



VINSON HALL

CAMPUS NEWS & VIEWS

CEO Corner

Our Values

A great senior living community is more than a place to live. It is a place where people feel known, connected, respected and confident about the future. While the building, programs and services are important, what truly defines a community is how people experience life within.

At the heart of our community are the values that define who we are as a community. Security, Friendship and Dignity are more than just words we say, they are the backbone of our secret sauce. Together, they create an environment where residents and staff can live or work with confidence, build meaningful relationships and continue to experience life on their own terms.

For me, security means more than feeling physically safe. It means having confidence that you are in the community that will be there for all of life's changes, providing the support, resources and services that may be needed along the way. It is about more than healthcare. It is knowing that your home is cared for, that someone is there when you need assistance, and that you can rely on a team that is committed to creating a safe, stable and welcoming environment. True security allows us to spend less time worrying about what might happen tomorrow and more time enjoying what today has to offer.

Friendship is what transforms the place where people live into a true community. It happens in the dining room over a shared meal, during a fitness class, a pickleball game, a happy hour, or in the lobby with a cup of coffee and the newspaper. Friendship also means looking out for one another, accepting feedback as a gift and giving grace when necessary. It is celebrating milestones together, offering encouragement during difficult times and creating connections that make everyday life a little richer. Friendship reminds us all that none of us must navigate life's changes alone.

Dignity! Dignity is my favorite. It is recognizing the value of every person and treating everyone with the respect they deserve. It means listening, honoring personal choices, and recognizing that everyone has different backgrounds, experiences, preferences, priorities and aspirations. It is recognizing that while we may not all agree, we can still treat one another with respect. As community life changes, our commitment to dignity should never change.

These three values are interconnected. Security allows us to live with confidence, friendship to live with connection, and dignity to live with purpose and respect. That is what our values mean for me. And that is the community we strive to build – together, every day!



CEO Rob Roe, holding his youngest, with VHRA President Sherm Eagan at Vinson Hall's July 4th celebration.

— Rob Roe, President and CEO

Best of the Summer

Summer was a season of celebration at Vinson Hall. In June we honored Vinson Hall's 57th birthday with cake and champagne. A few weeks later, we came together again to celebrate the 250th birthday of America. Residents themselves planned and presented the program to commemorate the historic occasion, which included the Vinson Hall Honor Guard performing a flag changing ceremony, a cake cutting featuring a Revolutionary War-era saber, and the reading aloud of the Declaration of Independence by 11 different readers. We rounded out the celebration of America's semiquincentennial with a concert of patriotic songs performed by our own Vinson Voices, and a special 4th of July dinner. Later in July we welcomed our friends from the U.S. Navy Memorial for a weekend program that included speakers, living history discussions

and presentations by the student interns who recognized our residents in their Stories of Service program. Then, as the summer heat and humidity stayed with us, we continued our socializing indoors, gathering for Ice Cream Socials and Birthday Teas. We filled tables at Fellowship Breakfasts and played spirited games of Trivia at Happy Hours. With summer quickly ending and the change of season fast approaching, one constant remained: the bonds of friendship and community at Vinson Hall.



About Campus News & Views

Campus News & Views is Vinson Hall's quarterly literary magazine. The goal of this publication is to share stories and remembrances from Vinson Hall 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 residents and staff.

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Campus News & Views is posted online:
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Campus News & Views Summer 2026

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Back cover photo by Sally Scott.

Navy Marine Coast Guard Residence Foundation News

Long Summer Days

When my children were young and I'd ask them what they liked best about summer, they would tell me that they loved the long days. Their summer days seemed suspended in time, with endless hours to do all the things they loved to do. At the Navy Marine Coast Guard Residence Foundation, we get that. Our long summer days have given us the time to work on all sorts of things we love to do!

First and foremost, we just sent out this year's invitation to our annual Gala fundraiser – and we sold out in a week! This year's theme is a Black & White Ball, reminiscent of the famed party-of-the-century hosted by Truman Capote and Kay Graham for 500 star-studded guests at the Plaza Hotel in 1966 – the same era as Vinson Hall's opening in 1969. Like its predecessor, Vinson Hall's own *Black & White Ball* promises to be a magical night. This is the Foundation's only major fundraiser, with all proceeds going toward supporting Vinson Hall. We hope the plans we've made this summer result in a night you'll never forget!

Another event we planned this summer: Vinson Hall's birthday party – its 57th, to be exact! About 75 residents gathered to hear Chaplain Scott Harrison talk about our history, share cake and champagne, and enjoy a relaxed afternoon visiting with friends old and new. We also celebrated another important birthday this summer – *The Beacon* weekly newsletter, which turned five in June! It has been a great pleasure to bring this publication to life, and to continue to publish it these past five years. And speaking of publications, this summer we also published the *2025 Annual Report*. We hope you enjoyed this look back at a great year!



From left: Bud Dougherty, Ronnie Hountz and Michelle Crone celebrate Vinson Hall's 57th birthday in June.

For those of us on the Philanthropy & Engagement team, the "Engagement" part of our title is one of the aspects of our work we love the most. We recently had a wonderful opportunity to welcome three senior girls from The Potomac School to campus to do their senior project. We organized multiple visits for the girls to interview six women residents, which resulted in a 76-page book they wrote about the lives and remarkable careers of the women they'd interviewed. "It was really amazing to talk to so many accomplished women who did so many cool, radical things in their careers," said one of the girls. "It was all very inspiring."

