

VINSON HALL RETIREMENT COMMUNITY CAMPUS NEWS & VIEWS



CEO Corner

The Road Ahead

I hope that everyone is having a great start to their holiday season. It is hard for me to believe that I am nearing my one-year anniversary at VHRC; some days it feels like it's been much longer than that, and others it feels like I started here about 10 minutes ago! While we have accomplished a lot in 2023, I am looking forward to an even better 2024. As you know, we have worked with residents, staff, Board members and others to develop our strategic plan for VHRC, and we will begin this work in earnest in the coming year.

In 2024, we plan to revitalize some of our existing facilities, such as the Vinson Hall common spaces and other areas needing attention. We will evaluate and implement new and/or expanded programs. We will work to further improve and integrate our health and wellness services across the campus. And we will continue to work on efforts to improve our ability to attract and retain great employees, as well as to ensure the lasting sustainability of our community. While we are doing these and many other things in 2024, we will also be looking at longer-term plans to ensure that our facilities and grounds are positioned to meet the needs of our current and future residents. This will be interesting and engaging work, and we will most certainly be looking for continued input from residents so that we can make the best possible decisions.



From left: Bud Dougherty, NMCGRF Board Member Sushil Jain and Chip.



Chip and Sally Fellowes.

With their permission, I'll share the Thanksgiving sentiments of VHRC residents Carl and Lynne Schone, who say it much better than me: "Both of us give thanks for our new community – friends, acquaintances, and staff. Vinson Hall is a unique and special place where people are quick to show welcome, earnest in the interest for each other's stories, willingness to share one's gifts and talents and genuine eagerness to continue building our unique community."

I am very much looking forward to the busy year ahead. Thank you as always for your continued support and advocacy for VHRC. ❖

— Chip Warner, CEO

A Very Full Fall at VHRC

As the heat of the summer faded and the cool weather set in, we filled our calendars with a full slate of activities this fall. In September, we channeled Bogart and Bergman and spent an *Evening in Casablanca* at the Navy Marine Coast Guard Residence Foundation's annual fundraising gala. Later that month, we met at the dog park for a Yappy Hour complete with pumpkin-flavored puppuccinos, then we enjoyed ice cream with all the toppings at the monthly Ice Cream Social. In October, we had fun letting our ghoulish sides show at our annual Halloween Parade and Costume Contest, while the Corn Bag Toss Tournament and Throw for Show, Putt for Dough putting contest gave us a chance to engage in a little friendly competition.

At the same time, VHRC residents found ways to give back to the broader community. We raised funds for the Alzheimer's Association

and participated in the annual Walk for a Cure in D.C. On Veterans Day, eight residents visited our neighbor Chesterbrook Elementary School to talk to students about their military service. And we celebrated artists from VHRC as well as the greater McLean area at our two-day fall Art Show. All in all, it's been a great fall!



About Campus News and Views

Campus News and Views is Vinson Hall Retirement Community's quarterly literary magazine. The goal of this publication is to share stories and remembrances from VHRC residents and staff. All residents and staff are invited to submit articles for inclusion. All items must be original pieces and must be submitted by the author. This publication is reviewed by an editorial committee comprised of VHRC residents and staff.

***Campus News and Views is designed and edited by
The Office of Philanthropy & Engagement***

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Campus News & Views Fall 2023

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Navy Marine Coast Guard Residence Foundation News

A Time to Celebrate Each Other – and You

The holiday season brings a special joy at year's end. It's a time for gathering together, sharing moments with loved ones, and celebrating. We at Navy Marine Coast Guard Residence Foundation have been busy with all these things at this time of year, but most importantly, we love being able to celebrate you. On November 2, we celebrated the generosity of our Star Members (those who had given a membership gift this year of \$250 or more) at our annual *Evening with the Stars* event. About 130 attendees, a record number, gathered in the Ballroom for an evening of fellowship, fun and great food. We are so grateful to all our donors – nearly 300 last year – for making our work possible with your generous annual gifts!

VHRC residents are always eager to give back to the broader community, and we are passionate about connecting them whenever possible to our community partners. On Veterans Day, the Foundation was honored to coordinate talks by eight of our veterans at Chesterbrook Elementary School next door. Their 4th, 5th and 6th graders were riveted by our residents' stories and peppered them with questions about their lives of service to our country. We were also delighted to organize our annual holiday drive to benefit Share, McLean's local food pantry. Residents donated items to help Share's elderly clients-in-need, and then assembled 96 gift bags that were delivered on December 1. What a labor of love!

One of our favorite activities is to coordinate the holiday decorating effort on campus. This year, more than 60 residents spread out across campus to hang ornaments and bows on 23 trees and spruce up common areas, transforming our campus into a glittering winter wonderland! We were also pleased to work with Madison High School's swim team, which gifted us again this year with a plethora of



Senior Director of Philanthropy & Engagement Michelle Crone, NMCGRF Board Members Rip Sullivan and John Roots, and Sherm Eagan at the Evening with the Stars on November 2.

poinsettias that we distributed to those in need of special holiday cheer.

At the same time, it is our pleasure to use our communication skills to keep residents connected and abreast of the latest VHRC news. We sent out the annual Thanksgiving card to 1,500 VHRC supporters, published the Annual Report and this quarterly literary magazine, posted updates in the monthly e-newsletter and on the VHRC Facebook page, and kept *The Beacon* newsletter coming out each and every week.

For us, the holiday season in the end is all about the people of Vinson Hall

Retirement Community. At our Holiday Donor Appreciation Tea on December 6, we were delighted to share coffee and cakes with more than 80 residents – and to thank this remarkable community that the Foundation is privileged to support! ❖

— Michelle Crone, Senior Director of Philanthropy & Engagement

You Have NO Idea!

