

VINSON HALL RETIREMENT COMMUNITY CAMPUS NEWS & VIEWS



Winter 2020

CEO Corner

Gratefully on Our Way to Someday

If you look at our globe, country, state, county, and community through a sterile lens, 2020 is about numbers. March 6 we sent out our first VHRC coronavirus letter – 280 days ago. It feels like a lifetime ago, doesn't it? Who would have ever thought we would be at this place at this time? So many uncertainties, unknowns, changes, and tragic consequences. We have seen unprecedented outcomes in all areas of our lives.

I grew up with a Mom who used the phrase, "Elizabeth Anne (yes, I knew it was bad if she used my first and middle names), this is non-negotiable." Whatever the "this" was, I knew this phrase meant go/no go. Would I attempt to negotiate, would I comply and accept "this" was actually non-negotiable? It represented a boundary, a moment in time, a hard line, and ultimately a choice. I've thought about this phrase many times throughout my adult years, especially becoming a Mom myself. My way of saying something similar is "what is controllable and what is uncontrollable?" This sums up what we've attempted to do at VHRC and NMCGRF during this pandemic.

There is certainly much we cannot control right now. COVID-19, on a global scale, and as a novel highly infectious virus, has driven monumental decisions as we look back to the beginning of the year. As time moves on, and we learn more, we're attempting to pivot or iterate to the next best place as defined by authorities having jurisdiction, whether federal or local governmental agencies. At VHRC, we're doing the same and also working to make our story our own.



Our top priority remains the health and wellness of our residents and dedicated staff. Every decision we make is based on this priority. This is our controllable. So far, it's been demonstrated through the way we communicate, the way we've created processes and protocols to support the mind, body and spirit, the exceptional clinical care for those infected by COVID-19, and the effort to constantly learn from others to adjust our protocol.

It's not just about numbers, it's about the story of the numbers. It's about each individual with each individual circumstance. It's about the friends and families of each individual. And, finally, it's about coming together to do our best to get to the other side of this alternate universe. As my really smart, feisty, loving, and big thinker Mom says, it's another day to someday. I continue to be grateful we are here together on our way to someday.

Better Late? We Hope So!

This issue of *Campus News and Views* has been a long time in coming! Originally, we had planned to have it published in April – but we remember all too well what happened in this spring! From early March on, much of the work the Office of Philanthropy and Engagement – the department responsible for publishing this newsletter – was focused on editing all communications related to the COVID-19 crisis and its impact on VHRC. Nonetheless, we hope you enjoy this issue, and we hope our contributors who put forward their stories so many months ago forgive the delay in printing their wonderful articles. Though some of the news in this newsletter may seem very old, we hope all the stories will be enjoyable no matter when they were written. We hope that you will bear with us for this issue and we hope – fervently hope!! – that for the spring issue we will get back on track. Just as a reminder, we welcome all types of original articles – including poems, remembrances, or fiction. We are also including the names of the members of our resident newsletter committee, to whom we are very grateful!



Who are these maskless people? Don't worry – this a photo is from February (so long ago!) when we had a Corn Bag Tournament in the Ballroom.

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. This edition and previous editions can also be found on our website at: www.vinsonhall.org/news-and-publications

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Navy Marine Coast Guard Residence Foundation News

Changing of the Guard

By Michelle Crone, Director of Philanthropy & Engagement

After bidding goodbye to Devon Meier, who returned to her home state of Michigan in May, I was privileged to step into her role as Philanthropy Director of Navy Marine Coast Guard Residence Foundation. I am absolutely delighted to be here amongst so many friends, and look forward to continuing to support our VHRC community!

The last half year has been busy. Throughout the spring and summer, our Foundation team shifted gears and became the communications team for VHRC during the pandemic, editing memos and producing videos to help keep our residents and staff informed and safe. We also started the Campus Voice, a weekly newsletter with campus news and resident profiles, which we hope you've been enjoying.

It was our sad duty to close the Treasure Shop at the end of June, due to the current environment with COVID-19 and rising operational costs. But we are deeply grateful for the Treasure Shop volunteers and sales that benefitted the Foundation for 49 years.

We also concluded our 2020 Annual Star Membership Campaign in October and are thrilled to share that we have raised more than \$163,000. This represents a \$67,000 increase over last year! Thank you to everyone who made this



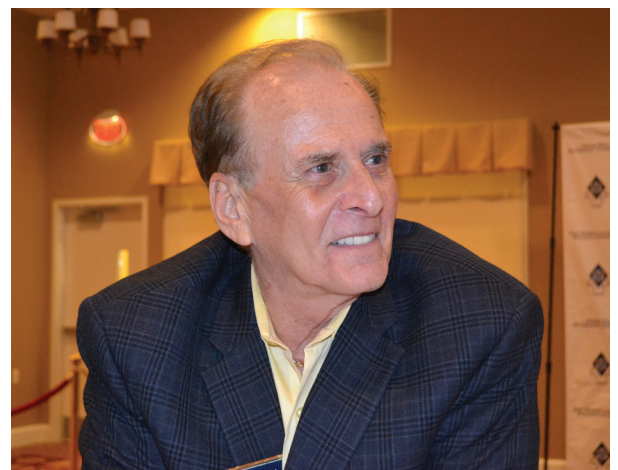
Michelle Crone and Fran Mooney at The Treasure Shop's final sidewalk sale in June.

possible. Your generous annual gifts are what enable the Foundation to support our VHRC family.

