

VINSON HALL RETIREMENT COMMUNITY CAMPUS NEWS & VIEWS



Winter
2021/2022

CEO Corner

Looking Back at Two Years of Pandemic Life

Another year, another opportunity to highlight our life together at Vinson Hall Retirement Community. What a different life it has been for the last two years – 2020 and 2021!

Although we continued this year in the pandemic, it was not 2020. Two years ago, we were under siege in a battle we had never fought before. It was hard not to believe the invisible enemy, COVID-19, was winning. The shock, pain, heartache of losing loved ones, and our freedom was coming at us all at one time. We were in emergency mode, reacting hour-to-hour.

Like so many times in history, perseverance, will, and faith brought us to 2021. This year we have been shifting, knowingly and unknowingly, to proactive versus reactive. This shift continues and is hard. The pandemic has changed our world and people. We now need to find our footing at this place while anticipating impact that is more pandemic.

At VHRC, our mission and values have remained the same before and through this pandemic.

Mission

We enrich the lives of those around us, so they are free to live life to the fullest.

Values

Dignity, Security and Friendship

Showing respect and dignity for all in our community, providing physical and psychological safety, and being friendly by showing care and



Libby Bush with Board members CAPT Jim Carman, USN (Ret), and RADM Mark Skinner, USN (Ret), at this year's Evening with the Stars, held Nov. 3, 2021 to celebrate NMCGRF's Star Members.

concern remains the same.

In 2021, telling our story and building community with intention became our steady behind-the-scenes and out-front mantra. New initiatives blossomed – the sports park, pickle ball, the Beacon, the Employee Caring Fund, resident events (virtual and in-person), wine dinners, dining action stations and more.

We are excited to continue this connection together. In summary, no matter where people's mind, body and spirit is in the continuum of life and abilities, we will continue to strive to create the best possible ways for people to live life to the fullest.

Ode to the Dining Team

By Maureen Kammerer

You were there at our doors,
When no one else could come.
You came with smiles and cheer
For our sad and anxious days.
You fed us, you walked miles for us.
You overcame your fears.

You bike to work, you bus to work,
commuting miles just for us.
You always look neat and special,
Because you care, because you are professionals.

You cook for us, you create for us,
You decorate your space for us.
You take care of our walkers,
You make us happy at all hours.

You know our names and what we drink,
You give us what we want, and more.
You serve us, you clean up after us.
Then you see us out with cheerful good-byes
And hope for happier times.



Throughout the last two years, the Dining Services team has taken extra care of everyone at VHRC through activities like the in-house grocery delivery program (left) or event catering such as the 2021 Evening with the Stars (right).

About Campus News and Views

Campus News and Views is Vinson Hall Retirement Community's quarterly newsletter. The goal of this newsletter is to share stories and remembrances from VHRC residents and staff. All residents and staff are invited to submit articles for inclusion in the newsletter. All items included in the newsletter are original pieces submitted by the author. This newsletter is reviewed by a newsletter committee, comprised of VHRC residents and staff.

Campus News and Views is designed and edited by

*Amiee Freeman, Communications Specialist
Office of Philanthropy and Engagement
amieef@vinsonhall.org or 703-538-3069*

Newsletter Committee

*Nancy McSlarrow
Ron Musselwhite*

*Mike Scott
Clarine Schmukler*

*Submissions for the Spring newsletter are due March 11, 2022.
Please submit entries to Amiee Freeman (amieef@vinsonhall.org)*

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Campus News & Views

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Navy Marine Coast Guard Residence Foundation News

Reflecting on 2021 with Gratitude

By Michelle Crone, Senior Director of Philanthropy & Engagement

For me, the close of every year is a time of reflection, and as we bid goodbye to 2021 my thoughts are full of gratitude. These last couple of months at Vinson Hall Retirement Community have been marked by generosity and celebration, and we at the Navy Marine Coast Guard Residence Foundation have been grateful to be a part of it all.

Thanks to the remarkable generosity of our donors, we wrapped up our Annual Membership Campaign at the end of October having raised a record \$256,265 – which represents an \$85,000 increase over 2020! This was cause for celebration, and celebrate we did. On Nov. 3 we were able to come together in person once again for our Evening with the Stars, an annual event we host to thank our Star Members (those who donate \$250 or more). Nearly 100 of last year's 196 Star Members gathered together in the Ballroom for an evening of fellowship, fun and great food. We are so grateful to all our donors – more than 300 in 2021 – for making our work possible with your generous annual gifts!

For Veteran's Day, the Foundation was honored to help plan three different tributes to our amazing residents. We purchased the wreath that our community was invited to lay at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in commemoration of its centennial. It was quite a moment on Nov. 3 when Admiral Gene Sizemore and Ambassador Ted Russell stepped up to lay VHRC's wreath at Arlington National Cemetery.