Finally, we couldn't be more excited about the terrific response we have had to our annual Membership Appeal campaign, which we launched in May. As we do every year, we invited folks to become 2026 members of the Foundation, and over the summer your membership donations have made our hearts soar! Your generosity inspires us daily and has kept us busy all summer, enabling us to do all the things we love to do for this exceptional community! ❖

— Michelle Crone, Senior Director of Philanthropy & Engagement

Dog Battery of the 12th Field Artillery

As told by First Lieutenant Walter W. Burns to his wife, Malve Burns



Lt. W. Burns, Gosford Castle, North Ireland.

My husband, Walter W. Burns, was a generation older than I. He was a widower when we were married, a marriage that lasted 30 years. Walter (who was called Bob in the family) had landed in Normandy on June 6, 1944. We visited that historic beach together in the 1990s and Bob told me many stories about that historic landing and the following battles. In fact, Bob was wounded in the Battle of the Bulge and shipped to a British hospital and after awhile back to the U.S. This story takes place just a couple of weeks after Normandy.

—Malve S. Burns

About three weeks after D-Day, there was a huge storm in the Atlantic Ocean. This made it very

difficult to move both food and ammunition to on-land facilities. As a result, the High Command limited the amount of ammo to be expended within a daily period. General George P. Hays, a mover and shaker, and commander of the Second Division Artillery, desperately sought ways of continuing to fire at the enemy.

The General went to the ordinance in search of enemy artillery. He did indeed find four 105 mm howitzers, which he immediately requisitioned. The enemy had taken off the gun sights, in the belief that doing so rendered the guns unusable. But, the General had other ideas. He ordered four US gun sights and special mountings to be affixed to the German guns.

However, there was a problem. The howitzers were metric whereas the U.S. guns were based on yards and inches. At that critical moment, no one present seemed to know the conversion ratio between meters and yards/inches. The men were momentarily stopped in their tracks.

Then one young 1st lieutenant piped up. He remembered his 6th grade math teacher who had given a study unit on the metric system. She had impressed on her class that one meter is equal to 39 inches and 37/100th of an inch. The unusual numbers 39 and 37 had stuck

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Reflections Upon Losing My Best Friend

By Lynne Schone

We were both 19 when first we met,

An outgoing, welcoming, teasing girl meeting a shy, self-reflective, serious one,

At first having fun with others and then enjoying each other.

One with a love of beer, ordering a pitcher of 3.2 at the only hangout in Farmville. The other having no taste for the vile swill, so gladly giving up her portion.

One with a true artistic bent, who stayed up all night to help save the vaulted cross arch made of sugar cubes with a coke bottle salvaged from the trash room. The other dissolving in tears and falling asleep as her project was being saved.

One with a fun-loving spirit, who called across the campus quad, "Godzilla, see you at dinner!" The other looking around to see if anyone noticed the outrageous name.

One with a teasing spirit, saying, "Oh, your magazine came but I sold it." The other gullible enough to believe each month, even though each month the magazine appeared.

One who was determined to get the only child to be less serious, and the other who wanted to be as free as her friend.

They both got married and went separate ways, but the bond was strong. No matter how long or far away they were, when they got back together it was the same.

One had cancer and had to put off having children. The other asked her to be a Godparent.

One had twin girls who grew up free. The other had a son, then a daughter who became a severely retarded epileptic.

One taught preschool and then got her master's degree in preschool handicapped teaching. The other waited for her master's in inclusion education until she was given the inclusion class 25 years later.

One sought out agencies to help babysit her friend's daughter while designing relaxing days for the two of them. The other was too stressed to find help but was forever grateful for the break.

One helped with the other's mom when help was sorely needed. The other had another opportunity to be grateful for the lightened load.

One got cancer again, and the other could only visit and send gifts from afar.

A friendship which spanned 60 years was filled with laughter, tears, sometimes anger, always love and eventual understanding. Wildly different in many ways, but wildly in love. She was the sister I never had. I don't know what I did for her, but she was the wind beneath my wings. ❖

Adventures in Early Times

By Maureen Kammerer



Maureen Kammerer in a photo taken by husband Joe in Sligo Creek Park, circa 1961.

Born in Washington, D.C. in 1940, I spent most of my life in the leafy suburbs of this great city of soaring monuments and low-rise architecture. But my introductions to the mysteries and joys of nature were established in Silver Spring, Maryland, around my first home and in the subsequent exotic year I spent in Southern California when I was seven years old.

My first home was 317 Franklin Avenue in Silver Spring, only a couple of blocks away from Sligo Creek Parkway and the creek and park themselves. In addition, the wonderful bus stop to other worlds was just in front of our house. I could walk down Leighton Avenue from our

corner into the entrance to the park, cross over the creek by a charming wooden bridge or crawl through the big sewer pipe with my five-year-old brother and be in the creek up to my ankles, playing with frogs, tadpoles, tiny crawfish, slipping and sliding on the rocks, watching little fish playing and darting round in the shallow pools or going with the flow toward who knew where. There were little beaches where sand and logs made places to sit and watch or wade around in the water. The sound of the water was gentle, consistent and so pleasant. It invited play, wading and stone jumping. We would come home covered in mud with pockets full of treasured stones and found objects.

In the park itself were swings and slides and a jungle gym for stretching and climbing, and so many trees, and people too coming and going on some days. On other days, just solitude and greenery and time to play in the creek. On the walk to the creek, there were houses of different kinds, a few exotic ones of Spanish design, a couple of big ones with porches and gardens. There were people to meet and say hello to. I would find myself in trouble sometimes for staying and visiting too long and my parents became worried.

