

# Avila News and Views

*A publication of the Resident Council at Avila Retirement Community*

*Albany, NY*

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## MARK JORDAN AWARDED



*Photograph by Karl Gohlke*

At the weekly wine and cheese event on August 4<sup>th</sup>, Mark Jordan was presented with a Certificate of Appreciation for his many years of diligence to the floral beautification of the Lodge grounds. In addition, he was designated "Proprietor of the Greenhouse," and a sign to that effect has been affixed to the greenhouse at the Lodge.

CEO Donna M. Smith added her praise to those of the residents. The Committee for the Celebration of Extraordinary Service to the Lodge Community and the members of the Kohlrabi branch of the Sunflowers of America, in association with Avila management, sponsored the event.

## DRUM CIRCLE

The Drum Circle has been introduced at Avila. This is a group playing hand drums and percussion in a circle. The object is to share rhythm and get in touch with each other and ourselves. It is said to help boost the immune system, lower blood pressure, and reduce stress.



*Photograph by Karl Gohlke*



*Photograph by Karl Gohlke*

## MEET OUR NEW NEIGHBORS AND STAFF MEMBER

### MIRIAM "MIMI" BECKER

By Maxine Koblenz



*Photograph by Karl Gohlke*

Meet Mimi Becker whose life has been filled with new experiences, adventures, and joy filled new beginnings.

Mimi grew up in Shaker Heights, Ohio. As a young adult Mimi left for San Francisco and became part of the hippies 60s generation. She loved being a part of this outgoing artistic culture. But, as a married woman, she and her husband left for LA and her husband's law practice. There Mimi was able to take dance classes with Baryshnikov and became a student and studied at the Los Angeles Royal Ballet.

Mimi also entered the field of social work and became a daycare teacher. During her daycare experience she interacted with Jane Fonda and her daughter. There she also

became Rona Barrett's associate editor.

From LA and the dance and writing scene it was back to Cleveland and a re-entry into the academia that her parents felt she should pursue. Mimi went to graduate school to get her PhD in psychology, being recognized there with academic awards. At the same time, she attended classes in painting at the Cleveland Institute of Art.

In 2019 she moved to Saratoga Springs for health reasons and to be closer to her sister and family. They have been a wonderful supportive link for Mimi, and she is so grateful for all they do.

Avila became her next home, because of Mimi and her family connecting with a resident here who knew her family from Shaker Heights. Mimi says everyone was so impressed with the Avila services and amenities that it became the "go to" place and was endorsed by all. Mimi feels having a pool, PT and OT makes Avila unique and is perfect for her needs.

Since Mimi taught painting at a senior center near Shaker Heights, and being an artist herself, she is looking forward to implementing art classes here at Avila.

Mimi is thankful for her talents that she can share with others both artistically and as a caring listener. She also speaks of the special memories of her family travels to "follow the sun" in Europe, South America, and most of the United States.

As part of this wonderful Avila community Mimi looks forward to the opportunities of giving something back, as she regains her health in this her new home of wonderful services and caring people.

### MARY ANN AND RICHARD NEIMEYER

By Karl Gohlke

Mary Ann and Dick Neimeyer are natives of the capital area and have always lived and worked in the area. Mary Ann has more than 40 years' experience as a teacher in the public and parochial schools; Dick, at Hudson Valley Community College, spent more than 38 years as a laboratory technician/assistant and currently works part-time as a caller, providing information to incoming and current students.

The Neimeyers have a deep and continuing commitment to helping others, with a long-term involvement with the service programs of the St. Vincent de Paul parish in Albany. They have been involved in the food pantry and other mission activities for years. Dick serves on two faith formation committees at the church. They are interested in becoming involved with some of the service opportunities at Avila.

They are the adoptive parents of two children born in China. Their son lives in California and is an accountant employed at a federal agency. He met his wife while serving in the US Marine Corps. She is completing a nursing program. Their daughter resides in the Capital District, was active in the National Guard, and currently is seeking a biology degree at UAlbany.

Dick is a ham radio operator, W2ABY, golfer, and easy to get to know. Mary Ann is a friendly person as well. They have settled in the Lodge and are anxious to participate in Avila's programs as they return from the COVID hiatus. They should add substantially to the community.



