

# VINSON HALL RETIREMENT COMMUNITY CAMPUS NEWS & VIEWS



## CEO Corner

### In Appreciation for Your Support of Staff

As we move towards the end of 2024, I wanted to take a moment to express our gratitude for the tremendous generosity of residents who have contributed to this year's Employee Appreciation Fund. We work very hard to recruit, develop, and retain great employees here at VHRC. The ability of our staff to deliver excellent programs, services, and experiences is fundamental to our success. We try to create an excellent working environment where our team members feel valued and understand the impact their work has on the lives of others.

Not surprisingly, our employee engagement surveys consistently reference the importance of relationships on their experience working at VHRC. We deeply appreciate our interactions with residents, which helps to make working at our community much more than just a job. I am sure this contributes significantly to our low employee turnover rate, which is approximately half that of other communities like ours. During our last several new employee orientation sessions, we've welcomed staff returning to VHRC after being away for a while. When we've asked what brought them back, they reference missing the outstanding work environment in general, and their relationships in particular.

The Employee Appreciation Fund is a highly meaningful expression of that relationship, through the investment that VHRC residents have in our employees. For our hourly staff members – both those you see every day and those who work hard behind the scenes to make this a great place to live – your gifts make a difference in countless ways.

Many, many thanks to Lynne Schone, who tirelessly leads the efforts to raise and distribute these funds, along with the members of her committee who provide such great support to this work. This is an enormous labor of love that continues throughout the year, and we're very excited to celebrate the success of this year's Employee Appreciation Fund.

I hope that you all have a wonderful holiday season, and I'm looking forward to a great 2025!❖

— Chip Warner, President and CEO



*CEO Chip Warner with members of the Navy Marine Coast Guard Residence Foundation Board of Trustees: Allie Leslie, Fred Sanford and Rip Sullivan.*

# VHRC Celebrates Fall

Fall came in slowly this year at VHRC, but the warmer-than-usual days didn't slow us down. As the days got shorter, we remained active with pickleball, putting contests and extended hours in the Fitness Center. In October, we spent a glamorous night in Monaco at *Moonlight Over Monte Carlo*, the Navy Marine Coast Guard Residence Foundation's annual fundraising gala, and we laughed in mock horror as a herd of dinosaurs came to haunt us on Halloween. We were also entertained by the artists in our community: Vinson Voices got us ready for fall with a Back-to-School concert in September and regaled us with patriotic classics at the Veterans Day Concert. The Vinson Hall Players gave us food for thought with the production of *War of the Worlds*, *the Panic Broadcast*. At the same time, VHRC residents found ways to connect to the broader community. We raised funds for

the Alzheimer's Association and participated in the annual Walk to end Alzheimer's in D.C. We visited the gallery at McLean Project for the Arts for a guided tour of their sculpture exhibition, and then welcomed one of their artists on campus to serve as a judge for our two-day community-wide fall Art Show. It's been a busy and energizing fall! ❖



## About Campus News & Views

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

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## Navy Marine Coast Guard Residence Foundation News

# Sharing Holiday Joy – and Gratitude

Is there any more joyful time of year than the holiday season? It's a time for gathering together and celebrating with the people we care most about. And for us at the Navy Marine Coast Guard Residence Foundation, that means all of you. On November 6, we were thrilled to share an *Evening with the Stars* with our Star Members (those who have given a membership gift of \$250 or more this year). About 135 attendees came together in the Ballroom for fellowship, fun and great food. We are so grateful for the friendships, support, kindness and generosity of this wonderful community and the donors that make the Foundation's work possible!

VHRC residents share a strong commitment to serving others, and with that in mind, we look for ways to build connections for our campus with the broader community. It was our privilege to coordinate talks at Chesterbrook Elementary School by nine of our residents in honor of Veterans Day. The kids were spellbound by our residents' stories about their lives of service to our country and asked a lot of questions! We brought Potomac School's high schoolers to campus this fall to work with residents on service learning projects. And we were also delighted to organize three different holiday drives so that residents and staff could give back to SHARE's elderly clients-in-need, the Capital Area Food Bank, and the Marine Corps Toys for Tots program. Thank you, one and all!



*Senior Director of Philanthropy and Engagement Michelle Crone with Wounded Warrior Kayla Saska and resident Carl Schone at the NMCGRF gala.*

Of course, a highlight of the holidays for us is always the campus holiday decorating tradition. We are gearing up for the week of December 2, when more than 60 residents and staff will spread out across campus to hang ornaments on 23 trees and transform the campus into a winter wonderland! This will be the sixth year that the Foundation has coordinated this effort – truly a labor of love.

This holiday season, we are especially thankful for the youngest members of our community – our two wounded warriors-in-residence, Kayla Saska and Tairique Whittaker. It has been a joy to be able to restart the Foundation's Warrior Transition program after a hiatus of several years. To our knowledge, this program is unlike any other in the country, and we couldn't be more thrilled to have welcomed Kayla and Tairique into our VHRC family this year!