Also in commemoration of the Tomb's centennial, the Foundation coordinated a visit



Doyce Burke and Nora Whalen raise a toast at NMCGRF's Evening with the Stars – an annual event to celebrate the Foundation's Star Members, individuals who donate \$250 or more to the Foundation.

from the Daughters of the American Revolution, who chose VHRC to plant a "Never Forget Garden" honoring our veterans. And finally, on Nov. 8 we welcomed the Memorial Day Flowers Foundation's gift of 600 bouquets of flowers for all our residents and staff. It is truly a privilege for us to serve this community of residents who have devoted their lives in service to our nation.

We were also pleased to share a Meet the Board video we created to highlight six of the remarkable people that make up VHRC's Board of Trustees. Stay tuned for the second installment in the series, coming soon! And finally, it was our pleasure to once again coordinate a holiday drive to benefit SHARE as well as the campus holiday decorating effort, with the help of a team of residents and staff. To top off the holiday cheer, the Foundation hosted a Holiday Donor Appreciation Tea on Dec. 11 in the Penthouse Lounge, and were delighted to share coffee and cakes with nearly 70 people! We raised a glass then, and we raise a glass now, to all of you in this exceptional community that we at the Foundation are honored to support!

Music Club Helps Residents form Connections

Every week a small group of eight to 10 Arleigh Burke Pavilion health care residents gather for Java music club. The club starts with a short breathing exercise to allow the club members a chance to switch gears and prepare to connect. After the introductory song, the club facilitator presents a discussion topic.

On a recent Thursday, the topic of discussion was Christmas memories. Roger Kilton shared a childhood memory of taking a train from Chicago to Louisiana to visit family at Christmas time. "I remember stepping off the train in Louisiana and just being shocked at the change in weather. Over a matter of hours we went from freezing to balmy." This reflection led to the group to sing "White Christmas," but they swapped out white for balmy, creating a fun connection between Roger's memory and the song.

The opportunity to share and discuss, paired with singing, is what makes Java music club such a success. At first glance, the club might appear to be forced, but the themes and the music allow for organic, spontaneous and fun discussions. Nicole Largent, Activities Manager for Arleigh Burke Pavilion and The Sylvestery, who is a music therapist by training, points out that music is in every part of the brain, meaning that listening to, playing, reading, and creating music involves practically every part of the brain. Just listening to music involves the memory centers in the brain and helps stimulate memory. Individuals who have trouble communicating can often communicate through song, and music brings great comfort.

"Seeing is really believing with this program," said Nicole. "I was skeptical at first that this program would work, but I was wrong. Our residents look forward to this club. The club



Roger Kilton plays the chimes at the start of the Java music club.

provides such a great opportunity to share, and they are very supportive of each other. And each week is different, providing different ways for the group to connect."

Java music club is an evidence-based program designed for residential care communities. Over the summer, Nicole submitted a grant application to Leading Age Virginia to receive training to be Java facilitator. Once trained, Nicole trained ABP's activities coordinators. In addition to training, ABP received program materials which include an Aboriginal talking stick that is passed to each speaker to allow opportunities for discussion, 52 themes and large-size photographs to spark conversations, and eight CDs of recorded music. As Nicole plays the guitar, she plays most of the songs rather than using the recorded music, and this allows for more flexibility with the song choices. The ultimate goal of Java music club is to combat loneliness and isolation. This goal is achieved by creating a safe space for individuals to come together to connect.

"At its heart, it's a peer support group. I don't want to call it 'therapy,' but the goal of the club is to bring people together and help them form connections," said Nicole. ❖

Generous Gift Provides New Technology

In August, The Sylvestery received a very generous donation from a TS family member who wishes to remain anonymous. The family member donated \$50,000 to The Sylvestery to express gratitude and appreciation for all that The Sylvestery does for the residents of that community. The donor requested that \$5,000 be directed toward an appreciation bonus for every TS staff member and that the remaining amount be used to support TS's activities program, sensory room, and improvements to its courtyards.

As Antionette Dublin, Senior Director of The Sylvestery and Arleigh Burke Pavilion explained, "We earned the family member's trust, and the donor felt moved to donate to The Sylvestery." The donor was especially impressed by the hard work of the staff and the phenomenal job that The Sylvestery's activities managers do every day, engaging with the residents on a personal level.

Upon receiving the donation, Analisse Vasquez Soto, Assistant Administrator of The Sylvestery, instructed the activities staff to make a wish list. Carlos Leiva and Stacey Samuels, activities managers for The Sylvestery, hopped to the task. One of the items requested was interactive white boards, which are used in small- and medium-sized group settings to play games or stimulate vocabulary use.

