

The MONTEBELLO Voice

an independent gazette

take a trip

September 8, 2016



Size matters. Kinda.

By Richard Titus

USA! USA! U.S. medals in the 2016 Olympics, 121. Next is China with 70 medals. The U.S. also gave us performances by the likes of Biles and Phelps that will stand for the ages. However.....

1. If you're a guy, don't stick your chest out too much. The U.S. women took 61 of these medals, the men took 55; (another five U.S. medals were taken in mixed events). The women won 27 of the U.S. gold medals to 19 for the men.


2. Also, suppose we rank-order medals won by the nation's population size. (www.medalspercapita.com). The U.S. is 43rd. Ahead of Japan (41), Malaysia (59), Turkey (65), Brazil (71), China (76), Mexico (79), Indonesia (83), Nigeria (85), and India (dead last at 86th). BUT, behind New Zealand (4), Denmark (5), Hungary (10), Australia (14), Sweden (16), Netherlands (17), Great Britain (19), Cuba (21), France (30), Canada (31), Germany (35), Italy (36), and Russia (42), (NOTE: this list excludes nations that won fewer than 11 medals).

Voices on the 37


How to explain these discrepancies? Financial support of athletes by governments, corporations, universities, alumni, etc.? The lure of future payoffs from endorsements or professional careers? "Culture" (e.g., Hungary always ranks high on the per-capita metric)? Historical artifact?


Thanks to a knee injury I watched far more Olympics than is my wont. Not one word about gambling. Americans gamble on everything; we can gamble on which movie star is going to die next! Were they gambling on e.g., how many medals would be won by Bolt?


The big loser was host-nation Brazil, at #71 on the per-capita metric. Their only consolation was "winning" the gold in soccer. Some "victory". They didn't score once in regulation time and needed their penalty kicker to get lucky and at least get something out of the Games.

Cicada are on a 17-year cycle. For Olympic sports it's a four-year cycle; they'll reappear in 2020. Between now and then the athletes will work incredibly hard to become amazing in sports that most of us don't really care about. Why do they do it? 

Who are your dream dinner companions?

 Yogi Berra....(a no-brainer)! –Richard Titus

 My choice for a dinner companion would be President Ronald Reagan! I would use this quote of his, "...that we will uphold the principles of self-reliance, self-discipline, morality and above all, responsible liberty for every individual that we will become that shining city on a hill." I and all American should love to hear what President Reagan would envision for our presently divided nation to better face the future. We would eat apple pie, of course! – Ralph Johnson

 Alive: Pope Francis, Justice Ruth Bader Ginsberg, Usain Bolt
Dead: Eleanor Roosevelt, Kurt Vonnegut, Carl Sagan – Janette Sherman

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

Spotlight on the flag

Most people believe you are not allowed to fly the stars and stripes at night. However, this is only partly true. According to the U.S. Flag Code, all American flags should be displayed from sunrise to sunset every day. Lowering the flag at night is an ultimate sign of respect for Old Glory.

But like many rules, there is an exception. You can keep your flag flying 24-hours if it is properly illum-



nated during all hours of darkness. But what exactly is "proper illumination?" The American Legion interprets that as a light source that is specifically placed to light up the flag at night. The light must be bright enough that the U.S. flag is recognizable by the casual observer passing by. **When driving up to our gate at night, I have looked deliberately to see the flag, and it is barely visible.** It is time for a real spotlight. – Carol Coyle-Shea

The MONTEBELLO Voice

Alexandria, Virginia

an independent gazette

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Attention frustrated gardeners!

Nearby Mt. Vernon United Methodist Church is seeking volunteer gardeners to pull weeds and do other gardening tasks. Plantings you donate and maintain are welcome. The church is a small congregation located 10 minutes from Montebello, just above the Mt. Vernon Recreation Center. Several Montebello residents are members. No particular beliefs or church attendance are required – just your love of gardening. Contact church board member Barry Colvert at thelieguy@aol or the church office at mvumc.office1@verizon.net or call 703-765-1100. – Sarah Newcomb

Good eats

Alexandria Pastry Shop (www.alexandriapastry.com) is at King and Quaker, halfway between us and Shirlington. It's more than great pastries; they also have sandwiches, salads, and entrées. They have a veggie sandwich that makes me glad not to be a carnivore. There's an ample seating area. They do catering. The center also has a The Fresh Market store, the closest one to us. – Richard Titus

“Terrorist attacks can shake the foundations of our biggest buildings, but they cannot touch the foundation of America.”