Finally, we were pleased to launch the Employee Caring Fund this year! This fund provides financial support to our dedicated staff who have been impacted by the pandemic, or when they encounter unexpected financial hardships. The fund also supports staff by covering coursework or licensure, or by awarding Hero Bonuses. To date, 100 employees have received assistance totaling nearly \$57,000. Thank you for your gifts enabling the Foundation to provide care in mind, body, and spirit for our amazing staff!

Remembering Fred Johnson

On February 16, just prior to the COVID-19 crisis, VHRC lost a valued employee and many lost a friend. Fred Johnson, life enrichment coordinator for Vinson Hall and Willow Oak, had worked at VHRC for 31 years, starting in dining services and eventually moving to life enrichment. In the Philanthropy and Engagement Office, we enjoyed collaborating with Fred often on various projects and knew we could turn to Fred for ideas, support, and perhaps a laugh. To every activity we worked on together, Fred brought not only his knowledge of VHRC, but also his love of its residents. We have definitely missed Fred these past few months, but know his legacy at VHRC will be lasting.



Playing Basketball at Turkey Thicket

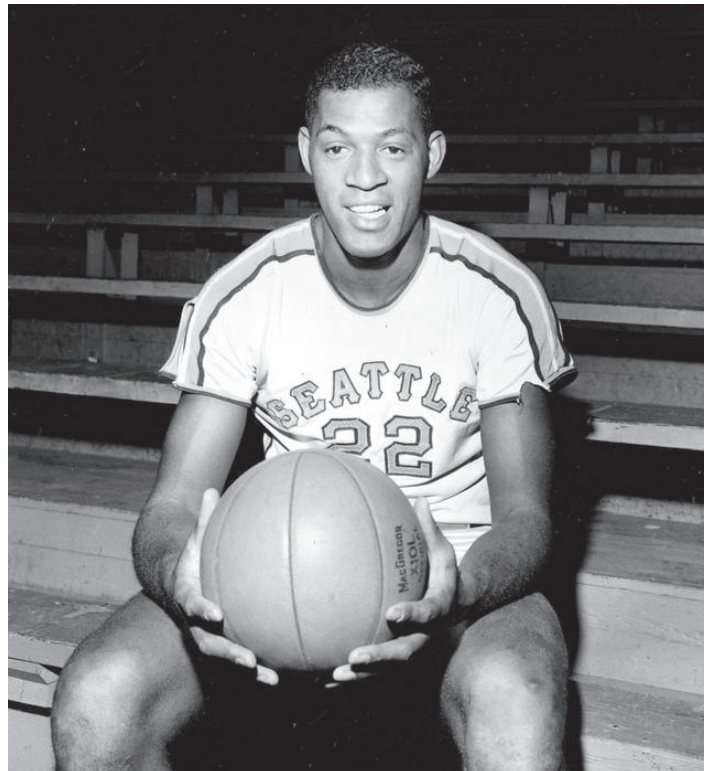
By Joe Kammerer

While growing up in northeast Washington, D.C., my twin brother and I spent many summer nights playing basketball at Turkey Thicket, a public playground near Catholic University.

At that time, a group of black basketball players would join us each night. They were primarily from Spingarn High School in downtown Washington and were led by the best high school basketball player in the area, Elgin Baylor. Spingarn was built in the 1952-53 season and was a segregated high school. Newspapers didn't give much coverage of the black schools, but basketball was undeniably a vehicle for bridging the gap between whites and blacks in the city.

Baylor wanted to get a better understanding of how the whites played the game so that he and his black friends could be better competitors in the white guys' sport. Baylor would arrive at Turkey Thicket with two carloads of black players. The black kids generally had a tough time getting on the public playgrounds to play basketball. They weren't allowed to play until the *Brown v Board of Education* desegregation ruling in 1954. The playgrounds were segregated, as were many public facilities. The only time they could play was at night when nobody was watching. Therefore, this time at Turkey Thicket was so very special for them and for me. The white teams were mostly high school players from Archbishop Carroll High School, where I played on the basketball team. Carroll was a powerhouse among the D.C. high schools.

When darkness came, all the players crossed Michigan Avenue to the "General Store" to purchase 12 ounce Nehi soft drinks, and returned to the basketball tarmac to sit and jive with each other and to get a better understanding of each other. It was a wonderful way to spend a summer evening and everyone had fun. The black group was led by Elgin Baylor, who was very down to earth.



After graduating from Spingarn High in D.C., Elgin Baylor won a scholarship to the College of Idaho. He switched to Seattle University, where he helped take the Chieftains to the NCAA championship in 1958. Following his junior year at Seattle, Baylor was drafted by the Minneapolis Lakers as the No. 1 pick in the 1958 NBA draft. Baylor stayed with the Lakers his entire career. (The Lakers moved to Los Angeles in 1960.) Baylor retired during the 1971-72 season due to nagging knee problems. From 1974 to 1979, Baylor was the assistant coach and then the head coach of the New Orleans Jazz. In 1986, he became the vice president of basketball operations for the Los Angeles Clippers, a position he held until his retirement in 2008, at the age of 74. Two years ago, Baylor wrote a memoir called Hang Time. He currently lives in Southern California.