A very short — but true — story

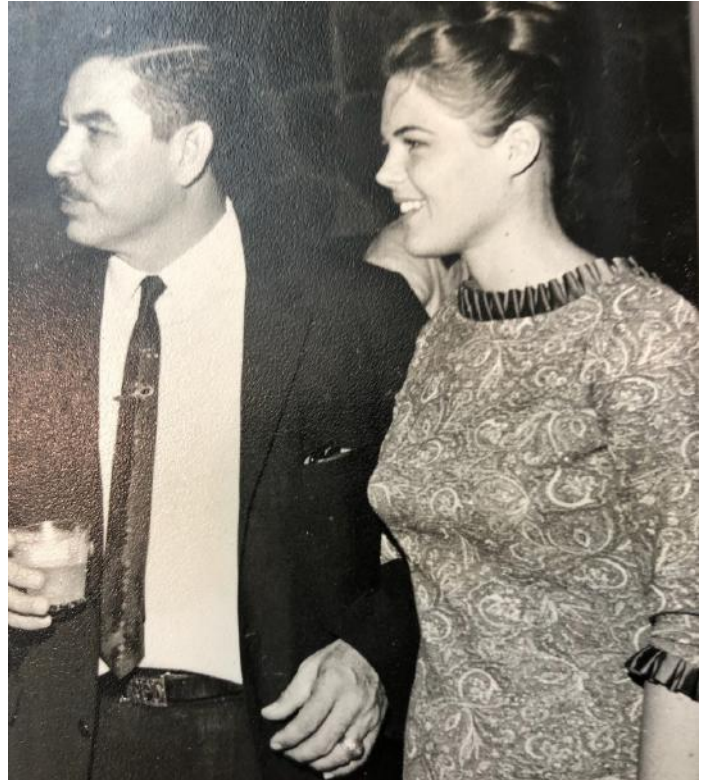
By Elisabeth Wilton

A friend phoned the other day to tell me of a very exciting event: President Biden was coming to her house! Her family is very active in politics and they were hosting some sort of rally. She described some of the advance preparations of the security teams and how thoroughly they examined every inch of space the president would occupy. She ended by saying, "You have NO idea. You cannot imagine what it is like."

Boy, did that trigger a memory! I had to laugh, and she asked why I was laughing. So I told her the story of MY adventures with security teams.

In the mid-1960s, I was living with my family in Managua, Nicaragua. My husband had a consulting job, and I kept busy doing volunteer work of various kinds and offering my services as a translator when needed. Well, one day WE got similar exciting news! President Johnson had hosted a summit of Latin American leaders in Washington and decided on a grand gesture of respect (Texas hospitality?): He would fly his guests home in Air Force One, dropping each one in his respective country and "showing the flag."

So a week before the event, a Secret Service team showed up in Managua, and I was asked to liaise (i.e., translate) between them and the Nicaraguan Security Service. A few days later, a front-page article, with photo, appeared in *La Prensa*, the local paper. The photo showed me between representatives of both services who appear to be listening with rapt attention to my every word. The headline referred to me as "La Chica de CIPOL" — the girl from U.N.C.L.E. — and the article went on to say that I was in charge of the President's security and giving orders to the men on both teams! I held my breath, waiting



Elisabeth Wilton, shown here with the Director of Immigration of Nicaragua at the time, served as an advisor to the Department of Immigration of Nicaragua from 1965 to 1968.

for the ID and expulsion from the country. But...I had just cut my long hair and the shot was from the back; apparently no one recognized me! Serendipity strikes again!

So, I knew exactly what my friend was talking about and we had a good laugh! ❖

To Eric, on the 14th of February

By Carol Henderson



Carol and Eric Henderson in 2009.

I wrote this poem in 1959 after searching for an appropriate Valentine card for Eric. We were both college students in Columbus, Ohio, recently engaged but not yet married. In those long-ago days, you could purchase a greeting card for a quarter. As I looked at the selection, however, I was puzzled by the rows of humorous and clever, but not very romantic Valentines. I wrote this light verse instead, used it as a creative writing assignment for one of my classes, and gave it to Eric. Little did I realize then that our upcoming marriage would last for 64 eventful and enjoyable years, until Eric passed away in September 2023.

To Eric on the 14th of February

Valentines must be the right kind

For the male ego is tender;

And a greeting of the light kind

Does nothing for the sender.

So I didn't want the sad ones,

I didn't like the bad ones,

Women's, men's,

Eight-by-tens,

Or even the modern mad ones.

They said too much,

They said too little,

The verse was often non-committal;

Or else the art

And rhyme were drippy,

Or line by line just way too zippy.

In terms contemporary

They said you're quite contrary,

They said you drink,

They said you stink,

They said you're necessary.

They weren't designed by Cupid's darters.

They're out to get my dimes and quarters.

So I protest

With a plea impassioned,

Show me a Valentine old-fashioned!

If the problem's not above you,

It's got me over a barrel;

So I'll just say I love you!

Very Sincerely, Carol ❖

The Prelude

By Althea Coetzee

On March 26, 1959, Althea Coetzee left her home in New York City to meet her fiancé, whom she knew only by their correspondence, in South Africa, where they were married one week later.

The steady droning of the plane's engines lulled me into a semisleep. My mind started to review the events of the past 34 hours as I realized that in a very short time I would finally meet my fiancé face to face. How could so much have happened in so short a time?

The office party was the talk of the company. The meal at Danny's Hide-Away had been extra special – or did it only seem that way to me? Returning to the office, I found my desk piled high with gifts – a frying pan, a steam iron, a mixer, some South African coins, additions for my trousseau, to mention only a few. It took three people to carry the treasures from the office to the waiting taxi. Imagine taking a taxi all the way home! That was luxury indeed. At that thought I smiled.