In the end, the holidays are all about gratitude. On behalf of our team in Philanthropy & Engagement, I am thankful for this community and the remarkable people we have the privilege to support – through the events and activities we organize, through communications like *The Beacon* and the *Campus News & Views* we publish, and through the smiles and good cheer we share every day. Thank you for all you bring to our lives!❖

— Michelle Crone, Senior Director of Philanthropy & Engagement



# The Kindness of Strangers\*

By Bob Springer



*Men of the 13th Combat Engineer Battalion sand down a slippery road to help prevent accidents to the Division's vehicles, north of Pyongyang, Korea. 6 Mar 1951. CC BY-NC-ND 2.0 Department of Defense*

*\* "The kindness of strangers – completely unexpected, gratefully accepted and long remembered." (Deb Sofield)*

This true story is about the kindness of a stranger during the Korean War. The kindness was unexpected, was gratefully accepted, and has been long remembered – for 73 years, in fact. This stranger's kindness may well have saved me from the loss of my legs and a crippling lifetime of pain and disability.

In January 1951, I had been with an Army combat unit in Korea for seven months as an artillery forward observer attached to E Company, 8th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Cavalry Division (Dismounted). I joined it a few weeks after the communist North Korean army surprised the world with a sudden, overwhelming tank-led military invasion of South Korea on June 25.

The army of South Korea, our ally, was quickly overrun and its remnants retreated south. Within a few days after the North Korean attack, the United States, which was unprepared for war, flew in to Korea what few Army and Marine forces could be quickly gathered up, including my artillery battalion, which had been on occupation duty in Japan.

After a bad beginning for our side came months of fighting, during which time we added many more troop units, China entered the war on the side of our enemy with overwhelming numbers, and we were pushed back to a defensive line along the 38th parallel, roughly close to positions where the war had begun. My regiment was ordered to defend a sector of this line toward the eastern side of the peninsula, which was quite mountainous.

Winter came early that year with a brutal vengeance we had not expected. By early January 1951, the temperatures in our mountainous area warmed up somewhat in the daytime, but at night dropped well below zero degrees Fahrenheit. For example, my battalion fire direction center, which had the job of keeping such data as wind speed, humidity and temperature, one morning reported to me a new overnight low temperature: 23 degrees below zero. Also, I heard that in the area of higher mountains to the north and east, which our Marines were defending, the temperature got down to 40 degrees below zero that night.

We almost always slept on the ground, often rocky, with no protection except for our sleeping bags, which were warm, but provided little

overhead cover. The ground was frozen hard and it often snowed, usually a light snow.

Most of our soldiers had not yet been issued warm winter clothing due to supply problems, and they were suffering seriously from the cold. Some came down with trench foot and frostbite. The frostbite was much feared because it could get infected and eventually result in an arm or leg amputation.

We could protect against trench foot by wearing dry socks, which we dried out each night under our arm pits, but our standard leather issue combat boots were no protection against frostbite, even with layers of socks. This was a serious problem in all our front-line units, and later that month, when I visited a field hospital in the rear area, I saw dozens of soldiers incapacitated by frostbite, which turned the flesh a dark color.

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**Our standard leather issue combat boots were no protection against frostbite, even with layers of socks. This was a serious problem in all our front-line units...I saw dozens of soldiers incapacitated by frostbite.**

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All were praying for the warm clothing to arrive, and finally the great day came when we were issued warm winter clothing, including arctic boots with thick insulation to replace our leather combat boots. There was great relief everywhere. The arctic boots were in very short supply, however, and tightly controlled. Only one pair was allowed for each soldier and we were told there would be no more if we lost them.

The arctic boots turned out to be very warm, and frostbite of the feet became rare. The only disadvantage of the arctic boots was that they were somewhat bulky and clumsy and you could not drive a vehicle safely with them on.

Several days after the new boots were issued, I had to go back to the rear area for some supplies. My driver could not be found, so I decided to drive myself. I took off my bulky arctic boots and threw them into the back of my jeep, put on my leather boots, and off I drove.

After a few minutes of driving I saw ahead some soldiers I did not know walking on the side of the road, and since I had plenty of room, I gave them a ride in back of the jeep.

A few miles later the soldiers asked me to stop, and they jumped out and thanked me. They quickly disappeared.

When I finally reached the supply tent, my destination, and began to get out of the jeep, several young Army chaplains walked over to my jeep, apparently lost, and asked for directions.

As I was talking with the chaplains, I happened to glance into the back of my jeep.

MY BELOVED ARCTIC BOOTS WERE GONE!!!  
Stolen, of course, by one of the men I had befriended by giving him a ride.

Naturally, I was very distraught. There were no more arctic boots to be had, and probably no more due in for weeks or more. I knew we were due for even colder weather ahead, probably more snow, and the roads would be blocked.

At that moment of my anguish, one of the young chaplains I had been talking with stepped forward, pulled off his arctic boots and gave them to me, saying "I just hope these fit, I know you must need them more than I." I thanked him, I hugged him, and thanked him again – then he had to leave. I have always regretted that in the confusion of the moment, I failed to get his name.❖

# The Rewards of My Punishment

By John Gardenier



*John Gardenier served in the Pacific as a young officer.*

Posted to a Navy squadron in the Pacific as a young officer, I was determined to deliver the very best service I could.