Baylor won a scholarship to a small college in Idaho where he was noted for his "hang time" (the time he was in the air jumping toward the basket or away from an opponent) and dreaded "head fake" (when he turned his head sharply in one direction but proceeded in another

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Let Us Celebrate Each Day

By Sally Springer, written in 2011

Why feel so blessed, when there is so much to be
done, and little time? Because I love all –
My bright life, its many contrasts: Quiet moments,
Then lively chaos – repeating waves upon the shore –
Solitude, and hum of loved ones' lives –
Point and counterpoint

I love it all with overflowing heart and mind,
Kaleidoscope of detail, mundane chores,
The challenges I fear I cannot meet.
How rich to live a part in many worlds.
Not sterile order – but tumbled tapestry of
Abundant confusion

Let me celebrate each day.



*This poem was submitted by Bob Springer.
Sally, his wife, passed away in February 2020.
Our condolences to the Springer family.*

Playing Basketball with a Future Great

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direction). In many circles, he is referred to as basketball's Wright Brother, a pioneer who took the game into the air when everyone else was still earthbound. Added to his remarkable hang time and head fake was a vast array of spectacular moves. Opponents were left spinning in confusion. I experienced this myself when I guarded him in a league game. Our coach, Bob Dwyer, assigned his best defensive players to guard Elgin and try to take the ball away from him. In my first attempt to steal the ball from Elgin, he demonstrated his famous head fake and proceeded to sail right over me with famous hang time. We were lucky to keep his team to only 64 points in the game! Elgin scored 40 points and we lost 64-55.

According to John McNamara's *The Capital of Basketball*, "Baylor was a comet, a dazzling, spectacular phenomenon hurtling through space like nothing anyone had ever seen before." He is considered the best ever to have played the game. Some claim he was the best forward ever. At 6'5" he scored for the Los Angeles Lakers and rebounded like few others, averaging 27.4 points

and 13.5 rebounds during a career that lasted from the late 1950s until early 1970s.

Baylor, it is said, demonstrated what one could possibly do with a basketball in mid-air, setting the stage for later players like Connie Hawkins, Julius Erving and, of course, Michael Jordan. "They all walked in his footsteps, even if those footsteps were a couple of feet off the ground," wrote McNamara.

McNamara, a Washington native, was gunned down in Annapolis while writing a book about Washington basketball. It is a wonderful history of hoops in the city and the coaches that made it all possible. In his book, McNamara quotes McKinley Tech High School's Babe Marshall as saying "Turkey Thicket was the destination for the best players in the city."

As I look back on the situation for the blacks and the outstanding player I had the privilege of playing with, I feel deeply saddened by the racism they experienced. But I am so grateful for the memories of those wonderful summer nights playing and learning and enjoying the company of those wonderful athletes. ❖

Deja Vu All Over Again

By Elisabeth Wilson

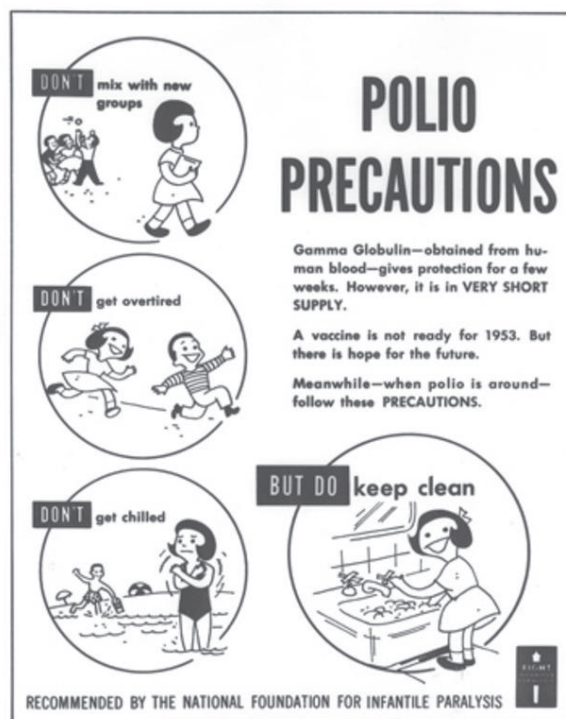
Well, here we are – quarantined. People are still talking in terms of weeks when it's pretty obvious this is going to go on much longer. It's a good time to be an introvert. I don't need many people. Those who do will suffer more from enforced separation. My task now is to remember that but also draw on the strength that comes from having been here before.

When I was 19, the U.S. suffered its last pre-Salk polio epidemic. There were three "hot spots" of contagion, one of which was where I lived, Neenah, Wisconsin. I began that summer (1955) working in a paper mill, earning money for my second year of college.

As it turned out, I didn't make much. About three weeks in, my Dad hollered down the stairs to get up for the early shift. All I remember saying was "I can't" and suddenly Dad was there. The day before I had been tired and a bit stiff, but otherwise all right, but now I couldn't move anything but my head and my left hand. No fever. No aches. No other symptoms at all. But we both knew what it was.