*Photograph by Karl Gohlke*

## GAIL RICE

By Maxine Koblenz

How special it is to welcome to Avila new resident Gail Rice in apartment 231. Gail is so warm and so very happy to be living here. She is a wonderful spokesperson for all the joys and benefits of choosing Avila.



*Photograph by Karl Gohlke*

Gail has two married daughters: Suzanne, a retired special education teacher and Barbara, who worked for New York State in economic development. She has two grandsons: Cal, who is an artist and opening his gallery in the Boston area and Sam, at Western New England Law School with IT interests.

Dr. Gail Rogers Rice was born, raised, educated, and employed all in her wonderful hometown of Saranac Lake. There she served as teacher, administrator, and dean of academic and student affairs at North Country Community College. She is so proud to represent the fifth generation on her mother's side to call Saranac Lake home. After graduating from high school in '57 she went to SUNY Albany, graduating in '61 with multiple majors in social studies, English, and teaching. She worked many jobs there and had scholarships to pay for college independently.

She married G. Carver "Bob" Rice at 20. They met in Saranac Lake where he worked in a furniture store. They were married for 44 years. Bob bought the store, which is still owned and run by the third generation of his family. Gail has wintered for many years in sunny Pompano Beach, FL to get relief from the harsh weather in Saranac Lake, but she always returned to

the lake for summers.

After an accident in Saranac Lake Gail's daughter Barbara heard about and investigated Avila. Family members, realizing Mom would need help after her surgery in Albany and COVID, decided that Avila was the best place. Gail has found everything they could ask for here at Avila. She has deeply experienced the kindness of residents, who are always asking how she is doing, and the many considerations of the staff. Also the amenities of Avila, such as the great transportation and the availability of swimming in the pool, which she loves. Her daughter Barbara and her husband live in Albany, where he is assistant principal at the Board of Cooperative Education. The location of Avila made for a perfect support system.

Gail feels Avila is a real blessing. She says that as a lifelong educator she would like to share some thoughts and says that as we grow and age, "people need a warm and safe supportive place in which to find comfort". Avila has been that place for Gail. It has been a wonderful, positive experience. Gail was even happier when she was able to bring her rescue dog Georgie back from her daughter's house. Georgie "lived in a cage weighing only six and a half pounds with no teeth when we found him. He is now a fat and sassy 12-pounder with all my love."

## SR. NATALIE RUNFOLA

By Rod Correll



*Photograph by Karl Gohlke*

Sr. Natalie Runfola, a member of the congregation of the Religious of the Sacred Heart, moved into Avila in late August from her residence at St. Francis of Assisi in the south end of Albany. Natalie, as she likes to be called, was born in Cortland, NY. Shortly thereafter, her family moved to Buffalo, to a house in the shadow of Rich Stadium, home of the Buffalo Bills. She grew up and went to school there and still thinks affectionately of her childhood in B-Lo.

At Manhattanville, where she got her BA degree, she was inspired to become a volunteer with the Sacred Heart order and went to Taiwan to teach. After deciding to enter the convent, she moved to Japan for her novitiate after which she taught for a couple of year in Tokyo and then returned to Taiwan. At that time, she prepared for her final vows in France and made those vows back in Taiwan. Her ten-year stay in Taiwan ended when she returned to the U.S. A few years as a nurse were followed by parish work in Albany, at St. Ann's/St. John's, followed by several years doing pastoral care in the infirmary at Kenwood. A short stint with the order's leadership team in St. Louis and a master's in theology at Marygrove College in Detroit came next. After Detroit she moved to East Harlem, where, with another sister, she established a program for young college graduates, lay volunteers who wanted to experience Christian ministry working with the poor.

Sr. Runfola has been involved in a variety of ministries and has traveled extensively throughout her career. She has enjoyed the opportunities this has given her to see the world, meet and work with the many people she has encountered. She now works at Teresian House as coordinator of her RSCJ sisters there and looks forward to becoming an active member of the Avila community.

## PETER SPARANO

By Kathy DeLaMater

Fourth floor west is pleased to welcome Pete Sparano, a longtime Guilderland resident who joined our community in mid-July. He comes to Avila already knowing some residents and eager to meet and befriend others.