That squadron staff had concerns about a pending Special Court Martial of a young sailor for constant misbehavior and disruption, including some legal violations (but none that had physically harmed people or property). The young sailor was so universally disliked that there seemed no way to assign a required Defense Attorney. I did not know him and, having benefited from a one-year (undergraduate) law school course on the history and principles of legal practice, I felt compelled to volunteer. Immediately accepted!!

Research into the Navy guidance showed that the proper course would be a non-judicial "Captain's Mast" and jail ("brig") time followed by administrative processing for discharge from the Navy. But the Commanding Officer didn't want that. Instead, I was directed to prepare for trial. I knew a "Bad Conduct" discharge could ruin the young fellow for life – an excess that I felt would violate basic principles of law. Seeking advice

from a more experienced officer, I was advised to look out for violations of trial procedure that could be used to win the case on appeal. I advised the C.O. of my dilemma and requested that he reconsider his decision to have a trial. He sardonically wished me "good luck with that" and ordered me to get on with it.

As predicted by my advisor, the trial was badly mishandled and had to be appealed. The appeal failed at two intermediate levels before going to the top – the Court of Military Review. Their judgement upheld my appeal as completely correct. That court soundly rebuked the command and the intermediate reviewers.

My C.O. felt I must be punished severely for the rebuke he received – but it must be done without putting himself in further jeopardy. He assigned me to extended temporary duty at a Joint/Combined Counter-Insurgency Exercise on Taiwan. He credibly expected that such an assignment would place me in a harsh jungle/mountain environment for weeks! Actually, I ended up being assigned to the comfortable headquarters in Taipei, immersed in a totally

delightful culture before my return to the U.S.

Still, one more punishment was to come my way! I managed to exasperate my Army Lt. Colonel staff boss in the final week in that assignment. In an extensive, complex counterinsurgency exercise I was a part of, many military components were involved. The actual Navy role there was relatively minor, so my part of the complex final report was simple and quickly completed. Not so for the Army Special Forces (Green Beret) participants. They were highly capable jungle fighters with extensive relevant experience in Vietnam. However, they were inexperienced with staff duty and the awkward demands of formal report documentation. They needed help, so I volunteered. We quickly agreed that I knew nothing of their expertise so I would write up in proper format whatever they told me, subject to their final approval. They were delighted, and we got along great!

For that unexpected service, I was given a Letter of Commendation by the Headquarters top brass. My Lt. Col. staff supervisor, a strait-laced Army regular who disliked Green Berets, was angry at me for helping them succeed and told me "You're fired!" – after all my work was done.

My commendation was forwarded through Pacific Fleet Command with their strong appreciation for my unexpected voluntary Navy contribution to an important report. My squadron C.O. simply "Forwarded" the document and also tried to sabotage my next duty assignment. But he failed - yet again.

I got a sought-after duty in Washington, D.C. and a doctorate at night school. Moving to the reserves, I served top-level Navy and DoD offices and earned qualifications for Naval Attaché duty. Mine was not an impressive career, but I am proud of it. ❖

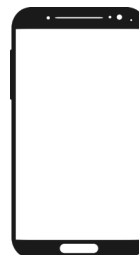
## Why I Look Things Up on My Phone

By Nancy McSlarrow

While from a prior  
Feline Life  
I retain  
My curiosity,

I also like  
A quiet spot  
To indulge  
In inactivity.

So when a question's  
posed to me,  
This rectangle  
gets my inquiry.





# Navy Prank – Counter-Prank

## *A Good “Navy Prank” Brings Much Amusement for All ... Eventually*

**By Jack Hannon**



*Naval Air Intelligence officer Jack Hannon in 1964 in Cubi Point, Philippines, about to board a Navy seaplane.*

### **Prank**

A Navy Officer's pay in those days (mid-1900s) wasn't great. The lowest rank, Ensign, earned a paltry \$220 a month, with room and board paid only when aboard ship! The next higher rank, Lieutenant Junior Grade, drew a pay increase of about \$50 per month after 18 months "in grade."

Most of the Ensigns aboard the U.S.S. Hancock (CVA-19) – and between ship's company and the Air Wing there were perhaps 25-30 of us – were eager to get that formerly automatic promotion and the accompanying pay raise. I say "formerly" most advisedly, because all of a sudden in all operating spaces on the ship a message came to us "at sea" to the effect that such promotions were no longer automatic. The message said that "BuPers" (Bureau of Naval

Personnel) was working on promotion criteria for the "lesser officer ranks," and in the meantime all promotions from Ensign to Lieutenant Junior Grade were being held in abeyance, which means they weren't going through.

The collective moan from those 25-30 hard-working young officers could be heard beyond the curvature of the earth! There was no Internet then, no phone calls from ship to home, only ourselves. We spent days asking around: Did you get a personal copy? (Yes!) Do you know anything about why this is happening now? (No!) How're you holdin' up? And so on. Nobody knew anything. It seemed rather far fetched...and yet...