I passed the night in a whirl of excitement with packing and all the last-minute preparations necessary for my afternoon departure the next day. Sleep only came in the early morning hours – then it was time to be up to greet the guests who would soon be arriving to bid me farewell. The luncheon my mother and aunt had prepared was a gay affair. Suddenly I jumped up from the table, realizing there were a few last-minute things to iron and pack. I worked feverishly! "I'm going to miss the plane," I wailed! At that point pandemonium broke loose. Then one of the guests took charge, and everyone was given a chore.

Unbelievably, the entourage left the house in good time. At the airport I was greeted by two of my beloved priests. One had contacted the head stewardess of Pan American and she had arranged for the entire party to accompany me



Althea and Franz Coetzee on their wedding day on April 6, 1959.

to the doorway of the plane. Amidst tears and laughter, the boarding was accomplished, and in minutes the plane was airborne.

I settled myself. A glance out the window revealed a magnificent sight. Directly behind the plane, the sky was a blue-black. The point through which we were passing was slightly lighter in hue. The lightness continued until, in the far distance, the sun could be seen rising in a brilliant red-orange glow. Added to this, the plane appeared to be supported by fluffy, white clouds. Surely, one could not doubt there is a God in the heavens.

Sleep had just overtaken me when the captain's voice over the intercom announced we would be landing in Lisbon in 20 minutes, where breakfast would be served in the airport dining room.

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Far Far Away

By Stanley Voyiazakis



Fr. Stan in his Cessna O-1 Bird Dog. During the Vietnam War, the Bird Dog was primarily used for reconnaissance, target acquisition, artillery adjustment, radio relay, convoy escort and forward air control of tactical aircraft.

I served as a Forward Air Controller (FAC) in the Vietnam War (1965-1966), flying 100 Combat Surveillance and FAC missions in the O-1, in 90 days! I was then transferred to Headquarters in Saigon. There, I served as the In-Country Briefer and Air Force Liaison Officer to five Aircraft Carriers, briefing their flight crews prior to their first combat missions on the Rules of Engagement, the Tactical Air Control System, and FAC control procedures.

One of my Queens College English classes in 1954 required composing a Shakespearian sonnet. The last two lines were applicable to my experience as a FAC years later:

FAR, FAR AWAY FROM ALL THAT MESS AM I,
YES, CLOSER TO GOD HERE IN THE SKY ❖

Lines Disapproving, for a Woman Reaching 90

By Valerie Vesser

PRESUMPTUOUS woman to have stayed so long.

As though you'd never done anything wrong; The planet is full enough without your stay:

You should have gone elsewhere to play!

At schools you took to misleading youth, Making fun of history and its special truth.

Facetious you are and full of old nick,

Flippant and saucy, a cheeky old chick.

Into "the great perhaps" you soon will be going:

I'm only afraid you'll make a poor showing!

P.S. Francois Rabelais remarked on his deathbed: "Here I go into the great Perhaps!" ❖

To South America in a Single Engine Plane

By Maureen Kammerer



I threw my little red and white beach bag into the small hold of the 1953 Beechcraft Bonanza sitting on the runway in Manassas, Virginia. It was a hot June day in 1965, and the cabin of the plane seemed no bigger than a bumper car with wings. The little airport was only a shack in the middle of a farm field on the outskirts of Washington, D.C. My bag weighed less than 10 pounds and held only a few changes of underwear, a couple of washable nylon dresses, a pair of slacks, pills for purifying water, some scarves and some trinkets to trade to natives if we crashed in uncharted jungle in South America. A Brownie camera and two of rolls of film were all I had, along with \$100 to give the pilot for gas and landing fees.

I was excited, apprehensive, and thrilled to be taking this trip with three other people to see the Mayan ruins in Mexico, a volcano in Costa Rica, the Indians in Esmeraldas and Quito, Ecuador, and the banditos in Bogota, Colombia. I was 25, married, and sorry that my husband couldn't join us since he was over flight weight. I was invited since I only weighed 110 lbs. My friend Mina's boyfriend was our pilot. Mike, a British engineer, said that we would be flying with full tanks at high altitudes and we needed all the lift we could get on those high runways; it had to be light passengers only. I was a teacher and I needed to

find a substitute. I also needed a passport and visas. I had made the rounds of the embassies downtown, and my uncle knew someone at the State Department who expedited my passport. I was ready for adventure. Our first stop would be Jacksonville, Florida, for fuel.

When I told my mother of my impending trip, she was horrified. I also told her that the fourth person had just dropped out and I said, "Why don't you join us?" She hesitated slightly then said yes, believing that she could then protect me from any disaster.

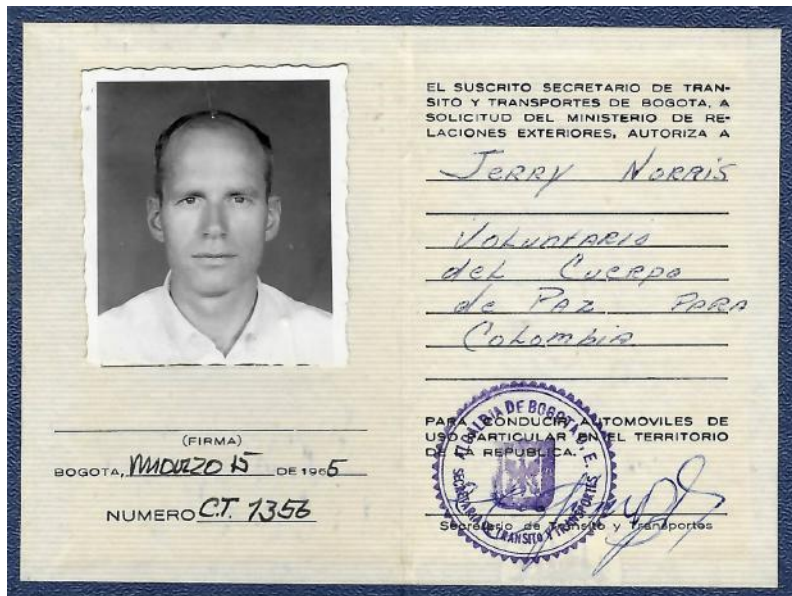
So, on the day of departure, after my father and my husband had driven Mother and me to the airport and seen the tiny airplane, they were stunned. My father, the lawyer, pulled out his little notebook, tore off a couple of pages and had us sign our wills on the wing of the plane. When the hugs and farewells were over, we climbed into the already hot cabin and took off into the blue sky over Virginia farmland.

