

Avila News and Views

A publication of the Resident Council at Avila Retirement Community

Albany, NY

July 2021

DONNA SMITH

Interviewed by Murray Block



Donna Smith assumed her position as the new Chief Executive Officer at a most propitious time for Avila and for her. May 2021 was the month when New York State, along with the rest of American society, began lifting the restrictions and limitations necessitated by the coronavirus pandemic. This not only gives Donna and the residents the opportunity to reopen, but to rethink and refresh the programs and activities.

Donna brings an ideal array of experiences to this important phase of Avila's development. She has worked in many aspects of the health care industry. She has had experience in training leaders in health care. Her educational pursuits at Hudson Valley Community College, Siena College, and Hunter Brookdale School of Health Professions are important assets for her position as CEO.

Donna is warm, friendly, and responsive—all excellent attributes for Avila's CEO. She is familiar with the senior residences in the Capital Region and believes that Avila is one of the best. It was her first choice for a work position and is delighted to now be here. Donna said that Avila's reputation for warmth and friendliness is well deserved.

Donna agrees that this is a great time to be CEO of Avila. She is currently searching to fill the Program Director position. With the opportunity to set up new programs in the post-pandemic period, she would like to hire someone who can develop programs that not only entertain but inspire our residents. Avila has many unusual residents with great knowledge and talents. A new Program Director can call on them to suggest, assist in developing, and even offer programs and lectures themselves. Donna would like more programs and activities that help bring Grand Lodge and Lodge residents together on more frequent occasions.

On a personal note, Donna is well travelled and has a wealth of educational experiences in various schools. Her father was a Marine and the family changed residences frequently. She attended many schools, both on military bases and in Catholic educational settings.

Donna is very proud of what she refers to as her greatest accomplishments—her two children. Andrew studied graphic design at St. Rose. Krystyna studied interior design at Sage of Albany. Both are currently working for New York State.

Donna lives in Niskayuna and enjoys gardening, travelling, and being with her family.

Donna likes to have an open door to her office—and eventually get to know all the wonderful residents at Avila.

All of us at Avila are delighted to have Donna Smith as our new CEO.

MEET OUR NEW NEIGHBORS

MARLENE AND JAY FORBES

Interviewed by Wilbur Shapiro.



Marlene and Jay came to Avila in May 2021 from Olmstedville, NY, a hamlet in the town of Minerva in the Adirondack Park. They own Finne-For Farm, a plot of 18 acres, where they used to raise pigs and goats, and cultivated an enormous vegetable garden.

Marlene's first husband was Robert Finnegan, who passed away in 1980 at the age of 46. They had seven children, some of whom reside in the Albany area, which is why they decided to come to Avila.

In 1986 Marlene married Jay.

Jay was divorced from Merici, his first wife. Jay had three children from his previous marriage, so the between the two of them they had ten children. They have now been married for 35 years.

Jay was an electrician and worked as a union employee. Later in his career he became an independent contractor. From 1955 to 1957 Jay served in the U.S. Army in Germany as a radio operator.

Marlene was a nurse at Peekskill Hospital for six years.

Of Marlene's children, six have degrees and four have advanced degrees. There are two lawyers, one chemical engineer, one MBA and one plumber. She has 10 grandchildren: seven have college degrees, two are attending college and one is in second grade.

Jay has five grandchildren, including one with a college degree, an electrician, a waitress, an owner of an electrical corporation, and a student. He also has two great grandchildren.

The Forbes have traveled extensively to England, Ireland, Germany, France, Spain, Italy, and Holland. Marlene has visited relatives in southern Ireland 14 times.

Marlene's voluntary work includes being a gym Mother in Catholic school, treasurer of the Mother's Club, a Pink Lady volunteer, and a member of the Hudson Valley Gaelic Society. Jay restored a 200-year-old house. He also enjoys downhill and cross-country skiing.

They both are generous and likable people. They invited the entire Lodge population to their apartment for cocktails and an acquaintance gathering, which was appreciated. The Lodge is happy they are here.



CONGRATULATIONS JULIA!



Photograph by Max Tiller

Julia Blanchard is Avila's most recent centenarian. She celebrated her 100th birthday April 5, 2021. Born and raised in Troy, NY, Julia worked in her father's store; worked at an employment agency; then married young, as she put it. She is the mother of two daughters, Meg and Laurie; two granddaughters and two great grandsons all of whom live in Washington state.

