngest daughter, Katrina, lives in the Chicago suburb of Naperville with her husband, Patrick.

Frank worked as a consultant for NSF International and then for Underwriters Labs certifying water and food quality products before retiring. In 2006 Elizabeth retired after teaching for 36 years; then returned to work as a neuropsychiatric psychologist in Ann Arbor, MI.

Decembers they would travel; often using Overseas Adventure Travel for their trips. They have been to India, several countries in Southeast Asia, Europe, and South America. In addition to travel, Frank is a classic car enthusiast and the owner of a 1961 Porsche.

He and Elizabeth lived in an 1896 farmhouse in Chelsea, MI. In 2019, Elizabeth was seriously injured in an auto accident. Unfortunately, their home did not lend itself to becoming handicapped accessible. While Elizabeth was recovering, Frank became ill; so, their children decided he should live near one of them. Frank chose Erich, Albany, and Avila. The rest, as they say, is history. Welcome, Frank. We look forward to Elizabeth joining you soon.

SISTER KATHLEEN HUGHES

By Rod Correll

Sister Kathleen Hughes came to the Avila campus in September of 2020, just prior to the arrival of the second wave of the COVID19 pandemic here in the Capital District. She was invited here by her order, the Religious of the Sacred Heart, to take over as the coordinator of the group of 10 retired nuns who live at Avila. The timing of her move from St Louis was fortunate in terms of safety but inopportune when it came to integrating, participating, and enjoying the activities in our community. She notes that she views her role here as "one with her sisters, not leading the pack" and looks forward to seeing more than just foreheads as social strictures are relaxed and she gets to meet other residents.

Sr. Hughes was born and brought up in Shaker Heights, Ohio, one of five siblings in what she described as a typical Catholic family. After high school she attended Newton College of the Sacred Heart near Boston



Photograph by Mary Jane Sullivan, RSCJ

After receiving her BA at Newton College, completing the formation program of the Religious of the Sacred Heart, and working in two of their schools, Sr. Hughes became the first woman to receive a PhD in Liturgical Studies from the University of Notre Dame. For the next 19 years she was Professor of Word and Worship at the Catholic Theological Union in Chicago. This changed when she was appointed provincial (CEO) of her order in the United States in 1999 and moved to St. Louis.

After two 3-year terms in this administrative post, Sr. Hughes returned to what she enjoys doing most, writing, preaching, speaking, consulting, and teaching. Event planning appears to be another thing she is particularly good at. Asked in 2015 to organize the bicentennial of her order's arrival here in the New World in 1818, Sr. Hughes gathered ideas and a committee to find ways to celebrate this occasion, which finally included a celebratory mass created by Fr. Michael Joncas, a world-renowned composer of liturgical music; spirituality and academic conferences; and publication of books and prayers for people of all ages. A global day of service was planned for the Sacred Heart family in 41 countries around the world and a life-sized statue of St. Rose Philippine Duchesne, the US founder of the order, was sculpted and placed in the St Louis cathedral garden. To call this enterprise a major undertaking is an understatement.

Sr. Hughes has written or edited 11 books and has published numerous articles and reviews demonstrating a broad range of interests. Besides writing she enjoys reading, "good" drama, cooking, knitting, arranging flowers and, perhaps most of all, being with close friends. When asked whether she would be staying here or eventually moving on, she replied, "Well, that's up to my order and the Holy Spirit, but I do plan to continue to enjoy life at Avila, to take advantage of some of the group activities here as they open again and, with my sisters, to continue walking each other home." What a wonderful plan, I thought, for all of us, as we age here in place.

RICHARD AND NANCY PFAU

By Rod Correll

The Pfaus moved to Avila from Sharon Springs, where they hoped to remain, but Nancy's stroke forced them to give up their 130-year-old farmhouse. Their friends Rod and Chloe Correll invited them to look at Avila.



When Richard retired in 2008, Nancy chose her hometown of Sharon Springs, where her mother's family dates to 1748. Her father was from Albany, and an uncle, Philip DiPace, served 33 years on the Albany Common Council and lived for a time at Teresian House. Nancy earned her BA at Syracuse and her MA from Columbia, and taught history and English in five states and Tehran, Iran.