It took three days for the doctor to get there. He said the hospital was so full I would be given a bed in the hallway. My mother asked what the hospital could do for me, and he replied "Sister Kenny treatments." When he explained that was just very hot baths, it was decided that could be done at home. After the first "bath," I came to on the floor by the tub and heard my mother on the phone upstairs saying, "Well, doctor, that doesn't seem to have worked." The heat had apparently caused me to pass out from weakness, but I lay there laughing at my mother's calm practicality.

My dad, who had been an athlete and coach, took over the treatments. Morning and evening he worked my poor body until it began to function on its own. Lawrence College, in nearby



Sixty years ago polio was one of the most feared diseases in the U.S. By the 1950s it had become one of the most serious communicable diseases among children. In 1952 alone, nearly 60,000 children were infected with the virus, thousands were paralyzed and more than 3,000 children died. Then, in 1955, the U.S. began widespread vaccinations. By 1979, the virus had been completely eliminated across the country. The image above is a March of Dimes Polio Precautions poster from 1953 that helped spread the word about disease prevention.

Appleton, delayed the opening of school for three weeks, and that allowed me to begin with the rest of the students, still dragging a leg but getting about on my own.

But the point of this narrative is that people were so terrified of getting polio that only one person came to visit me the entire summer, despite the fact that I was no longer contagious. As a result, I learned how to be solitary, how to wait, and how to "go with the flow." I never thought I'd be doing it again, but here we are! ❖

Hawaii

By Anonymous

Since childhood, she had been awed by the majestic, terrifying power of volcanoes. So when she saw on the eleven o'clock news that the largest – Mauna Loa – was about to erupt, she knew instantly it was a sign. She called United, and found she could get cheap last-minute space to Hilo the next morning. She didn't bother to, or think to, also book a room. It was enough that she had acted, at last. Where she would stay, once she got to Hilo, was pretty unimportant. She didn't plan to be there long.

As she carefully packed her small bag just after sunrise, she wondered whether she should tell anyone. Mary, her only child, would never know she was gone. She was off in South Carolina with her latest acquisition, the one with the chin hair, photographing aquatic life in the Low Country marshes. There was no boss to tell – that had ended two years ago. And certainly her ex wouldn't care, at least for now: his alimony checks, paltry as they were, were transmitted electronically to her account each month as long, the judge had said, as they "both shall live."

She speculated she could tell the Denhams next door, just so they wouldn't call the police thinking she had had another breakdown. But she rejected the idea. Fred Denham had never given her as much as a "hello" since she had moved in, and that stumpy wife of his was so pudding gooey that the thought of ringing their bell was abhorrent. She'd just send them a postcard when she got to O'Hare.

She drove the Kennedy Expressway in her aged Honda, fearful all the while that the brakes would fail her. She knew she should have had them repaired, but by the time the radiation and chemo were ended, she was driving so little that it hardly mattered that her brakes were faulty. Besides, driving around meant she might



encounter someone she knew. Not that anyone would recognize her. Her hair, now almost fully re-grown, had turned stark white, and the deep fatigue lines scoring her face had aged her 20 years. She found it difficult to look in the mirror. Her TV set was her only real friend – it couldn't see her, but she could see it. And it, after all, had told her of Mauna Loa.

She didn't realize how exhausted she was, but the instant the plane took off, she fell into merciful sleep, head propped against the bulkhead. She did not dream; dreams were a luxury her psyche could no longer afford. She was vaguely aware of a flight attendant trying to wake her once or twice; she did not really awaken until she heard the pilot distantly announce they were starting their descent into Hilo.

As the plane banked for its approach, she could see the island – a great grey-black mass of land filling the horizon, but wearing a fringe of green around its perimeter. Her heart leaped as she saw, there in the distance, the towering plume of steam rising a thousand feet in the air from the bowels of the earth: Mauna Loa was signaling its promise.

Finding a place to stay turned out to be easy. A tourist help desk was located in the open-air terminal, and since this was the slow season, she had no trouble renting a furnished studio. It was in the outskirts of Hilo, at the edge of the lava

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Hawaii, a short story

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zone, purportedly with a view of the summit. After deliberating, she rented the apartment for a week; it did not rent by the day, which is what she would have preferred.

The taxi ride took almost a half-hour. When she reached the apartment cluster, she understood why the rent had been so modest. The area was essentially a slum – if any place in the Hawaiian Islands can be called a slum – but one feature was as advertised: she could see Mauna Loa from the window of her tiny kitchenette. She found herself transfixed, staring through a purple-framed 2-by-3 foot pane of glass at the steam rising majestically from the volcano's core.

After unpacking her chosen belongings, she whisked the cockroaches from the bath tub with a towel, and drew the blind. She lit the candles she had brought, and took a long warm shower to their light. Centuries ago, she thought, the priests would have bathed her – today, she would have to be her own priest, or priestess. On drying herself off, she rubbed a thin coating of scented palm oil into her skin. She dressed carefully, making concession to the fact that because it was mid-summer, the air was hot and very humid. A sleeveless shirt and mid-thigh shorts, both pure white, served as her garments.

When she emerged from the apartment, she began to walk up the road in the general direction of the volcano. She passed a small market, a used car lot, and what appeared to be a soccer field where children were at play. There was a slight breeze, and she soon became conscious of Mauna Loa's ash filtering down through the air. The eruption had begun.