What a thrill to see it all from a small plane. It was going to be a very cramped two weeks in this tiny space. My place was behind the pilot. My job was to make sure the Bowie knife strapped to my waist was at the ready in case

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My Dona Anita

By Jerry Norris



Jerry Norris carried this Peace Corps identification card in Colombia in 1963.

know, either. She laughed when I used the term 'Dona'. This title was never used for her because it implied some level of social status. She was the town beggar, a social outcast to all. She lived in a small lean-to up against the back of the church about two blocks down from our house.

At the appointed time in late afternoon, Dona Anita would rattle on my door, asking me in a thick throaty voice to open it up. If I happened to be in a back room of our house and one of the other Peace Corps volunteers opened the door first, she would refuse any help they offered. Dona Anita wanted Geronimo (Spanish for Jeremiah) or no one else. She would never enter, with the exception of during heavy rains, and only asked that I refill an old jar she carried about for daily water needs. It looked more like a delicate flower vase, though now dirty and cracked. Often, the jar was full. I would empty it, clean the jar off, refill it with fresh water, then press into her timeworn hands some cookies or candy or other food that we might have handy. She was always appreciative.

In 1963, early on in my stay as a Peace Corps volunteer in La Plata, a small village of some 3,000 residents in Colombia, an elderly woman made a habit of coming to my door late every afternoon. She looked to be about 80 or so, was dressed in moldy black rags – with a shawl covering her head and most of her face. She had gnarled hands, a deeply weathered face, walked uncertainly with a stick, hunched over and very slowly. She couldn't have weighed more than 75 pounds. It pained her to look up at me as she was much less than 5 feet tall. She had to twist her head to one side and look up sideways when we spoke.

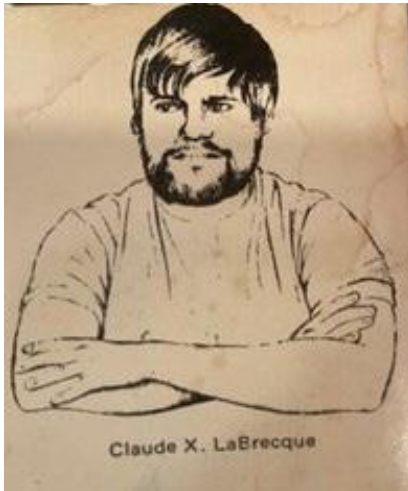
Once, though, she had been preceded into this world by a love story. Who were those lovers? What dreams did they have for their child? Was she beautiful in her youth? Did she have lovers? What great passions of the heart did they share, what were their hopes and aspirations? Was there a path untaken? How did it lead her to a life of unforgiving impoverishment and social scorn? The person who appeared at my door every day was not who she had once been. I called her Dona Anita, though she never did tell me her real name. No one else seemed to

Although water and some companionship were the reasons for her stopping by, the most important request she had for me was to walk her home. If I was with her, boys and girls wouldn't throw small pebbles at her as she stumbled slowly by. Apparently, in a very small town with little to do, this gave them some form of perverse entertainment. On most every day that I was in La Plata, I walked Dona Anita home. She loved it, often raising her stick up in defiance to her former tormentors, saying, "I dare you to throw something at me now, eh." The boys and

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A Case of Mistaken Identity

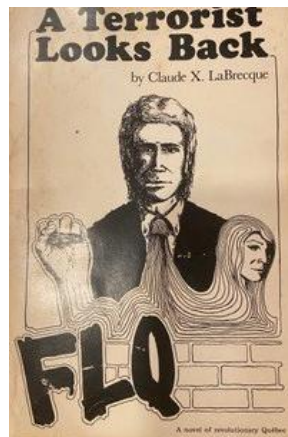
By Sherm Eagan



The photo of Sherm Eagan (above) on his old employee ID badge bears a striking resemblance to the drawing of Quebec Liberation Front leader Claude X. LaBrecque (left).

It was 1969 or so, and the Quebec Liberation Front (FLQ) had been blowing up mailboxes in between kidnapping politicians. Canada was about to invoke their War Powers Act for the first time in history.

Business took me from Chicago to Montreal for a week or so every two to three weeks. I was there often enough that I picked up decent Quebec French — which bears some distant resemblance to modern-day Parisian French. One day, I was shopping at a large bookstore in the underground mall beneath the Queen Elizabeth Hotel. As I was checking out, a woman behind me saw we were purchasing the same book, *A Terrorist Looks Back: A Novel of Revolutionary Quebec*, by Claude X. LaBrecque.



I turned to look at her and she screamed out "Claude LaBrecque! You're the author! Will you autograph my book?" Before I could explain who I wasn't, she yelled, "Hey everybody, it's Claude LaBrecque." Then the checkout clerk, looking at me compared to the sketch on the back of

the book, shouted "Sacre Bleu!" (Actually, he dropped a big fat F-bomb in English.) He picked up the microphone and announced to the store that I was there and would autograph books as he held up a copy.

At the time, I *did* look almost exactly like the pen-ink drawing of the author on the back cover. By this point, there was no way to escape without huge embarrassment, so I signed my new checkout friend's book and about nine others that probably would not have been sold otherwise. On future trips, I changed to the Bonaventure Hotel and never again darkened the doors of the QE or the mall below. For one thing, Monsieur LaBrecque was none too popular with his former chums, and I most certainly would have received a greeting far different than the one in the book store.