The bus stop near the house was the ticket to more freedom. I went to first grade at St. Michael's School on the bus into downtown

Silver Spring. Many commuters used Capital Transit to get to the District Line, where they could catch another bus or take the streetcar into downtown D.C. I got to know the regulars, and the bus drivers got to know all of us. I had walked blocks to the kindergarten class across a busy highway, so a nearby bus to first grade was so much easier. I wore a hunter green jumper and a beige blouse and oxford shoes, as did a couple of others on the bus. My uniform signaled the driver to drop me at St. Michaels, but I knew how to pull the cord above the window when my stop came up.

I walked two blocks up Rittenhouse Street in Washington to busy Georgia Avenue, stepped into the service road and waited for the streetcar to take me to the District Line, then I boarded a bus back to St. Michael's School. This was an adventure surely at seven years old.

The next year, just before moving to California, Mother and we three children stayed in our grandmother's house after our house was sold and we were waiting for the DC-7 planes to go back into nonstop service after several crashes. My father had decided to go into housing development in California with his cousin in the beautiful area of Southern California. Dad had already driven across the country. I walked two blocks up Rittenhouse Street in Washington to busy Georgia Avenue, stepped into the service road and waited for the streetcar to take me to the District Line, then I boarded a bus back to St. Michael's School. This was an adventure surely at seven years old, but so easy to do since I had already met the challenge of creek exploration and bus riding in Silver Spring.

I am sure those early days of adventure laid the foundation for the fearless traveler and nature lover I became later in life. Joe and I often walked near the creek while dating, and one of

his favorite pictures of me was taken while I was on the swing in that park. During our marriage we hiked in many places: Maryland, Virginia, Colorado, Utah, West Virginia, Canadian Rockies, California, Maine, New Hampshire, New York, England, France, Italy. Always the creeks were a big part of the pleasure of those walks together. Joe presented me with a beautiful diamond engagement ring, which I found at the bottom of an orchid corsage box while walking by a creek near the University of Maryland on Easter Sunday morning in 1960. Six years later, my very first Mother's Day breakfast was prepared by Daddy Joe right in that very park with Sligo Creek sliding by peacefully on a sunny May morning. Six-month-old baby Eric was smiling close by. A few years later, we taught Eric how to enjoy the creek near our house when we walked there. We both took off our shoes and played in the creek with daughter Michelle nearby in her stroller.

Today, my neighborhood in Silver Spring is still standing and is almost the way it was 85 years ago; it is leafy, full of old trees and houses, the creek still gently running, the bridges still wooden and inviting one to lean over and gaze at the creek. (My sister, Cathy, and I met there during the pandemic to be with one another outdoors. I came from Virginia, she from Columbia, Md.)

Those early times are vivid and comforting memories as I walk alone now, 75 years later, along a path by the creek near Vinson Hall that Joe and I walked together just a few months ago. Early times, later times, a creek runs through the memories of nature's comforting and fun explorations.

The bus stop is not where I wait now. I often use Lyft for my adventures, waiting for the driver to take me to the beautiful Whitehall Creek in Annapolis where my daughter's family lives. We catch crabs in the creek, and I paint the boats on the creek. And I remember the many joyful creeks that have run through my life. ❖

Excitement on Kirby Road

Barb Shaffer



This happened during the quiet of COVID in 2020.

Feeling thankful after a wonderful visit with family in Richmond, I managed to arrive safely from my drive back home to Vinson Hall with groceries to last me while I spent the next two weeks in quarantine in my apartment. Pandemic rules. But it was such a gorgeous day and early enough that I could fit in a late afternoon walk along Kirby Rd before I "checked myself in." I would just walk, unwind and be thankful!

There was a good bit of traffic on Kirby, though not heavy enough to prevent easy crossing over to the woodsy side, across the street from those large old houses on their big, heavily wooded lots. A startled dog barking alarmingly in a fenced yard got my attention. As I was curiously looking over there, a large buck with a good-sized rack of antlers was darting in zig-zags through the yard, obviously spooked by the dog. With such graceful power he easily leaped the yard fence and dashed out into the road.

There was a car coming into the late afternoon

sun and the timing and projection were unmistakable!! I must confess, I shuddered and turned away! As I write this I realize I am not my Dad's daughter since it did not occur to me to record it or take a picture!! (Way back then, my Dad always had his old, 16 mm movie camera handy, even laying it on the passenger seat of his car for just such moments and after all, I did have my phone.) But, I didn't even watch, intentionally.

WHAM!! The huge deer landed across the oncoming lane and was completely prone although I could see its chest moving. The small car that hit it stopped right by me and a young man and two young women seemed to erupt out on the passenger side, on my side! A young woman who was driving got out on the driver's side. I impulsively hollered out, gesturing at all of them, "Oh wow!! Do you have a gun?" The guy kind of threw up his hands and exclaimed, "NO!" and I thought he might jump back into the car. So, I said, "I just thought we ought to put it down." I have no idea what he was thinking! As I turned and looked at the huge beast sprawled across the full lane of road there was another

car coming briskly along the other direction. I ran out in front frantically waving as it was hard to see in those flickering shadows of the bright setting sun and he would have plowed into that deer. The car slowed, looked and went around. In the next moment another wonderment.

A car coming along my side pulled over and stopped in the same place of the damaged car, which had now limped ahead to a pull-off area. A lone man, middle-aged, a well-dressed guy, put on his brake, and got out. Without a word he crossed over to the other lane and up to the deer, took hold of the antlers and dragged it off the road, gently and methodically arranging it along a safe path for clearance. I do believe that deer was as big as he was. As he came back to his car, I excitedly waved to him and called out,

"Oh, thank you, thank you!! Is he dead?" As he got back into his car he smiled and waved back to me and said, "No, but he will be in a moment." He drove away.