Born and raised in Whitehall, NY, he graduated from high school there and went on to obtain a bachelor's degree from Saint Joseph's Seminary and a master's degree in public administration from the University at Albany

While serving a two-year stint in the Army in Columbia, SC he met his lifelong partner, Merry, and after his discharge they came north, married, and settled in the Albany area. They were blessed with 56 years together, with the added blessing of three children. Son Michael is a pilot with Southwest Airlines, based in Chicago and living in St. Louis, MO. Daughter Jennifer is senior analyst with KeyCorp, residing in Cleveland, OH. Second son David and wife Peggy call Quincy, IL, home, where David is employed as a design engineer at GatesAir.

Pete had a long and successful career with New York State. He worked his way up through six different departments, culminating with 20 years at the Public Service Commission, which included several years as deputy director of customer services. He had a second career, post-retirement, as a "practice patient" at Albany Medical College, and keeps in touch with other faux patients, playing golf as a group. His wife Merry became a successful real estate agent with Coldwell Banker in her later years, helping many people buy and sell homes in the area.

An avid golfer, Pete has been a member/officer at Pinehaven Country Club for many years. He is a member of the Schenectady Sons of Italy and an active communicant of Saint Madeline Sophie parish. He is also a member of the board of trustees of the McCloskey Community Corporation, which owns and manages properties occupied by Catholic Charities of the Albany diocese.

Pete is very clear about Avila's friendly culture being his main reason for moving here. Oh, and he's happy that he no longer has to cook! Welcome, Pete, and may your residency be a long and happy one!



*Photograph by Karl Gohlke*

## BEVERLY AND EDWIN TOBIN

By Pat Binzer

The Tobins always knew they would retire to Avila. It was just a matter of time. After 50 years in their house on South Manning Boulevard in Albany, where they raised three children and welcomed six grandchildren, they decided they needed a place without stairs. So, they knew it was time to come to Avila. Beverly's mother, Ann Cipollo, lived here when it was first built so they had been here many times and were very familiar with the setup and knew what to expect.

What pleasantly surprised them was the conviviality and positive spirit that they have encountered throughout! They both admitted they hadn't even thought about that aspect when coming here and are so delighted with the warmth and friendship they have found with their old and new friends and neighbors.



*Photograph by Karl Gohlke*

Ed and Beverly were both born right here in Albany. Beverly was born in Brady Maternity Hospital. She graduated from (the beloved "VI"), Vincentian Institute, the College of New Rochelle, and Albany Law School, where she was the only woman in her class. Ed graduated from St. John's Academy in Rensselaer, Siena College, and Albany Law School, which is where he met Beverly.

After graduating from law school, Beverly joined her father, Michael Cipollo, in the practice of law. She went on to serve with the NYS Division for Youth in the council's office. Beverly was the first woman elected to a county-wide judgeship and served in the Albany County Family Court for 16 years before retiring.

Ed was twice elected Justice of the City Court of Albany. In his private practice, he was a litigator defending doctors,

hospitals, municipalities, counties, and others in New York State.

Their favorite personal time has always been time spent with their family. Their children and grandchildren continue to be an important part of their lives. This includes time spent on Lake George. For Ed, this also means enjoyment with his antique 1947 wooden Chris Craft and a small steam-powered boat. Mention of either of these boats brings a broad smile to his face. Beverly recalled her time spent making stained glass pieces and chair caning. She says she would be interested to start another craft project here at Avila. Reading is also one of her passions when she finds time.

Over many years both Beverly and Ed have served on many boards, committees, and charities. Historic Cherry Hill was mentioned as a special place for each of them.

Avila residents are delighted the Tobins have joined our community.

## TOM AND JANET WAHL

By Maxine Koblenz

A resounding welcome "home" to Tom and Janet Wahl, who have made multiple moves around New York State until finally finding their special permanent abode in Avila.

They both get a special award for being the most efficient movers, finding the places where everything fits and unloading their boxes in record time, feeling truly settled within a week.

They married in 1976 and pursued professional careers, Janet as a switchman in telephone communications for New York Telephone Company providing logistic assistance in technical and special circuits. Tom worked as regional supervisor of natural resources, at the forefront for solving problems in state and management for the Department of Environmental Conservation. He completed his educational background at SUNY College of Forestry in Syracuse, with many years of training on the job.