I hope Claude forgives my identity theft. I meant no harm and I did sell a few books. And I hope the FLQ has stopped looking for me. ❖

AFS Takes Me to Pakistan in 1961 And Changes My Life

By Jill Stryker



Jill Stryker in a Pakistani shalwar kameez in 1961.

It was 1961. The principal at Nicolet High School, in Glendale, Wisconsin, called me into his office. I was a bit anxious. He directed me to the conference room where there were teachers and administrators. I was really nervous then. After offering me a seat, the principal said that I had been accepted by AFS – AFS, which began as the American Ambulance

Field Service in 1915, has been organizing international high school student exchange programs since 1946 – and that I was going to Karachi, Pakistan, for the summer. The assembled group congratulated me. After a short session, I went to call my mother, who had already been contacted by the principal. When she heard my voice, she said, “Just forget it. You are not going to Pakistan.”

“Mom,” I said, “we agreed that I would go anywhere AFS sent me.”

“Yes, but we were talking about Europe. I didn’t even know Pakistan was in the program.”

After much discussion that evening with my parents, it was decided that I could go.

In mid-June, we drove to New York where six students from all over the United States boarded a Flying Tiger cargo plane for Pakistan. If we flew too high, the plane would get very cold and our ears would pop. Luckily, we had a stopover in Athens. We were driven to an estate in the countryside where we stayed and had dinner. We were shown to the dining room. Our plates were filled with lovely food. We gobbled it up and asked for seconds, to the surprise of the staff. Midway through our second helping, I noticed my neighbor had multiple plates under the plate he was eating from. I asked the waiter how many courses were coming? He said four! Plus dessert! I alerted the other students, some whom stopped eating the second serving immediately. Needless to say, we were stuffed by the end of dinner.

The next day, a limo drove us into Athens. We visited the Acropolis and toured the sights. Two more days in beautiful Athens and then we boarded another Flying Tiger plane. Luckily, this flight was less traumatic than our earlier one.

At the airport in Karachi, I was met by my Pakistani hosts, the Bhattys. We were driven home by a chauffeur to their home in Nazimabad, a suburb of Karachi. At dinner, I was introduced to food that was spicy beyond my imagination. By the end of the summer, I could eat mango pickles out of the crock, which were the spiciest item in the house. None of my Pakistani sisters would attempt that.

The girls slept on a veranda with no roof. Our beds were wood frames with rope strung across

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A Short Short Story

By Stan Trost

Frank was drinking with Hemingway. Frank challenged Ernie to write a six-word story. Ernie wrote: "For sale: baby shoes. Never worn."

Next day Frank started looking for other examples:

She was at her own funeral.

Yesterday, I will do things differently.

Streets full of water. Please advise. (Benchley)

Then Frank asked me to write 5-, 4-, 3-, 2- and 1-word stories.

Ate hot chili, drank water

Moon rose, sun set

Born, died

Boom ❖

AFS Takes Me to Pakistan and Changes My Life

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the frame but no mattress. The first night, after much tossing and turning, I was about to fall asleep when a man outside the high wall around the house let out a loud shout. After my heart returned to normal, I asked what the man said. I was told he was the night watchmen who patrolled the neighborhood. He had said, "All is well."

Soon after my arrival, I was given permission to attend school with my sisters. It was a private, Catholic, girls' school. I went with Tpsi, who was nearest to my age. I was greeted by the teacher/nun and shown to an empty seat. The girls kept pointing at me and whispering. The teacher had a great deal of trouble keeping the girls focused on the lessons since all they wanted to do was talk about me or talk to me. After school, we returned home, where I was told the principal had called and said I was no longer welcome at the school because I was disruptive, just by being there.

For a week, my host mother Ami and I would go to the market to shop for food and other necessities. I watched her bargain about the price of items. Ami answered my questions about their everyday lives. Muslims pray five times a day.

Every evening, the Bhattys prayed together on their prayer rugs. After a month, I asked if I could join them, and they agreed.

Since none of the windows in the house had glass, scorpions, lizards and other creatures were throughout the house. To get to the toilet, I had to stamp my feet so that the scorpions would move out of the way.

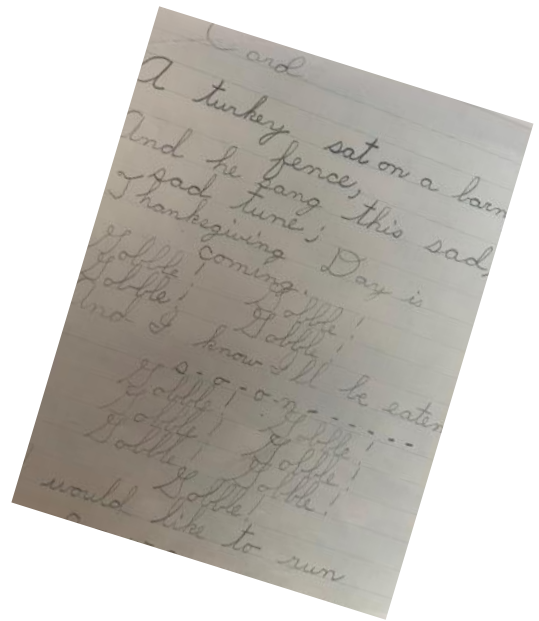
AFS took all the students to Lahore by train to see the beautiful ancient buildings and gardens. By the end of my visit there, the temperature reached 122 degrees. We limited our outings to early morning.