As village historian Nancy wrote *Sharon and Sharon Springs*, published by Arcadia Press, the story of a spa that historically has embraced diversity. Her first book, *Illinois College President's Home: Traditions for Dining*, a combination of history and recipes, was named 2001's best cookbook in Illinois.

Richard received his BA from Hamilton College and PhD from Virginia. He taught at Dickinson College and the University of Miami, then spent 25 years in academic leadership, the last 15 as president of Illinois College and then Averett University.

His biography of Admiral Lewis Strauss, a controversial figure at the Atomic Energy Commission in the early Cold War, was published by the University Press of Virginia. Richard was an Air Force officer from 1966 to 1971, including two years advising the Imperial Iranian Air Force.

After retirement Richard taught at SUNY Albany and Hartwick College, was a senior consultant for Collegiate Counsel, an academic search firm, and served on the Schoharie County Economic Development Authority.

The Pfaus have two children and two grandchildren. Daughter Aleksandra, Professor of Medieval History at Hendrix College, earned her BA at Wellesley and her PhD at Michigan. Son Bradley has degrees from Hamilton and Lesley Colleges, teaches teachers at the University of Bern, Switzerland, and travels all over Europe teaching for Apple. Grandson Sebastian is at the University of Bern in Archaeology and Islamic Studies, and grandson Tobias is finishing at gymnasium.

MARILYN SEIDENBERG

Interviewed by Murray Block



Photograph by Max Tiller

Marilyn Seidenberg is, by no means, a **new** resident at Avila. She moved into her west wing apartment at the end of August 2020, having come here from Menands. Due to personal limitations, on my part, I was not able to meet and interview her before this. I am delighted to have finally been able to meet with our friendly and affable new neighbor.

She was quite familiar with Avila and its warmth and caring neighbors. She has had several friends here, and often came to play Mah Jongg, and visit with them. She, therefore, knew of the warmth of neighbors and staff and the variety of (pre-pandemic) activities available here.

Marilyn likes to keep busy. Since moving here, she joined with a group of neighbors to form the Quilt Club. For years, she has been active in the Linus Project, a charity dedicated to helping young children who are sick or traumatized, often providing them with personal blankets that gave them the sense of security that the cartoon character, Linus, gets from his blanket.

Marilyn was born in Middletown, and later moved to Newburgh. She attended the University of Pittsburgh, where she earned a BS degree in French and psychology. She made her career as a grade schoolteacher, notably in the Troy School District.

She had been married but, sadly, her husband died at a young age, leaving her with a young daughter. Marilyn became a single working Mom, raising her daughter, working full time, and still finding time to do charitable volunteering to help others.

Marilyn's daughter is married and lives with her husband and two daughters of her own in Maryland. Marilyn, of course, adores her two granddaughters, and misses seeing them due to pandemic limitations on travel. However, the phone and computer keep the family together, until COVID-19 is no longer the menace it is.

She loves living here and praises the leadership and staff for their successful efforts to keep all of us safe during this difficult year. She is very glad she moved to Avila.

KAREN MEEMKEN

By John Wagner

A recent addition to the staff here at Avila is Karen Meemken, our Resident Service Advisor. As Karen noted in her introductory letter, she has spent her career using her knowledge and skills to help us maintain our independent living styles. Her goal is that each Avila resident remain as safe and independent as they can, while maintaining their best possible quality of life.

To help realize this goal, Karen can:

- assist in providing medical and non-medical support in the form of helping to obtain medical equipment or home health aides,
- provide a contact link when a resident is in a hospital or rehab facility, as well as with the
- resident's emergency contact person,
- provide counseling in times of transition or stress, and
- offer insight and education concerning medical treatment options, alternate living options, and end of life care planning.

