

Avila News and Views

A publication of the Resident Council at Avila Retirement Community

Albany, NY

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DID YOU EVER WONDER?

By Tom Fitzgerald

Did you ever wonder about the garden plots and the beautiful flower beds and barrels placed in the public areas here at Avila? Who takes such meticulous care of the gardens both at the Grand Lodge and Lodge? The answer is Mark Jordan, Rod Correll, and Tom Wahl, among others.

These three and other gardeners enjoy the opportunity to bring flowers and vegetables to life in the plots behind the garages at the Grand Lodge and at the Lodge patio and greenhouse. Tom planted over a hundred tulip bulbs that we all enjoyed this spring. Some of us even attempt to grow tomatoes and flowers on our patios, usually with some success.

Garden plots are available to any resident interested in planting flowers, vegetables or herbs. Investigate these opportunities this summer. Avila is our home, and we extend a warm thank you to these gentlemen for making beautification their hobby.



Photo by Rod Correll



Photo by Rod Correll



Photo by Lynn Altonin



Photo by Lynn Altonin

MEET OUR NEW NEIGHBORS

JANET BERTOMEN

By Wilbur Shapiro



Photo by Wilbur Shapiro

Janet arrived in Avila in April 2022. She came from Millerton, NY, where she lived for 20 years. At the recommendations of her daughters, who reside in the Albany area, she decided to move to Avila. Some 50 years ago, Janet's husband passed away, but not until he and Janet created eight offspring. There were four boys and four girls. One child died, but the rest are doing well. Today there are eight grandchildren, four boys and four girls.

Janet received her college education at the Catholic Institution in Manhattanville, New York, where she majored in education and English. She had a varied career teaching reading and English in New York City and as far away as Hawaii. In Chinatown she became the principal of an elementary school.

In retirement, her passion remains her children.

Janet is easy to talk to, is a good conversationalist and is a welcome addition to the Avila community.

RICHARD AND MARY ELLEN LEE

By Thomas and Ellen Fitzgerald

Richard and Mary Ellen Lee are both in their early seventies and have been married going on 43 years. They met at Bucknell U. in PA, where they both pursued BS degrees—hers in education and his in business administration. After a few years teaching in public schools, Mary Ellen completed her master's in library science at Palmer Graduate School, C.W. Post College of Long Island University. She taught library classes to students and directed a 10,000-volume elementary library in the Cold Spring Harbor School District on Long Island.

Richard went on to Hofstra University to earn his law degree, practicing law in the state and federal courts in the NY metro area. He was associated with several firms as well as at the largest writer of architect and engineers' malpractice insurance in the U.S.



Photo courtesy of Avila Admin. staff



Photo courtesy of Avila Admin. staff

The Lees designed and contracted to build a house on a hilltop near Coeymans Hollow in southern Albany County. Following retirement after about thirty-year careers, they moved from Glen Cove, L.I. to their new home in the capital district where they lived until moving to our Avila Community in early December 2021.

Mary Ellen loves to garden and misses her previous gardens though she is starting to find her green thumb again here at Avila. She is an avid reader and single-handedly does more than her share to keep the local libraries busy. Richard also enjoys reading, duplicate bridge and other games. Both enjoy classical music, particularly early music and chamber music. Mary Ellen expressed a wish that someone would start a choral music group so that she could resume her singing. Anyone interested?

Richard and Mary Ellen are an interesting couple with wide interests and experiences. They have already immersed themselves in the Avila Community through book club, gardening and other social activities. You will enjoy conversations with them. We welcome

Richard and Mary Ellen to the Avila community!

JAMES MCHENRY

By John Wagner

James McHenry grew up in rural East Greenbush and has lived in the Albany area for most of his life. When he graduated from high school, the Korean conflict prompted Jim and three of his classmates to enlist in the military services, three in the Navy and one in the Air Force. Jim joined the Navy (as had his Dad) and was trained as a Teleman (a communications specialist in teletype and postal mail). He was first posted to the USS *Tripoli*, an escort aircraft carrier. The ship was used to transport military fighter aircraft to our European allies. His first trip took him to Portugal and Italy. After a second voyage on the *Tripoli* to Copenhagen, Denmark and Bremerhaven, Germany, Jim was transferred to a large naval facility in Puerto Rico, an assignment which lasted for two years. While stationed there, Jim became part of a service basketball team that played other service teams and some local college teams. Jim's last assignment was on a destroyer escort, the USS *Coates*, which was assigned to convoy duty in the North Atlantic. He was still aboard the *Coates* in 1974 when she was ordered not to enter Norfolk, VA harbor, but to put to sea to ride out hurricane Hazel. The next week was very trying for men on a ship as small as the *Coates*. Jim was discharged as a Petty Officer, 2nd class, soon thereafter.