By the end of my stay, I had a second family. The Bhattys visited me when I was married and living in McLean. They would come with their new husbands or wives. Ami visited me and her son, who was living in Minnesota. They would stay with me and I would take them to see the sights in D.C. and the many wonders there. I visited Tpsi in London, Seemi in the UAE, Dawood in Minnesota, Vicky in Lahore. We will always be family. I am grateful to AFS for bringing us together. ❖

Thankful Song

By Carol Saunders

My third grade teacher, Mrs Pilch, taught us the Palmer method of cursive writing. Thus, this Thanksgiving song is written in pencil - I was much too young to be allowed the use of a pen - and all these decades later it is a bit hard to decipher. I hope you enjoy it.



I grew up in the small Mercer County, New Jersey, town of Hopewell. We all walked or biked to Hopewell Elementary School for grades K-8, biking home for lunch, stopping to see friends' families en route. Hopewell has two reasons you may have heard of it: John Hart, signer of the Declaration of Independence, resides, not in his former home on Hart Avenue, but rather under an obelisk in the churchyard of the Old School Baptist Church on Broad Street next to the Hopewell House Saloon. Sadly, Hopewell's infamy is that it was here that Colonel and Anne Morrow Lindburgh's baby was kidnapped from his crib. Despite a ton of circumstantial evidence, Bruno Hauptmann, the carpenter convicted of the abduction, claimed his innocence until his dying day.

THANKFUL SONG

Oh! A lone pumpkin grew
on a green pumpkin vine
He was round & he was fat; he was yellow
"No silly Jack-o-lantern shall I make" he said
"I'm determined that I'll be a useful fellow"

CHORUS

"For the glory of the Jack is in the candle
From the gatepost when it grins set up so high,
And the glory of the turkey is in the drumstick

But, the glory of the pumpkin is in the pie!
So he raised up his head when the cook came 'round
And she chose him at once as the winner
His fondest wish came true; he was a proud pumpkin pie,
And the glory of the big Thanksgiving dinner

CHORUS

A turkey sat on a barnyard fence,
And he sang this sad, sad tune
Thanksgiving Day is coming
Gobble! Gobble!
Gobble! Gobble!
And I know I'll be eaten s-o-o-n —
I would like to run a-w-a-y
Gobble! Gobble!
Gobble! Gobble!

I don't like Thanksgiving Day - NOT AT ALL!!!~ ❖

Moishe or the Kindness of Strangers

By Arma Jane Karaer



Arma Jane Karaer during her travels in India, circa 1964.

In July, 1964, my friend Carolyn and I left India, after two adventurous years, on our way home and in love with Asia. Carolyn had mapped our return journey, which would take us through Thailand, Indonesia, Hong Kong and Japan.

On the flight from Bangkok to Jakarta, I was seated next to a man of European appearance who, to my 23-year-old eyes, looked middle aged. As we chatted, I learned that his name was Moishe and he was a businessman whose family had been in Indonesia for a couple of generations, he had been interned by the Japanese and survived whole. Now his brothers and his mother were living in Hong Kong and his married sister was in Kuala Lumpur. He was holding down the family fort in Jakarta.

And what were my friend and I planning to do in Indonesia, he inquired. We were signed up as paying guests with an Indonesian family in Jakarta, where we would stay just long enough to see the famous cultural center of Jogjakarta and

gigantic Buddhist stupa there and then proceed to Bali, where we would be paying guests of one of its Hindu noblemen.

"Ahh," said Moishe, "and did you change your money in Bangkok for this trip?" "Oh, no," said I, "That would be illegal." Moishe did the verbal equivalent of a head slap. The official rate of exchange in Indonesia, he informed me, bore no relation to the real value of the currency. And no one (except naive foreigners) used it.

"Look," he said, "I know we've just met and you don't know me, but if you give me a check for \$200, when we stop in Kuala Lumpur, I will give it to my sister with some other checks. Then, when we get to Jakarta, I will give you enough Indonesian currency to cover all expenses for you and your friend."

Woof! How does a polite person respond? Moishe didn't seem like a con man to me (although I had only met them in the movies), and \$200, even in 1964, was a small amount of money for a week's travel for two people. But I had never done anything illegal in my life, up to that point anyway.

He told me he wouldn't be offended if I decided not to trust a stranger, but we were about to land

in Kuala Lumpur. If I wanted to take up his offer, I had to decide. "You can see me meet my sister," he said, "but from a discreet distance. Just act like you're admiring the airport architecture."

I took a deep breath, wrote out the check and watched Moishe do as he had said he would.

He handed me an enormous handful of paper currency and then handed Carolyn the same. "Don't let anyone see how much of this you have," he said.

When we parted at Jakarta airport, he told me to meet him on the porch of the Hotel Indonesia the next morning at 11:00.

The ride in from the airport reminded me how much the government of Indonesia did not like Americans in 1964. Huge banners strung across the highway showed blood red American ogres pinning down hapless Indonesians with demonic pitchforks. OMG! What had I done?

She didn't have a pitchfork, but Carolyn was as verbally scathing. During our two years in India we had developed a sisterly relationship and she was definitely big sis. She couldn't believe I was stupid enough to believe a man that I had just met. Well, it was my money. I could sit on the porch of the Hotel Indonesia. She would go to the Government Tourism Bureau around the corner and make our travel arrangements.

I did sit on the porch of the Hotel Indonesia, as far behind a big potted palm as I could fit, feeling like an inept Mati Hari and sure the police would pick me up at any moment. Right on time, Moishe pulled up, just as a very angry Carolyn swooped down on me from the opposite direction. The meeting was epic. Carolyn didn't like anyone, particularly men, telling her what to do. Moishe was from a patriarchal culture living in an Asian society. "The tourism agency isn't of any help at all," shouted Carolyn angrily. "Of course not," snapped Moishe, "Get in." He pulled away from the curb, stopping a discreet distance away. He handed me an enormous handful of paper currency and then handed Carolyn the same. "Don't let anyone see how much of this you have," he said. We had seen enough movies to know what to do, and were flat chested enough to do it.