"These games or activities encourage our residents to think, to be creative and use their words," said Analisse. "Often we have the misconception that people with dementia or Alzheimer's can't do anything, which is not true. All of our residents are intelligent, thoughtful individuals, who have had amazing careers and life experiences. These experiences don't just disappear with a diagnosis of dementia. Through our activities – and now thanks to the new technology we are able to purchase – we work with our residents to stimulate their



Carlos Leiva, using the newly purchased interactive white boards, shares funny photos and games with small groups of TS residents.

thinking, so we can try to delay the vocabulary loss and the loss of engagement that comes with the disease."

On a recent afternoon, Carlos shared funny dog pictures with a small group of five residents, who laughed at the dogs' silly costumes or expressions. This laughter is a delight to Analisse, TS staff and families. As dementia or Alzheimer's progresses, it is harder and harder to illicit reactions from individuals. "To have a piece of technology that encourages the residents to laugh is invaluable," said Analisse.

In addition to the white boards, Analisse and her staff have plans to purchase Virtual Reality (VR) goggles. VR goggles provide 360-degree scenic views of wildlife, nature, or other pictures. For example, a picture of a childhood home could be scanned and uploaded into the VR goggles, allowing the viewer to have the sense they were standing in front of their former home.

"Most of our residents did not grow up with technology," said Analisse. "Some people think that because of this they can't appreciate or enjoy what technology can offer. But it's amazing to see how adaptive our residents are to technology. Our hope is that with this technology and with the care of our staff they will be able to live life without limits." ❖

Brinksmanship

By Mike Scott

Well before our daughter was in her teens, she had decided to pursue a career as a veterinarian, and this fact was widely known among our friends and her schoolmates. Thus, one afternoon, she received a telephone call from a distraught neighborhood parent, reporting that three newborn raccoons had been discovered in the family's fireplace chimney. Our daughter promptly went to have a look, and inevitably, she decided to "adopt" one, advising the county animal control agency of the existence of only the other two. Given the fact that among the residents in our Northern Virginia home was Hope, a German Shepherd dog, my wife and I were – to say the least – apprehensive.

Our concerns to the contrary, our daughter began to familiarize our new "live-in" with kitten milk formula from a bottle, and in time, we were able to construct a rudimentary cage under shelter of the garage roof. Fortunately, though Hope took interest in the new family member, she demonstrated no hostility, and could often be found "lying guard" in close proximity to the cage. And at the same time, our daughter undertook to develop an appropriate diet for the raccoon as it matured beyond the bottle – a diet with which Hope learned quickly not to interfere lest she be savagely rebuffed. Our daughter also, and to this day I don't know how, found a veterinarian who, in violation of the law, gave the raccoon vaccinations he would give to a dog.

In time, we began to allow the raccoon – whom we named Brink in imitation of its bark – freedom from its cage. Because my daughter was a guaranteed source of food, Brink always could be found in his cage when he became hungry. (One exception was the summer evening we were giving a dinner party, and Brink decided that the aromas from the kitchen's open door were too hard to ignore.) More remarkably, however, Brink at some point came to the conclusion that he too was a dog, and we have several feet of 8mm film recording him playfully romping about the yard with his constant guardian, Hope.



Brink, the raccoon, with the author's daughter.

The time came, however, when our daughter was ready for college. She chose to enter a university 200 miles away in Connecticut. The institution allowed its students to have small companion pets, but at the same time did not define what kind of small pets were allowable. For our family, the next decision was simple: hire a local carpenter to build an attractive but functional cage, and paint the cage with the institution's emblem and colors.

For reasons that I do not now recall, it fell to my wife, and not me, to drive our daughter, her luggage, Brink, and the cage (tied to the station wagon roof) from Northern Virginia to Connecticut. Fortunately, the trip was without incident, and to our further good fortune, a group of young men assigned to my daughter's dorm helped to hoist Brink's cage to the porch outside her second-floor dorm unit.

Apparently, things went well for the first few weeks, but then Brink decided, on his own, to take in the Saturday afternoon football games that were attracting so many people. According to our daughter, games were stopped from

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On Stage at the Ramayana Ballet

By Ed and Sheila Davis

In 1998, we took our first trip to Indonesia to visit our son, who had been in the country for a year or so. As part of our visit to Bali and Yogyakarta, we visited the Ramayana Ballet where Jamie, our son, knew the dancers and had even performed himself several times. After the show, we went backstage and dressed in the real costumes. It took an hour and a half to put it all on and 45 minutes to get it all off. Meanwhile, we took pictures on stage and this photo (right) is the best one. This was not an ordinary tourist event, but the friendship of our son with the cast allowed this to happen – and it was FUN! ❖



Brinksmanship

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time to time, to the delight of the crowd, when Brink scampered onto the field of play. To his ill-fortune on alumni weekend, however, he was spotted by a couple of youngsters who were attending the game with their father, and the three of them somehow managed to take this “adorable” animal home with them. That evening, one of the youngsters (who of course knew nothing about raccoons) tried to play with Brink while he was eating, and she was predictably bitten.