At age 7, Julia began dance lessons; and has enjoyed "tripping the light fantastic" since. She and her husband, Duncan, would be on the dance floor whenever Avila had a party.

Julia is an Avila pioneer, having moved in when Avila opened in 2004. This will be her 17th year here.

FIGHTING THE BUREAUCRACY (Part 2): FROM THE NURSING HOME BACK TO AVILA

BY Fred Seltzer

After a period, it was felt that Elane was well enough to come home to Avila. However, it was required that she have aides. Her neurologist wanted her to have aides 24 hours a day, but the nursing home wanted 14 hours daily. That was where the difficulty began.

Hiring aides is expensive, and we had to find a way to get financial support to pay for the assistance of aides required. Fidelis Care only offered to furnish four hours per day, believing that I could be of help. Unfortunately, I do not have the strength to be of help in many circumstances. We appealed the four-hour decision with Fidelis, to no avail. This took at least three to four months. I tried to find help from many sources without success. Although Elane could come home without medical approval, I was told it was not advisable.

Our social worker finally found Open Doors, Independent Living of the Hudson Valley, which is a non-profit agency located in Troy. Its essential goal is to get patients out of the hospital or nursing home to their own homes in the community. They visited our apartment and we filled out many forms. When we were approved, we were qualified for up to 16 hours of aides per day, seven days a week.

But this was not the end. We then had to apply to another agency, Nursing Home Transition and Diversion (NHTD). Once again, we had an apartment visit and filled out many forms. Once approved, they work up an individualized care plan for the client. However, they do not provide the care. They give you a list of agencies in your area from which to get the aides you need.

At that time, ten agencies were on the list, but only five had staff available to take on new clients. I chose All-Metro Healthcare, as they had offices nearby. This proved to be a mistake. While they had several excellent aides, some of the others were not reliable. In one month, an aide did not show up 16 times.

We went to our service coordinator to find another agency. She came up with Any-Time Healthcare, which was not on our original list. We were accepted by this new agency and found most of the aides to be particularly good and reliable.

You never know in advance who an agency will send, but you hope they will be friendly, skilled, and compatible. If you are alone, you will depend upon them for everything. In that case, you should have a member of your family or a friend get acquainted with the situation. They can see what other problems you may have where the aides cannot help. In our case, even with the aides, there is much to do in caring for a disabled person.

My lawyer advised me to get a pooled income trust for Elane. This means essentially that, instead of paying the nursing home, care Agency, or county the Medicaid spend-down amount, you put the money in a trust. You can then have the trust use the money to pay medical or other maintenance expenses, such as rent. You pay them the monthly spend-down amount and then they pay the approved expenses. This is a big savings. NYSARC, Inc. Trust Services handles these trusts.

Remember that you must be on Medicaid to work with some of these agencies.

FLOWER LADIES LUNCHEON



Photograph by Karl Gohlke

As she had done previously for the country store volunteers, resident Bami Das recently hosted a luncheon in the private dining room for Avia's flower ladies, who maintain the flower arrangements in the dining rooms and public areas at both buildings. Donna Smith and Mackenzie Watroba attended and expressed their appreciation for the contributions of the volunteers.

EDISON AND ME

By Joe Shapiro

When I was 10, our grocery welcomed a window dresser who changed the three window displays each month. He removed the old cardboard and created displays, usually for cigarettes, beer, and groceries. He filled his mouth with tacks, placed the peen of this metal of his all-metal hammer into his mouth, extracted each tack successively and quickly drove them to fashion new displays. He showed me his metal hammer. Sure enough, each tack was easily drawn, ready to be struck with a single blow! I had to have one.

I implored my father to get one. He told me to use the one we had, an old fashioned, wooden handled one that did not attract and retain nails. What to do? Magnetize! I stripped a lead, plugged it in, grabbed the handle and placed the peen on the live wire. POW! FLASH! BOOM! BANG!

I recoiled. Holding the hammer over some tacks, nothing happened. None were attached. I sadly unplugged the lead. I later learned that I was born the very same day that Thomas Alva Edison died. Nevertheless, he imparted none of his knowledge to me, except perhaps, that the wood handled hammer, not the metal one, was the safer choice. Thank you, Mr. Edison!

IT'S A SMALL WORLD

By Mary Farley

Once upon a time there was a family living in Dublin, Ireland: father Michael, mother Lizzie and five children. Michael retired from the military but met an untimely death at the age of 49. Lizzie moved the family to Castlerock, Northern Ireland, to be closer to her family.