Next, Moishe took me into the Air Indonesia office. The waiting room was filled with people who looked like they had cobwebs growing on them. Moishe went to the back, spoke briefly with the manager and came back with the air

tickets we needed to fly from Jogjakarta to Bali and back to Jakarta. Then it was off to the train station. "I have no contacts here," he said, "but every day the railway keeps a number of seats empty just in case a government bigwig needs one. The station master controls them. You know what to do."

I did? Yes, I did. I overwhelmed the poor stationmaster with my passionate plea for help to see the magnificent culture that my friend

I overwhelmed the poor stationmaster with my passionate plea for help to see the magnificent culture that my friend and I had been studying so long.

and I had been studying about for so long. Wouldn't he help us to complete our dream trip?

What's a patriotic station master to do in the face of such extravagant flattery?

The next day, comfortable in our plush first-class seats, Carolyn discovered that the woman sitting in front of us was the classmate whose husband was studying in Jakarta. In the course of learning how foreigners managed to live on student stipends, Carolyn asked what rate of exchange they used. Her friend explained, adding, "Of course, there's a much higher rate, but using that is very dangerous." My mental calculator went into overdrive and I sank even further into my seat.

A week later, after shadow puppet shows and a giant stupa in Jogjakarta and wonderful times with the Balinese raja, a Hindu, who treated us like a medieval Irish monk might have treated pilgrims returning from Rome, we returned to Jakarta. Moishe took us to dinner and back to the airport giving us his brother's address in Hong Kong and a fond farewell.

"Goodbye, nice girls." "Goodbye, nice man." I never saw nor heard from Moishe again, but I will never forget him. ❖

Rocky...The Parachuting Bear

By Roy Easley

This article was originally published in the Spring 2017 issue of Campus News and Views. It is being republished here at the request of the author.

This story is over 60 years old, but needs to be told for it is an extremely unusual story.

During the Korean conflict, I served in the only parachute regimental combat team in the Far East. The combat team served three tours in the front lines in Korea. Between combat tours, we trained for future missions to Korea in the windswept Kyushu-Sanchi mountain range on the Japanese island of Kyushu. This mountain range was similar in topography to that of the Korean peninsula.



Rocky, ready for a jump.

Paratroopers have their special language. Paratroopers are “jumpers” and parachuting is “jumping.” The combat team was manned by four thousand jumpers. The infantrymen, the artillerymen, the engineers, the medics, even the doctors and chaplains were jumpers. So too was our little mascot, Rocky, the jumping bear!

Rocky actually belonged to one of the parachute artillery batteries (about 90 enlisted men and six officers), as this battery had purchased the bear from the city zoo in Kumamoto, Kyushu, Japan. But when it became known to the balance of the combat team that the artillerymen were jumping Rocky, they were overcome with amazement and joy. They promptly hijacked Rocky (figuratively) as the combat team’s mascot. Esprit was off the chart!

The bear did not run free. The bear had a collar and a leash and an orderly. Each 24-hour period, an orderly was designated by duty roster to tend to Rocky. Feed, water, exercise and keep the bear from creating mischief.

The bear needed special equipment to be safely jumped. Fortunately, the combat team included a parachute maintenance company. The company had heavy-duty sewing machines needed to repair thick webbing straps and to produce new strap configurations. A special parachute harness was configured to the bear’s form and figure to which a standard backpack parachute could be firmly secured. Rocky was now good to go and made five jumps without injury. Paratrooper Lieutenant Easley is shown in the photo above near one of the jump aircraft ready for a jump with Rocky.



Paratrooper Roy Easley.

Rocky was a young, and not big, bear, weighing about 130 pounds and measuring less than 30 inches from shoulders to rump. The bear’s parachute deployment line was hooked to a static line cable in the aircraft, the bear was pushed out the aircraft’s door and after falling about 15 feet, the parachute deployed. One thousand feet later, Rocky was safely on terra firma. The bear’s reward was any bear’s favorite: a container of berries and honey!

In 1954 the combat team was notified that it would soon return to the States with an uncertain future. Rocky needed a new home and the Lincoln Park Zoo in Chicago agreed to take her. HER? Yep, only a few paratroopers knew that Rocky was a female. Why disappoint 4,000 macho male egos with this fact?

Is Rocky still living? No, black bears have a lifespan of only 30 to 40 years, but she does reside in bear heaven enjoying berries and honey, that’s for sure! ♦

The Story Behind *The Exposition Woman*

By Emmy Simmons

Who would have thought that a play about a young woman who served as a nude model for some of America's most celebrated sculptors would draw a crowd at Vinson Hall more than a hundred years after her birth? Mary Lee McIntyre and Susan Berkey, that's who! The script for *The Exposition Woman* was written by Paul Handy, a fellow playwright in a class that Mary Lee attended. Maryland-based Paul Handy, who is an administrative judge in Washington, D.C., when he isn't writing plays, based the story on Audrey Munson's life, which had both great drama – a difficult mother-daughter relationship, nude modelling, starring in the first silent movies – and great sorrow, a long life in a mental hospital.

The Vinson Hall Players faced an uphill challenge in their successful staging in November 2022 of *The Exposition Woman*. How could the theatrical flashbacks in *The Exposition Woman* be conveyed to and understood by the audience? The play's narrative switches quickly from "the present" – in a mental hospital in New York in the late 1990s – to "the past" – the early 1900s in New York City streets and theaters. With no spotlights in the Ballroom to guide the action and nowhere to build sets as scenery, this was a puzzle.

To overcome these technical constraints, the Vinson Hall Players turned to the internet and the wonders of PowerPoint, a presentation software. The internet had abundant sources of information about Audrey Munson, the young nude model who posed for several sculptors creating the beautiful nude statues for the San Francisco Exposition of 1915.

The internet also informed us about Dr. Wilkins, a wealthy New York doctor, who was alleged to have murdered his wife and went to prison for his deed. We created a PowerPoint presentation with images and this background information to play behind the Players as they read the play's lines and communicated the necessary emotional

drama with their voices.