– President George W. Bush,
September 11, 2001

Voices on the 37



INOVA nurse Neelam Sharma checks Bonnie Daniel's blood pressure at the free monthly blood pressure check in the community center's card room.

Montebello Speakers Series presents
How the World Views America's Political Season: A Snapshot
September 14 at 7:30 p.m. in the community center

Panelists are neighbors representing countries well known to them through long and close association

Argentina: Hugh Schwartz
China: Donald Barnes
Iran: Azita Mashayekhi

Brazil: Getulio Carvalho
Denmark: Jorn Justensen
Ukraine: Andrew Masiuk

Moderator: Margaret Sullivan

By 2001 Joint Congressional Resolution designating September 11 as Patriot Day:

The President is requested to issue each year a proclamation calling on:

- state and local governments and the people of the United States to observe Patriot Day with appropriate programs and activities;
- all departments, agencies, and instrumentalities of the United States and interested organizations and individuals to display the flag of the United States at half staff on Patriot Day in honor of the individuals who lost their lives as a result of the terrorist attacks against the United States that occurred on September 11, 2001; and
- the people of the United States to observe a moment of silence on Patriot Day in honor of the individuals who lost their lives as a result of the terrorist attacks against the United States that occurred on September 11, 2001.

How much wood can Montebello's woodchucks chuck?

By Sarah Newcomb

The saying, “How much wood can a woodchuck chuck, if a woodchuck could chuck wood?” doesn’t apply to our resident Montebello woodchucks. They don’t chuck wood at all.

The name “woodchuck” stems from an Algonquian Indian name for the animal, wuchak. Woodchucks, also called groundhogs, are members of the squirrel family who live on the ground in dens. The United States and Canada celebrate February 2 as Groundhog Day giving groundhogs recognition and popularity, as has the movie of the same name. The most popularly known groundhog is Punxsutawney Phil.

Groundhogs are most active early in the morning or late afternoon. Groundhogs in Montebello’s woodlands use their burrows for safety, retreat in bad weather, hibernating, sleeping, as a love nest, and nursery. The burrow usually has side galleries and even an

excrement chamber. A nest may be up to three feet below the ground surface. The burrow usually has two or more openings. One is the main entrance, the other a spy hole.

Rather than the adage “chucking wood,” Montebello’s groundhogs feast on our clover, dandelions, grubs, insects, snails and nuts. Unlike squirrels, they do not bury nuts for future use.

Groundhogs are one of the few species that enter into true hibernation, and often build a separate winter burrow for this purpose. This burrow is usually in a wooded or brushy area and is dug below the frost line so that it remains well above freezing during the winter.

In most regions, groundhogs hibernate from October to March or April. In more temperate areas, such as ours, they may hibernate as few as three months. Like bears, to survive the winter, groundhogs reach maximum weight shortly before entering hibernation. They emerge with some remain-


ing body fat to live on until the warmer spring weather produces abundant plants for food.

Their breeding season extends from early March to late April, after hibernation. A mated pair remains in the same den throughout the 31- to 32-day gestation period. Mothers have one litter of two to six blind, hairless and helpless young. Groundhog mothers introduce their young to the wild when their fur is grown in and they can see. By the end of August, the family breaks up or members move to burrow on their own.

Groundhog Day is a tale of self-improvement. It emphasizes the need to look inside ourselves and realize that satisfaction in life comes from concerning ourselves with others’ needs rather than concentrating solely on our own desires. These furry neighbors offer all of us at Montebello a good model for realizing what truly makes us happy – especially enjoying and preserving our irreplaceable woodlands. 🐿

Grandparents’ Day with Chinese characteristics

By Karen and Don Barnes

 With Grandparents’ Day coming on Sept. 11, we are reminded of the years when we were teaching English in China. Often we gave our students the assignment of writing remembrances of their grandparents. Here are two clear-eyed tales (lightly edited) of some of the “ancestors” who lived in a China that used to be, not so long ago, and still exists in parts of the countryside.

An Old Man

I don’t know what I should call the old man; he is the husband of my grandma’s sister. But I know he was very kind to me until he died 10 years ago. When I was a little boy, he liked to take me to some interesting places, eat delicious food and tell some old stories to me. I liked to stay with him. Because

my grandpa and grandma died when I was very little, I regarded him as my grandpa. I loved him and I respected him.

He was not a local; his home was very far from my hometown. It was in Nanjing. [*The student is from Nanning, which is about 1,000 miles from Nanjing.*] I heard from my parents that he had to join the army when he was young because of the anti-Japanese war. When the war ended, he was in my hometown [Nanning], far from his home [Nanjing]. In my hometown he got a job and married. But he had not any children. I thought that was one of the reasons that he loved me so much. After the war he went back to a shattered Nanjing two times, then never went back to Nanjing again...till he died. He was buried on the mountain of Nanning, faced the northeast, the direction of his hometown.