After a few days and much sleuthing, the focus came to dwell on one aviation squadron wanting to "cut their Intel officer down a bit." Nothing too



serious, mind you. And the ship's officers, who run the Communications function, were happy to oblige by sending around the bogus message to the entire Junior Officer peer group on the ship! And that person in the spotlight was...ME! And the attacking officer was...Commander Bill Miller, our VA-216 squadron commander, and possibly other senior officers, all of whom had very good senses of humor. Once focused upon, it all blew over quite rapidly. But –

### Counter-Prank

Accept defeat? Nonsense! The big question was...HOW TO RETURN THE FIRE?! Fast forward about six months. We were home from the war at Naval Air Station Lemoore in California. One day I heard that Commander Miller, the "head prankster," was extremely exasperated over Navy Federal Credit Union's slow response to his application for a new car loan. AHA, SEZ I - THE MOMENT HAS ARISEN! The plot formed quickly. Secure in my knowledge that soon I would be separated from the Navy after four wonderful years of service and entering law school 3,000 miles away, I determined to risk faking a message from Navy Federal about Skipper's car loan (he still didn't have the \$\$\$) and thereby hope to vex him even more than he had done to me and my colleagues.

After some mighty fast talking with a certain Communications Officer that I knew, she bravely sent my draft NFCU message, to Commander Miller only, that very afternoon. It read something like this:

*Dear Cdr. Miller:*

*It appears there may be certain irregularities in your account with us, requiring further investigation and necessarily delaying final action on your loan application. We regret the inconvenience.*

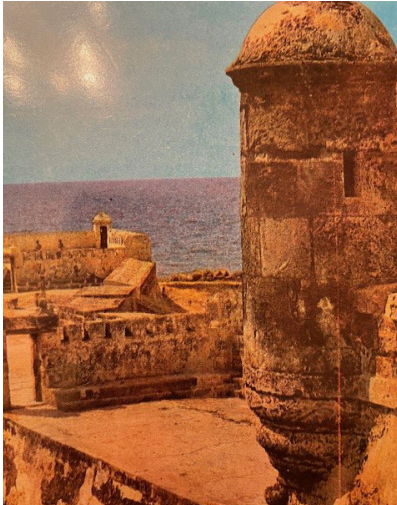
I arranged not to be anywhere near the squadron and Commander Miller for the entire afternoon, which was easy because I also had a separate office in the Intel building. I heard later that when "the message" came in at the squadron and was read by Miller, he just absolutely blew up and raged around the Ready Room shouting and throwing his arms in the air.

The next morning, though, I had to "face the music" with our all-powerful Skipper, likely even before "Morning Muster" at 7 a.m. And indeed when Skipper Miller saw me arriving, he made a beeline over to me, looking quite mad about something...("This looks pretty bad," I thought to myself...) But when he was no more than three feet away, his features relaxed into a smile and he said, and this is verbatim over nearly 60 years, "I guess we're even, eh?" And that was that! A near-perfect prank and counter-prank, now concluded. He had probably called Navy Federal, which responded that they had sent no such message (and tried hard not to laugh or even guffaw)!

The wonderful thing about a great Navy prank is that it hurts no one, uses up some otherwise empty time, often at sea (for example, a two-week transit for an older carrier like Hancock from Pearl Harbor to the Philippines), and provides some amusement, often to a whole bunch of people. In my view, this particular prank – counter-prank operation met all those requirements and is still satisfying so many years later. ❖

# To South America in a Single Engine Plane – The Last Leg

By Maureen Kammerer



*Left, the fortress in Cartagena, Colombia. Right, the author's mother, Gertrude Lanman Kane, on the beach in Montego Bay, Jamaica.*

*This is the final installment of a five-part story about the author's trip to South America. Part 1 appeared in Fall 2023, Part 2 was published in the Winter 2024, Part 3 appeared in Spring 2024 and Part 4 was published in Summer 2024.*

After our frightening flight through the Andes Mountains from Quito, Ecuador, to Bogota, Colombia, we enjoyed two days in Bogota in a beautiful hotel with colorful peacocks roaming the gardens. Then we flew to Cartagena, Colombia, on the coast, which was once a lovely Spanish colonial city, rich in indigenous culture and Spanish architecture and color. It had a large protective fortress overlooking the sea. On our visit there in 1965, it was an aging but intriguing city of buildings with balconies, arches and columns with peeling paint, stray dogs wandering the streets, and beautiful children seeking our attention.

The castle-like fortress on the Caribbean Sea, Castillo San Felipe de Barajas, was built by slave labor in 1639 in a strategic location for both land and sea invasion. After touring the massive fortress, we wandered the streets. Then we flew to the Cayman Islands to relax for a day before flying to our final stop, Jamaica. Grand Cayman Island was beautiful, with the palm trees waving

and dancing in the sun and the whitest beach sand I had ever seen. Our small wooden hotel on the beach was simple and peaceful. This was a time before wealthy investors from around the world hid their money there to avoid paying taxes, and before the elegant beachfront hotels. In 1965 this was the true Caribbean escape to sun, sea and sand.