Traffic was light, but to her good fortune, a cab came along after she had not walked more than 10 minutes. She hailed it and asked the fare to Mauna Loa tourist entrance. The driver was reluctant, but told her it would cost \$75 if he had to deadhead back to Hilo. She nodded and got

in the cab. She had just enough cash to cover the fare and tip. She sat back and closed her eyes, reminding herself that she would need courage if she were to gain her chosen destiny that day. Her destiny certainly wasn't to be found in Chicago. That destiny was already dead – a dust-bin of anger, terror, pain, nausea, and in the end, grinding despair. "I felt a funeral in my brain" – wasn't that how her poet had put it?

The trip took her up the east, less populous coast, and the driver pointed out the cauldron where the scalding lava already drained into the ocean from deep in the earth. When he dropped her at the entrance to the park, she told him not to wait. The park was almost deserted. She paid her admission to the small museum, and, ignoring the warning signs, circled behind the museum, climbed a low gate, and started the difficult hike up the lava field at the base of the mountain. No one stopped her.

As she climbed higher from stone to stone, she soon found herself sweating and panting, even though she was on the east face and the sun had already begun its descent in the west. She reminded herself that the treatments, even though now fully six months past, had taken most of what strength she otherwise had left at age 55.

After perhaps an hour's zig-zag climb, always to avoid park rangers, she felt her breath now coming only in great sucking gasps. She could smell the sulfur. Her clothes were already stained with sweat and oil. She became aware that her feet, shod only in a pair of tennis shoes, were uncomfortably hot. She looked down, and there, through the crevices in the stones, she could glimpse fire, still well below the surface on which she was standing. The rocks at her feet, though, were hot to the touch.

As she looked about, she saw small vertical columns of steam dotting the barren landscape

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Hawaii, a short story

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just above, well below the summit. The smell of sulfur was becoming heavy, and mixed with her sweat, it stung her eyes. How right, she thought, how very right. If I can climb only another two or three hundred yards higher, where the lava stream is close to the surface, I can just hurl myself upon a rock head-first and let the elements come take me. It is the best I can do; I have no priests to offer me. If I can do it, the funeral in my brain will not have been for naught. How right this place is.

She looked around another time. She saw no one within a half-mile of her in any direction. A tourist helicopter had passed overhead, but was now disappearing to the south. And she again began to climb, knowing that finding her way without breaking an ankle would be even more difficult as deep shadows were being formed by the setting sun. No sound competed with her grunts of exertion and gasps for more air. The arthritis in her hands made climbing difficult. And with each step, the rocks and atmosphere became warmer, the sulfur smell more profound. Her arm and leg muscles felt as if they were already on fire from the exertion. But she climbed steadily if painfully on, drawing upon the thin ribbon of courage she had known she would need.

Obstructing her way after another 10 minutes' ascent, however, was a large lava rock, perhaps six feet in diameter. She recognized she could not go over, and would have to go around. As she worked her way round the jagged edge of the stone, she was startled to see to her right a sudden hint of bright color midst the grey-black landscape. She turned, and there before her – barely two yards away – was a small bloom of yellow-orange flowers that apparently were growing out of the molten rock. She stared, incredulous. That's not possible, she thought: there's no earth here, and no water – only heat and sulfur.

She fell to her knees and crawled painfully the short distance to the flowers. Slowly, almost unconsciously, she lowered her head until she could smell their fragrance. The smell was not sweet, but spoke nonetheless of life. She allowed the blossoms to brush her cheek, her eyes, her lips, her tongue. And then, chest heaving, she began to cry, never softly, but with great sobs suddenly welling from deep inside her. She could not stop.

Soon, when she had exhausted herself emotionally as much as she already had physically, she lay down and closed her eyes, her face just inches from the blossoms. Though the stones cut into her torso and limbs, she felt no pain or discomfort. She lost consciousness of her surroundings, but did not sleep. She just lay there in a zen-like state, inches from the blossoms, as darkness began to creep up the landscape.

After a time, she slowly stood, cleared the loose pebbles from around the plant, and plucked one, just one, of the blossoms. She cupped it in her raw and aching hands, and carefully pushed it into the breastless bosom of her shirt. Then she looked at the plant once again, opened her mouth as if to speak to it, and finally silently turned away.

She retraced her steps around the large stone that had impeded her initial planned ascent. After gazing for a long moment at the summit, she started down the lava field, one careful step after another. She picked her way for an hour in the growing dusk, until the stones were no longer heated, sulfur was only hinted in the air, and the walking was easier, even with so little light.

As she descended to the park, she found herself wondering how she could find a way to get back to Hilo in time to buy groceries at that little market, using her debit card. Surely she needed at least a small jar of instant coffee, a loaf of bread or some rolls – and maybe some raspberry jam. She had always loved raspberry jam. ❖

Two CIA Insiders Shed Light on the Cold War

By Michelle Crone, Philanthropy and Engagement Director

Vinson Hall is the kind of place where the person you just exchanged pleasantries with in the lounge may well have led military battles that turned the tide of past wars. But there is another group of history-makers here who have mostly kept their roles in global conflict to themselves: those who worked in the Central Intelligence Agency.

It turns out this group is larger than anyone – even other residents with CIA backgrounds – realized, and includes Jim Woolsey, the former director of the CIA from 1993-95. Florence Hall happened to hear Woolsey speak at the Cosmos Club recently and approached him about the idea of talking at Vinson Hall.