When he came home from the Navy, Jim returned to his job at a bank, National Commercial, until he matriculated in Utica College for a degree in journalism. While at his bank job, he met Carol Leahy, a lovely lady who later became his wife.

After graduating from Utica College, Jim enrolled in Albany Law School, along with many other veterans.



Photo by John Wagner

Because of its disappointing record in the bar exam, the law school began to upgrade and so its attrition rate grew significantly. Jim survived and graduated from Albany Law School. After passing the bar exam, Jim worked for several private law firms here in Albany. However, much of Jim's career was spent with the firm of Ainsworth, Sullivan, Tracy, and Knauf, where he practiced administrative law and private property right law.

Jim and Carol had three sons. Patrick was in the restaurant business but died in 2012 of a heart attack. Carol passed away about a year later. Their other sons are Michael, who works in the health care industry and lives in Ballston Spa, and Timothy, who lives with his wife in West Nyack and works for a firm that maintains specialized air conditioning equipment. Jim has three great-grandchildren.

Jim and Carol used to winter in Florida and enjoyed trips to Ireland (his ancestral home) as well as France and Italy

Last year, Jim gave up driving and decided to move to Avila, where some friends and a former law school classmate lived. Jim moved into the Lodge late last year and is still settling in.

BARBARA AND GREG SAUER

By Thomas and Ellen Fitzgerald

What a fascinating experience listening to the Sauers retell their careers, interests and personal details about their 56 years of marriage. They joined the Avila Community in March of 2022 after moving from their 200-year-old townhouse in the Stockade district of Schenectady.



Photo by Tom and Ellen Fitzgerald

Barbara and Greg met while in college in the Baltimore area: she at the College of Notre Dame studying French, and he studying physics at Loyola College, Baltimore. Greg recalls that he and his physics lab partner, one of his best friends, both expressed an interest in dating Barbara when they met her. It is clear who won her heart and affections.

With his degree in physics, Greg enrolled in a PhD program at University of Notre Dame, while Barbara began teaching 5th and 6th grade in Mishawaka, IN, after they were married in 1966. However, the Viet Nam war interrupted their plans. Facing the prospects of the draft, Greg left graduate school and sought employment in the defense industry. That year, he began a successful 35-year career using his physics background and administrative skills at Knolls Atomic Power Lab in Niskayuna in several engineering and management positions. Barbara pursued a master's degree in education at SUNY Albany before joining Empire State College in Saratoga Springs. Later Barbara taught at SUNY Schenectady and then founded an SAT PREP business with a partner.

Both Barbara and Greg have been actively involved in volunteer work. Both served on the board of the Stockade Association, and both served on many Stockade neighborhood committees, especially those promoting historic preservation. Barbara was a member of the Schenectady County AIDS Task Force where she chaired the "Buddy" program. Besides Stockade related activities, Greg has and is serving on the board of the Heritage Home for Women in Schenectady and on the steering committee for the Union College Academy for Lifelong Learning (UCALL) where he is also a frequent lecturer.

Greg retired early at 59 to aggressively pursue treatment at Dana Farber Cancer Center in Boston where he was an early recipient of a stem cell transplant. Greg continues his yoga practice with his friend Hank Binzer here at Avila.

The Sauers have already become engaged in other activities as well here at Avila. Barbara participates in the book club and bud vase flower decorating, among others. Greg continues his passion for all things dealing with history and has joined the gardening group where he will focus on a cutting garden. He shared his knowledge of history with the Avila community on June 22nd in a session dealing with how the world stumbled into World War I and drew some comparisons to today's situation in Ukraine.

We welcome Barbara and Greg as fine additions to our Avila Community and wish them health and happiness in their new home.

MARGARET AND PETER SEDLMEIR

By Pat Binzer

Margaret and Peter Sedlmeir came to Avila, leaving a beautiful large house in Preston Hollow after more than 30 years, when they decided it was time for a simpler life. They had visited residents Beth and Earle Flatt many times and felt Avila would be just the right fit for their next stage in life.