After relaxing on the white beach for a day, we took off for Jamaica. I was looking forward to this storied island paradise where British authors like Noel Coward and Somerset Maugham had their homes. I had told Joe, my husband, what day we would land there and we were right on schedule.

When we landed, and after our plane was inspected, we entered the airport to the sound of island music. Immediately we were approached by young men offering to sell us drugs, and we were given Planter's Punch rum drinks by the airport bar owner. (None of us had had drugs before and we certainly weren't going to try them then; however, the punch was great after our hot flight!) The airport in Montego Bay had a very happy and welcoming atmosphere compared to our other landings.

An airport official came over to us, asking for

Mrs. Joseph Kammerer, and gave me a note that Joe had left with the Avis Car Rental desk telling me that he had arrived and was in a nearby hotel. How thrilling to be able to see him, tell him of our adventures and share the exploration of the island with him! My mother was exhausted by our adventures and had earlier expressed a desire to go home from Jamaica. We all had dinner together and spent the night in the Beach View Hotel, which Joe had found, and enjoyed telling Joe about the trip. We explored the quaint British Cornwall Beach Club the next day, then saw Mother off on a Pan Am flight to Washington. Now that Joe had arrived, Mother could stop worrying about me.

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### **I enjoyed the luxury of not having to endure plane inspections, suspicious officials and “Yanqui go home” signs.**

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We drove to the beautiful resort area of Ocho Rios and to our hotel, the Sans Souci, on the beach, which had a lovely pool and a bar named for the famed Harry’s Bar in Venice. Joe had gone into our closet and found a suitable cocktail dress and high heel shoes for me and brought them with him in a real suitcase, not just a small beach bag as I had been using. It was wonderful to think about dressing up and having fun at night, instead of washing out the undies and nylon dress that served for so long on the trip.

Mina and Mike and Joe and I explored Jamaica for a few days. The contrast of wealth and poverty was so striking. Ocho Rios had lovely old homes for the wealthy in the hills and on the beach. Even Princess Margaret would escape to Jamaica. The population and the workers in the hotels lived on the other side of the island in much different circumstances. Poverty was there but one had to drive away from our side of the island to see it. A substitute teacher was giving my final exams to my students that June in Hyattsville, Maryland, at home, while Joe

and I walked among the poinsettia bushes in full bloom everywhere, swam in the pool and explored beautiful Dunns Falls. I enjoyed the luxury of not having to endure plane inspections, suspicious officials and “Yanqui go home” signs.

We danced to the band in Harry’s Bar. We bought small wooden carvings of fish made by the island’s young people whom we saw on the roads as we explored. Sans Souci means “without care” and those few days at the end of our adventure are still a vivid memory of beauty, relaxation and fun. Those days in Jamaica were a happy ending to a memorable trip to South America.

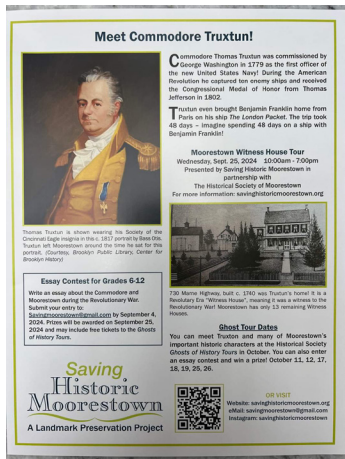
Four months later, we adopted our first child, Eric, and life would never be “without care” again. The madness of the events of the late 1960’s came upon us in Washington and the country along with our second baby, Michelle. In 1973, after one of life’s times of sadness and stress, Joe and I returned to Jamaica to once again enjoy the sea, the palm trees, and the gracious helpers in the Sans Souci Hotel. It had evolved into a building of condos to rent with a housemaid to serve us delicious meals and take care of us. It was another special time in Harry’s Bar and Restaurant.

Sixty years later, the memories of flying in that little Cessna plane, N4441, are still vivid, as are the memories of our intimate companionship and fear in that plane over the jungle and the Andes mountains with old life vests, the uninspected World War II rafts that could explode, and the Bowie knife I wore. We had bravely set out on an adventure to explore ruins and other cultures. We learned our own strengths and met our challenges. From landing in the rain and lightning near the ocean in St. Petersburg to negotiating a mountain pass in Quito to the canoes in Esmeraldas, it was an unforgettable trip to South America in a small single engine plane. ❖



# Home is Where the Hearth Is

By Midge Walton Holmes



*Left, the flyer announcing the home tour featuring The Homestead. Right, the miniature replica of the home, commissioned by Midge's husband Chris Holmes.*

I was thrilled to learn that my childhood home, The Homestead, built in 1740, was featured in a September 25, 2024 tour of Revolutionary War-era homes in Moorestown, New Jersey.

This old farmhouse was formerly owned by Thomas Truxton. Truxton was commissioned by President George Washington as the first officer of the new U.S. Navy. Truxton was awarded the Medal of Honor by Thomas Jefferson for capturing enemy ships during the Revolutionary War. As a result, his old home was declared a "Witness House" – meaning it was a witness to the Revolutionary War – by Saving Historic Moorestown and the Historical Society of Moorestown.

