

## Eeyore or eyesore?

### Indoor pool Big Ass Fan undergoes color and decency makeover

By *Mikhailina Karina*

**W**hat's in a name? When it comes to company names, careful branding and focus groups often spell success in helping the product stand out in a crowded field. In fact, highly paid name branding linguists are often behind the names of popular and successful products.

Sometimes the perfect company name creates itself, as it did for Big Ass Fans. According to the company website ([www.bigassfans.com](http://www.bigassfans.com)), in 1999, HVLS started in Lexington, Ky., as a company selling enormous high-volume, low speed ceiling fans, or HVLS. Clearly, no branding linguist had come up with that vow-

el-free name. But a few years later, after numerous calls from customers asking about "those big-ass fans," the catchy new name just created itself without any help from marketing experts.



The huge, helicopter-like propeller in Montebello's indoor pool was installed during the recent Fitness Center construction and indoor pool renovation. Many swimmers found an element of mirth in the fan's bright yellow colors and the donkey's posterior on the fan's plate.

But Montebello is Montebello and *el burro* had to say *adios*. On March 2,

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### Restoring our ailing grounds needs to be Board priority

By *Jerry Stedje*

*Note: Below is the text of the address to the Board of Directors at the March 8 meeting*

**A**fter reviewing the ad-hoc committee's recommendations it is clear to me that the committee members may not have a full understanding of the degree to which our grounds have deteriorated over the last 10 or so years. I believe our 30 plus acres are what differentiate us from other condos in the area. They are our most valuable asset. And they are in very bad condition.

*Continued on page 4*

### Questions and misperceptions abound about recommended fiber optic project

By *Mikhailina Karina*

**I**n a damage control maneuver, before the start of the meeting, Board president Doug Kennett told a packed room of residents that they had been misinformed "from an email last night that we would be voting on the fiber optic plan." In fact, he said, the Board would be merely looking at the report by the Reserve Project Review Committee comprised of engineers, financial experts, and architects. "That project is not on the agenda tonight."

At the March 8 Board meeting, Kennett was referring to the lengthy Eagle Eyes email written and sent by Loretta Ratkus, which stated, "At to-

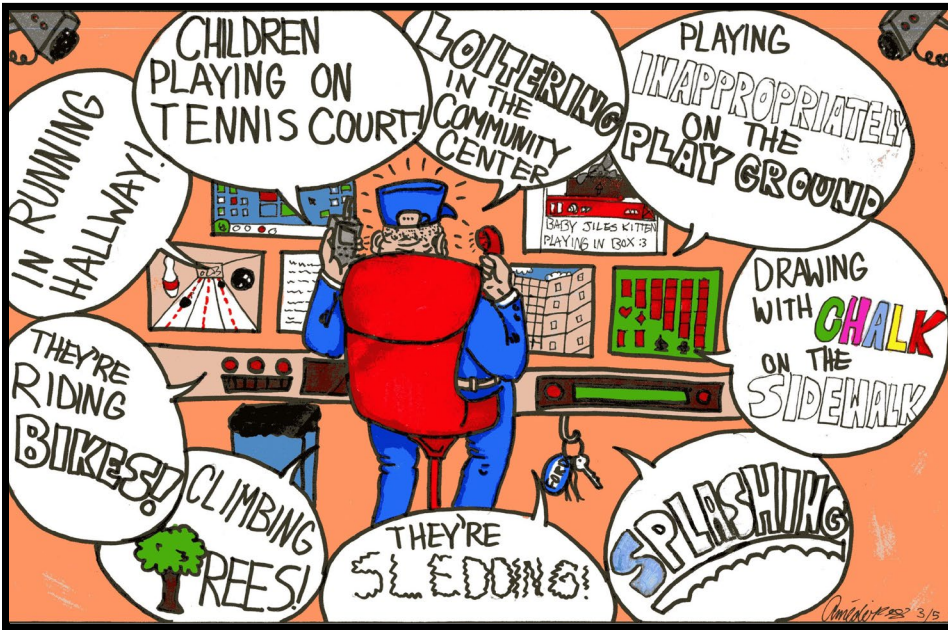
night's Board meeting, the Board will cram through approval of a Fiber Optics Network for our compound. It is a stand-alone network for the benefit of management. It will not be connected to communications external to Montebello." The email was widely circulated and discussed by the residents, who were aghast that the Board was sneaking in an \$860,000 project no one really understood.

The only vote taking place that night was on the committee's report and recommendations for budgets. "Every project will get an individual vote," Kennett said. The seven members of the Board (one position vacant

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#### *Spring forward on Picnic Hill*





Caution: Montebello children at play

**Night light**

I have been a stargazer since childhood, but recently the lights are so bright, one cannot pick out the seasonal constellations.

The overly bright lights beam into my bedroom and interfere with my sleep. Even with (unattractive) sheets of cardboard, I am unable to keep out the light. When there was a nice breeze, I often slept on the daybed located on the deck off of my living room. This is now impossible, with the light so bright I can read a newspaper by it. – *Janette Sherman*

**Bright light**

BTW, speaking of lights, they also really annoy us. They are onmi-directional, which means that they shine 360 spherical degrees including up and into our windows and wasting light energy into the trees and areas that do not need to be lit. We had to install shutters to keep the light out of our bedroom.