The first I knew of this happening was when I answered our phone and heard my sobbing daughter tell me that Brink had been tracked to a home in a nearby town and was going to be killed the next day and be tested for rabies. Needless to say, I was pretty much at a loss as to what I could do next, but it suddenly dawned on me that one of my business partners was chairman of the institution’s board of trustees and that he probably would be familiar with some of the leading local lawyers. He was indeed, and in 10 minutes I was on the phone with one such lawyer, retaining him to seek a restraining order the next morning against the

rabies test going forward.

Thus it was that, I believe, Brink was the first and probably the only raccoon in the history of the State of Connecticut to have been represented by a lawyer. Bottom line: A deal was struck between Brink’s lawyer and the state animal control authorities the next morning, by which Brink would be quarantined at our expense for two weeks, after which – if he had not shown any signs of rabies – he would be promptly removed from the state.

I’m happy to say that Brink survived quarantine, and we promptly indeed brought him (and his cage) back to our Northern Virginia home. Though we fed him his favorite meals, within a week he had left us, as his primal instincts must have then dictated, for the surrounding woods. Though we never saw him again, our daughter (aka “The Raccoon Lady”) reports to us that the legend of Brink’s ill-advised interest in the game of college football lives on at the university he “attended” – almost a half-century ago. As for Brink himself, I like to think he went long for a Hail Mary pass, and then – as did Forrest Gump – just kept on running. ❖

Ask Not

By Jerry Norris

Following service as a Tank Commander in the Korean War, I earned a bachelor of science degree from the University of Illinois. Then, I became a Peace Corps volunteer, assigned to La Plata, a small village in the foothills of the Andean mountains in Colombia. On what soon would become a fateful morning of November 22, 1963, I had taken a bus into the departmental capital, Neiva, to obtain a governmental authorization for one of our projects. Like most every bus in our area, firmly set above the driver's head were three pictures: Jesus, the Virgin Mary, and President John F. Kennedy. Later in the afternoon, before boarding the bus for the trip back, I stopped at a newsstand to see if it had a recent copy of *Time* magazine. I was in luck. There was one copy left!

In my excitement to read it, I paid little attention to a wildly gesturing sales clerk, shouting at me in desperation. I didn't catch all he was saying, but I did understand *muerto* (dead); John F. Kennedy; *asesino* (assassinated); *en la cabeza* (in the head). With this last phrase he jabbed fingers to his head for added effect.

I thought the man was either deranged or just anti-American, gave him no attention, and left rather than create a scene. He kept shouting after me, obviously quite upset at my dismissive attitude. I was self-absorbed, focused entirely on having *Time* magazine all to myself during the three-hour ride back before having to share it with my site partners, Bob and Mark.

Upon arriving in La Plata, I noticed the streets were empty but a huge crowd had formed at the front door of our house. There were some 3,000 people living in La Plata and they all seemed to be at our front door! My first thought was that something had happened to my site partners. As I moved closer, the crowd made way for me. No one spoke. Some reached out to put a gentle hand on my shoulder, lightly touched my hand, or to murmur something as I passed by, their faces prefiguring something that had to be



Jerry Norris served as a Peace Corps volunteer in Colombia in the early 1960s. Each volunteer was issued a transit card (above) which allowed movement throughout the country.

unspeakable.

Once inside our house, I went into a room where my two site partners were seated. I was relieved to see that they looked just fine. They were huddled around a small short-wave radio, saying nothing, but moving to make room for me to sit next to them. They appeared stunned and were furiously working the radio to pick up clear stations. They tried the BBC, then VOA, then Radio Cali and Bogota. At each stop on the dial, brief bursts of news came through: shots in Dallas, Texas; the President was in a hospital; then Air Force One was taking off for Washington, D.C. We didn't connect the dots. At one point, the front door opened and plates of food and coffee were silently slipped in to us. No faces, just extended arms.

Before midnight, there was a gentle knock on the door. It was the mayor, asking if we might take a moment to step outside. Upon doing so, it became clear that the entire town of La Plata was out there. The mayor, hesitant and clearing his throat for what must have been a long minute before finally reading a proclamation, expressing a deep and profound sorrow on the part of every citizen in La Plata for the incomprehensible news that "the sons of John F. Kennedy now had to bear."

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Screeching Wagons

By Joe Kammerer

My twin brother, John, and I learned an important lesson from a mishap early one Sunday morning: Always carry a spare wheel and a tool to fix a broken wagon.