The Players came through this dramatic performance with flying colors, animating the storyline of the *The Exposition Woman* with vivid readings of the roles and backed by the PowerPoint that combined actual pictures of the main characters and old New York with new photos of the actors.



Audrey Munson in "Purity,"
Liberty Theatre in Apeda, N.Y.

After the success of this production, the Vinson Hall Players have continued to search for new opportunities to perform. *Complaint Department and Lemonade*, performed in May 2023, brought in new talent from among Vinson Hall residents, with 15 Players engaging the audience with their complaints that involved a husband's deafness, Oreo cookies with too much icing and having nothing to complain about, among others. Then, in October, the Vinson Hall Players presented another play by Paul Handy, *Satellite Parking*. And *A Krampus Carol* is coming in December with new Players volunteering to be onstage – or, at least, in the PowerPoints that visually carry the action forward.

The Exposition Woman broke new entertainment ground for Vinson Hall, thanks to the initiatives of Mary Lee and Susan, and, of course, the considerable time and efforts of so many others. We are hoping to "break a leg" as we continue this new season! ❖

To South America in a Single Engine Plane

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the WWII Navy life vest/raft packs that we had on our laps didn't explode and blow the roof off the plane. We would be flying over water. A Navy friend of Mina's had secured them for us telling us he had no idea when they were last inspected. "How long does shark repellent last?" I wondered.

I suppose if we ever had to use them we would have been out of luck, but they made us feel better as we flew over the sea – in spite of the fact that they were already at least 25 years old. We kept the packs on our laps along with bottled water and pills for making potable any water we might find near our downed plane in the jungle or mountains. We felt prepared for a crash and

survival in the jungle. Of course, we were not.

When Mina first asked me to join the adventure, I began dreaming of jungles and mountains, waterfalls and ziggurats. I was thrilled that I would see the mysterious Mayan ruins discovered earlier in the 20th century. I was enthralled with the idea of this adventure. I didn't know how potentially dangerous this trip would be. The reality was that it became a trip of survival. ❖

This concludes part one. Look for part two of this story in the Winter 2024 Issue of the Campus News and Views.

My Dona Anita

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girls stood silently by and said nothing as we passed. On days when I was out late on the trail, one of Dona Lucia's boys (from the house where we volunteers took our meals) would sometimes walk her home and ensure that no one bothered her. I never asked them to do this and they never told me that they had. Others would say, "When you are not here, Dona Anita is being taken of by your friends." Soon, no one bothered her anymore.

I never gave a second thought to what I was doing with her, or why, and neither did my Peace Corps partners, Bob and Andy, question my motives. She simply became an accepted part of our daily lives. Sometimes, when I was down the street doing business at the time of her arrival, one of Dona's Lucia's children would come and

get me, saying, "Your Dona is waiting for you." The boys smiled when they said that.

One day, I went off to Popayan and stayed for a long weekend. On my last day there, Dona Anita died and was buried within 24 hours. When I returned to La Plata, people would come up to me, expressing their condolences as if Dona Anita had been my mother. Maybe she was. On being informed of her death, my immediate mental picture of Dona Anita was of a beautiful young girl in a plain white linen dress, laid out in a simple casket surrounded by fresh flowers of every kind. In my mind's eye, I saw her rising up. "See," she exclaimed to those who had taunted her all these years, "you let my outward appearance trick your eyes. I was once young and pretty, and now I am forever." ❖

The Prelude

...Continued from page 6

Further brief stops were made at Accra and Leopoldville. How depressing and frightening the Belgian Congo stop was. (Little did I know that eight years later my husband, with his South African passport, would be held a political prisoner at this airport while his plane underwent repairs.)

Suddenly, I am wide awake! Jan Smuts – now called the O.R. Tambo International Airport in Johannesburg, South Africa – is just two hours away. For 35 hours I have been traveling on a plane. Somehow, I must freshen up. Off I go to the washroom. Excitement is building; my nerves are raw, my palms perspiring. I start applying liquid rouge. Suddenly, the bottle slips out of my

fingers; the contents spill down my neck, leaving my blouse stained and unpresentable. What a sight! My tear ducts overflow – now my mascara joins the rouge. What a mess!

Pulling myself together, I am forced to start over again. Finally, I am ready to leave the cubicle where a queue awaits my departure. With my beet-red face, my stature reduced to a foot, I try to make myself invisible as I walk down the aisle. My humiliation is complete.

Soon, the captain announces the airport is in sight. The plane descends, lands, and at long last I disembark. As I reach the last step, I fall flat on my face. No one can say I didn't fall for my husband-to-be! ❖

First Sight

By Margaret Dean

Adam saw her standing there
Back lit against the glaring sun
Lovely flowers in her hair
Rain's misty halo round her head.

Lovely garden, lovely hair
Shining through the shimmering mist.
Bright sun, warm rain
Pleasure here and pleasure done
He could not know
What lay ahead.

The leaves so crinkly
That misty Eve with
Grass 'tween her toes and
Black sand paving solid
Down the road the

Road down the hill
Away from the Garden
Where all was so still.

He'd taken the road
On down the hill
Away from the garden
On toward the birds
Where apple blossoms
Bobbled heads through
The haze of the rain.

Adam saw her standing there
A silhouette against the light
Eagerly awaiting night.
They could not know, not know
What lay ahead and so... ❖



Vinson Hall Retirement Community
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VINSON HALL RETIREMENT COMMUNITY

Campus News & Views Fall 2023



Fall fun at VHRC included the Navy Marine Coast Guard Residence Foundation's Gala, *An Evening in Casablanca*, the Halloween parade and costume contest, Yappy Hour at the Sports Park and a Veterans Day visit by VHRC residents to Chesterbrook Elementary School.