Since we are on the third floor, in the back of Building 1, we are essentially six stories above the parking area so the light pollution has a long reach. In the WDC area, there are parking lots and apartments that have high-quality lights with reflectors above the lights (or reflectors that are integral to the light

that direct all the light’s energy only onto the parking areas and do not pollute the night sky. – *Angelo Cicolani*

**Candid camera**

Most people who drive into the garages have a place to park. Few do it so they can experience the joy of turning around amid concrete poles and other cars.

Who cares if I arrive at 3 p.m. with groceries or at 3 a.m., having spent the evening dancing, singing, and drinking at the local Karaoke bar?

Why is there a camera aimed at the entrance? How many residents object to this? This is an invasion of privacy. – *Janette Sherman*

**This ol’ cart**

I have a problem with our luggage carts and what you are not doing about them. They are old and some are in pretty bad shape and falling apart. These should be replaced periodically, like say every 10 years or less. They are not expensive. I’ve looked up the costs of them and have been so annoyed with the deterioration of the existing ones, I considered buying 4-5 of them for Building 1 with my own money.

And, while we’re at it, the grocery carts that we used to have here are

Board of Directors member Guido Zanni has sent *The Montebello Voice* two corrections to the “Board plans to authorize upgrade to fiber optic network” article that appeared in the previous issue of this publication:

1. The Board is not approving the fiber optics project at the March Board meeting. On March 8, the Board will accept the recommended priorities for reserve projects. Each project will be eventually discussed at a work session and approved by a resolution.
2. On March 8, I will present a strategy for the root cause analysis and not the results.

long since expired, gone and folks are bringing back grocery carts from the local businesses. Again, these do not cost that much, \$450 for three and that is for the better quality carts. Having deteriorated luggage carts and beat-up local business grocery carts gives some of our amenities the look of a ghetto.

The cost of replacing all of these are well within the discretionary expenditures that the BOD can make and I recommend that this issue be taken up. – *Angelo Cicolani*

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# Pathways materials pose potential hazards

By *Christine Blair*

I'm writing to express my concerns about the new composition surface that has been laid on all of Montebello's pathways. Specifically, I am concerned about: 1) the choice of material used, 2) how it was installed, and 3) what can be done to correct the problems.

## **1. Choice of material (CR#6Stone)**

Is this material appropriate for pathways and trails? As installed, does it pose health concerns for residents and pets?

When some trial materials were first put down on selected areas of Montebello's trails, I was impressed by the portion of trail between buildings one and five. That portion was laid with uniform-sized gravel creating a trail that reminded me of walking in an arboretum with a nicely kept, soft gravel path. My dog had no problem walking on that surface.

It certainly was easier and cleaner to walk on than the remaining chips or dirt/mud path.

Since then, a new surface has been laid over all of Montebello's trails, including the one that previously pleased me. The new surface is a hand-mixed combination of powder-like substance, presumably stone, and some irregular pieces of gray stone – I saw the workers from McFall and Berry mixing the two substances in wheelbarrows before placing them on the path. As currently installed, many portions of the trails are chalky, dusty walkways that are of uneven thickness, loose underfoot and difficult to walk on.

My dog immediately let me know she does not want to walk on the new pathways. After the first walk on the new trail, she began to have some new issues with coughing and itchy paws – a couple got quite inflamed. I've de-



cidied neither one of us needs to inhale crushed stone, so we are keeping off the trails, which is sad as it keeps us from enjoying all the places she loves to walk.

## **2. Were the pathways correctly installed?**

After reading that McFall and Berry installed CR#6Stone, I did a little research and learned that CR#6Stone is a combination of crushed (powdered) stone and larger irregularly shaped stones that is used for slab foundations and driveways.

Looking further for something about its use for trails, I found an article on the web site for American Trails ([www.americantrails.org](http://www.americantrails.org)) entitled "The art of building crushed stone trails." It discusses the use and appropriate installation of crushed stone trails and notes, among other things, that a correctly installed crushed stone trail can be used by walkers, joggers, people with strollers or in wheelchairs and can meet the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Accessibility Standards. The article suggests that proper installation involves shaping the crushed stone,

wetting it, and compacting it by machine into a stable surface.

The article's summary notes three critical characteristics of a properly installed crushed stone trail. "The rock source is crushed into irregular angular particles that interlock and bind into a firm matrix; the material has particles ranging from dust to a specified maximum particle size in order to mechanically bind the matrix; and the material must retain all of its original binders in order to be re-compacted to a firm surface after shaping, wetting and vibratory compaction."

"Success relies on getting the right materials and installing them correctly. Mistakes often result in poor compaction, soft surface conditions, non-accessibility, and inevitably costly repairs."

My observation is that, after being mixed, the material applied at Montebello was not adequately shaped or wetted and was not adequately machine compacted.