John and I both had a newspaper route. We also each had a wagon to carry the newspapers. We loved to race these wagons down the alleys to our newspaper pick-up destination. We also loved the screeching, squealing racket that our wagons made. I'm sure the noise was absolutely abominable at 5:30 on a Sunday morning.

On this particular morning, just as we entered the second alley, one of the wheels shed its steel rim, leaving the wagon broken. With just one wagon, we would have to combine our routes and deliver all 300 newspapers together. Facing this rather daunting prospect, I remembered that we had a spare wheel back at our home, so we headed back home to get it. Of course, this meant screeching the good wagon back through the alleys to retrieve the spare wheel.

When we returned to the broken wagon, we had to improvise using the only tool we had – a wire cutter – to remove the cotter pin from the broken wheel to install the spare wheel. Luckily, we were able to restore the broken wagon to service and deliver the newspapers. John was especially thankful since it was his wagon that was broken.

Later that morning, as we were delivering our newspapers on the street that was common to both newspaper routes, we encountered one another. John shared with me that he had told one of his customers, Mrs. Smith, about our travails that morning, and she had invited us to have breakfast in her home after we had finished delivering the newspapers. This offer made the remainder of the route go by much more quickly. In no time at all, we were in Mrs. Smith's kitchen enjoying a delicious breakfast of buckwheat pancakes, fried eggs, and bacon with hot chocolate – just what we needed after a difficult morning. ❖

Ask Not

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The three of us still had not understood fully what had happened. We stood there rather bewildered. Then, Dona Lucia Perez, a woman that lived down the street, stepped forward. She asked us to look at our front door. There, stretched above it was an American flag. To make sure we could see it in the darkness, everyone who had a flashlight put their beams onto it. The effect of all those lights in that midnight environment was rather surreal.

It was at this point that our denial finally gave way to the inevitable truth. The man who with one simple sentence – “Ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country” – had compelled us to reach into the unknown was no longer with us.

My site partners entrusted this flag to me. It is 4' x4' in dimensions, made of rayon. Where Dona

Lucia, a poor woman, obtained the materials to stitch the flag together without a sewing machine by the dim light of a candle, and how she knew it had to have 13 stripes and 50 white stars on a field of blue in the upper left hand corner, I never knew—nor asked. Over the next 18 months of my assignment in La Plata, I became part of her household, which included her 11 children and her beloved husband, Don Luis, a one-eyed itinerant day-laborer. I flew the flag she had made from the front door of our home every Memorial Day, July 4th, Veterans Day, and often take it to reunions of our Peace Corps group. In spite of its exposure to wind, sun and sudden thunderstorms over the past 56 years, it has never required any repairs. When I see it, this flag reminds me of JFK's comment that “the burden of a long twilight struggle” is ever with us, its outcome always uncertain, painful and costly. ❖

Famous People and Me

By Gene Wentz

I am a pompous name dropper. If the person was reasonably well known, and if I shook his/her hand, was within spitting distance of them or rubbed elbows, I made sure all my relatives and friends were informed of the encounter – told with brazen embellishments.

Those celebrities included Harry Truman, George H.W. Bush, Kirk Douglas, Jayne Mansfield, Tippi Hedren, George Jessel, Jimmy Stewart, Hedda Hopper, Doris Day and Sophia Loren (twice).

But the show business hot-shot that I knew best, and had the longest association with, was just a lowly U.S. Army E-4 in Saigon in 1968-69. He was Armed Forces Radio Disc Jockey Pat Sajak. Pat is now known to millions, and has earned millions, as the 40-year host of the highly rated television game show "Wheel of Fortune," with sidekick Vanna White.

I arrived in Saigon in July 1968 with orders as the Officer in Charge of Network Radio for the Armed Forces Vietnam Network (AFVN). There were 15 enlisted broadcast specialists in my division. Most were Army, with a few Air Force and one Marine and one Navy. Pat was the morning DJ, opening the day with "Good Morning, Vietnam" on a music/news/sports program titled "Dawn Busters." He was not a broadcast specialist, but rather in Army finance. He had civilian experience in radio/TV and talked his way into a transfer to our station.

Military broadcasters in Vietnam during that time could be disciplinary problems. Many were drafted into the Army from good paying civilian jobs and resented the interruptions to



Gene Wentz and Pat Sajak sit side by side in the back row of the photo taken in Saigon in 1969. Gene is third from the left in the back row and Pat is fourth from the left.

their careers and the relative inconveniences of military customs and traditions.

During the nine months that I worked with Pat, I never had a single problem with him. He was hard-working, respectful, polite, showed up on time, shined his shoes and got regular haircuts. He was well liked by everyone in the station.