When asked what they like about living here, the answers came quickly and joyfully: "Everything is lovely! The food is great. The people are friendly. Good activities. It's very lovely here, we think we'll stay," they both added with a laugh and a smile.

Margaret and Peter are both educators, counselors, teachers, community-spirited individuals. Their desire to assist others spiritually, emotionally and intellectually has been part of their life's work for each of them, although it has taken different paths.

Margaret completed high school in White Plains and earned her bachelor's degree from Mount Saint Mary College in Newburgh, followed by a master's degree in religious education from Providence College in RI. All this education was supplemented by special course work as she pursued substance abuse counseling or teaching positions and as a trainer for Chase Manhattan Bank. She also served on the Rensselaerville town board for eight years.

Peter completed high school at Marist Prep in Esopus, followed by a degree from Marist College in Poughkeepsie. A master's degree from Manhattan College in physics led to years of teaching physics, advanced physics, and electronics, and another career as an electronics engineer for UNISYS. He completed a second master's degree from Saint Bernard's School of Theology here in Albany. In between there was other schooling as he studied for the diaconate and substance abuse counseling.

As teachers, they made use of their summer vacations serving as camp counselors for children with hearing and mental disabilities.



Photograph by Patricia Binzer

Here at Avila Peter and Margaret are certain to find their niche. She has already joined the flower arrangers and plans to volunteer in the country store a couple of hours a week. She is willing to join other committees that could use her talents. She is also interested in starting a singing group here. Since there are several residents who used to sing, the name "The Useta Singers" was suggested.

Peter devotes a great deal of his time to his obligations as a deacon in the Catholic church but is enjoying all the sociability he and Margaret have encountered so far here at Avila. He also enjoys reading and taking walks.

The Sedlmeirs are a welcome addition to the Avila family.

DISAPPOINTMENT

By Wilbur Shapiro

*Disappointment is a fact of life
It comes with and without strife
It happens more often than victory
These words are no mystery*

*How we accept this disappointment is the key
We can hide and we can flee
Or we can rebound
And sometimes astound*

*It is okay to have a disappointment frown
But, have the courage to not let it get you down
You have been tested and you failed
A victory lap would be your bail*

BOOK REVIEW

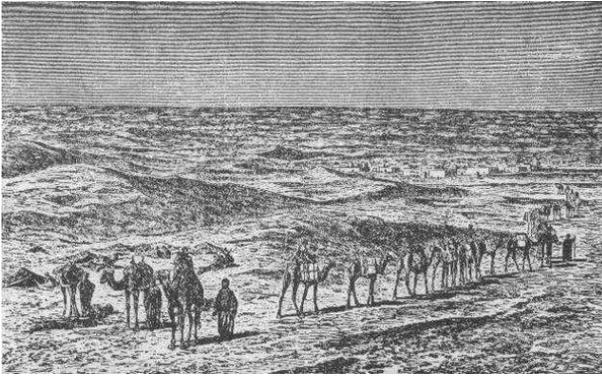
By Joe Shapiro

We live in an age when the world is at our fingertips. In earlier times ingenious means gave solace to those who would venture forth, to search for knowledge and understanding.

On the other hand, evil exists. Witness the invasion of Ukraine, preceded by a massing of tanks and armor

Was there a time when the massing of vehicles was essential to the preservation and spread of knowledge and goodwill? From the desert, the land of Araby?

In a delightful, brief book Jeff Deutsch notes in *In Praise of Good Bookstores* (Princeton University Press 2022) at page 30, the following:



"In his history of reading, Alberto Mangual, an exemplary reader and supremely bookish writer, tells of Abdul Kassem Ismael, the 10th century Grand Vizier of Persia, and his 400 camels that carried his collection of 117,000 books when he traveled. Through a dexterous feat of herd indexing, he trained the camels to walk in alphabetical order lest his collection succumb to the tyranny of chance."

To yearn to learn, ready to teach, a means of enlightening rather than death and destruction—we have more to learn from the wisdom of the 10th century. Some may walk a mile for a camel. Better

yet, let the camels do the walking! Let us enjoy their cargo. Peace, not war!

FOCUS FEATURE: AVILA'S FINE STAFF

"Thank you, Michelle: we sometimes leave unrecognized Michelle's quiet, effective skills encouraging potential residents of the Avila community. As an example, she has 'trained' those of us taking the aqua motion exercise session to immediately smile and wave from the pool whenever she walks potential residents by the pool and spa windows. We love showing the Avila community spirit in support of Michelle."