Not knowing what else to do, I tentatively began to walk on, feeling anticlimactic and heart pounding. I shortly came upon the damaged car pulled off in the church parking lot with the three women standing alongside. The driver was calling Geico. There was no sign of the young man and I didn't think to ask. All I could think to say to those girls was, "If you have any interest today in speaking to the Lord, you might thank Him for protecting you all; I think you might have needed much more than Geico." I turned around and did not walk any farther!! It seemed like a very full day. ❖

Sore Toe

By Margaret Dean

Toxin
Taxing
Toenail

True – too true
The nail is blue
What can I do?

Doubt die done
What of this can really come?

Fee fi fo fum
That little toe can hardly run.
Ho hum Hum ho
This is the way we ought to go.❖

Robot Story

By Stan Trost



AI-generated image.

Imagine a personal robot to help you change the bed linens, carry out the trash or clean the floor. You don't have to imagine this because personal robots are here! For example, the Roomba vacuum has been available since 2002. It has been continuously improved and has proved useful to those who have purchased it.

Isaac Asimov wrote a seminal book in 1950 titled *I, Robot*. The book is famous for introducing Asimov's Three Laws of Robotics, which are ethical guidelines programmed into the robots to ensure they operate safely in human society. The First Law, for instance, states: "A robot may not injure a human being, or, through inaction, allow a human being to come to harm."

The stories in the book explore themes of morality, humanity, technology, and the complex interaction between humans and their positronic robots. They often focus on scenarios where robots exhibit "aberrant behavior," which challenges the scientists to understand the nuances of their ethical programming.

In 1961 the first working robot, called Unimate, joined an assembly line at the General Motors

plant in Ewing Township (Trenton, New Jersey).

This industrial robot was designed by Unimation, Inc. and its task was to unload hot, die-cast door handles and other car parts from a die-casting press, dropping them into a cooling liquid. This event is widely considered the start of the modern industrial robotics industry. Use of industrial robots rapidly increased and today we estimate there are approximately 4.66 million industrial robots operating in factories worldwide. In addition, there are 36 million service robots in operation (this includes millions of Roombas).

Perhaps you have seen food service robots in operation in restaurants. These devices allow kitchen staff to load meals on to a serving platform and then send the order to your table.

Elon Musk, a brilliant entrepreneur, has announced plans to build humanoid robots. He is planning to create a general-purpose, bipedal, autonomous humanoid robot capable of performing tasks that are unsafe, repetitive, or boring for humans. Musk has suggested that Optimus will eventually be able to do anything

that humans don't want to do. Musk believes the robots, along with autonomous vehicles, will usher in a world where there is no poverty. He previously claimed that 80 percent of Tesla's value would come from the robot.

Tesla plans to start production of Optimus before the end of 2026 and intends to begin selling the robot to the public in 2027. The long-term goal is to eventually produce one million robots per year. Tesla is reportedly winding down production of the Model S and Model X

vehicles, and the Fremont, California factory will be converted to manufacture Optimus robots. In March 2025, Musk announced a plan to send an Optimus robot to Mars in 2026 aboard a SpaceX Starship rocket.

Where is this all going? We can expect increased use of robots in industry, as well as in retail settings, restaurants, and homes. Robots will become part of everyday life. ❖

AppRISE What's Next

By Midge Holmes

*With RISE a comin', and construction just around the corner,
here's a poem about what we residents might expect.*

Noisy hammers, drills and more
Will outdo silence from days before.
Hard hats in fashion, cones stealin' the show.
And 'Watch Your Step' is the way to go.
But we'll laugh and adapt. What else can we do?
The coffee will perk and our friends will too.
After awhile the dust will clear.
And a better Vinson Hall should then appear.❖

Greetings from Russia

By Carol Saunders



Hal and Carol Saunders in Russia in the mid-1990s.

In 1991, after the break up of the Soviet Union, the five central Asian republics declared independence and became sovereign nations. Tajikistan, the poorest, ended up in a vicious bloody civil war that appeared intractable. My husband Hal, head of the Kettering Foundation's international arm, joined with Russian counterparts to form the Regional Conflicts Task Force. One arm of this was the Inter Tajik Dialogue. At the time when I wrote this narrative, they had held 35 meetings over 12 years. An extremely patient and dedicated person, Hal thoroughly enjoyed seeing the five-step process of reconciliation he'd formalized being utilized and proven. When several dialogue participants ended up in the newly formed government, taking the skills they'd learned in those years of negotiations, this was a thrill and reward. Since I accompanied Hal on several occasions, I can attest that the wear and tear on the seat of your pants as well as your emotions was very real. This was written when I travelled with Hal in the 1990s.

We traveled yesterday from Moscow to this retreat center in Valdai – a national park in the midst of a dense pine forest. Last year, we made the eight-hour trip over potholed roads in a

Russian bus without restroom facilities. After numerous passenger complaints, the driver began stopping at service stations. Eventually he located one that offered one toilet. The ensuing long line did nothing to shorten the trip, but everything to improve the comfort and mood of us passengers. This year, we took a delightful two-hour ride on an ultra-modern high-speed train that runs from Moscow to St Petersburg. Valdai is halfway between these two major cities. A bone jarring hour long bus ride to remind us of last year, ended at the center.