Tom has many avocations, loves cooking and experimenting with fresh vegetables and fruits to create his unique recipes. He bicycles daily, loving all the flat terrain around Avila. He also is looking forward to implementing his gardening skills in the Avila gardens and courtyard beds



*Photograph by Karl Gohlke*

Janet is a reader, loving mysteries in particular. Her apartment showcases her adventures in reading with many bookshelves filled to the brim. She is delighted Avila offers fitness programs as well as having their pool all under one roof.

Avila became their top choice as they explored multiple senior facilities in their search for the right apartment that would give them wonderful open spaces, great outdoor sunny window views, good food, and many amenities.

Their dogs and cats have always been a wonderful addition to their lives, and the memories they now have of them make for joy filled moments.

Tom feels fortunate when he signed up in the Army, he was posted at Fort Ritchie in Maryland, and they used his knowledge of forestry throughout his enlistment. Both he and Janet have prized their volunteer involvement in Coats for Kids, Toys for Tots, the Mohawk Hudson River Humane Society, and the Lion's Club providing eyecare for those in need.

Tom and Janet began their married life in Albany. It was a beginning for their "gypsy" lives together 45 years ago. They feel now they have come full circle, and they look at starting over once again in Avila with fun-filled retirement for both.

## SISTER JULIANA YACHTIS

By Wilbur Shapiro



*Photograph by Karl Gohlke*

Sister Julie (as she prefers to be called) came to Avila in August 2021. Her career had been dedicated to helping the poor and disadvantaged people overcome physical and mental disorders. The information presented herein is part of Sister Julie's written biography.

Sister Julie was born in western Pennsylvania in the town of Hastings. She received her BA in education from Clarion University in Pennsylvania. She entered the Religious Order of the Sacred Heart in 1980 and went to Washington D.C. to live with a community of her sisters. There she directed a drug prevention program that later changed to a Teen Leadership Program in a housing project, Sursum Corda.

The program won an award from Washington D.C. for the best teen program in the city. A similar award was also given by the Archdiocese of Washington. While at Sursum Corda, she received a master's degree in social work at Catholic University of America. Years later she became an associate professor in the program.

After Sursum Corda she worked at the Mazique Child Center which became part of a US 5-year study to try to understand the causes of poverty. A catch-22 resulted between job creation and welfare benefits. Once a job is obtained benefits are lost and family support is diminished. She was a psychotherapist at the Saint Luke Institute in Maryland in an inpatient program where priests and religious observers came for mental health treatment. She then worked as a therapist with the elderly in nursing homes who had a mental health diagnosis. Next, she was the site director and clinical services director at My Sisters Place, a safe shelter for physically abused women and their children.

On a sabbatical, Sister Julie went to the Maryland College of Art and Design. She specialized in polymer clay, creating jewelry and mosaic pieces, such as tabletops, jewelry boxes and sculpture. She went into business with a friend and the business was called "Nun Craftier". From then on, she always had the craft business parallel to her professional life.

Presently, photography is her art interest, and she has made beautiful greeting cards from flower photos she had taken.

Sister Julie finished her professional career in private practice providing psychotherapy to those who were disadvantaged and underserved. The last six years, Sister Julie lived and worked at the Anne Montgomery House. It is an intentional community of three Sacred Heart sisters and four young women. Those living there make a commitment to daily community prayer, social justice and living a communal life.

After a long career helping others, we welcome Sister Julie to Avila and we pray she will enjoy the companionship of our other sisters, and the community of Avila. It is with great pleasure that Avila receives you, Sister Julie.

## ERICH STEINER EVENT AND TRANSPORTATION COORDINATOR

By Murray Block

With the limitations on group gatherings and outside visitors allowed during the height of the COVID pandemic beginning to ease up, it was a great time to fill the vacant position of the coordinator of these programs. Erich Steiner was selected to head up and revitalize the activities and trips that keep Avila residents occupied, busy, and happy. He joined the staff as Event and Transportation Coordinator on July 19, 2021.

Erich was born and raised in Rutland, a small town in central Massachusetts, about 12 miles northwest of Worcester. His father is a sign painter. His mother is a retired special education teacher. He has three older brothers. He attended a local technical high school where he learned mechanical engineering and architectural design. He was quite active in sports in high school, participating in baseball, basketball, and tennis. He represented his school at the State Tennis Tournament.