Years went by, two of the sons left home for other places and two daughters died, leaving one son, Leo.

Lizzie was fortunate to meet an eligible mature bachelor, John Wilson, who was quite a catch. He owned a large estate named Pottagh (it is customary for large property owners to name their holdings).

Thus, Leo became the adopted son. He was being groomed to take over Pottagh. When Leo finished his schooling and before he took over the farm, he sailed to America to visit his brother Victor, who by then had become a welder and emigrated to Rensselaer, NY.

Sad to say, Leo had a change of heart and decided to remain in the United States, joined by Victor, and learn the art of welding and boiler making. Leo's mother and stepfather were greatly disappointed. However, time went by and in 1940 Leo married—me—and we lived happily for 49 years.

I should mention that during World War II Pottagh was confiscated by the British



government and became a radar station. Three 300-foot radar towers were built as well as four bunkers to house the equipment. Mr. and Mrs. Wilson remained in the house but were allowed only the use of the front yard. All other buildings barns, etc., were off-limits. The Castlerock Radar Station was manned by British, Canadian, and U.S. troops monitoring plane activity between the United States, Canada, and Europe. The towers were eventually removed, but the bunkers remain to this day. Eventually the property was released back to the Wilsons.

John Wilson died in 1948. Lizzie remained in the house until she died in 1962 at age 94, bequeathing the property to Leo. He then sold it to Tom and Heather Sherrard, who were still living there in 2017.

Chapter 2: fast forward several decades. My daughter, who is active in church, works on several committees with her fellow church members. One day she was speaking to one of these members, Peter, whom she had known for 20 years, and he mentioned that his daughter was studying in Northern Ireland.

As the conversation continued, my daughter told Peter that she, along with her children and her mom, had been there two years previously. So, you can imagine the details that were discussed. Peter mentioned that his daughter was going to look up their ancestral home in Northern Ireland and that his ancestral home's name was Pottagh. You could have knocked my daughter over with a feather. "That's my father's home!" It seems that his mother was a Wilson.

The Wilson family had been the owners of Pottagh since the 1700s. When the potato famine was at its height one of the sons emigrated to America to Philadelphia, leaving the other one on the farm. Apparently, the John Wilson that we knew was a descendant.

It turns out that the Peter's daughter did locate Pottagh, but no one was at home that day so she could not talk to anyone.

Over the years my husband and I visited Pottagh and spoke to the Sherrards, who said that occasionally someone would stop by, claiming they were related to the Wilsons.

That's my claim that it is a small world indeed!

FROM THE DESK OF THE RESIDENT SERVICES ADVISOR, KAREN MEEMKEN

Health and Wellness Topics: SUMMER SAFETY TIPS—July 2021

Summertime is well underway. With that comes a sense of being carefree, often with fewer strict routines. Longer hours of daylight often mean more free time for fun outdoor activities, like walking, picnics in the park, outdoor concerts, a round of golf, reading a good book under a shade tree, and maybe even a vacation that includes a trip to the beach or a cabin in the woods.

While out having fun, be mindful of some common summertime risks. These include sunburn, heat related illness, and mosquito and tick-borne illness.

- **SUNBURN** is caused by overexposure to UV rays **and** can increase your risk for heat related illness and skin cancer.
- **HEAT EXHAUSTION** occurs when the body loses excessive water and salt, usually due to sweating **and** can lead to heat stroke.
- **HEAT STROKE** can happen if the body temperature reaches 103 degrees and requires immediate medical help.

Both heat exhaustion and heat stroke can escalate rapidly and lead to delirium or even organ damage. The risks are greater for those over age 65; those with breathing difficulties; those taking certain medications; and those with heart or kidney problems.

SUMMER SAFETY TIPS to help you avoid these potential risks and to enjoy each day to the fullest.

- Avoid time outdoors during hottest part of day – 11:00 am-3:00pm
- Wear loose, lightweight clothes or even clothes with SPF
- Use sunscreen with at least an SPF of 15, be sure to cover feet, hands, lips, etc. and throw away old sunscreen
- Wear sunglasses with UVA and UVP protection and a wide brimmed hat
- Pace yourself – don't overexert
- Drink plenty of fluids – water or sport drinks – never alcohol
- Stay in air-conditioned places
- Use EPA registered insect repellent or even a plant-based repellent
- Wear long sleeves and pants and check for ticks after being outdoors
- Don't prop open doors or windows – bugs will fly in
- Remove standing water – empty flower pots, bird baths, etc. at least weekly
- Use air conditioning – insects prefer warm, damp spaces

<https://www.nsc.org/home-safety/tools-resources/seasonal-safety/summer>

<https://ohsonline.com/articles/2018/07/03/hot-tips-for-summer-safety.aspx>

NEWS AND VIEWS 2021

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FOCUS FEATURE: AVILA'S FINE STAFF

"I am moving to Avila because Michelle, your marketing coordinator, was always there, above and beyond my expectations in her professionalism."