"I went up to him, said I lived at Vinson Hall and understood he did, which was fortunate for us, and asked if he would give a talk to us – and he said yes," Florence said. Jim suggested that Dick Holm, a paramilitary operations officer who headed the CIA's China desk out of Hong Kong, be a co-speaker. "Jim and I met with Fred Johnson and Dick Holm, and the idea of addressing the Cold War came up," she explained. "Jim has had great experience with the Soviet Union – frankly, nobody else here has Woolsey's unique experience – and I don't know anyone else in the CIA with 15 years in China, which is what Dick has."

Meanwhile, another CIA-inspired plan was also in the works at Vinson Hall. Chris and Midge Holmes had come up with the idea of having the first-ever VHRC dinner with other residents who had backgrounds in the CIA. (See box) While pulling together the guest list, they learned of the Woolsey-Holm talk and decided to plan the dinner

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VHRC residents Dick Holm and Jim Woolsey, along with moderator Daniel Fontenot, discussed their Cold War experiences and life inside the CIA.

Out in the Open

By Midge Holmes

Midge and Chris Holmes, residents here at Vinson Hall for four years, were both CIA careerists. Chris, an economist, worked on Soviet weapons and arms control culminating as the Director of the Office of Transnational Issues in the Directorate of Intelligence. He also served on rotation to the National Photographic Intelligence Center (NPIC) for one year. Midge was the head of the CIA Library, and also in the Agency's Office of Congressional Affairs, following a year on the Hill as a Congressional fellow. She finished her career in the CIA Office of Public Affairs.

Chris and I wondered how many others came to Vinson Hall like us, with a background in intelligence, and if they would like to get together to share stories about their careers. So first we went to Vinson Hall's Marketing Office to obtain a list of those residents who, as Agency employees, had backgrounds that qualified them to live here. This yielded a list of 15 people.

We then asked around internally, mostly by word of mouth, to get other names (no resident's apartment was bugged in this investigation). Lo and behold, we came up with 33 residents, three of whom were spouses of Agency employees, all collectively representing centuries of service to CIA. (The exact

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CIA Insiders Offer Opinions on the Cold War

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for the same night. More than 30 former CIA residents attended the dinner at the Bistro on Feb. 11. After each person spoke about their CIA career – many opening up publicly for the first time to their Vinson Hall friends – the group then joined other residents in a packed Ballroom to hear Jim and Dick speak.

The discussion, which was moderated by Daniel Fontenot, the grandson of resident Miriam Fontenot, who passed away earlier this year, began with both men being asked to explain the origins of the Cold War. "We ended up in a Cold War with Russia for a complex set of reasons," said Jim, who served as Under Secretary of the Navy in the late 1970s and was involved in treaty negotiations with the Soviets in the 1980s. He emphasized Russia's four-century tradition of aggression toward its neighbors. "We have had to deal with a country that has developed a strong appetite for devouring its neighbors."

The U.S. had helped Russia against the Germans in World War II, and "when the war was over, we'd produced so many weapons for Russia, it was almost as if when the Russian tanks rolled in, they rolled in on wheels made in Detroit," he said. "The Cold War began after that, when Russia needed to be stopped by us in their conquest of the rest of Europe."

"The origins of the Cold War in China?" said Dick Holm. "The simple answer is Russia." He gave a brief summary of China's history, from centuries of dynasty rule to the democratic revolt led by Sun Yat-sen, to the power struggle after his death between Mao Zedong, a communist, and Chiang Kai-shek, a nationalist. "They were at each other's throats for decades," he said. After the Japanese invasion and then defeat in World War II, civil war erupted in China. "Russia supported Mao, and we supported Chiang Kai-shek," Dick explained. "Mao won in 1949, and this is what led to China becoming a Communist country."

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VHRC's CIA Residents Ponder Next Assignment

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number of years is classified.) Invitations were sent out to gather at The Bistro on a Tuesday evening in February, and we were pleasantly surprised at the enthusiastic response from fellow intelligence officers from both covert and overt career tracks.

During the dinner, superbly catered by Mike Solari, we all shared information about our backgrounds and stories about our various assignments. First up was Luella Morgan, who passed away earlier this year, a surprise wonder, who revealed her connection to the OSS in the 1940s. It was no coincidence that these folks gathered on the same evening that Jim Woolsey, former Director of the CIA, and Dick Holm, intelligence officer from the Clandestine Service, lectured on Russia and China respectively in the Ballroom, topping off the evening.

The feedback from this evening was enthusiastic with many participants wishing to convene again. There will be no cloak and dagger assignments, secret writing, surveillance, hidden messages, disguises, or secret codes from now on. This CIA niche at Vinson Hall claims to be out in the open and very proud of each and everyone's secret pasts. The group is already pondering what its next internal mission will be. ❖



CIA Insiders Remember the Cold War

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To answer the question "What impact has the Cold War had on the U.S.?" both Jim and Dick took a historic view.

"What Russia has historically tried to do is destroy people's confidence in their own values," said Jim, who pointed out that the Russians sought to paint both Judaism and Christianity as evil in the wake of WWII. He said Russia's major tool for combat is disinformation or lying, "that's the way they fight. Even today, there are more Russians working on disinformation than in their armed forces," he said, adding "We are sitting on a time bomb with social media."