Tom Fitzgerald

"Thank you to Genesis, housekeeping, for her help washing and drying two queen-size winter blankets. It is really an Avila asset being able to use the very large washer and dryer in the housekeeping office."

Erin Teichman

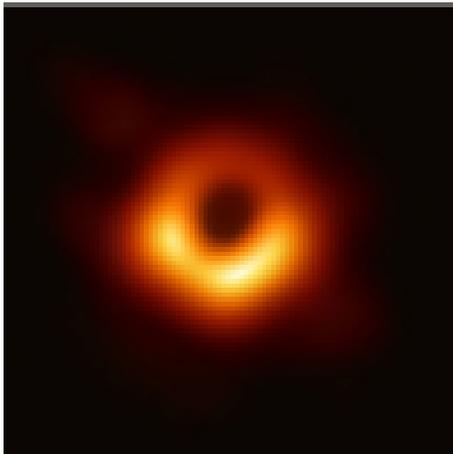
"We are very fortunate here at Avila to be able to call upon our experienced and accommodating staff. Recently, work requests sent to Gordy by us were promptly addressed. Tom helped correct a computer problem, "Z" installed window blinds, and Tom installed carpeting on our patio. It would have taken hours for me to tackle the carpeting. Tom mentioned that he had 31 years' experience with carpeting. We are lucky to be able to call on these individuals who have technical skills and pleasant personalities. Thanks again to the Maintenance staff!"

Tom and Ellen Fitzgerald

BLACK HOLES

By John Wagner

In 1916, Albert Einstein published his theory of general relativity, with its curved space and the equivalence of matter and energy. He proposed that, on a galactic scale, Newton's law of universal gravitation be replaced by a curved space-time continuum. The mathematics in his "Field Equations of Gravitation" was complex and the first solution wasn't found for a year. Subsequent solutions were used to confirm the theory by successfully computing values that agreed with observable data. But the theory also predicted the existence of the exotic objects we call black holes. Galactic data argued for their existence. But it was only in 2019 that astronomers were able to prove that they really existed with the image showing the outline of an actual black hole.



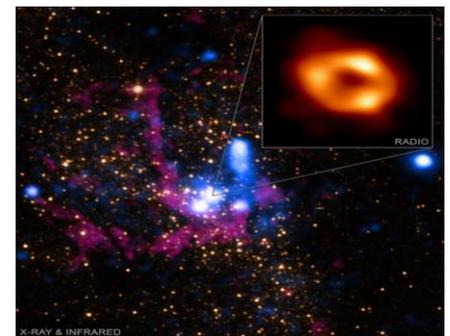
Black hole in Galaxy M87

Black holes are regions in space where gravity is so strong that particles of matter or light or electromagnetic radiation cannot escape. The boundary of this region is called the 'Event Horizon.' A black hole is created when a large star reaches the end of its life; it has burned up its hydrogen fuel, it begins to cool down, and then it collapses from its own weight. The result is a spheroidal region in space so dense that it bends the fabric of space-time and forms a space trap. Any matter, light or radiation crossing the edge of the trap (the event horizon) disappears inside it.

In addition to these "simple" black holes, there also appear to be "supermassive" black holes, like the one at the center of our Milky Way, with a mass more than a million times that of our sun. These are fed by matter and energy spiraling in from their host galaxies. These black holes are the most massive objects in our universe. The existence of these

supermassive black holes was implied by many galaxies where stars and gas clouds seem to be orbiting a hidden object. Astronomers now believe that most galaxies have a supermassive black hole at their center.

In 2009, an international team of scientists and engineers formed the Event Horizon Telescope project, whose goal was to capture an image of a black hole (or at least, its silhouette). The obscuring presence of galactic dust and gas clouds necessitated the use of radio telescopes. To achieve the needed resolution, a radio telescope would require a dish antenna as wide as the Earth. So, radio telescopes on six continents were linked together to form a 'virtual' telescope. Using atomic clocks to synchronize time at the different telescopes and employing super computers to align and process the terabytes of data, the project team created and released its image of the black hole in the galaxy M87 in 2020. While the black hole is not visible, it is backlit by a blinding glow of radiation emanating from material swirling around it. Friction and magnetic forces heat the material to more than a million degrees, creating an incandescent plasma that emits light and radio waves. These rays are bent by the black hole and sent to us carrying the silhouette or shadow of the invisible object. Thus, we have visible proof that black holes are real! Then, a year later, the Event Horizon Telescope Project released an image showing the black hole in our Milky Way galaxy, in Sagittarius A*.