We were lodged in a hotel made of bleached pine logs, each at least 12" in diameter, with wool felt chinked in between both inside and out. It resembles an A-frame log cabin on steroids. Our large, comfortable room at the top had a sloping ceiling and balcony.

The weather was in direct contrast to the heat and humidity at home. Here, we all are wearing jackets, and participants in the log cabin meeting building are issued blankets to wrap around their shoulders. This being the season of white nights, our eyeshades were most welcome.

When we went to bed at about 11 p.m., the gradually descending sun caused the trunks of the pines outside our balcony to glow with a pinkish purple hue. If any Impressionist painter had duplicated that color on canvas, he would immediately have been labeled "one of those crazy, wild animal fauves." We found it magical. At 3 a.m. we were awakened by the calls of countless birds. As I struggled against jet lag to get back to sleep, I found myself wishing those birds would soon find the mates they were calling!

There are numerous other airborne indigenous inhabitants of the area. They are noted for their voracious blood thirstiness which is compared to that of a starving lioness; their size and noise level comparable to a fleet of 747's; and their reproductive capacity which outstrips that of even the most fecund rabbits. The numerous puddles, reminders of frequent recent rains, provide ample breeding grounds. The surest way to economic success in the area is to become a purveyor of mosquito repellent.

The follow-on meetings took place back in Moscow, where the air quality was on the

opposite end of the spectrum. Having arrived at Sheremeytevo airport just outside the capital at rush hour, it was a three-hour crawl to finally reach our hotel. Traffic jams are the norm at all hours. Parking, if available at all, is on the sidewalk, so drivers abandon their vehicles (increasingly Lexus, BMW's, Mercedes, Audis, not the old Russian made Ladas of yore) in the roadway. The concept of traffic lanes is very fluid to nonexistent, so drivers seem to expect frequent obstacles and maneuver around them with general good humor and great dexterity. If there are traffic laws, they are not enforced by a generally absent police force. I expect it would be impossible for them to issue a single speeding ticket in a year's time.

Should I be consulted on future trips to Moscow, I'd strongly recommend telecommuting or helicopters to land in rooftop helipads in order for workers to arrive at the office on time. Walking and metro are the current best options, though Muscovites appear to have a love affair with their cars no matter the daily time consumed behind the wheel to get to and from work. ❖

Dog Battery of the 12th Field Artillery

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in the boy's mind. The ratio was applied and the guns were test fired. The observation post reported that the German shell bursts were indistinguishable from the American ones. The war could go on.

Immediately, a new gun battery was established which drafted cooks, bakers, truck drivers, and other supernumeraries. It was christened Dog Battery, following the already established Able, Baker, and Charley Batteries. For the next several weeks, Dog Battery fired 4,000 rounds at the German Army, turning its own weapons

against it and boosting the morale of every U.S. soldier involved. By the time Dog Battery had expended its entire ammunition, the storm had died down and new ammunition was delivered. All restrictions were lifted and Dog Battery was dissolved. The cooks, bakers, and truck drivers who at first had not been thrilled with their conversion into artillery soldiers, found that they missed the action. And the soldier whose conversion formula had saved the day always felt that someone should have pinned a medal to his math teacher's chest. ❖

Coming of Age via an Army-Issued Salt Shaker

By Jerry Norris



Jerry Norris in North Korea in 1954.

In 1953, I volunteered for the draft. After basic training for an assignment to North Korea, I was assigned to the 89th Tank Battalion, then dug in on the northern most point of the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ). I was posted to the Communications Unit of the battalion's Headquarters Company – as a telephone operator! After two days of answering calls off a switchboard, I wondered: Is this what I had taken so much trouble to volunteer for? What I was doing here I could do anywhere else, at any other time, in my life. All I had to do when the light lit up on my console was to say: "89th Tank Battalion, Headquarters Company, whom do you

wish to speak with." I was on a long, tedious road to nowhere.

I went to the sergeant in charge and asked to see the commanding officer and request a transfer. At first, he denied me permission, then relented after saying some very unkind things about my family. But I now had to secure permission from the commanding officer of the Communications Unit, a captain, before I could see the commanding officer of the Headquarters Company, a major. In short order, I got to see the captain. He tried to be fatherly and talk me out of it. He took me to a hilltop overlooking the parked tanks of the Battalion. "Son," he said, "When I pull those people out of their tanks after they have been hit, do you know what's in my hands?" I had a blank look on my face. Satisfied that he had made his point, he waited for my answer. It was obvious that I was supposed to show gratitude for being saved and that, like the sergeant, I should be thanking him and writing home to mother about this near-miss with the body bag. Instead, I asked him to forward my request to the commanding officer of Headquarters Company. The captain was miffed, cursed under his breath, pushed his way by me and went back into his tent. The next day, he informed me that he had presented my request to the Headquarters Company commander, and that the only opening available on a transfer

basis was for the Reconnaissance Platoon (Recon).

The captain assumed I was sane, his duty was done, and I would remain as one of his telephone operators. I took the captain's comment as a form of approval to see the commanding officer. I re-stated to the major my conversation with the captain and used his words: "The only way to obtain a transfer was to the Recon Platoon." He asked, "Is that what you want – really want?" and I quickly responded that I understood the conditions of my transfer. The major jumped up from his chair and said, "Done, you're in."

He came off the bench like a rocket, all 6 feet 4 inches of him. The others in the platoon were hooting and goading him on to punch out the new guy. I could think of nothing else to do but finish eating my dinner.