The last time I had contact with Pat was in 1980 when I was temporarily assigned to the Los Angeles area. One evening I tuned in to an area TV station for the local news. Who should show up on screen as the station's weatherman but Pat Sajak. I telephoned the station and we talked about our Saigon days and old colleagues. That was about one year before Pat won the audition to host "Wheel."

His career has been nothing but success ever since. He progressed from E-4 pay of about \$214 a month to where Wikipedia estimates his worth today as \$70 million. For comparison, in 1969 as an O-4, I earned \$890 per month. My financial worth today is less than \$70 million. ❖

Once Upon a Time

By Margaret Dean

Once upon a time —
A long long time ago —
In a land a long long ways from here
And a long long ways from there too
A young foreign service officer
 and his wife
Arrived at their first post.
He to take up his position as vice-consul;
She to provide hearth and home.

They had hurried to that strange and distant land
 at the request of the incumbent officer
Who had written that he and his family
 urgently needed their R&R
To recover their perspective, rest their souls,
 regain their health —
And to become reacquainted with their native land.
Their elderly parents needed to touch their
 grandchildren
And those small children needed to see their
 grandparents,
 hug them, touch them too,
 know that they were real.
Those children needed to find America
 before they were whisked off to another
 exotic lacuna in the world by their
 professionally itinerant parents.

Such a plea, impossible to resist, rending the
 heart of that young couple,
 impelled them forwards.
Straight from language school,
Immediately to Dulles,
Over the weekend,
Flying on their own time,
Hour after hour, rushing onward
Through the dark and the light.

Well, why not let that family leave,
Why not skip an overlap,
Hardly vital elsewhere?
So many reasons why.
That young officer was just a baby FSO
And felt — rightly or wrongly —
That he had much to learn
That he needed any drop of shared wisdom

And experience which that other officer
Might impart on consular matters,
Cultural matters,
Personnel matters.
Or even political concerns.

That young officer thought he needed
introduction to key contacts
And advice about the lay of the land
Which this — much more senior — officer
Personally held.
Besides this view, the department said
There must be overlap because there was no other
Officer to serve as vice-consul.

 No way
For those poor benighted foreigners to
reach our shores;

 No way
For destitute Americans to cope
So far from the red, white and blue;

 No way
For the united fruit company
To reach out and touch its government.

So they went — quickly and efficiently
Through the night.
A brief phone call to his parents to say goodbye;
Another — longer one — to hers

And they were gone
To steamy heat, and bugs,
To foreigners of surprising ilk:
Arabs and Jews in a Latin land.

The couple saw and learned
That strangers in a foreign land are friends
And that the incumbents
Had had three weeks of home leave with his family;
Three weeks of home leave with her family,
Two weeks of consultation in Washington,
Two weeks of leave in Europe.

And so
In that far away land the young — perhaps
 naively young — couple learned
Never to rush to post. ❖

Well-Done, Good and Faithful Servant

By John Hall

In mid-September we took up residence at Vinson Hall with our 11-year-old black lab, "Adela." Donna and I came to be acquainted with Adela thanks to our 20+ years of experience volunteering for Guiding Eyes for the Blind (GEB). Our connection with GEB gave us the opportunity to provide a caring home for this 80-pound "gentle giant," and in 2018 we welcomed Adela to our home.

At that time, Adela had just retired from a career as a guide dog for her partner, Matt. Every day, Adela was tasked with guiding Matt to his job in mid-town Manhattan where he worked as a special education teacher. The commute was carried out on foot, by subway and bus.

Following her retirement, Adela was in our care for three years. Just before moving to Vinson Hall, we received the sad news that Adela had a very fast-growing form of cancer and that her days were numbered. With a recommended palliative care treatment plan, we hoped she would not be affected by the stress of moving to a new home and would enjoy her surroundings, even if for a short while.

It soon became apparent to us that Adela was not only unfazed by her new digs, but seemed to enjoy all the sights, sounds, and especially the people she encountered every day. We didn't keep count, but it's safe to say she met literally dozens of new friends in the hallways, elevators, reception areas and outside grassy fields on campus. We were struck, once again, at the amazing impact this peaceable, calm and patient dog had on the people she got to know. No criticism of "little dogs" intended, but there's nothing quite like having a (very) large head settle on your lap... whether seated on a sofa or wheelchair!

By early October, the unmistakable signs that it was time to say good-bye to Adela were clear. Upon Adela's death, family, friends, neighbors, her blind partner, and the wonderful folks at Guiding Eyes for the Blind shared with us some



Every day, Adela, a seeing eye dog, assisted her partner Matt, including at work as a special education teacher in New York.

very touching tributes, celebrating the life and work of this "service" dog.

Janet, our dear friend and Adela's caregiver/trainer from eight weeks old, emailed us, saying "Adela was such a special girl, and she taught me so much about myself."