Erich's tennis ability won him a tennis scholarship to Assumption College in Western Massachusetts, and that is where he met Hannah, now his wife. While at Assumption, Erich signed up for a stint in the US Army. He completed his basic training in South Carolina. Before the pandemic hit us, Erich and Hannah went on a trip to Ireland, where his mom has relatives. They were officially engaged there and began planning for a wedding in 2020. Large gatherings were taboo all of that year and are still questionable at present. The two of them decided on a wedding this past Good Friday. Toward the end of this past September, they were finally off on their one-week belated honeymoon in Aruba.

Erich is most delighted working at Avila. He finds everyone – staff and residents – friendly and helpful. With the pandemic, hopefully, winding down, there is much to do to restore the programs and trips we all enjoyed, and to develop new ones. Erich has already brought to Avila new enjoyable programs. Drum Circle, Tai Chi, and Group Meditation sessions are among the newer offerings that have met with acclaim by those who have been happy to attend them and shed the pandemic doldrums.

Erich has started on a great streak to assist residents to better enjoy our wonderful homes at Avila. We wish him continued success and enjoyment in his new position here. We look forward to the activities, programs, and trips he will be organizing for us to participate in and enjoy.

Welcome to Avila, Erich Steiner!



*Photograph by Karl Gohlke*

In going through Elane's effects Fred Seltzer found the following poem that he wrote for her more than 16 years ago.

## *But It's The Thought That Counts*

*By Fred Seltzer*

*For our anniversary or New Year's, the card may be early  
For Hanukah, however, it may be late  
But it's the thought that counts,  
Not the date!*

*Save Luke, there is no other,  
You're my true love, my mate.  
But it's the thought that counts,  
There's no debate!*

*You're the best thing that's happened to me.  
Life without you, I can't contemplate.  
But it's the thought that counts,  
At any rate!*

*The seasons change, the years roll by,  
Our love endures, it remains top rate.  
But it's the thought that counts,  
Not the date!*

*What brought us together, an accident or fate?  
It's a complex story, too long to relate.  
But it's the thought that counts,  
There's no debate!*

*Where a couple, a duo, a team,  
Always together, never separate.  
But it's the thought that counts,  
At any rate!*

*Calibrate, fascinate, gesticulate, meditate,  
Contemplate, facilitate, titillate, saturate,  
The hour grows late,  
Let's end the debate!*

## NEW AND VIEWS REMEMBERS MAX TILLER



Over the years, Max has photographed almost all of us—for the resident photo album, and for profiles and inquiring reporter articles in *News and Views*, always showing us at our very best. His photographs also enhanced the resident center conference room. We will all miss his talent and his wit.

## FOCUS FEATURE: AVILA'S FINE STAFF

*Recently I spilled chocolate Ensure all over my light beige carpet, which caused quite a mess. I did a work order to have it cleaned up but was told it could not be done for a day or two. While I was sitting in the lobby with a crestfallen look on my face, Gordie came by and asked me what was wrong. I told him about the spill. He immediately came to my apartment and cleaned the carpet, doing a beautiful job.*

*Gloria Herkowitz*

*What a pleasure it is to sit down to have dinner at the Lodge! Emily has our drinks on the table as soon as we sit down. She knows our preferences (sometimes reminding us when we forget). She also serves a Caesar salad that is lovely to look at (the anchovies are separated!). Not only is she very professional but is also very patient with some of the demands on her. This makes dining at the Lodge a special experience.*

*Lynn Altonin*

*Esther —what a gem. Something spilled in my fridge under the glass covering the two bottom drawers. I asked her what I could do to lift the glass. She came up and tried —nothing. Asked maintenance. Esther came up again and we both tried, with success!*

*Very professional, competent, and willing. Now I know what to do the next time.*

*Marilyn Seidenberg, Apt. 423*

## FOOD PANTRY NEEDS YOUR HELP

Many people in Albany still need food donations to help feed their families. We at Avila can help do something about this by donating once, or on a regular basis. We have a basket for donations in the Resident Center. The food is picked up by Susan Shipherd, who takes it to the St. Francis church food pantry in the South End. Please help with your donation of nonperishable items.

## A STATISTICIAN'S VIEW

By Marion Burns

I recently reconnected with Don, a dear friend of my late husband. Don and John enjoyed many Adirondack hikes together and Don, an accomplished pilot, once took John up in his private plane for lunch at Basin Harbor on Lake Champlain!