I found out later that the Recon Platoon leader, a lieutenant, filled out his often-reduced ranks by attending monthly courts marshall hearings at Division Headquarters. For minor offenses, like AWOL, he would offer the sentenced individual a chance to be in his Recon Platoon and thus clear his record without having to do any jail time. In a sense, then, his platoon of 36 men that did all of the advance scouting for the battalion, were the "dirty dozen" times three.

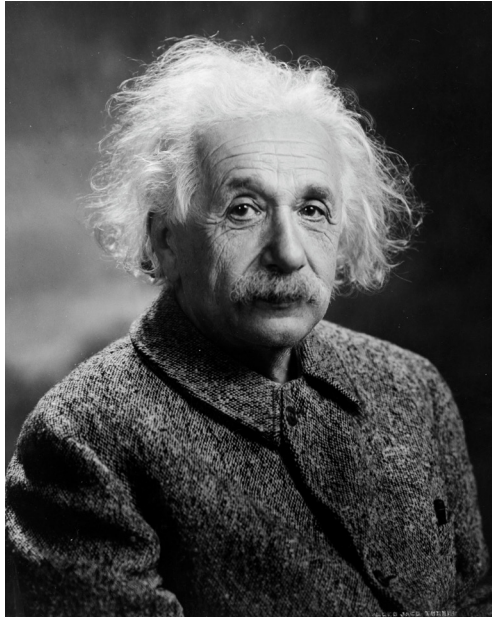
At my first dinner with the platoon, I ran directly into a situation that defines one's presence as the new guy in a tough outfit. The salt shaker was sitting near the lead scout and I said to him: "Pass the salt, please." The scout picked up the salt shaker, playfully juggled it in his right hand and continued talking to a friend on the opposite side of the bench, all the while ignoring me. Instinctively, I stood up, reached over, slapped the salt shaker out of his hand and unexpectedly caught it at the top of its arc with my left hand. I remarked, rather casually, "I said

pass it, please." I couldn't believe myself – didn't want to – until reality came crashing down all too soon. He came off the bench like a rocket, all 6 feet 4 inches of him. The others in the platoon were hooting and goading him on to punch out the new guy. I could think of nothing else to do but finish eating my dinner, avoid his flinty eyes and vile threats, while he continued to fume away, particles of c-rations spewing from his exasperated mouth. Finally, he collected his wits and informed me that he would be waiting outside. It wasn't a challenge but rather a statement: Be there.

There was an intense wave of excitement going through the ranks at the thought of a good fight following dinner. He finished eating before I did. When I finally went out of the tent, he was waiting, doing some shadow boxing and jabbing at the air in a menacing manner. His friends were offering encouragement and hints on how to take me out quickly. I couldn't avoid him because that would have finished me off with the platoon even before I got my first night's sleep in one of its tents. I walked up to him and expressed the only thought that entered my frightened mind: "You know, if you had told me that no amount of salt would have helped that dinner, I might have waited for you to pass it without saying please." To my immense and immediate relief, this man had a sense of humor as big as he was. He began laughing from his boots upward, grabbed my parka in a rough but friendly bear hug and announced, "You're going to be OK. here." The others, at first uncertain, soon joined in. It was over. At that moment, I knew that all my past grief with the sergeant and the captain had been worth it. I now had an outfit. This was where I belonged. We were an oddly matched pair with a budding friendship based on some primeval instinct generated by that salt shaker. We became a fun bunch without any effort at all. And it all started with a common Army-issued salt shaker. ❖

Gut Reactions

By Gene Wentz



Do you ladies believe there is such a thing as “women’s intuition,” the ability to just know instinctively that something is right or wrong just because of a “feeling?” Do females possess an inner voice that tells them when to take a job; postpone a trip or avoid certain people? Recognizing Love-at-first-Sight is also said to be a unique intuitive female gift.

You guys. Do you have “gut reactions” to situations that call for you to change careers, in-vest in a mutual fund or decide not to buy a seemingly perfect used car? What about common sense? Do some people have it – and others not, even highly intelligent people who have a gift for academics but blunder with everyday decision-making?

Whether it is called intuition, gut-reaction or common sense, psychologists agree that some people have it and others are deficient. During my professional career I prided myself in knowing when opportunity was knocking. I volunteered for job assignments that others avoided, just because I had an unexplainable

feeling that, if I worked hard and used the projects to showcase my talent, it would advance my career. It worked. Those dirty little nitpicky jobs that nobody else wanted turned out to be stepping stones to accelerated promotion and career advancement. But, I was not overly good at judging some people, and had to be warned by my wife when someone I began trusting might be less than honest. That why I so admire husband and wife teams that combine the man’s determination and doggedness with the woman’s instinct and intuition.

Our instincts evolved a long time ago to keep the human species vigilant and safe. The biological process is essentially the same today as it was way back then. When the brain takes in or produces information, amino acid compounds called peptides are produced in the cells of the stomach, suggesting action. It is at this point that a rational person must choose between following whatever facts, statistics or related information bears on the problem being analyzed, or follow his gut reaction. Geniuses and really gifted executives can combine both facts and intuition into the decision-making process. Albert Einstein had this observation about intuition: “The intuitive mind is a sacred gift and the rational mind a faithful servant. America has created a society that honors the servant and has forgotten the gift.”

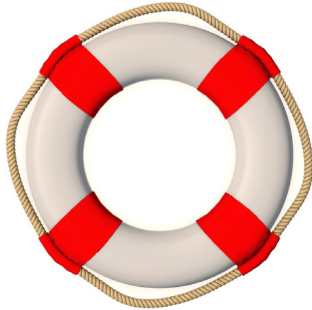
The opposite of “Gut Reaction” is “Paralysis by Analysis,” an axiom that describes a situation where nothing gets done because there is too much thinking going on.