A friend of Maxine Koblenz

"Well, we made it, didn't we? Pandemic – a new word for some of us. It certainly took its toll, but we can say with pride, 'we are survivors.' Having said that, we have to admit we couldn't do it alone.

I would like to propose, among the many staff members, Pearl and her staff, including the young people delivering our meals. We didn't miss a meal. Everything was kept pretty much on schedule and, may I suggest, with a smile.

There are many other masked bandits we could name, but please give Pearl and her staff the praise they certainly deserve.

Again, we are survivors. What else can we conquer?"

Beth Flatt

Kudos to Avila's housekeeping and maintenance staffs during the pandemic as they kept us clean and repaired during this very trying time.

Erin and Ray Teichman

"Just want to give a "shout out" to the maintenance staff. They go above and beyond—Gordy, Tom T, and Tom K. Can't single one over the other, but Tom T called the manufacturer about missing hardware for a table for me. The others have done similar projects."

Marilyn Seidenberg

MY (SHORT) VISIT TO NORTH KOREA

By Don Stauffer



Our visit to North Korea took place on a snowy day in 1991, when we journeyed from Seoul with a group from the Royal Asiatic Society to Panmunjom, the United Nations encampment on the border of the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) at the 38th parallel.

The DMZ had been established in 1953 after the cessation of hostilities of the Korean conflict, which began in 1950 when Kim Il Sung, the North Korean dictator, attempted to place the entire peninsula under his control and rapidly moved troops southward to achieve that end. President Harry Truman declared a "police action" and sent U.S. troops under the aegis of the UN to stop his advance. The result was years of bitter and disastrous warfare, involving 15 allies on our side and China and the Soviet Union on the side of the North. The casualties were enormous: 55,000 Americans killed; more than a half million North and South Korean combatants killed. After all those years the cease-fire had not been resolved into a peace agreement—which is still true today.

As our bus approached the installation, we saw uniformed guards with blue UN helmets and UN flags on the buildings. The main building was a white two-story building with a flat roof.

Before we left the bus, we were given strict instructions: to remain silent once we were inside the building, not to make any sudden movements, or to laugh or joke, or to look directly at or speak to the North Korean guards. As we entered the building, we were directed to the main conference room, where countless peace talks between the two countries had been held for almost forty years. It was a cold sterile looking room and in its center was a long, green-topped table placed on a north-south axis.

The reason for the placement, it was explained to us, was that it was precisely situated so that one half was in North Korea and the other half was in South Korea. So, as we silently and solemnly walked around the table we of course found ourselves in North Korea, under the not friendly gaze of a North Korean guard, who never blinked or changed expression.



When we left the building, we were escorted to a ridge overlooking a valley in the DMZ. On the other side was a row of impressive looking houses. This Potemkin village had been erected by the North as a propaganda measure to convey a message about their prosperity. Of course, the majority of their people were actually living in poverty and misery.

As we returned to the bus we reflected on this sobering experience, recalling memories of that long, bitter, and unresolved conflict.

WOMEN IN COMPUTING

By John Wagner

Some people have a gift for languages, others a gift for the arts, and still others a gift for numbers. Women's accomplishments in the fields of literature and the arts are widely recognized, but this is not true in the fields of science and mathematics; perhaps Madame Curie is the solitary exception. But there have been many women who have made significant contributions to the field of computer sciences.

One of the earliest was Ada Lovelace, a mathematician whose work with Charles Babbage on his Analytic Engine, led to her being considered the world's first computer programmer. Today, a computer programming language is named after her.



Some fifty years later, the programming staff for the first electronic digital computer, ENIAC, was comprised of six women students at the University of Pennsylvania. The computer consisted of 30 individual modules, each of whose vacuum tubes calculated a specific mathematical function. To "program" the machine to solve a particular equation, that equation had to be decomposed into its basic functions and then the appropriate modules had to be wired together in the proper sequence. It could take as long as six weeks to interconnect the modules and to verify that the wiring led to the proper solution. Unfortunately, the work of these ladies

was undervalued, and their names are now difficult to find (Betty Jennings, Betty Snyder, France's Spence, Kay McNulty., Marlyn Wescoff. and Ruth Lichteman). Furthermore, none of them were present at the 50th anniversary of ENIAC.