## **3. What can be done?**

My conclusion is that the installation of the chosen material was not done correctly, i.e., not sufficiently wetted and compacted, resulting in a largely unusable trail. What are our choices? Perhaps the material can be reworked and correctly installed so that we have a stable network of trails.

If this route is chosen, a contractor with proven experience in building crushed-stone trails should be used. Alternatively, the material could be removed and replaced. In that case, we are back to the issue of how and by whom the choice of material is made.

I believe that Montebello residents need greater input into that decision and that there should be greater transparency in the decision. Whatever approach is taken, Montebello's trails should be safe and accessible to Montebello's residents and pets. ■

🌀 We live on a hill, and have a significant storm water run-off issue that has caused erosion throughout our property. This has resulted in the complete removal of top soil so grass will no longer grow in many areas around our property. In addition, the storm water runoff carries salt and silt onto our grass areas and makes growing grass difficult, or in some cases, impossible. Just walk behind Building 3 to see the impact I am describing.

🌀 Our woodland canopy has been decimated and our woodlands now look sick and bare.

🌀 Our trails are now covered with unattractive blue stones that have been applied haphazardly because our trails no longer have well-defined edges. Stone was put down with good intentions, because storm water continues to wipe away the wood chips we have used for years, but it is a Band-Aid for our larger storm water management problem.

🌀 In many places around the property, where we used to have shrubs and flowers, we now have bare dirt.

🌀 Where we do have grass, the edges are not well-defined and it looks really shoddy.

🌀 Many areas of our property are full of ruts caused by erosion that make walking difficult and unsafe.

Our grounds have been neglected for too long. I know it is an easy thing to overlook, as it never really “breaks.” But we have ignored our grounds for too long, and they now need major rehabilitation.

I know both the Board and the Ad-hoc committee say this is a top priority; however, only \$82K has been included in 2016 for erosion control. No funds are set aside for 2017 erosion control. And only another \$54K is included in 2018, but as a discretionary project.

This is simply insufficient for a storm water management system to provide erosion control.

We need a REAL storm water control system. This probably means additional storm water drains, underground pipes (just like we installed behind the new fitness center), and lips on our asphalt areas. It does not mean above ground, unattractive, and failing ad-hoc Band-Aids like what was built behind Building 3.

And, once our storm water system is in place, we then need to fix the past erosion, put in new turf and plantings, and install more attractive and walkable trails. This will not be cheap. It can't be

done with the regular annual landscaping budget. It is all rehabilitation and needs to be funded from the

reserve budget as a top priority. Our grounds are not discretionary.

As a comparison, the committee has recommended spending:

✓ \$880K for 2016 for a fiber optic system to make it easier for our staff to manage our buildings as a priority project.

✓ \$175-281K to replace the bowling alleys in 2017.

✓ \$228K in 2017 to replace the outdoor lights (which still work) as a priority project.

✓ \$1.3M in 2017 to replace our file alarm systems as a priority project.

✓ \$200K to renovate our party rooms in 2017 as a priority project.

✓ And finally, in 2018, they have included \$720K to upgrade the café and lounge.

We deserve better. Our grounds deserve better. They deserve our full attention, and they deserve our reserve funds. They deserve at least as much as we are willing to spend on fiber optics or a café refurbishment. We should fully fund their repair over one or two years and the Board should give our grounds the same attention that they have given

the new fitness center and other large projects. We must focus our limited reserves on refurbishing and protecting what we have before we spend another dime on new amenities or systems.

I ask the BOD to take the time to get this right. We are not in a rush. Please postpone approval of these recommendations and ask the ad-hoc committee to go back and provide a fully funded recommendation for our grounds in fiscal years 2016 and 2017. It is time to finally address this crisis. I am happy to help in any way I can. Just ask. 📌

## Fiber optic project concerns and suggestions

By Angelo Cicolani

In my opinion, this is an unnecessary project and there are at least three things wrong with the way it is presented.

✓ There is no indication in the proposal of what is wrong/degraded/inoperable or the degree of inefficiency with the present system that requires the proposed system. This sort of expenditure should not go forward without a strong rationale and cost-benefit trade-offs.

✓ Once you can provide a convincing rationale about existing deficiencies, there should be some analysis of the options to mitigate them, including wireless vs. fiber, proprietary vs. non-proprietary equipment & software and the project's effects on our property.

✓ Projects of this magnitude, that are clearly not emergencies, should be put to a MCOA vote. It is not a replacement/upgrade of anything as articulated in the proposal. Arguments to the contrary are suspect and lead to loss of owners' respect for the transparency that we expect of our BOD. I do not expect our BOD to spin a project to avoid owners' voices and votes. I recommend that you send this project back to the drawing board and involve the owners in the next iteration. 📌



and one member away) voted unanimously to accept it.

To explain the parameters and benefits of the fiber optic project, Kennett said the management “is compiling a Q&A about what it entails and what it does and does not do.” He plans to have this document available by mid-April. He added that it would be a long process with ample opportunities for people to comment at town hall meetings.