Go figure. ❖

Man Overboard

By Paul Peak

This story was originally published in the Spring 2016 issue of Campus News & Views, following the death of Paul Peak, a 25-year resident of Vinson Hall.



The Coast Guard cutter Winnebago had arrived in the late afternoon at Hilo, Hawaii, a new-to-our-crew small town. We had been 10 days at sea on this reserve training cruise, with man overboard drills, as well as many other evolutions, on every watch. We were scheduled to sail again at 8:00 in the morning, so "Cinderella Liberty" was granted to two of our three sections, to expire on board at midnight. We were tied up to the dock with our gangway bridging the over-water gap to the shore; there was a large camel (floating and tethered log) alongside, keeping the ship from scraping the dock. Our gangway had waist-high handrails and cleats on the walkway for safety, and was chained to the gangway stanchions on the edge of the main deck to make it easy to step on board. The warm, tropical wind was offshore, holding the ship away from the dock, so the gangway barely reached the dock.

As midnight approached, I, as commanding officer, was on the bridge wing, watching the officer of the day (OOD) controlling the action at the well-lighted gangway. As is typical of Cinderella Liberty, a few crew members, with an early deadline for returning to the ship, had started early imbibing at the local bars – and perhaps missed eating any food at all. These

few were apt to be drunk and noisy – generally happy, but noisy. So the messenger of the watch or a more sober "liberty hound" would be helping them down to quarters as they return, cautioning them to quiet down and not disturb their sleeping shipmates.

Suddenly, one of the returning petty officers, weaving his way home, missed his step at the foot of the gangway and fell off the dock into the water 10 feet below.

"MAN OVERBOARD," was the shout from the quarterdeck. The OOD and I quickly realized that the man in the water had fortunately missed the camel, which would have rendered him unconscious, and was swimming but ignoring the ring buoy which had been thrown to him. The concern was that he would be crushed between the ship and dock if there was the slightest wind shift or tidal surge. For the same reason, it would be foolhardy to put another crew member over the side.

"Use the outboard boat," I instructed and the OOD ordered over the ship's public address system.

"Man overboard! Duty boat's crew lay the one boat!" That really disturbed the sleeping crew members.

And then I heard, from our miscreant treading water between the dock and the ship, "Man overboard? Where? I'll go get him!"

Now it's funny. At the time, my adrenaline was pumping too quickly for laughs.

The quartermaster of the watch took advantage of the swimmer's well-intentioned offer by coaxing him to hang onto the ring buoy, tending its lifeline from the deck, and towing him around the bow of the ship to meet the ship's boat.

And so we logged another, very realistic, man overboard drill on our reserve training cruise. ❖

Moving in Inner Space

By Harvey Follender



During my government career, I was overseas a lot. One day when I was packing to depart, Rochelle, my wife, asked me, "While you're gone, do you mind if I change things around?" I replied, "No problem, I don't mind." I was gone for about a month. When I returned, I was surprised to find that two walls had been removed. The results were that:

1. The smallish dining room had become part of the enlarged kitchen.
2. The large family room had become the dining room.
3. Gone was the family room. [We weren't using it much anymore.]
4. I didn't see the dining room table.

There were two wheeled chairs and a small computer desk, for both of us, in the far corner

of the enlarged kitchen.

I knew it would never be returned to the original layout. I thought, Rochelle decides so quickly. I'd have to start with engineering spreadsheets and take months to decide. I looked around. I noticed that, from my new desk chair, I could see a lot of things, line-of-sight. Without leaving my chair, I could:

1. Be at my computer (writing emails, playing music)
2. Watch TV
3. Listen to the radio
4. Grab paper to write notes
5. Use my telephones
6. Be near the pantry and kitchen to grab a bite while still watching TV

7. Roll over to the kitchen table and eat
8. See some of my Indian artifacts
9. Look out the window and see what's going on, and whether it's raining.

I decided that I liked it a lot and told Rochelle I admired her for her good ideas and thanked her for what she had done.

Some years later, I returned home from another long overseas trip and found that Rochelle had the basement finished as an in-law apartment. Pretty good except that my basement workroom had been reduced to a large closet that I would have to share with the furnace. I didn't like to lose my workroom but I thought it good that we'd have a place for our parents if that was needed. It never was, but we had friends or colleagues between assignments sleep over, many times.

After Rochelle died, I decided to move to an apartment in Vinson Hall. There were two apartments available. Both were ready for refurbishment and they would use our chosen colors and accessories, and even rearrange walls to our desire. The total floor space of both was so similar that I couldn't decide on the apartment. I was told that I had one more day to think it over.

My daughter, Saroya, told me to pick the rounder one and she would make it turn out right. I left it to Saroya. She did make it come out right. Living only 20 minutes from Vinson Hall, Saroya worked a lot onsite with the Vinson Hall project manager. She visited often and had some inner walls removed and the kitchen pushed back so the center of the apartment became a wide space, just like our enlarged kitchen was in Bethesda. Saroya made proportional diagrams of floor plans with carpets and furniture that could be moved around so we and the movers would know exactly where everything would go and

fit. It turned out to be perfect. We didn't have to change anything. Saroya had also hired five moving-experienced women who knew exactly where everything belongs in an apartment right down to the sock drawers. When I arrived, everything was in place. I've never had to move anything. I was amazed.

Months later, I met the Vinson Hall Project Manager. He said, "I remember your daughter. She knew exactly what you wanted and even told me to have some walls removed and push the kitchen back so you have line-of-sight vision to everything."