My Grandpa

My grandpa became a soldier when he was at the age of 20. The reason why he joined was that at that time a poor man could only be full if he became a soldier.

About 15 years passed. Grandpa became a village head. The worst time came in 1970 [*This year was in the middle of the Cultural Revolution*]. My grandpa was calumniated as a traitor although he didn’t do anything bad to China.

From then on, he had to be a farmer. Grandpa loved smoking and drinking at that time. When I remember him, I often see him smoking and drinking... alone. 🐿



Along the Ice Field Parkway. Notice the beautiful water and the snow slide area framed by the trees. Photo would have been complete with a bear fishing.

Text & photos by Ralph Johnson

So many beautiful and interesting places to visit in this world. However, only so much time and funds, so we have to make difficult choices.

Probably my first choice would be the Canadian Rockies and Alaska. Gracie and I visited twice lately, in 2014 and again, this summer. During the first

connected by beautiful passageways, looking at humpback whales, orcas, seals, sea otters and so many species of birds. We saw the beautiful blues hues of glaciers and watched them calve while dodging the floating ice. We did a float trip on the melting ice of the Mendenhall Glacier. We took boat trips to Glacier Bay and Tracy Arm. Does awesome nature get any better?

This summer we flew to Vancouver,

pleting a circular tour through Kananaskis Country with unbelievable snow capped mountains, lakes and wildlife. Our adventure ended by way of the Calgary airport to Montebello.

As we both enjoy photography, about 1,000 photos were taken. We will share bear photos; one grizzly, one black, (photographed about 30), and a few landscapes. I am sure others at Montebello have enjoyed this area, but

The splendor of the Canadian Rockies and Alaska

trip, we flew to Calgary, Canada, and drove along Ice Field Parkway to Prince Rupert, a small town on the Inside Passage with an Alaska Ferry Terminal. We parked the rental car at our hotel (free), boarded the ferry, and made a circular route through many Alaskan towns

enjoying this beautiful city for several days. We rode the Mountaineer train to Jasper, a town on the northern end of the Ice Field Parkway. Rented a car taking a slow trip along the Parkway enjoying Jasper, Banff, Canmore, com-

if you have not and are looking for travel suggestions, especially if you enjoy photography, we highly recommend this stunning corner of the world. 🏠

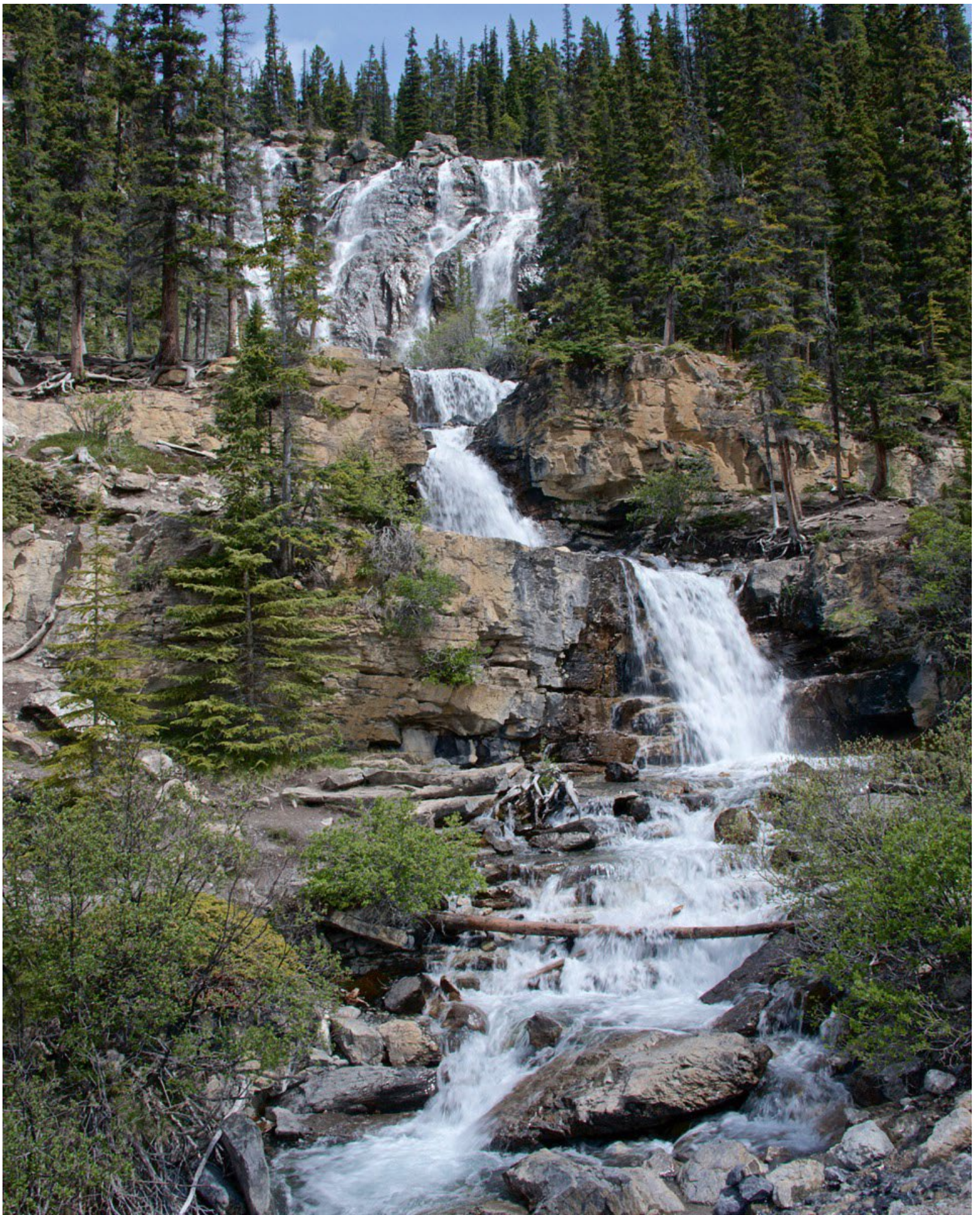
On the cover: Black Bear at the Weeping Wall. Ice Field Parkway