One possible reason for residents’ confusion – is it a done deal? when did this happen? why are we hearing about such an expensive project just now? – could be Board member Greg Bender’s presentation at the Feb. 23 Board meeting. As he showed the slides explaining the benefits of installing fiber optics to improve Montebello’s computer systems, he said that once Montebello gives Honeywell Building Solutions its “okay to finish the system’s design,” the installation could be completed “within this year.” He said he expected the March meeting would result in further “discussion to get authorization” to proceed.

According to one resident who spoke at the meeting, this type of confusion and mixed messaging are often typical of Board communications. “I am concerned about the lack of transparency with the proceedings,” said Kathryn Vanzant, “how the Board takes up various concerns that don’t filter down to the general populace.”

“Should there be a cost-comparison analysis” of the fiber optic network project, Vanzant asked. “Why are we moving to sole-source contracting?” She added that such deals were illegal with federal government contracts.

Bender responded that Montebello is not the federal government and doesn’t abide by the same rules. He explained that four potential companies were approached for bids – two said they didn’t deal with condos and another one, IBM, “walked away.” Thus, by default, Honeywell was the only company willing to work with Montebello.

“Please don’t close the doors when uncomfortable things are being said,” Vanzant said. “There’s been a considerable number of upset people who feel that our leadership speaks with a forked tongue.” She specifically referred to letters to the editor in *The Times of Montebello*, which receive “mellifluously worded and unclear” responses.

Board member Guido Zanni took issue with Vanzant’s opinion. “I find that insulting,” he fired back. “We are not trying to whitewash or milquetoast any information.”

In the words of George Bernard Shaw, “The single biggest problem in communication is the illusion that it has taken place.” 📖



Avani greets Montebello’s first cherry blossoms

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**Asinine fanfare**, continued from page 1

workers changed the fan’s standard bright yellow tips to blue ones in order to be matchy-matchy with the new pool furniture. And the donkey’s voluminous rump was covered with a neutral plate, which is not matchy-matchy with anything at the pool, but befits the non-offensive décor.

When asked about the changes in the fan’s appearance, the Association responded in a written statement, “There is no cost to change out the colors of the tips or plate. The fans [sic] tips that were available at the time of install were yellow. The manufacturer is replacing the yellow tips with blue tips.” (Presumably to match the blue lounge chairs and tiles.)

In response to the reason for covering the company’s logo and name, the Association gave its characteristic non-answer, “The plate advertising the

fan company name is being replaced with a solid plate.”

The Association did not respond to the query whether there had been complaints about the fan’s whimsical name or give a reason for why the cover plate needed to be installed.

According to Scott Sloan, spokesman for Big Ass Fans, fewer than 10 percent of customers, typically religious organizations and schools, request a cover plate over the logo. The company also provides a “no ass package” to those opting for a neutral look.

However, he says that the United States is a lot less “buttoned up” than it was in the past, when post offices in several states refused to mail the company’s postcards. A number of videos, both newscasts and company-produced spoofs, are available on YouTube under Big Ass Fans.

So now when anyone walks by the indoor pool and exclaims, “My, what a big-ass fan you have!” a mischievous little donkey will be shaking its *tuches* and grinning beneath the metal plate. 📖

# History marches on

By *Janette Sherman, M.D.*

**M**arch 11 will mark five years since the nuclear plant at Fukushima, Japan melted down. The release of highly toxic radiation from the reactors was enormous, on the level of the Chernobyl disaster a generation earlier. But Fukushima is arguably worse than Chernobyl. There were four reactors that melted down, vs. just one at Chernobyl. And the Chernobyl reactor was buried in a matter of weeks, while Fukushima is still not controlled, and radioactive contaminants continue to leak into the air and into the Pacific Ocean. In time, this may prove to be the worst environmental catastrophe ever.

Japan had 54 reactors in operation, but the nation's people, who had suffered from the two atomic bombs at Hiroshima and Nagasaki, are adamantly against nuclear power. As a result, despite strong efforts by government and industry, only three reactors have been brought back on line.

The most crucial question is, without doubt, how many casualties occurred from the 2011 disaster?

Public health leaders have addressed the topic with ignorance and deception. A search of the medical literature shows only two studies in Japan that review actual changes in disease and death rates. One showed that 127 Fukushima-area children have developed thyroid cancer since the meltdown; a typical number of cases for a similar sized population of children would be about 5-10.

The other study showed a number of ectopic intrathyroidal problems in local children – a disorder that is extremely rare. No other studies looking at changes in infant deaths, premature births, child cancers, or other radiation-sensitive diseases are available.

But the literature also shows that researchers have been pouring out articles on mental health and psychological impacts on local residents. Journals from Japan and other nations have printed research on stress, behavioral changes, fears, and even changes in average blood pressure (blaming it on concerns about the meltdown). At least 51 of these articles are listed on the National Library of Medicine web site.