Perhaps the most famous woman in the early days of this field was Grace Hopper (1906-1992). After receiving her PhD in mathematics, she joined the Naval Reserve in 1944. Grace was known as the "mother of COBOL." Four years after her death, a guided missile destroyer was christened the *USS Hopper*.



As the computer industry matured, women continued to contribute to the development and growth of computer technology in various ways. Sometimes, the contributions came from unlikely places. For example, in 1942, Hedy Lamarr, a beautiful Hollywood star, received a U.S. patent for a frequency-hopping technique for controlling naval torpedoes. The U.S. Navy opted to pass over it, but the technique is used today in secure Wi-Fi, GPS, and Bluetooth devices. In 1997, Hedy was given the Pioneer Award by the Electronic Frontier Foundation for her contributions to the field of spread spectrum technology.

Women also played a significant role in the early stages of America's space program. The story of NSAS's "Hidden Figures" was told in an Oscar-nominated film.

Adele Goldberg participated in the development of SmallTalk, the first object-oriented programming language. Susan Kane used this language to help Apple create the graphic user interface that replaced typewritten commands. The Apple Macintosh was the first personal computer with a built-in screen displaying program icons and a mouse for control. It was introduced in 1977.

Women continued to prepare NASA mission software. In 1969, Margaret Hamilton led a team that created in-flight software for the Apollo program. Other women were involved in the planning and execution of deep space probes. Male engineers confided that these "human computers" were faster and more accurate.

Emma Schneider Hoover developed a computerized switching system that was used to make the electronic switchboard that replaced the old manual one. The patent to protect this was the first software patent ever issued.

In the early 70s, Elizabeth Feinier led the team that established the domain categories for e-mails. A domain was assigned to a computer depending on its location. Thus, a computer at an educational facility was assigned .edu as its domain.

Women also excelled in the management of computer activities. Donna Dubinsky was the CEO of the company, Palm, that introduced the first Personal Digital Assistant (PDA). She also served on many boards of directors and was later nominated by *Fortune* for their Inventors Hall of Fame in recognition of her contributions to the development of the PDA.

Most recently, Margaret (Meg) Whitman was the president and CEO of Hewlett Packard from 2011 until 2017. Hewlett Packard is a major manufacturer of personal computers and computer printers.



Old age is coming at a really bad time.

When I was a child, I thought "naptime" was a punishment. Now, as a grownup, it feels like a small vacation.

I didn't make it to the gym today. That makes five years in a row.

IT'S FAIR TIME

By Patricia J. Binzer

If you're not from around here
you probably don't understand
all the fuss that we're making
over fairs about land.

In summer in small towns in New York's upstate
there was little to do, maybe bike, maybe skate.
Or swimming in a creek or picnic near a lake.
But to think that was enough
was a big mistake.

We yearned for excitement that was yet to come.
The annual county fair was our idea of fun.
The fairs were around us, each county took part,
But the fair held in Chatham
Always pulled at our heart.

We got there before it opened, probably by eight
and anxiously waited til they opened the gate.
Then we raced in, didn't know quite what to do -
head for the midway or an exhibit or two.
We had all day before us and so much to see.
I could hear sweet music of the calliope.
There was the smell of the hotdogs
and it aroused our hunger
We might have given in if we were younger.
Wow look now just above the tops of the trees .
There's the Ferris wheel going round and around
Waiting to please.

You hope when you're on it, it will come to a stop
Not at the bottom but the very top.
You can look out at everything down below
You take it all in. It's quite a show.

Now off to the good stuff we haven't seen yet.
There are lots of animals and some you can pet.
We see kids that we know feeding calves some hay.
They're with the 4-H and brought them for display.

The smell of the pies and the cakes on the table spread.
Some won blue ribbons, some won white or red.
Now I'm really hungry. I want to be fed.

We'll save time for the tractor pull, the demolition derby
And the firefighter's parade.
Then the Grange awards made of flowers.
Maybe even a rest in the shade.

We hear music coming from the end of the stage
They're playing good country, it's all the rage.
Our day is most over. It's about time to go.
Maybe there's time for one more show.

Or more cotton candy
That sticks to our hands, in our hair
It's all over our faces but we couldn't care.

because

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, IT'S FAIR TIME!