Karen's career began with her studies at SUNY at Brockport, leading to a Bachelor of Science in Social Work degree. A couple of years later, Karen earned a master's degree in Social Work at SUNY Albany. Along the way, she earned several credentials:

- LCSW, Licensed Clinical Social Worker,
- C-ASWCM, Advanced Social Work Case Manager

The requirements for the first license changed after Karen had been working in the field for several years and so she was "grandfathered in" and not required to take a second exam. To maintain both credentials, Karen must participate in continuing education annually.

On the personal side, Karen grew up in Utica, where much of her family still lives. She married David Meemken, an accountant, 12 years after meeting him as a college freshman. They live in Averill Park and have three children, all in their twenties. The eldest son just got engaged. There had been a debate in Karen's family as to whether there was a notorious outlaw in their family tree. Karen's maiden name was Bonney, and a William Bonney was also known as Billy the Kid. The NIMFT side ("Not in **MY** Family Tree") appears to have won.

We are delighted that Karen has joined us and we look forward to working with her.



Photograph by Karl Gohlke

HAIKU

By Margaret Teichman Craig

Pretty spring flowers

In my beautiful garden

Snow bound in the ground.

WATERPOWER AND COHOES (PART II)

By Steve Rotter

In 1831, the Mohawk River was dammed above the Cohoes Falls to provide water for the Erie Canal so it could circumvent Cohoes Falls. This dam also provided hydro power for the Harmony Mills complex and was the final step in the construction of the Erie Canal. The original Erie Canal, or "Clinton's Ditch," was 40 feet wide at the top and 4 feet deep. It was replaced by the Enlarged Canal in 1941. The Enlarged Canal was 70 feet wide at the top and 7 feet deep and was now wide enough to permit traffic in both directions. In Cohoes, the canal had a system of 10 locks to navigate the 60 to 90-foot drop of the Cohoes Falls. This was the greatest concentration of locks on the Canal. Portions of the old Erie Canal locks can still be seen in the city. Most of the locks are buried or demolished.

The Champlain Canal had been completed in 1823 and the Erie Canal very soon after. The old Erie Canal became the Cohoes Power Canal for Harmony Mills. This canal system was nearly two miles long and had a drop of 120 feet from beginning to end. The power came from this head of water of 120 feet at the turbines. From 1871 to 1873 two eight-foot diameter pipes were installed to feed two turbines that were installed in the basement of mill #3 that harnessed the power of the water going over the Cohoes Falls, and the water in the canal system, to run the belts that turned the gears that made the spindles and looms run. The turbines can be seen today at Mill #3. At the time they were the largest and most powerful turbines ever manufactured to supply direct power to an American manufacturer and they ran until 1915. They ran not on coal or electricity, which was not even an option then, but hydraulic power. In addition to the two main turbines, there were three other smaller turbines elsewhere in the mill.

The Cohoes Power Canal System was completed in 1880 and provided the power source for Cohoes mills and factories by supplying water for the wheels and turbines. Cohoes could be described as a mini-Venice due to the network of canals and raceways that transformed the northern part of the city into a little group of islands. This can be seen in a map of 1843. Bridges of all types and description were necessary to carry on the daily routines of work and leisure. Erie Canal lock gates were used as short cuts to cross the canal, which resulted in several drownings.

In 1911 the Cohoes Company proposed an extensive project of electrification for Cohoes and the surrounding area with a new hydroelectric plant on its waterpower site. Dam, gatehouse, and diverting canal were already in existence for the new plant. The system of canals providing waterpower for all floors of Harmony Mills was now obsolete. Three hydroelectric generators were to be built and installed by General Electric to produce 30,000 electric horsepower. This plant would supply light and heat, as well as power where required. A whole new world opened for Cohoes and its surroundings. In 1918, the Cohoes Company and its Power Canal System became the Cohoes Power and Light Company. In 1950, the company would finally become part of the Niagara Mohawk system.

In 1910, business at Harmony Mills started to go downhill - the depression was the final blow. The Mills ceased operation and began selling off the company. The company was liquidated between 1932 and 1937.

Harmony Mills is now living a new life as attractive, modern, and comfortable loft living apartments. The Lofts at Mill #3 have many amenities---indoor parking, indoor pool, fitness room and great views.