**T**he same pattern of illnesses occurred after other meltdowns in other countries. The 1979 meltdown at the Three Mile Island nuclear plant in Pennsylvania was followed by a total denial that anyone had been harmed. The first journal article on changes in cancer cases didn't appear until nearly 12 years after the meltdown; it showed a 64% rise in cancer cases within 10 miles of the plant during the first five years after the accident. The authors, from Columbia University, blamed this increase on stress and psychological reactions to the disaster.

After Chernobyl, the same thing occurred. The 31 emergency workers who helped bury the red-hot reactor and died from high exposures became almost a mantra (“Chernobyl caused only 31 deaths”) despite the massive amount of fallout it dispersed across the globe. A 2009 compendium of 5,000 articles, published by the New York Academy of Sciences, estimated about 1 million deaths from the meltdown occurred in the following 20 years.

Unfortunately, nuclear supporters have made the claim that nobody died from Fukushima, while churning out study after study on how a meltdown affects mental status – and no other part of the body.

Radiation from all nuclear power plants, including Fukushima, is a mix of over 100 chemicals found only in atomic reactors and nuclear bombs. University of South Carolina biology professor Timothy Mousseau has made multiple trips to Japan and Chernobyl collecting specimens of plants and animals. He and colleagues have published multiple journal articles showing DNA damage and actual disease near the plants. So if plants and animals are affected, and not known to be neurotic, it is logical that humans are as well.

**A**nd while the damage is worst in Japan, the radioactive harm spread for long distances. Right after the meltdown, prevailing winds drove Fukushima fallout across the Pacific, reaching the U.S. West Coast in five days, and moving through the air across the nation. EPA data showed that the West Coast had the highest levels of fallout in the weeks following the accident, up to 200 times normal. In the years since, the slower-moving radiation in the Pacific has moved steadily eastward, reaching the U.S. and contaminating fish and aquatic plant life along the way.

My colleague and I published three journal articles showing that babies born on the West Coast in the nine months after Fukushima had a 16% increase in defective thyroids, compared to little change in the rest of the country.

Since the meltdown, in Japan the death rate has increased and the birth rate has decreased, resulting in a 5% drop in population and resultant social problems, including proportionally more retirees and fewer young workers.

Not coming to grips with the truth about nuclear power will raise the chance of another catastrophic meltdown in the future. ■

*Building 1 resident Janette Sherman, M.D., specializes in internal medicine and toxicology with an emphasis on chemicals and nuclear radiation that cause illness, including cancer and birth defects. She has written several books and continues to write numerous articles and give interviews on these topics.*  
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## The Montebello Bookshelf

An excerpt from *The Chimera Legion*

By Alan Simon

**W**azir had a reputation as a strong-man. He and his brother, Farooq, a man even more powerful than Wazir, had fought in almost every engagement against the Russian kafir invaders.

His feats in battle were the stuff of legend. Mustapha Raza sat behind the counter of his small tea shop, thinking about this, uncertain of what to do. He had no doubt but that he was the first human ever to see Wazir cry.

Teary-eyed, Wazir lifted his head and looked at the shop-keeper. "Mustapha, my friend, my brother is dying. My brother, Farooq, is dying a most horrible death," he wailed, repeating his lament.

"What are you talking about? Since when?"

"I saw him – at the hospital in Islamabad. It appeared as if blood was seeping through his skin – from his nose, his mouth, his ears. From his eyes, even. My brother Farooq was crying tears of blood."

Mustapha stopped his wiping down of the small tables and stood upright at this improbable tale. "Which hospital, Wazir?" Mustapha asked. "Tell me, at which hospital did you see Farooq?"

"Around the corner from the Shifa International Hospital—a private clinic."

Mustapha walked from behind his counter and went over to Wazir's table. The oppressive heat lay upon the area like a smothering, down-filled comforter, making the slightest movement seem an effort. Wiping at the sweat pouring off his face with a less than clean dish

towel, Mustapha took a seat across from Wazir.

"You must tell me what is happening, Wazir. I saw your brother only last month. He could have vanquished an ox."

Wazir shrugged his shoulders in bafflement. "I cannot understand, either. His flesh seems to have melted. He – he is like a large balloon that has lost its air. His flesh lies upon his bones like loose rags."

Mustapha gripped Wazir's arm in an effort to comfort the man. "Could you speak with him – ask him what had happened?"

Wazir shook his head. "No, not possible. They had placed his bed in a special, sealed room. I could look at him through a large window but he could not hear me. I was not certain if he was awake or not."

"I do not understand, Wazir. You say he lies in a sealed room. How does he get care, medicines? How do the doctors treat him?"

"I saw two people in the room with Farooq. I could not tell who they were, men or women."

"How could that be?" Mustapha asked.

"They wore special suits, special gloves and boots. They had large hoods over their heads. I could see only part of their faces through the window in front of the hoods."

"Yet you could not recognize them?"

"No. They had masks over their faces."

"You mean the masks that doctors wear when treating patients?"

"No, Mustapha, not those masks. These were like the ones we wore to protect us from the poisons during the war against the Russian invaders."

Mustapha sat back in astonishment. "Gas masks? They wore gas masks?"