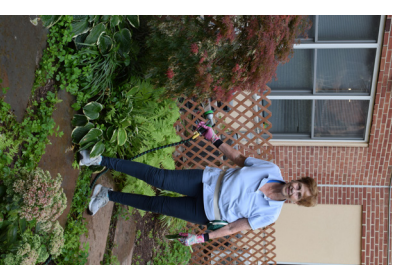
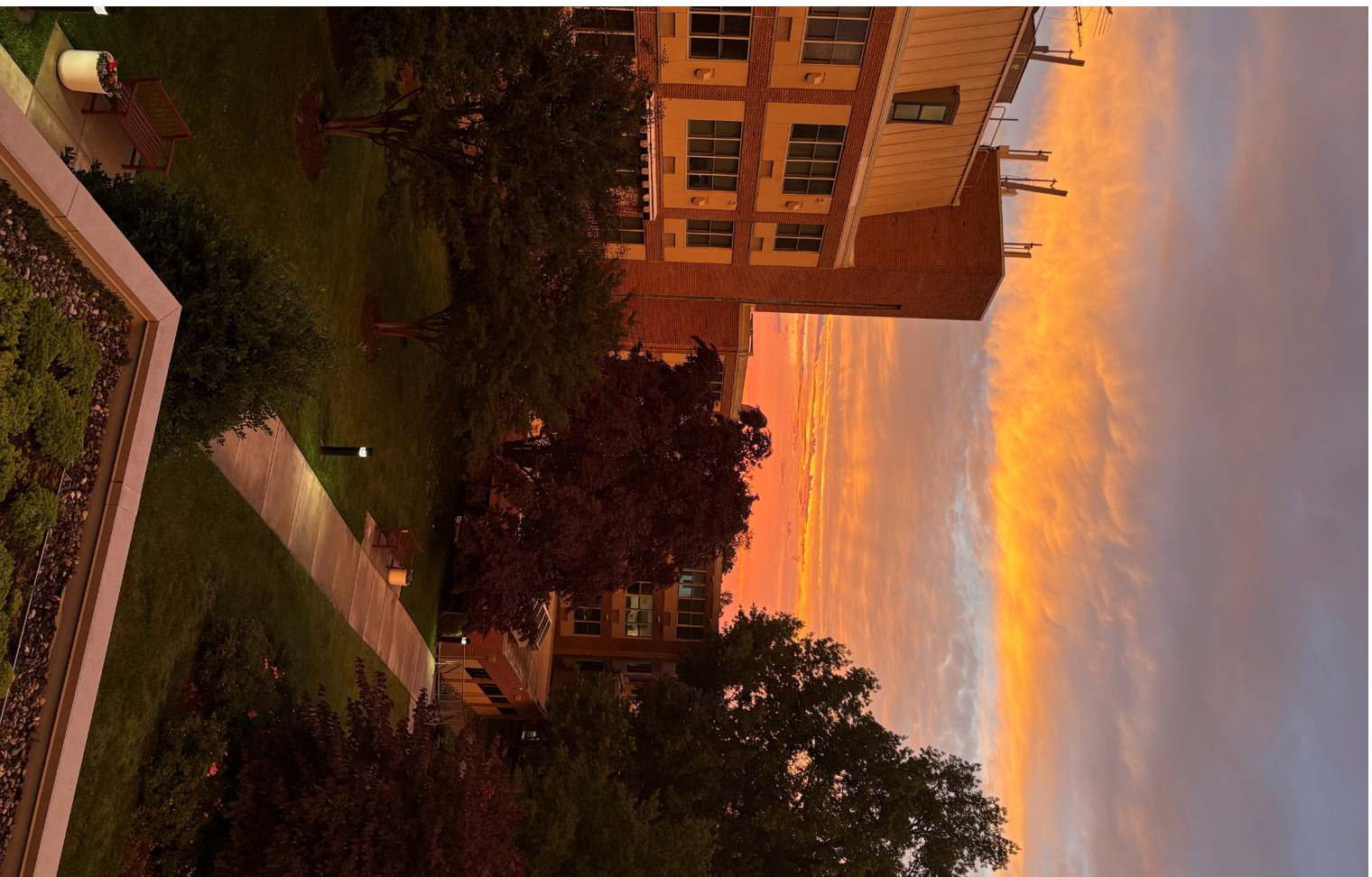
Without leaving my chair, I can:

1. Be on my computer (write emails, play music)
2. Watch TV
3. Listen to the radio
4. Grab paper to write notes
5. Use my telephones
6. Be near my pantry and kitchen to grab a bite
7. Turn around to my dining table and eat
8. Hear the clothes dryer alarm
9. See my Indian statues and many other treasures
10. Look out the window and see the action; what's going on, cars, ambulances, trucks, and whether it's raining.
11. With my apartment-door open, see who has arrived at my door.

The project manager was very impressed with Saroya. So was I. She takes after her Mom. I think she was also helped by her career experience as an Air Force officer managing facilities planning, layout, construction, repair, and maintenance.

Thank you, Uncle Sam. ❖

VINSON HALL Campus News & Views Summer 2026



We enjoyed the summer sunshine at Vinson Hall! Clockwise from left: Residents organized a celebration of America's 250th birthday on July 4 with a flag ceremony and reading of the Declaration of Independence. We gathered for birthday teas in the Penthouse, and enjoyed the pleasure of summer gardening. Three days each week players met at the pickleball courts for spirited games of doubles.

NAVY MARINE COAST GUARD RESIDENCE FOUNDATION