This grizzly bear loved to pose for photos



Along the road between Lake Louise and Moraine Lake, Alberta, Canada



Tangle Falls along the Ice Field Parkway
The Montebello Voice



Spirit Island, Maligne Lake, near Jasper, Alberta, Canada



*Fairmont Hotel
at Lake Louise,
Alberta, Canada*



Overview of Town of Banff and the Bow River. Prairie dog town is on the right.



Moraine Lake, Alberta, Canada

The little-known pitfalls of Medicare Advantage Plans

Note: the following article came from Paul Follas, who is not affiliated with the Farr Law Firm, but received permission to reprint it because he thought Montebello residents would find the information useful.

Author Wendell Potter's mother had a Medicare Advantage (MA) plan, with premiums that increased significantly over the years. Despite the increasing premiums, she didn't feel she had any real motivation to disenroll. This was until she broke her hip and required skilled care in a nursing facility. After a few days, the nursing home administrator told her that if she stayed there, she would have to pay for everything out of her own pocket. How could this happen when she has a plan that she thought should cover this sort of thing?

In Ms. Potter's situation, a utilization review nurse at her MA plan, who had never seen or examined her, decided that the care she was receiving was no longer "medically necessary." This was when Ms. Potter discovered that there are no commonly used criteria as to what constitutes medical necessity, and that insurers have wide discretion in determining what they will pay for and when they will stop paying for services like skilled nursing care by decreeing it "custodial."

Also known as Part C, Medicare Advantage plans are HMOs or PPOs that provide both basic Medicare Part B coverage and many of the benefits offered by supplementary Medigap insurance policies. But Medicare beneficiaries' premiums for an Advantage plan plus Medicare Part B coverage are roughly half, on average, of the premiums for a Medigap policy plus Part B. Similar to Ms. Potter, nearly 18 million people are currently enrolled in Medicare Advantage Plans. Many baby boomers are enticed by them, as many of them offer \$0 premiums, but what most people don't realize is that there can be enormous unexpected out-of-pocket expenses when you get sick. These are some of the other pitfalls

that people may not know about MA plans:

- ❏ Care can actually end up costing more, to the patient and the federal budget, than it would under original Medicare, particularly if one suffers from a very serious medical problem.
- ❏ Some private plans are not financially stable and may suddenly cease coverage. This happened in Florida in 2014 when a popular MA plan called Physicians United Plan was declared insolvent.
- ❏ One may have difficulty getting emergency or urgent care due to rationing.
- ❏ The plans only cover certain doctors, often drop providers without cause, breaking the continuity of care.
- ❏ Members have to follow plan rules to get covered care.
- ❏ There are always restrictions when choosing doctors, hospitals and other providers, which is another form of rationing that keeps profits up for the insurance company but may limit patient choice.
- ❏ It can be difficult to get care away from home, because you are out of the HMO's coverage area.
- ❏ The extra benefits offered can turn out to be less than promised.
- ❏ Plans that include coverage for Part D prescription drug costs may ration certain high-cost medications.
- ❏ Access to National Cancer Institute (NCI) cancer centers is limited.
- ❏ It can be difficult to ascertain whether certain specialty care facilities affiliated with a hospital listed in an Advantage plan network, such as heart, rehabilitation, or women's care centers, are covered as part of a plan's provider network.