The home's original exterior bricks and the glass window panes came from England. It contains three original fireplaces with antique mantles (hence my title for this article), high ceilings, a beautifully sculpted central staircase with the original banister, a wrap-around porch, and an original red tin roof, which sounded deliciously soothing when it rained.

The Homestead was owned and farmed by the Walton (my maiden name) family for five generations. We held holidays around the large

dining room table in the front dining room. My sister, Trudy Walton Peischl, and my cousins used to jump in the hay mow; they rode a mule named Kate and saddled up a quarterhorse named Ginger. We played softball in the pasture and "Antny Over," a game of throwing and catching balls over the corn crib. We played basketball using a peach basket nailed to the barn for the basket. I fed chickens and collected their eggs (with trepidation – they pecked) from the chicken coop.

We held large picnics every Memorial Day with relay races on the large front yard for the kids. We drove tractors in the fields (after the mules were sold) and drove around the premises in an old 1947 Willys red jeep. We climbed the sycamore tree across the driveway next to the pasture. One winter our father pulled a line of eight sleds, ridden by us and some cousins, with his tractor after a heavy snow fall. Trudy and I both enjoyed hosting Quaker wedding receptions in the spacious front yard.

Sadly, the Homestead was sold ten years after my father, Aubrey Stockton Walton, Jr., a successful Garden State "truck farmer," died at

*Continued on page 19...*

# The Loudest Purr You Ever Heard

By Carol Saunders



Image by Andreas Gölner from Pixabay

Have you ever visited South Africa? In past years, my husband, Hal, and I enjoyed three different stays at Mala Mala Game Reserve near Kruger National Park, north of Johannesburg. Two or three times a day, we'd go out in an open Land Rover to get rather up close and personal with "THE BIG FIVE": elephants, lions, giraffes, zebras and hippos.

Flying in to the area, as we landed on the sandy runway, we were treated each time to a race with a handsome cheetah – who easily outran our plane. They zoom from zero to 60 mph in just 3 seconds and can travel 16 miles per day. These beautiful, lithe cats with their varied-size spots and handsome "tear-stained" cheeks are in danger. There remain in our world only about 7,000 in the wild, down from 100,000 just a hundred years ago. I was fascinated to watch one safeguarding her kill by laboriously dragging it up a tree then splay out on the horizontal branch to recuperate.

A recent visit to the San Diego Zoo brought back memories of Africa. The trip, part of the Carter Center annual reunion, promised dinner and a show overlooking the zoo. (Sniff, sniff. I wasn't keen on the possible updrafts. Turned out we

overlooked the zoo from the opposite side of a ravine. Phew!) We got to view several "stars" called "animal ambassadors" with their regular handlers or "wildlife care specialists," as the zoo calls them. I could have skipped the 36-foot-long python hauled up by three strong men, but was fascinated by a young cheetah. Concerned she might be lonely, the zoo had paraded several critters for her approval to see if she might be interested in a companion. She chose a scruffy, Heinz 57 mutt and they instantly bonded. They share a large enclosure; each has a bed, but they usually cuddle. They came to show off, and her handler raised Cheetah onto the viewing table. She looked down adoringly at Mutty, and PURRED so loud you easily could hear her from a good distance!!! Wow! I've had kitties all my life, but the decibel difference was most remarkable! I was so transfixed I never even thought to take a picture, or an audio recording. That was a PURR on steroids, lasting until they exited stage left with their handler so she could get in her exercise – a vital part of her daily routine to keep this handsome cat who can outrun a racehorse in top shape.

This indelible memory makes me smile each time I recall it. ❖

# Wonders of the World I Have Seen (or Missed)

By Gene Wentz



*Gene Wentz visiting the Great Wall of China in 2015.*

"JOIN THE NAVY AND SEE THE WORLD." That was the recruiting slogan for the U.S. Navy when I volunteered in 1957. After getting assigned to European shore duty as my first Navy assignment, I was hooked on the travel and adventure and stayed for 27 years, 19 of which were served overseas.

My foreign tours took me to the locales of three of the seven "Ancient Wonders of the World." (Olympia, Greece; the Mediterranean island of Rhodes; and the Great Pyramids near Cairo.) More recently, the "Modern Wonders of the World" have been designated and three of them have been subjected to my eyeballs. One other was within my grasp, but passed over for more earthly pleasures than sightseeing.

A worldwide Internet vote was conducted in about 2010 by New7Wonders, a nonprofit organization. Over 10 million votes were cast. The seven modern winners are the Colosseum in Rome; the Great Wall of China; the Taj Mahal in

India; Petra (an ancient city known for buildings carved into sandstone cliffs) in Jordan; Machu Picchu (an ancient city built by the Incas high in the mountains of Peru); the Statue of Christ the Redeemer in Rio de Janeiro; and the Chichen Itza pyramid in Mexico. I lived in Italy for more than five years and glimpsed the Colosseum on numerous occasions. I was first enamored by the photo of this ancient gladiator stadium in my high school Latin textbook. When I saw the real thing in 1957, I mused that my Latin teacher, D.L. Shaffer, might envy my actual standing at the site of this marvel of medieval architecture.