"I do not know what kind of mask, just that it covered the nose and mouth. I could not make out their faces"

"What kind of poison was in the room? Why didn't Farooq have a mask over his face as well? Did you not ask?"

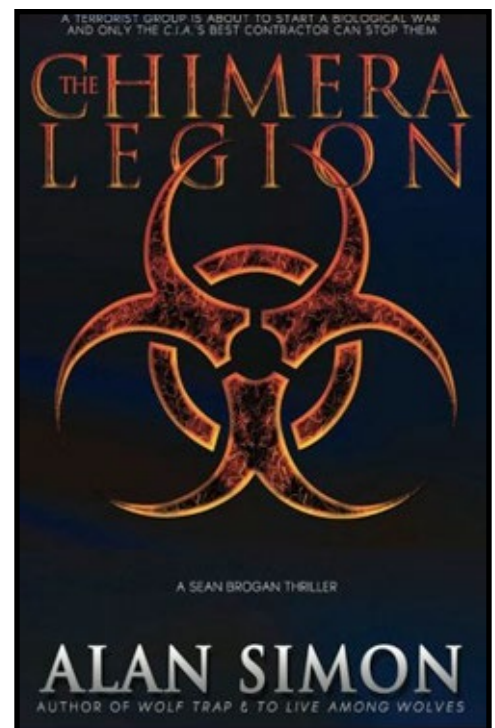
"Yes, I asked. The doctor told me Farooq suffered from a dangerous disease. It spread through the air. That is why the doctors had to protect themselves. That is why his room had to be sealed."

Mustapha refilled Wazir's glass with hot tea. "Go, drink and refresh yourself. This must have been a most terrible day for you."

Mustapha waited for Wazir to finish drinking before asking, "Did they have a name for the disease that infected Farooq?"

"No. They gave me no name. I have no more information. I only know that in a few days, Farooq will be dead. And there is nothing I or anyone else can do about it."

*Continued on page 6*



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“Wazir, if the disease was so dangerous, why was it that only Farooq suffered? Why not more people? What about the person from whom Farooq became infected?”

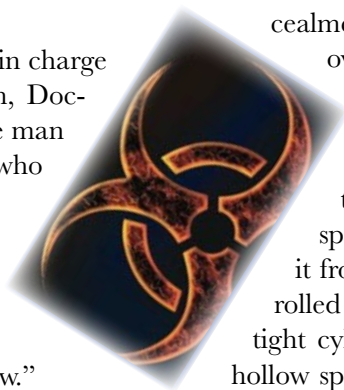
“I did not think to ask.”

“Tell me about the men you spoke to in the hospital. What were their names?”

“The Pakistani doctor in charge – his name was Saifullah, Doctor Saifullah Ahmed. The man with him was a foreigner who did not speak.”

“A foreigner? What did he look like?” Raza asked.

“He was Asian. What part of Asia, I do not know.”



That evening, after locking up his tea room, Mustapha Raza entered his small house attached to the rear of his shop. He walked over to a wall cabinet. Pushing aside small containers of tea, he reached back and tugged open a hidden panel. He removed what appeared to be a large, metal spike and sheets of thin, flimsy paper.

After carefully closing the concealment device, he hunched over his table, committing to the paper all he had learned from Wazir, omitting nothing. He twisted the head of the spike clockwise, unscrewing it from the body. He carefully rolled the sheets of paper into a tight cylinder, placing it into the hollow spike. Tightening the head, he placed the assembly in his pocket and exited his house.

Four streets from his shop, satisfied no one was following, Mustapha used the sharpened tip of the metal spike to scratch a scar on a brick wall. He turned the corner and, counting his steps, walked another ten paces. He bent down, pushing the spike into the ground. With his shoe, he scuffed loose dirt over the protruding head. In a matter of days, his information would reach CIA Headquarters in Langley. VSWAXWING/1 smiled to himself. He had done a good day's work. 🏠

*A resident of Building 4, Alan spent almost 30 years as an operations officer in the CIA. During those years, he engaged in a wide variety of clandestine, covert and special operations in many different parts of the world. For another 10 years, Alan served as a consultant to the CIA, both as a trade-craft trainer of Non-Official Cover officers and as a supervisor of counter-terrorist operations in the CIA Counter Terrorist Center.*

## Warm & fuzzy welcome

Mercymarie is a chocolate Spaniel and long-haired Dachshund mix with lovely caramel eyebrows. She is a “country girl from West Virginia,” says her new mom, Pat Ferris in Building 1, who adopted this almost 2-year-old from the animal shelter on Eisenhower Avenue.



*The Montebello Voice wants to hear from you: musings, travels, announcements, photos, and ads*

## Animal Magnetism

### Two little birds singin' sweet songs

By Sophie and Sarah

We have two pet cockatiels, one male, Billy, and one female, Bindi. They are 8 years old. They are perfect condo pets because they love being with their human flock at all times and since we live in close quarters they always know in which room we are.