❏ HMOs tend to have narrower hospital networks than preferred provider organizations, or PPOs.

So, be sure to shop very carefully if you are thinking of using a Medicare Advantage plan. Remember to read the fine print, and get a comprehensive list of all co-pays and deductibles before choosing one. Also, be sure to find out if all your doctors accept the plan and all the medications you take (if it's a plan that also wraps in Part D prescription drug coverage) will be covered. If the plan doesn't cover your current physicians, be sure that its doctors are acceptable to you and are taking new patients covered by the plan.

It is important to understand that neither Medicare nor Medicare Advantage plans ever pay one penny for long-term care. Medicare only pays for medical care delivered by doctors and hospitals, and in certain cases short-term rehabilitation which might take place in a nursing home. Medicare covers, at most, 100 days of short-term rehabilitation (20 days in full and 80 days in part), and does not cover help with activities of daily living, such as eating, bathing, and dressing — long-term care that the aged can need for years.

What if you or a loved one needs long-term nursing home care in the future? Long-term care in our area costs \$10,000 to \$14,000 a month. To protect your hard-earned assets from these catastrophic costs, the best time to create your own long-term care strategy is NOW.

If you have not done Long-Term Care Planning, Estate Planning, or Incapacity Planning, you should call us as soon as possible to make an appointment for a no-cost initial consultation at www.farrlawfirm.com. 📞

Portes cochères, Pueblo stucco, and a mysterious hum

Diary of a new resident

Entry No. 2

By Rebecca Long Hayden

Dear Diary,

Did you think it would be another 30 years? There's too much material at Montebello for that. I'll call this entry "How I Came to Love the Exterior and Why We Almost Moved Out."

We became aware of Montebello through friends, and although I was impressed with the interior of their condo, the lobby was a mess, being in the middle of a remodel

at the time. Also, I didn't love the ancient motels along Highway One. The Cedar Lodge still bears a sign declaring proudly: COLOR TV! Imagine. Color TV.

Then there was the entrance and the *portes cochères*, which means *coach gateway* in 17th century French (I looked it up). Anyway, I thought the *gateways* were ugly, and I didn't like the color of the brick buildings, either. OK, the protests can be heard all the way to New Mexico. What? Yes, Diary, I have come to love the exterior, and that's where New Mexico comes in. Also Colorado, Utah, and Arizona.

Flipping through an old copy of *Travel Magazine*, I came across a picture of Montebello. A second look told me otherwise, but who would live stacked up like this, and why sand-colored brick and clunky gateways? Only the oldest culture in the United States – the Pueblo people.

The Pueblo pictures reminded me of Montebello, gateways included, same flat-topped pile of stucco, even the same bleached color. Did the architects

of Montebello realize this? It seems like more than coincidence, but perhaps the design surfaced from shards of DNA lost long ago inside them. The answer is unknown, maybe even to the architects.

Staring at the Pueblo pictures, I fell in love with the exterior of Montebello. It has a kinship going back 7,000 years! Yes, Diary, I know. That's an exaggeration, but I like hyperbole, and it's almost true. The Pueblo structures out west go back six or seven hundred years, but the ancestry of the people who built the sandstone dwellings goes back at least 7,000 years



and have names like dances: the Mogollon, Hohokam, and Anasazi.

So the problem of my aesthetic negativity toward the exterior shifted. Sometimes all it takes is to look at something in a new way. I see Montebello differently now. A stretch? Maybe. Romantic? Definitely. But once you're on the reservation, it's a thing of beauty, enchanting, connected to something ancient in another landscape, a juxtaposition that works for me.

As for Highway One, I solve easy problems the easy way, sometimes employing one of my personal mottos (I have many), which is: Who Cares? Maybe my kids may care someday when they have to sell the place, but about that, too, Who Cares?

So we bought a "J" model, and almost moved out the week we moved in. It was the hum.

The hum began before we moved in. We sat in folding chairs on the balcony, sipping coffee, waiting out an "open house" taking place at our home in Fairfax. Brian lifted his chin, frowned, and held up his hand to pause our conversation about the Russian Parliament of 1918. (Not what we were talking about, but it's my Diary, and I can say so if I like.)