I have climbed the Great Wall of China and admired the statue of Christ situated on a mountaintop overlooking the magnificent harbor of Rio de Janeiro. The Navy ship to which I was assigned made port calls there in 1965-66. The statue was in full view from the residence of the U.S. Consul General, who hosted a reception for ship officers. On the other side of South America, I had the opportunity to take a VIP



tour of Machu Picchu in 1966 when the Peruvian Navy offered my task force admiral and his staff officers a private tour of the ruins north of the capital Lima. I was a bachelor at the time and opted to stay in Lima for its bright lights and night life excitement. I was a fool. I should have taken the tour.

I saw some of the losers among the other nominated modern landmarks. They included the

Eiffel Tower, the Statue of Liberty, the Acropolis, the Sydney Opera House and Stonehenge. I have been to the top of the Eiffel Tower, the Statue of Liberty and the Acropolis, walked around Stonehenge and admired the Sydney Opera House from the bridge overlooking the edifice.

Pity that none of them was selected.❖

## Soliloquy on Community

By Margaret Dean

Our community energizes our spirits as we take up our lives at Vinson Hall.

We celebrate the seasons. We treasure spring with the bright fresh green of its trees, enjoy the glowing darkness of an eclipse, or feel the frosty air in fall or seek the sharp cheerfulness of the yellow daffodils as we grow to be one community.

Neighbors enfold us here, or at an ice cream social, at a bluegrass sing-along; in the shared harmonies of religion, or even in our own private conversation with the divine.

We understand today's challenges to hope, peace and love in rising international threats. We fear for the future but we, you and I, energize Vinson Hall.

We seek not just to receive support from our

colleagues through difficult times, but to share that same grace and support with others.

We seek to be generous of heart.

To achieve our goals our leadership calls on our strengths, guides our intelligence and reinforces our courage.

We are a neighborhood. We are called

- to welcome new arrivals,
- to support our neighbors,
- to attend those who seek to help,
- to greet those who yearn for comfort,
- to pray for those who need our prayers, and
- to help the ill to heal their souls. ❖

# Memories of Childhood

By Elisabeth Wilton



*Elisabeth Wilton, age 5.*

Some things you never forget no matter how many years have passed. Sometimes these include nasty things you heard from some older kids and wish you COULD forget. Or the sound of raised voices. Or other bits of ugliness.

But there are good things as well, like all the stories Mother read to my brother and me when we were sick with measles, mumps and chicken pox. My older brother went to school to catch them and then brought them home to me, so I had most of them at about age three.

When she was too tired (or too hoarse) to read, Mother would set us lines to learn, mostly from Shakespeare, given that she had been an English teacher before she became our mother. I used to know dozens of famous verses but sadly have forgotten many of them, at least enough that I

don't dare try to recite them anymore. One bit of Chaucer I DO remember: the first 18 lines of the Prologue to The Canterbury Tales. That so caught my ear that I must have recited it to myself hundreds of times over the years. And I even used it to get exempted from a college English course that was centered on the Tales (having neglected to tell the professor that that was ALL I knew of them).

Another good memory from those days (which ended when I was six, when we moved) had to do with Mother being a Faculty Wife with certain privileges. Like putting my brother and me in the McGuffey School, which was a training ground for young teachers-to-be inspired by William Holmes McGuffey and located in Oxford, Ohio, at Miami University, where Dad was head football and baseball coach. Also, as a Faculty Wife she was allowed to supervise young girls from the Home Economics program who came to help her with the household tasks, learn some cooking and baking and take care of us. We must have had the whole class eventually, because there were many of them. They got college credit for the hours they spent at our house, and Mother also paid them a small wage, so they were happy to come. Two of them I remember especially, sisters named Wilma and Guyreba. Who could forget a name like Guyreba? Their father's name was Guy and their Mother was Reba. I don't know where Wilma came from – perhaps a Grandma.

*Continued on page 17...*

# My Kim Novak Story

By Stan Trost



I enrolled at the University of California, Berkeley, in 1957. A friend belonged to a fraternity called Kappa Nu, and he encouraged me to live there. Kappa Nu was a group of very talented people, most of whom came from middle class families. Room and board charges were reasonable, but to reduce the cost, I worked in the kitchen, first as a server, then as the cook's helper.

One of my assignments was to cut the pies on the nights they were served. Let's say there were 60 people for dinner, and there were eight pies. I always cut them so there were ample leftovers for the kitchen staff! But back to our story.

One of our members found out that Kim Novak was coming to San Francisco for the premiere of the movie *Vertigo*. The member had an uncle in the movie industry, and he connected us with the publicity department of the movie studio.

Now you should note that KN is the initial of our fraternity, but also of Kim Novak. We told the studio we were the Kim Novak Athletic Club. Ms. Novak came to Oakland from L.A. and we met her at the train station, dressed in our KN jerseys. The studio gave us new cars, and we chauffeured Ms. Novak and her entourage around San Francisco for the weekend.