Condos are also safe places for free birds since there are screens on all the windows and if they were to fly out the door, which ours never do, they would land in the hallway.

Cockatiels are mostly quiet pets and since they sleep 12 hours per day they are never noisy at night. Billy and Bindi sleep in their cage, but they also spend a lot of time perched on our shoulders and waddling around the living room. They fly or run to us when we call them.

They love traveling with us on trips, meeting strangers, hot showers, and



*Building 2 residents Sophie (left) with Bindi and Sarah with Billy celebrate the cockatiels' “birdday.”*

piano music. They fall asleep on our shoulders when we practice the piano. Billy whistles tunes. He often mixes up the Star Wars and Andy Griffith themes. Bindi squawks. Cockatiels can live up to 30 years. The average age is 15 years. They need to be handled with great care, fed daily, and should never be left alone more than 24 hours. 🏠



**P**ardon me if I wax slightly sappy in this essay. I'm talking about maple syrup so a little sap doesn't seem inappropriate. It's maple month in my native Massachusetts.

I like to think of cooking as a folk science. The science part is indisputable. Most cooking tasks – whisking, boiling, baking – are simply applied chemistry. We read books to help us figure out just the right formulas to create using our culinary versions of test tubes. Sometimes we experience a scientific breakthrough and discover a new formula in the kitchen.

Nevertheless, many of our most beloved formulas for cooking have been handed down to us, like a family story or a favorite lullaby. Perhaps the best analogy is a folk song.

Composer Alice Parker uses this analogy a lot. She points out that we don't know who wrote a song like "Wayfaring Stranger." In fact, the very definition of a folk song is that the composer and lyricist are anonymous. A song like this belongs to all of us, and we re-compose it every time we sing it.

Folk songs cannot be copyrighted, although arrangements of them can. Similarly, it is impossible to copyright a list of ingredients, but one can copyright the words one uses in the directions for a recipe. We don't value folk songs or recipes any the less because they are not "original."

In fact, we often value them more because they have sprung up in different places and been modified as they go from singer to singer, cook to cook. We certainly value not having to come up with something completely new every time we get out the guitar or the saucepan.

Musical tradition and culinary tradition are miracles we celebrate every day.

At this time of year I'm particularly grateful for the tradition of boiling down the sap of sugar maple trees. Just as it's hopeless to pinpoint the very first person who ever opened his or her mouth and sang "I'm just a poor way-



faring stranger," it's impossible to figure out who first made maple syrup.

We assume it was a Native American since the original residents of this country were sweetening their food with maple long before Europeans arrived. Nevertheless, it's hard to imagine how the first maple syrup came to be made. Did someone accidentally poke a hole in a tree that was near a cooking pot and then notice that the resultant food tasted extra sweet? We'll never know.

We do know that farmers who have sugarhouses do what they do in large part because boiling down sap is part of the history of their families and of this nation.

I'm lucky to come from New England, a place where a folk food tradition like maple sugaring still exists – where people are willing to do the hard work necessary to nurture the trees, maintain the sap lines, and boil (and boil and boil and boil) the sap. I treasure the liquid amber they produce.

You may be thinking that maple syrup has little to do with Montebello. We don't make syrup in Alexandria, but there ARE sources for it in Virginia. In

fact, Highland County has a maple festival coming up. ([www.highlandcounty.org/events/maple-festival](http://www.highlandcounty.org/events/maple-festival))

Virginia maple syrup doesn't taste exactly like the sweet stuff from New England; the soil and the climate make a big difference. It's still delicious on pancakes or in a recipe, however. Here's one of my recipes to get you started celebrating maple month.

### Maple Glazed Carrots

I love stretching the uses of maple syrup beyond breakfast and dessert. These carrots get a lot of sweetness out of just a little syrup. (And they're easy!)

If you want to add to the feast of flavors, add a little minced fresh ginger to the maple mixture – or toss some fresh dill on top of the carrots when you serve them. I think the dish is pretty terrific as is.

#### Ingredients:

- 28 baby carrots (you may obviously use large carrots cut small as well!)
- 2 tablespoons maple syrup
- 2 tablespoons sweet butter

#### Instructions:

Bring the baby carrots to a boil in a pot of lightly salted water. Boil them until they are ALMOST done. (This won't take very long.) Put 2 tablespoons of the water in which they boiled in a small sauté pan. Drain the carrots, discarding the remaining water, and rinse them in cold water to stop them from cooking any longer.