"What's that?" Brian said.

"What's what?" I answered.

This exchange has become routine. We both have compromised hearing, but I hear high-pitched sounds better; he hears low-pitched sounds better. I heard nothing, but he heard a hum.

"Uh, oh,"

he said. "Do you think that's something that won't go away?"

"Since I can't hear it, I don't care." I smiled to soften the edges of my tongue.

We wanted to live on the first floor, but we've been around long enough to expect things to go to hell in a handcart pretty regularly. Might there be something about the first floor we don't know, something hideous waiting to pounce, as in Henry James' *Beast in the Jungle*? Was the hum to be our beast?

We moved in, and the hum got louder. At first only Brian heard it, and only on the balcony. Then it got louder, and I heard it, too. It became audible in the living areas, and finally, louder than ever, in the bedrooms.

"Can we live with that?" Brian asked.

"Impossible," I said.

"What about your Pueblo theory?"

Can't it sound like a chant or something?" he asked. He laughs at most of my "theories," but I share them anyway.

"Nope. Not a chance. Or a chant." He knows I love all chanting, from Druid to Hawaiian to African to Tibetan Monk-an. "If it can't be fixed, we'll have to move." I shrugged. I wasn't kidding.

He turned the color of cottage cheese, staggered, and passed out, gasping for breath as he fell. He didn't, but he wanted to. Yes, Diary, after 45 years of marriage, I know how to spur him into immediate action. Just suggest a scenario that will cost him a significant pile of money unnecessarily.

He lunged for the phone. "I'll call someone."

He was polite but emphatic, and two nice engineer types showed up the same day, one to go to the basement and tinker while the other communicated via walkie-talkie, along the lines of *No, noth-*

ing happened, and *Try the anterior fan*. We walked from room to room. Mechanical things were tested. The hum diminished. Apparently, there was a perfect storm of failed fans, screws, nuts loose in the garage, and I don't know what else, but the hum had more than one source. Parts would be ordered, screws tightened, gadgets adjusted. More communication, and then a miracle, all hums ceased! Cancel the moving van!

But the next night IT was back. Only in the bedroom, but loud enough to wake us up at 4 AM. We called at dawn, the engineers came, and the same routine began. It was no use. The engineer in the garage had nothing else to try, so he came back up to the unit. There was much head scratching, but all agreed. There was still a significant hum.

"We're moving," I said.

Brian looked stricken. More head-scratching. Some foot-shuffling.

Then one of the engineers reached

over and unplugged the bedroom cable box.

Immediate cessation of the hum.

Yesterday the cable box was installed. Last night the hum didn't *come back*; it was a brand new hum. Next day a new cable box was installed. No hum. Thank the Great Father-Chief in the Sky. And thanks for reminding everyone concerned to be sure you know what the problem is before you try to solve it.

We still hear sounds – children laughing, conversations of passers-by, birds in the trees, and late at night, on the balcony with all the glass open, I imagine chants over the vast plains of Montebello. In my head. But no return of the hum.

Happy are the dwellers in Pueblo J Unit 118.

Yours truly,

Rebecca from Texas 📧



David Pedraza and Annya Nizhegorodtseva with Montebello Music Club president Carla Jones-Batka.

Back by popular demand, world-class musicians, violist David Pedraza and pianist Annya Nizhegorodtseva, performed compositions by Brahms, Chopin, Paganini, Beethoven, and Monti in front of an appreciative audience. The August 28 concert was sponsored by the Montebello Music Club.

Photos by Dian McDonald



Juliet Du Bosq, almost 4, came to the concert with her own 1/16 size violin.

Colorscapes: Space & Spirit

A series by Rebecca McNeely in the Montebello Café

September 10 – October 15, 2016



“Those who contemplate the beauty of the earth find reserves of strength that will endure as long as life lasts.” – *Rachel Carson*

Rebecca McNeely, known for her colorful expressionistic paintings, has created solo exhibits for the Montebello Café annually for the past ten years, making this her 11th solo exhibit here. She is represented by Gallery Underground in Arlington and Gallery 75 in Alexandria at the Torpedo Factory. She is an active and exhibiting member of Arlington Artists Alliance and The Art League of Alexandria, where she serves on the Board of Directors. She maintains a public studio at Cyan Studios in Crystal City, as well as a private home studio where she welcomes visitors by appointment. Her paintings are in private collections coast to coast.