Who said college wasn't fun? ❖

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## Memories of Childhood

*...Continued from page 16*

Wilma and Guyreba were lots of fun and kept my brother and me occupied and happy whenever they came to our house. They were full of funny songs and stories, and since we were accomplished memorizers by that time (I had made it into Kindergarten) we learned quite a few silly things from them, to our great delight. I can give you the words to my favorite but will have to sing it another time.

There once was a girl I knew  
By the name of Sloughfoot Sue

She was Chief Engineer at a Shirttail Factory  
Down by the riverside view  
Her form was all she had  
She had a face like a soft-shell crab  
Every night she had a tussle with the buttons on  
her bustle  
And, boy was she mad!  
Whew! ❖



# A Most Remarkable Woman

By Jerry Norris



*Doña Lucia Perez  
and two of her  
eight children.*

In 1963, my two Peace Corps site partners, Bob and Andy, and I had no daily access to any restaurants in La Plata, Colombia, a rather small village of some 3,000 residents. Just down the street from our house was that of Doña Lucia Perez, mother of eight children. Her family easily fell into the category of one of the poorest in La Plata. We made an agreement with her to provide us three meals per day. Since she knew the local market, she set the price for our meals. In addition, she agreed to have two of her lads groom our three horses and pasture them. In our house, there was a large room that we used to store CARE food products like rice, wheat, powdered milk, and tins of cooking oil. Often, we had tons of these products. We monetized the value of food that we used to pay workers on our community development projects. For example, for so many pounds of wheat, a worker would provide so many hours of labor, or provide so

many board feet of lumber and other building materials, and so forth.

Even after so many decades, in my mind's eye I can still see Doña Lucia. She's standing atop a huge concrete slab in front of her house, looking for one of her children. She's dressed as usual in a blue, rough denim type full length dress down to her shoe tops. Around her waist is a black leather belt with one end long enough to hang down an inch off the ground. Any time that she picks it up in her hands, her children dare not disobey her commands. Her hair is jet black, her frame surprisingly slender and lengthy after bearing eight children, her face angular and sharp in definition, distinctively of indigenous descent.

Her husband, Don Luis, a day-laborer, was seldom seen during the day. He had lost one eye, some say in a bar brawl. At times, he wore

the town's band uniform. It always seemed comical as it was much too small for his frame and was more patch than a consistent weave. His coat was tightly buttoned at the top, giving the appearance of an "A" as both ends splayed out to his hips. His hat was consistently placed at a rakish tilt to one side in a forlorn attempt to hide the black patch that covered his eye. Nonetheless, when he came home at night, he was joyfully received by his children as a long lost relative. If there was any meat in the pot at dinner, it went first to Don Luis. No one complained.

We had given Doña Lucia a key to the CARE storeroom. Whenever she needed anything, she would send one of her children over to fetch it. And, if truth be told, we Volunteers especially needed the powder milk! She knew a hundred different ways to make use of this milk with rice, and we thoroughly enjoyed every one of them. Doña Lucia was in a position to capitalize on her access to our storeroom and sell off a small portion of its contents. We would not have noticed at first. But, we would have known eventually. La Plata was too small a place for self-dealing to go unnoticed and not to become common gossip. Yet, she only took what she needed for us and her own family. Doña Lucia

was as honorable as she was poor.

However deep in poverty this family was, Doña Lucia would have none of its corrosive effects pervade the family's solidarity, even in the stark face of all the privations that surrounded it. She was its unchallenged head. I never heard her complain or express woe with her situation in life. There was consistent want in that house. Yet, there was love, too, which is so often absent in houses of great wealth. Doña Lucia was a woman who had character when no one was looking.

Doña Lucia used this opportunity to provide the Volunteers with three meals per day under a contract sealed with a handshake, as a force multiplier for her children. Its income was pivotal in the sense that she managed to use its proceeds to partially finance her children's passage into a wider world of opportunities. From this low-income household of eight children, all save one went on to university educations, with one becoming a M.D. and another serving as the Vice Mayor of Cali, Colombia's second largest city, and still another earning two Masters Degrees in Education from Chicago's Department of Education. Thus, it can be said that Doña Lucia was A Most Remarkable Woman. ❖

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## Home is Where the Hearth Is

*...Continued from page 12*

age 45 in 1959. The house was purchased by a printing company. After losing its residential status, commercial ownership changed hands many times over the past 55 years. Fortunately, however, its basic construction has remained sound.

The Homestead is currently destined, pending funding, to be restored as a museum. My sister, Trudy, and I are thrilled to learn that the legacy

of this Revolutionary War-era house has endured and to know its historical value will be honored. And I am grateful that my thoughtful husband, Chris, understood the sentimental value of the old farmhouse for me. He commissioned an accurate replica of the house, realizing that this gift to me combined my hobby of collecting dollhouse miniatures with the love and painful loss of my childhood home. ❖



# Campus News & Views

## Fall 2024



We had a festive fall at Vinson Hall Retirement Community. We talked about Veterans Day at Chesterbrook Elementary School. We enjoyed extraordinary weather during outdoor events like the Putting Contest. We haunted campus on Halloween in costumes fun and frightening. And we celebrated with each other and our community at dinners, galas, socials and teas.