I have so many fine memories of Don, now 98. He now publishes a daily e-newsletter which goes out to over 40 friends. I am one of those privileged friends. His daily emails are always time stamped by 7 a.m.! Many of them are taken from diaries he meticulously kept all his adult life. They include accounts of hiking, flying, and thousands of miles of bike touring (with beautiful photos).

One of his recent newsletters is printed below. There are dozens of them I would love to share with Avila residents but for some odd reason, I singled this one out. Hope you are amused:

### YOU CAN COUNT ON IT

Having spent a good part of my banking career analyzing business financial statements, I've never been able to shake the habit of looking at everything analytically. Take the obituaries, for example. I don't bother reading them. I wouldn't know the players anymore. I used to; some of them anyway. That doesn't stop me from analyzing, though.

Today there were fifteen entrants in the race to the top (assuming heaven is up). Two had entered into eternal life, one elected to be born into it, one went to be with the Lord on Sunday (probably to join him at Sunday school), another passed away surrounded by a loving family (I think I heard one of them say ABOUT TIME!), one passed away at Albany Medical Center, one decided to pass away at his residence, two preferred to pass away peacefully without disclosing the location (believing it's none of your business). Unfortunately, six died. No one faded away, so there were no old soldiers.

All this proves that there's more than one way to play the game. The rules are pretty loose.

Ages ranged from 65 to 102, averaging 84.857142. One was excluded from the averaging computation because he was ageless (no age given). He was probably one of those people who don't like to disclose their age. Usually that's a woman thing. Men generally are less sensitive about their accumulation of years. I have no trouble admitting that I'm over 39, although you'd never guess it -- that I'm over 39. At the checkout counter I'm always asked to show my driver's license to prove I'm old enough to buy a six-pack of beer. Oddly, I'm also always asked if I need help taking my groceries out to the car. I always say no; I'm too cheap to tip. I need to save my money for my old age when I get there.

Speaking of my banking career, I remember being told in the early days that I was too young for the jobs I had. In later years I was told there was a preference for people whose outlook hadn't been affected by experiencing the Great Depression. Jeez! Headwinds in both directions!

Whatever; you can find amusement wherever you like it, even in the obits.

*HAVE YOU BEEN OUTSIDE TODAY?*

*By Patricia J. Binzer*

*Have you opened the door to see what's there?  
Have you taken a deep breath of outside air?*

*Step out the door, put your feet on the ground.  
You'll be amazed at what can be found.*

*Feel the firm earth beneath your shoes  
And look all around, linger if you choose.*

*Notice the sky, is it blue, is it gray?  
What kind of weather will we have today?  
Look at the clouds as they float by  
Wait, there goes a plane way up high.  
Where is it going, you wonder aloud?  
Far away maybe well beyond that cloud.*

*A noise from the street draws your attention.  
It came from a truck. I guess I should mention  
Lots of trucks come and go around here  
Bringing food and supplies we need to appear.  
We expect SYSCO and Antonucci here on time  
So food can be ready when we come to dine.*

*Now let's go for a walk. We won't go far  
Just down the sidewalk away from the car.  
The surface is bumpy. Better take your time.  
Walk with a friend. That would be fine.  
Enjoy your world that's all around.  
You're outside. Look what you've found.*

*There's the flag on the flagpole.  
Waving to us from up there.  
Salute if you want to.  
The flag would be honored  
To know that you care.*

*Trees look like statues without their leaves.  
Do they want sweaters with longer sleeves?  
Will they hope for a winter that's not very cold?  
And want warmer weather as they grow old.*

*There's a crunch under our feet.  
It's leaves resting where they fell.  
Waiting for someone to move them.  
Where? Who can tell?  
Lawn guys will come and blow them away.  
Sorry leaves, move on. Here you can't stay.*

*The sun is getting lower now.  
It feels cool on our back.  
Time to head in. and time for a snack.  
If it's Thursday, there's wine and cheese  
You'll get a beverage if you say please.*

*Now take a deep breath, breathe in fresh air.  
Welcome this world outside instead of in there.  
It will be here when you are ready for more.  
C'mon grab your sweater and go out the door.*

*HAPPY*



*HALLOWEEN*