She has been juried into numerous local and national exhibits. In August this year, she was juried into the Washington, D.C., national exhibit “Art as Politics” that received extensive attention regionally. Also this month, she was juried into “The Blues” exhibition at Gallery Underground, where she was awarded an honorable mention.



“This series of paintings expresses some of my contemplations of landscape and the beauty of our earth. My soul finds respite in nature, a cathedral for the spirit. My heart sings when I see the magnificence of the mountains, forest, deserts and seas. My eye has always found peace and pleasure in looking out over the wide open spaces toward the far horizon. My love of nature led me into painting which led me to the discovery that color is a powerful communicator. I love to simplify the landscape into abstractions, allowing myself full rein with color and value. My goals are to express the moods of nature and to communicate my joy in painting my vision. My hope is that others will come to appreciate the beauty around us a little more after seeing my paintings.”



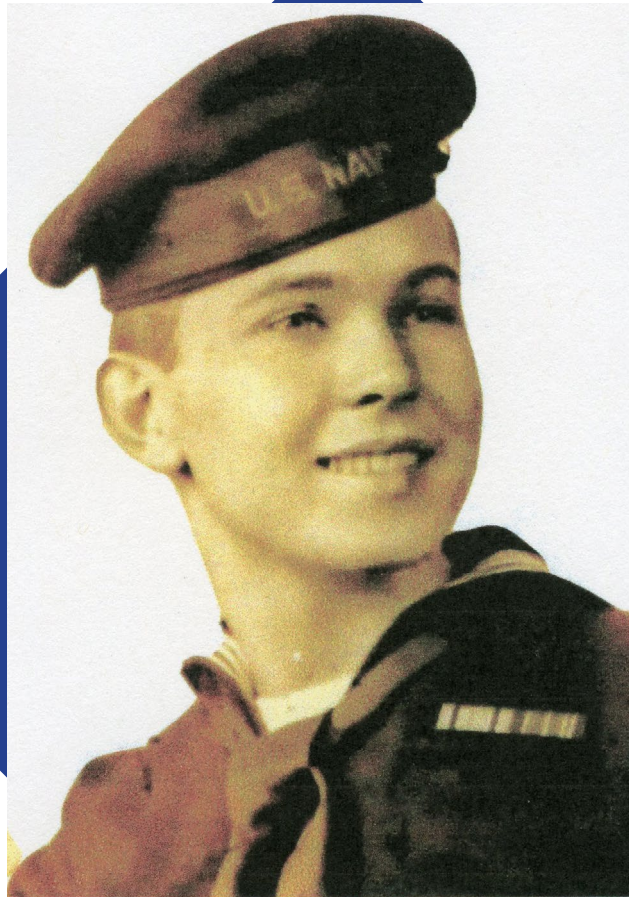
To see more of her work, go to: RebeccaMcNeely.Artspan.com.

enlisted in the Navy on November 30, 1942 in St. Louis, Missouri, and was sent to Boot Training at Chicago's Great Lakes Naval Training Station. A large number of recruits were put on board a train one afternoon and sent to Chicago, Illinois. At Chicago we were transferred to the North Shore Line and taken to the Great Lakes Naval Training Center. We arrived after midnight, it was particularly cold and the cars were quite drafty. They herded us to a supply building where we were issued uniforms and blankets. We were then taken to barracks. We all fell into bunks in clothes and all and fell asleep, exhausted. We were awakened early and taken to the chow hall. My favorite Navy chow was a Navy breakfast consisting of navy beans and French toast, which was especially good that morning.

Boot camp seemed to me to be a little unnecessary. I could never understand why they insisted on trying to teach sailors to march. Most of your time on board ship was learning to stand and walk on a rolling, pitching deck. They were in such an awful hurry to inoculate against anything and everything that they gave us six shots and a vaccination in two days. What it did for me was to make my arms so sore that I could not raise my arms sufficiently to put on my Navy blouse.

The shots were not enough to keep me from getting the German measles. I was quarantined and missed most of the boot camp. They, however, graduated me with the class.

Let me paint a picture of this inoculation process. Recruits were lined up single-file. Two sets of tables in the



Charlie Becherer as a 19-year-old Navy recruit

My story

by Charles J. Becherer

middle of a large hangar-type building manned by medics with needles. As a recruit passed between the tables he was attacked from both sides. He was then off to the next set of tables to be stabbed again. If someone passed out, he was stabbed where he lay on the floor: This stabbing continued during our time aboard ship. Each change in latitude or temperature, another shot. I do not remember a single epidemic of any sort.