"The hardest thing for a Guide Dog user is worrying about our dogs in retirement," wrote Adela's partner, Matt, "but you both gave me such a gift in knowing Adela was loved and cared for. We will all have memories of Adela that will remain in our hearts. She was truly an amazing dog, full of life and love."

For our part we are grateful to GEB for making the decision to allow Adela to retire "early" at age 8. This decision enabled us to have 3+ years with her, "giving back" to her for all those working years she had. We know that GEB and Matt join us in saying, "well done, good and faithful servant" with great appreciation and gratitude. ❖

Middle Eastern Adventure

By Elisabeth Wilton

I spent much of the 1990s in Europe, attached to the State Department, covering Europe, Africa and the Middle East. Countless trips around Europe (sadly, going south in summer and north in winter instead of the other way around!), eight trips to Africa, and a few to the Middle East. But one trip was quite memorable.

I was asked to go to Sanaa, Yemen, to coordinate with staff at the embassy there. When I arrived, I called to check in and was told that it was their monthly commissary flight and all hands were busy with the deliveries. I was asked to give them about four hours and check back. They suggested I get a car from the hotel and visit the local souk, the market area of the city, and just see the sights. So, why not?

I arranged to have the driver come back in three hours and pick me up at the place where he had dropped me off (one of those acts of faith of which we are all guilty when we have few other choices). So off I went (and off went the driver) and I wandered through the souk. To my knowledge there was only one other adult woman in the souk that day. She was selling something or other and hidden behind all kinds of veils. Little girls were there with their fathers (uncles, brothers?) wearing frilly party dresses. Little boys were there, dressed like the adult males in white robes and turbans, with huge knives in their belts. But all were very friendly to me, indicating things they thought might be of interest, smiling and acting very welcoming. I thoroughly enjoyed the three hours I spent there and exited the souk precisely at noon, only a bit concerned about whether my car would be waiting there for me.

Not a prob! There he was, and off we went back to the hotel.



The Old City of Sanaa, Yemen, in an undated photo.

Upon entering the hotel, I asked the desk clerk if there were any messages for me. He said no. I asked about lunch, and he indicated the upstairs room where I could be served. Well, yes. It was otherwise deserted, with chairs on top of tables. The staff cleared off a table for me and I ordered a simple lunch. Shortly thereafter, a lady in a black tent paused as she passed the doorway and asked me if I were alone. "Moment," she murmured, and disappeared. She returned within minutes, stunningly dressed in Parisian fashion and proceeded to regale me with interesting stories while I had my lunch. Fortunately, my French was adequate! She was so kind to befriend me so I wouldn't have to eat alone.

I checked with the desk again before going to my room, and said that I was awaiting word from the American Embassy but would take a nap. At 3 p.m. I awoke in some alarm. I should have heard something by then. I went down to the desk to ask if I had received a call. They said, "Oh yes, but we didn't want to disturb you!" AAACKK. I immediately called my contact who was audibly relieved to hear from me. He said they were just about to send out a detail of Marines because there had been many reportings of kidnappings recently! I got a hotel car to take me to the embassy, and all was well thereafter. ❖

My Father, Roy Woodson Easley

By Roy Easley

My father, Roy Woodson Easley, was a citizen soldier in many respects and in many ways. His success in life was strongly influenced by the lessons learned and the skills obtained while working with and by observing his father, Samuel, in action.

Samuel Woodson Easley married Ella Nora Hamilton in 1890. The following year my father was born, followed by Virgil, Carrie, and Nell. While a carpenter during the day, Samuel studied architecture at night. In 1908, he received a contract to install pews in the First Baptist Church in Williamsburg, Ky. Very favorably impressed with this small college town, he established his family there permanently. Cumberland College in Williamsburg was founded in 1889 to provide affordable education for mountain people.

Williamsburg is located in southeastern Kentucky in the Cumberland Plateau of the Cumberland Mountains, 25 miles northwest of the Cumberland Gap. These mountains are a part of the chain of mountains in the great Appalachian Mountains which run southwest from Maine to Georgia. The mighty Cumberland River, with headwaters in far eastern Kentucky, flows through the Cumberland Gap and past Williamsburg on its ever western journey through Kentucky and Tennessee. Flowing into the Ohio River near Paducah, Ky., the Ohio soon enters the Mississippi for the trip south to the Gulf of Mexico. The Gap was a "gateway to the West" for many 18th and 19th century settlers.