Photo by Daniel Case

DREAM, DREAM, DREAM**Wilbur Shapiro**

*When I was a kid, I dreamed to be a Dodger
To play baseball in Brooklyn, I was a real charger
Or maybe the basketball Knicks, I'd be in Heaven
That would be difficult, since I was only five feet seven*

*When I learned to drive, a car was my desire
I dreamed of having a Pontiac bird of fire
As a teenager I had a pompadour
I dreamed of being with Dorothy Lamour*

*Dreaming is good because it provides incentive
In very rare cases, the result is inventive
However, success doesn't come out of the blue
Dreams mostly do not come true*

FLOWERS**By Joe Shapiro**

We marveled at the orchids growing profusely in the dense shrubbery, south of San Juan in the el Yungue National Forest, Puerto Rico's unique home for these rare and exotic beauties. Returning to San Juan to the north, the two-lane highway twisted and turned, cars passing on the narrow shoulders, with no sight distance, the first car that honked, passed, as oncoming cars hopefully waited....

Tight grip on the wheel. Suddenly, looming, an old station wagon in the middle of the road, its driver changing a tire, his family scattered about, children playing, mother looking anxiously on. Poor folks out for a Sunday drive. No flare. But...

Warning the oncoming driver, a bright red geranium plant, 20 feet back, aptly placed!
How appropriate.



NEWS AND VIEWS SAYS GOODBYE TO TWO COLLEAGUES

SALLY TILLER



Photograph by Max Tiller

We mourn the passing of Sally Tiller, a valuable member of our staff and Avila's poet laureate. Sally was in charge of distributing *News and Views* (in fact she was doing just that a few hours before she became ill). Whenever we needed a poem to celebrate a 100th birthday, to thank someone, or just to lighten up our day, Sally would always come up with an appropriate verse. We will miss her vitality, warmth, and wit.

ELANE SELTZER

Sadly, just before we went to publication, we learned of the passing of Elane Seltzer. Prior to her illness, Elane was the "go to" person for proofreading *News and Views*. Our previous editor, Lore Scurrah, had high praise for Elane's ability to quickly spot and correct any mistakes or inconsistencies. We are sorry to hear of her death.



Photograph by Max Tiller

FOCUS FEATURE: AVILA'S FINE STAFF

"Tom Thompson, Maintenance, has been very helpful and pleasant when I need him. Also, Housekeeping staff have been effective in cleaning and keeping halls and our facility clean. They are always so pleasant." – Millie Polsik

Gloria Herkowitz wants to commend Tammy Kreuger, Lodge receptionist, for her help as Gloria was going to PT and frequently had to change dates and times. Tammy made the changes, never complaining, always cheerful.

"Devin and Jeanette, Grand Lodge Reception, have both been very helpful and cheerful during the pandemic. Devin will come any time, any problem. Jeanette is very pleasant to talk to. Both make us feel comfortable." – Bea Glucksman.

Pat Connally would like to feature Esther Ford, Housekeeping, for going out of her way to help Pat recently when Pat was ill.

TRAVEL VIGNETTES - SWAZILAND AND BERLIN

By Fred Seltzer (including photographs)



Driving from Kruger National Park to Durban in 1969, we went through Swaziland. In Somhlolo National Stadium we watched warriors in traditional dress, soldiers, boy scouts, and girl scouts pass in review before King Sobhuza II (in his leopard skin dress) during Independence Day celebrations.

(Editor's Note: In 2018 the country's name was changed to eSwatini.)

In 1970 a friend and i crossed from West Berlin to East Berlin at Checkpoint Charlie. After walking down Unter den Linden to the Museum Island and viewing the Great Gate of Ishtar, we returned to Checkpoint Charlie. There the East German official took our passports and examined our pictures inside the passports for a very long time. Then he gave me my friend's passport and gave my friend mine! So much for German efficiency. After leaving the checkpoint we viewed the wall, which was covered with graffiti. It came down four years later.