Black hole in our Milky Way

These discoveries focused attention on black holes and on the activities associated with the accretion disc, the ring of material spiraling into the black hole. But many questions remain. How are supermassive black holes formed? Black holes appear to eat and then rest (the "duty cycle"). What triggers the eating? What role does a black hole play in selecting stars for its host galaxy? Did our black hole contribute to the conditions in our galaxy that made life possible?

WHAT DOES IT TAKE TO BE A MASTER (OVER AGE 50) SWIMMER?

By Tom Fitzgerald

Some of you may remember an interesting person at Avila's Halloween Party dressed as Michael Phelps, the famous Olympic swimmer. That was me! I have been swimming since I was 55 years old but still wonder what it takes to be a good swimmer. I did not swim in school, nor during my thirty-year career in education but started competitive swimming for fitness and to satisfy my ego later in life.

I now know what it takes to swim competitively: a sense of humor, strong self-image, a little skill and determination to "stay the course" over the numerous trials and tribulations. It also helps to set out to "just have fun" meeting and talking with fellow swimmers. How did I manage to stay focused throughout training and numerous faux pas?

First, I had to deal with a body that deviated from that traditional image of a competitive swimmer who usually has a body shaped like an inverted triangle with broad shoulders and narrow waist. Unfortunately, I have more of a traditional triangle!

My first adventures at a swim meet involved 80 other Master Swimmers, male and female, all of whom were over 50, some as old as 95, each competing in one of five-year age blocks (50-54, 55-59, etc.). Wearing a swimsuit, I was sure that everyone was looking at me as I stood next to other swimmers, many displaying triangle shaped bodies. This challenged my self-image. I survived realizing that few if anyone was looking at me. They were all concentrating on competing for a best personal time in each event they entered.

My confidence was further challenged by a series of minor but on the surface embarrassing mishaps. I jumped into the warmup lane still wearing my flip-flops which floated beside me until I discreetly removed them. In St. George, Utah, for an international competition, I walked from the locker room to the pool area only to discover I had my swimsuit on "inside out." Even though I quickly retreated to the locker-room, I received several amused glances and outright chuckles from fellow competitors.

New York State Senior Game meets provide medals for the top three swimmers in each age category. I am always pleased to receive one of those medals recognizing my training, determination and, in a small measure, my skills. However, in one such meet, my name was called to come forward to receive the first-place medal in my age group, only to discover that I was the only swimmer entered in that group. I swam faster than nobody else, but at least I won the race!

Here at Avila, we have a wonderful resource in our pool and hot tub. I encourage my fellow residents to take advantage of the pool for swimming, exercise and socializing, no medals are awarded, relaxation and enjoyment are your reward. See you there.

A SMILE, A GRIN, A CHUCKLE, A LAUGH

By Patricia J. Binzer

*I heard it said that you should laugh
At least once every day.
Maybe something made you chuckle
That you overheard someone say
Or a great big belly laugh that shows
One that came up from your toes.*

*It's okay to laugh alone
When no one else can hear.
It will make you feel really good
You won't need the rousing cheer.*

*Notice how your face softens
When you get ready to smile,
There's a twinkle all around your eyes
That's a look that fits your style.*

*Little things may reach your ear
making you feel warm and content.
You think about it quietly
then smile remembering the event.*

*When passing people walking by
you catch a bit of what was said.
Their talk could not be serious
you saw them grin instead.*

*You were sitting in the dining room
on a sunny afternoon.
There was a lot of noise and chatter
filling up the room.*

*As you studied people's faces
you tried to guess their mood.
Were they enjoying each other's company?
How did they like the food?*

*Were they smiling, grinning, laughing?
Was there a lot being said?
Guess they just stopped talking
as they buttered a piece of bread.*

*They left me alone sitting by myself
not knowing I was listening in.
Would they have been self-conscious?
I tried hard not to grin.*

*But I did enjoy just watching
until their luncheon came to an end.
It was time to leave and say farewell.
Come again my friend.*

*Time for me to leave as well.
It's been a lovely day.
I got to laugh, to smile, to grin
As I enjoyed what people had to say*

*Now I share this day with you
and hope it brought you pleasure too.
Let me see you laugh and grin.
Even a smile will do, a way to begin.*