Samuel became well-known in Williamsburg as a builder. His accomplishments included construction of the Masonic Hall, Farmers Bank, a funeral home, and many private homes. He also designed and constructed several very large and beautiful homes for wealthy citizens who also liked this beautiful little college town. And he built several other commercial structures and the first and only ice plant in Williamsburg. Soon after this plant was completed, he acquired a soft drink franchise. Other sideline businesses



Roy Easley's father served as the Louisville chief of police from 1926 to 1929. In the photo above, Roy, age 3, is dressed up in a policeman's uniform.

involved buying and retailing lime, hauling coal and ice, and being the first franchised Standard Oil dealer in the area. Samuel died of cardiac arrest in 1934 at the age of 75. He is buried in a family cemetery in Pleasureville, Ky.

My father married Kathleen Young Roberts on May 24, 1911. She was a student at the Cumberland College Preparatory School in Williamsburg at that time. She was 16 years old and my father was 20. Her parents' home was in the high country of Wise County, Va., 75 miles due east from Williamsburg on the east side of the Appalachian Mountains.

I was the seventh born of the eight children of this marriage and the only male. I was given my father's name, Roy, which means "king," so I was treated that way – and I acted this way too!

In 1917 the U.S. entered the World War and my father enlisted in the Army and went directly to officer training school. He expected to be sent

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My Father, Roy Woodson Easley

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to France as a platoon leader of doughboys (infantrymen), but due to his automotive experience driving and maintaining his father's automotive vehicles, he was assigned to a new part of the Army – the Motor Transportation Corps. He was sent by railroad to an Army camp in Florida where he trained Motor Transport soldiers who were sent to France. At the war's end, he was returned to Williamsburg by railroad.

He then was promoted to captain in the National Guard and organized Company D of the 149th Infantry Regiment (a machine gun company). This was the first National Guard unit in Williamsburg.

In the 1920s, he became a Federal Prohibition Officer. One of his adventures was recorded in the Congressional Record (1929, page 2797) in a report titled, "George Strong, Facts of the Case." The report details a rather intense encounter between the prohibition agents and suspects: "On March 28, 1923, Prohibition Agents Tuggle, Easley, Green, and Saylor with posse men arrived at the home of George Strong, Middle Fork, 25 miles north of Harlan, Ky., near Asher, for the purpose of searching for liquor. One of the posse men was shot through the head and also in the breast. The shots came from the Strong house. The agents returned fire and after the firing ceased on both sides found Ike Strong, George Strong, and Mrs. Ike Strong had all been killed. All had taken part in the fight. Disposition of the case: No prosecution instituted against the above-named agents."

My father next served as chief of police in Louisville (1926-29). In 1930, the Louisville City Council merged the police and fire departments into the Department of Public Safety and appointed my father director of public safety (1930-33).

Congress ended Prohibition in 1933 and in 1934 my father became sales manager of the largest wholesale liquor distributorship in Kentucky, the Maloney Davidson Company, which was located

in Louisville. He served there until the National Guard was federalized for service in World War II in January 1941. When departing Maloney Davidson, Mr. Maloney, president and CEO of the company, said to my father, "Roy, don't worry about your job. It will be here for you when you return from war."

My father served in World War II as a brigadier general and assistant division commander of the 38th Infantry Division, which participated in the battle for Leyte Island in the Philippines. Following this battle, the 38th participated in the battle for the Island of Luzon. The 38th was specifically utilized in liberating the southwest Bataan peninsula. It was a very rugged fight. My father then returned to Louisville in the spring of 1945 and was placed on the National Guard retired list. World War II ended several months later.

My father's promised civilian job with Maloney Davidson was not available. Mr. Maloney had died during the war, and his son, David Earl, was now president and CEO. He had appointed his brother, Bernard, as sales manager. The Republican Party requested my father to be their candidate for Mayor of Louisville in the November 1945 election. My father ran for mayor but lost by 226 votes.

A great manager, a great salesman, and with his knowledge of the wholesaling of liquor, he recruited three financial partners. The four men contributed funds to create a new wholesale liquor distributorship. The recruited partners elected my father president and CEO to manage the new business – Southern Liquors, Inc. My father was given an excellent salary to manage the company and the four partners each received 25 percent of the annual profits. Within seven years, Southern Liquors became the most profitable liquor wholesaler in Kentucky!

After 15 years of managing Southern Liquors, my father retired in 1961 at the age of 70. He died November 27, 1985, two months shy of his 95th birthday. He is buried in Cave Hill Cemetery in Louisville. ❖



Vinson Hall Retirement Community

6251 Old Dominion Drive

McLean, VA 22101

VINSON HALL RETIREMENT COMMUNITY

Campus News & Views

Winter 2021/2022



The Foundation's Star Members, including Barb Shaffer, Lorna Lagarde, and Anna Coutlakis (above), were honored during the Evening with the Stars celebration. Ted Russell and Gene Sizemore placed a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier (lower right). Jerry Norris (lower left) was one of many who helped us get ready for the holidays.