Dick Holm looked back to the Korean War in 1950, in which lack of good intelligence resulted in one of the worst military defeats the U.S. armed forces ever suffered. "There was debate over whether China would enter the war," said Dick, given that the whereabouts and intentions of the Chinese army were not clear to General MacArthur. "The CIA was only three years old then and was more or less excluded."

"One of our colleagues at Vinson Hall, Bob Springer, was there," he continued. "Bob was an artillery observer at the border, and he saw some 300,000 Chinese coming across." Their numbers caused our units to retreat, and thousands of allied troops to perish. "In the end, we concluded there had been a terrible intelligence failure. It was a lesson learned: You have to have good intelligence."

Toward the end of the talk, Jim and Dick fielded questions from the audience. One resident asked about the relationship between Russian and China and whether or not the interests of the two countries would diverge. "The more they cooperate, the worse it is for us," said Jim. "Anything we can do to drive wedges between them would be good." Dick expressed



confidence in the strength of America relative to both countries. "Neither has leverage to cause us much trouble or harm," he said. "Even when we're not trading with China, our companies have leverage to redirect supply chains."

A question about negotiations with Russia prompted Jim to share a tale of a treaty negotiation that he was involved with in the late 1980s. Russian leaders were withholding approval of a treaty that their diplomats had already agreed to, so Jim was sent by the National Security Council to talk to the Soviet defense minister, Dmitry Yazov, to work out the stumbling block – which "came down to 24 damn helicopters," he said.

"I showed up at Yazov's office in the Kremlin with one general, and there at a huge table were seated 25 Russian generals in full dress," he said. "Yazov lectured me for an hour on how wonderful Russia's military was." Jim coolly asked him why then, if he didn't want helicopters covered, he hadn't told his diplomats to say that? Yazov countered angrily that he might just limit American aircraft and submarines next. "I stood up and yelled, 'Over my dead body!'" Jim said. "The 25 generals all stood up, grinning, and as they walked past me they patted me on the shoulder as if to say, 'Young man, you finally figured out how to talk to us.' I learned that sometimes in negotiations you have to vary your

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Reflecting on the Cold War

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tactic."

Looking toward the future, one resident said he was alarmed by the failure of schools to teach students what it takes to be a good citizen. He asked what our leaders should do to make the younger generation aware of how to keep democracy strong.

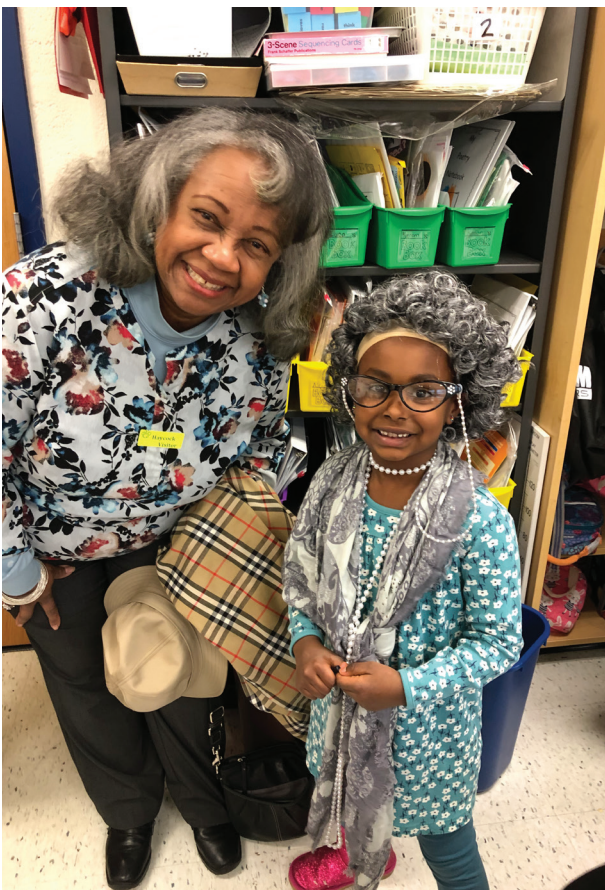
"We need a thorough-going reform of American education," said Jim, who decried the fact that universities "throw a single political philosophy at students" and discourage debate. "When I was growing up, my father who was a litigator would bring up something in the newspaper and ask my opinion, then argue with me whatever I said – and from that I learned to argue. Students shouldn't be barred from arguing."

In Dick's view, parental guidance is the key. "Family structure is so important. Religion is also an important part of it, and we're losing that as well," he said, adding, "I hope this is just a phase our country is going through."

The evening closed with a provocative question asked of the speakers by the 24-year-old moderator: Did the Cold War ever really end? "The Cold War ended for a bit, but Putin has turned everything around," said Jim. Dick added, "If the Cold War ended in China, it may have been for a weekend in 1991." He pointed out that there have been 2,000 economic espionage incidents and 1,200 cases of intellectual property theft by China. "We've spent the last 30 years talking with China, but they still do what they want to do."

"The Cold War is not over," said Dick, "and I don't see it ending any time soon." ❖

Celebrating 100 Days of School at Haycock



In February, several residents visited Haycock Elementary for their 100 days of school celebration. Our residents shared memories from their youth and the students considered what they would look like – as the young lady on the left with Silvia Fenton showed – or do as 100-year-olds. Above, Alice Brouillard, Susan Osborn and John Christensen talk with a class of 2nd graders.