To the 2 tablespoons water add the maple syrup and butter. Heat this mixture until the butter melts. Add the carrots and toss them in the liquid. Continue to cook over medium-low heat, covered but tossing frequently, until the liquid almost evaporates (about 5 to 10 minutes). Serve immediately. Serves 4. 🍴

*Tinky Weisblat is a writer and singer who divides her time between Alexandria and western Massachusetts. She owns a condo in Building 1. To learn more about Tinky, visit her website, [www.TinkyCooks.com](http://www.TinkyCooks.com).*

# Residents suggest ideas for the locker rooms antechamber



*A Versailles-inspired trompe-l'œil would give the space a classy touch*

## Additional loos

I think that we are greatly in need of two restrooms (one male + one female). We only have one of each at the entrance, near the market. Otherwise, one has to enter locker rooms to use the facilities. That may be awkward for guests who are simply having meals in the café or attending events in the lounge. – *Guin Jones*

## Pinball!

I vote for a pinball machine in the fitness center anteroom. – *Paul Walden*

## Flea market and library

Could it be used as a library with shelves up against the walls? This could expand what we have in the closets in each building. Also, the idea of having an occasional flea market is a way for people to “regift” stuff they’ve been stuffing in the trash rooms. It could happen, again against the walls, once a month to supplement “neighbor-to-neighbor.” – *Karen Barnes*

## Flea market, too

I like the idea of having some sort of flea market. – *Jo Weber*

## Social club and book exchange

Why not make it a lounge area with a few tables, sofas, and comfortable chairs? It could be a place to relax and a meet-and-greet area pre- and post-workouts in the fitness center. It could also accommodate those who may not be working out but who would like to meet neighbors in a casual and pleasant setting.

I have always thought it would be a good idea to have a book recycling place in the community center similar to what exists in our lobbies. Maybe one wall in the ante-room could be used for bookshelves where residents could leave books they no longer need or want.

A book drop-off/pickup area in a central area of Montebello would be much appreciated and would be used by a lot of residents, I believe.

Watergate at Landmark and Huntington Gateway apartments next door both have libraries in the community center or other area frequented by all residents. We have a lot of readers here who would gladly donate books to be recycled among their neighbors. Myself included. – *Dian McDonald*

## Resort living

The space is big enough for a fancy juice and smoothie bar, The ‘bello, and a massage studio, The Full Monte. – *Mikhailina Karina*



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## Party Pix



*More than 60 neighbors spent their Friday night socializing and eating home-made finger foods at the Building 1 & 5 party on Feb. 26.*

Having a party? Send your photos to *The Montebello Voice*.



# Help, my dog has the crazies!!

By Shauna Miller

**J**umping up. Barking at anything that moves. Pulling like a maniac. Zooming through the house while ricocheting off of furniture. Wanting to play 25 hours a day. Too much coffee? Of course not. It's goofy dog syndrome!

When most people imagine getting a dog, they often have visions of leisurely strolls through the park, snuggling on the couch, and their loyal pet gently playing with the children. Rarely do dog owners enter into pet ownership realizing that a dog, and especially a puppy, is more likely to drag them down the street, bolt out the door and run around the neighborhood, or hang off the children's clothing in a nipping frenzy that could be enough to make an adult shed tears.

While not every dog is this goofy, many of them are... particularly young ones. So how do you get your dog to learn when it's playtime and when to relax? How to be better mannered and to listen when told? To be more obedient while still letting your pet's glowing personality shine through?

**O**bedience training coupled with ample exercise and sprinkled with mental stimulation. These three things can make a huge difference in helping to create a calm, relaxed and happy dog. This is even more important when dealing with most behavioral issues. No, I'm not talking about turning your dog into a show dog, police dog, or circus dog. Simply a well-behaved pet who you can enjoy much more once the "goofiness" is brought under control.

Obedience commands such as "heel," "sit," "down," "stay," and "come," are intended to be used not as cute tricks, but as a way of life.

For example, if your dog knows how to "heel" and pay attention when you're walking, he will not be pulling and your walks will be enjoyed much more by both of you. A "down/stay"



command can be used to teach your dog when enough is enough and it's time to relax in the house. The "sit" can be used to eliminate jumping on visitors at the door.

In addition to obedience training, exercise can be a big help in calming down an excited dog. "A tired dog is a good dog" goes a long way in burning off the sillies and helping dogs to identify when it's the right time to run (playing ball in the yard), and when is not (in the living room, bouncing off the furniture).

**F**or many dogs walking is simply not an effective way to wear out their vast amount of energy. This is where mental stimulation comes into play. Training, including obedience and tricks is a great way to engage a dog's mind, as well as their body. If walking is the dog's main source of exercise, you can engage their mind by having them

practice obedience or by giving them a job to do. Fit a doggie back pack on your dog and fill it with a few bottles of water or if they are toy-driven have them carry their favorite ball. These types of exercise will wear a dog out much faster than simply walking alone.

**W**hether you work with your dog on your own or with a knowledgeable trainer, a little obedience training, mental stimulation and exercise can go a long way toward eventually having that snuggle on the couch or leisurely walk in the park that you originally envisioned. 🐾

*Building 4 resident Shauna Miller, the owner of Parks Dog Training, specializes in dealing with aggressive, difficult-to-manage dogs. She recently graduated from Starmark Academy, a premier dog training center in Hutto, Tx. She now puts into practice a broad range of dog-training skills including beginner, intermediate and advanced obedience; competitive obedience; clicker training; agility, and service dog work. Shauna uses a balanced method of training and is skilled with behavioral assessments and modification. [www.montebellodogtrainer.com](http://www.montebellodogtrainer.com)*

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