HUBBLE AND HIS TELESCOPE

By John Wagner

Some of the most spectacular images of objects in the night sky have been provided by the Hubble Space Telescope. Its observations have contributed to our understanding of the world in which we live. It is fitting that it was named in honor of Edwin Hubble (1889 - 1953). When he was going to school, the astronomers thought that the Milky Way contained all the stars in the universe and that the universe was quite stable. Hubble's work changed all that.

After completing his military service in World War I, Hubble joined the staff of the Mount Wilson Observatory in California. He resumed his study of nebulae, bright clusters of stars. While examining them with the powerful telescope at Mount Wilson, he discovered that some of the nebulae had Cepheid variable stars. These stars are unusual because their brightness varies in a periodic fashion. An earlier researcher had found that the periodicity was related to the star's surface brightness. By comparing the apparent brightness of the star to its surface brightness, Hubble was able to determine the distance to the star. Repeating this for several nebulae, he found that all of them were far outside the Milky Way. They were in fact separate galaxies, just like the Milky Way.

Furthermore, spectral analysis of the light from these galaxies revealed that they all showed a shift toward the red end of the visible spectrum. The shift occurred because the galaxies were moving away from the Earth. Hence, the universe was not stable, but was expanding. The rate at which the universe is expanding is still not clear, but this was the first observational data to support the "Big Bang" theory. Hubble also noted that the distance to and velocity of those galaxies were proportional. This constant of proportionality is now called the Hubble constant.



Photo courtesy of NASA

To get better data on remote objects, an optical telescope needed to be above the atmosphere with its absorption and variability as well as away from the optical pollution caused by city lights. NASA launched the largest such telescope in 1990 and named it after Edwin Hubble. It was a reflector scope with a huge mirror (about 8 ft. in diameter). After several space missions to repair and improve it, the telescope is expected to last more than 40 years. (As of April 2020, it was still yielding valuable data.)

One of the first missions assigned to the Hubble Space Telescope (HST) was to repeat Hubble's measurements and recalculate the value of the Hubble constant. This can be used to calculate the age of the universe (the time since the Big Bang). This age is derived from a mathematical description of the evolution of the universe (using Albert Einstein's theory of general relativity). The resulting equation contains the Hubble constant and a corrective factor involving the fractions of matter and energy in the universe. The HST value for the Hubble constant yields an estimate of 13.799 billion years for the age of the universe.

With its ability to "peer" into the cores of distant galaxies, the HST was able to confirm the existence of massive black holes¹ in the center of three distant galaxies. After a survey of 27 other galaxies, astronomers now believe that most galaxies have supermassive black holes at their cores.

Closer to home, HST has provided spectacular views of two comets as they collided with the planet, Jupiter. The Shoemaker-Levy comet of 1994 and the Ajax comet of April 2020 were each torn apart by Jupiter's gravity and more than 20 fragments from each comet crashed into the planet's gaseous atmosphere.

The HST also provided the first views of the new "dwarf planets." In 2005, the International Astronomical Union began to classify objects in our Solar System, terming them planets, dwarf planets, or small solar system objects. Pluto was classified as (demoted to?) dwarf planet status along with four others, Eris (a moon of Pluto), Ceres (the largest object in the asteroid belt between Mars and Jupiter) and two other objects beyond Neptune: Makemake and Haumea. HST provided the first view of the last three.

The ability of the HST to probe galaxies in deep space has also identified several phenomena that can't be explained by our current understanding of the universe and the laws that describe its functioning. This has led to suggestions that there are unobservable entities with appropriate properties to explain these mysteries. Hence the literature contains references to "dark matter" and "dark energy." In ages past, such supernatural entities might have been called angels, but I think that a future refinement of the theory of general relativity may clear up these mysteries.



Photo courtesy of NASA

¹ A black hole is a volume in space where the gravitational field is so strong that nothing can escape, no matter or light. It is believed that they are formed when a star consumes all its hydrogen fuel and collapses into a very dense mass. A black hole can only be detected by the changes in the orbits of nearby stars.