Some of my Favorite Critters

by Carol Saunders

Like many other only children, pets played a very important role in my young life. My first kitten, Snicklefritz, Snickie for short, was a gift from my future uncle who was trying to impress my Auntie. He'd served in Germany in WWII and assigned German-sounding names to his gifts. (Auntie's kitty was Kriegadoria!!) There followed a series of marmalade cats, all named either Goldie or Sandy. My only dog, a rescue Samoyed named Frosty, made me the vacuum cleaner bag salesman's favorite customer. But we loved her, with her long white eyelashes and Snoopy dances every time it snowed. She was faithful and loving to us, including to Tippy, our cat – once she stopped eating Tippy's food.

Tippy learned to sit and purr on command – honest!—to receive his red collar with the brass bell to protect the birds. This was his passport to going out. Frosty always joined him. Tip had learned to ring his bell so I would open the door to let him in. Often, it was Frosty who wanted to come in, and Tip would return to the yard. Sibling cooperation, even though Tippy cat had ruled the roost for several years until this huge, hairy Sammy dog joined the family.

My adult critter encounters were perhaps more unusual. Spending New Year's with my husband, Hal, in Sri Lanka, our driver took us to an elephant orphanage in Kandy. As I entered, a little calf – as tall as my shoulder but still with the long, soft bristles of youth – caught my attention. I began talking softly to him and he allowed me to pet him. The *mahout* gave me a huge "baby" bottle that was promptly consumed through the mouth, his trunk held high, while I continued my quiet conversation. Subsequently, I was invited to visit the adult rescue elephants bathing in the muddy stream. When it was time to leave, I went to say goodbye to "my" baby. He promptly wrapped his trunk around my waist – by my interpretation, not wanting "Mama" to leave.

The next elephant we "met" was at Mala Mala game reserve in South Africa. Our driver started to cut across the savannah, surprising a bull



Young Carol Saunders holding either Goldie or Sandy, one of a series of marmalade cats her family had as pets.

elephant coming out of his "bath." We stopped suddenly very close to him as he bellowed loudly and took out his frustration by knocking down a small tree in front of our Jeep. I can still see him – dark gray from "waist" down where he'd been soaking in the stream, dusty gray on his top half.

When Hal and I visited the coast of Argentina, we spent several hours at Punta Tombo Reserve for Magellanic penguins. We freely walked quietly among these beautiful birds who never saw snow and ice, but would sit on their tail feathers to slide down a sandy sloping dune into the ocean. Again, quiet conversations leaning down on their level proved to be an entrée. First, one untied my sneaker, another seemed to invite me to follow her. After an interval of quiet conversation, this Mama seemed to invite me to peek into her burrow. Gradually, I got down on my belly, again asked for permission, and looked in at her several downy babies. What a thrill! I have no photos, only my unique happy memories. ❖

You Never Know Who You Are Talking To

by **Lorna Lagarde**

Mr. John always came to the Pentagon pharmacy in the morning to have his prescription filled or refilled. I remember him as a very thoughtful guy. He always brought with him a bagel with cream cheese on the side. Once in a while he had souvenirs from the Vatican for me – little things such as a rosary, a medallion of St. Mary with Baby Jesus on her arm, a key chain with an engraving of Pope John Paul II.

For me, Mr. John did these things in order to accomplish his purpose in the pharmacy before he sat down to wait for whatever he came for. He liked to say: "I personally supervise my projects. I want make sure everything is properly done." He also told me interesting anecdotes, such as sharing that the Queen of England likes modern technology, so Buckingham Palace has excellent IT services.

One morning Mr. John handed me an invitation. The invitation read that the Crown Prince of England was to be honored with a reception at the British Embassy in Washington, D.C. Since the event was to be on a work day, I thanked him but told him that I could not make it. He urged me to reconsider. He said that he would be greatly honored if I could attend, and that I could leave anytime after the Crown Prince had spoken.

I showed the invitation to one of our clinic medical doctors. He said that this was a once in a life time opportunity. He also said that he would love to see the Crown Prince in person and that if I needed an escort he would be more than happy



Lorna Lagarde shows one of the souvenirs from the Vatican that Sir John gave her.

to accompany me. So, we made our plan and I notified Mr. John that I would attend.

It was an exciting evening when the day came. A uniformed usher escorted us to our designated table and introduced us. Then another usher announced that all must stand to welcome Sir John and his lovely wife to the reception. When Sir John appeared, I whispered, "The bagel guy!"

The next time Sir John came to the pharmacy, I asked him why the protocol usher called him Sir John. He said, quite simply, that he was a knight. The Queen had knighted him by laying a sword on either shoulder as he knelt before her. "How interesting!" I said to him. To myself, I said, "Treat everyone you meet with respect. You don't really know who they are!" ❖

Remember

By **Elisabeth Wilton**

Remember . . .

If you want to beat COVID-19
Your hands must be kept very clean
So you don't get sick
Good old soap does the trick
Along with social distancing



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Photos from the before-times, including 100 Days of School Celebration at Haycock Elementary, 2nd Corn Bag Tournament, and Mardi Gras!