In boot camp they also gave us a battery of tests designed to tell them what we might be suited for. I was selected to go to Sonar school because of my good hearing. I am now 87 and can hear you quite well if you shout. Sonar school

was located in Key West, Florida. What a delightful place to be sent. There were two barracks buildings. Between them was a very nice swimming pool. After eight hours of classes we made for the pool. The mess hall was a block away and there was a marine club where you could purchase a beer and relax. Sonar is the use of underwater sound to detect and destroy submarines. To learn the practical side of Sonar operation, the Navy had a Navy sub chaser and a World War I submarine to chase. At the end of the day's exercise we would move the sub chaser away from the sub and drop a depth charge at a shallow depth, circle around and retrieve the stunned fish. We had fresh fish for dinner. Finishing Sonar operator's school I was selected to attend an additional course to learn to repair the Sonar gear. I can remember one of the exercises. They gave you a shoe box containing a lot of condensers and resistors, etc., and you were supposed to build a primitive radio.

At sea you did not have to be an engineer to repair a broken piece of electronic equipment. Diagnose the problem, remove the faulty portion, and plug in a new one. I do remember the job getting a little more difficult. Sometimes after a storm an antennae wire would be down, which required someone to climb up the mast and reattach the wire. Up the mast and out on the yardarm; sit on the yardarm with one leg hooked between the yardarm and the attached cable; make the repair and then find that your leg had gone to sleep. There is a considerable difference between a 5 degree roll down on the deck and the roll on the yardarm. Most of the time if you look

down you are over the open water.

After another storm in the North Atlantic, the Sonar gear froze, seeping salt water and a bent shaft. I was lying in sick bay with a swollen right leg (diagnosed by the corpsman as cellulitis) when the Captain came down to ask me to “see if you can do something.” I crawled up to the bow, let myself down through three hatches into the hold of the ship, into the very cramped compartment that held the motors, the shaft, and the gears that turned the sonar antennae. One by one the other sonar men came down to help me try to loosen the shaft. One by one they had to go topside to get some air. I couldn’t climb in and out because of my leg. With all of that we still had to wait until we got into port to have it repaired.

From Florida I was sent to Houston, Texas. Not exactly Houston. The Brown Ship Building Company was located on one of the waterways outside Houston that allowed ocean-going ships to go to and from the Gulf. My job was to inspect the Sonar gear after it was installed. Since the ships were not in the water, that amounted to operating the gear to see if the underwater antennae raised and lowered and if it would turn.

While there, Houston was hit by a hurricane. The wind was so strong that it blew a large iron park bench off the second floor of the barracks porch for a distance of at least 50 feet crashing into another building. The shipyard workers could not make it home and had to be fed. The chow hall asked if anyone wanted to help serve the workers so some of us volunteered. We had to get down on our hands and knees to cover the short distance to the chow hall. Standing in that gale was impossible.

Destroyer Escort (DE) 247 was ready for Commissioning and was assembling a crew. I don’t remember now whether I volunteered or was volunteered. But I became part of that crew as the leading Sonarman even though



USS Stanton Destroyer Escort 247

I had never been to sea. At the Commissioning ceremony I stood gangway watch welcoming all the guests as they came aboard.

Our first port after leaving Houston was New Orleans. What a fascinating place for a Midwestern kid who had never been anywhere except Chicago. We had enough time to go into town and get something to eat. This rather fancy restaurant had fried oysters on the menu. Charlie had never eaten oysters. To prove my bravery, I ordered the oysters. Some kind of good.

From there we went on our shakedown cruise. That is where you tried to tear the ship apart, burn out the gun barrels, and see if the crew can operate without sleep, constant drills and general quarters all hours of the day and night, all choreographed by Captain Barker. I understand that he had been ushered out of the Navy because he grounded a ship. Because there was a shortage of experienced officers he was brought back in to conduct these shakedown cruises. I have no idea who he was mad at but he was a nasty person who knew only curse words. He must

have been a terribly miserable person within. After the shakedown cruise we began a series of short trips to various ports and in the Gulf of Mexico.

The most important change was in the change in command. Captain Tiffany relieved Captain Barker. He was a reserve officer who was quite capable and who knew the King’s English.

On one of these trips we were escorting a freighter that was carrying replacement Marines to Trinidad when we encountered a hurricane. It was so rough that several of the crew were thrown about and seriously injured. We also lost all contact with the ship we were escorting. At one point our ship was in a skip distance (between two waves) and lifted completely out of the water. We came back down with quite a thud.

On our way back from delivering the Marines to Trinidad we picked up 19 survivors in a small motor launch who had been adrift seven days. If you are looking for miracles, I think this might qualify. A missionary was taking some local natives from one island to another, got caught in the storm, and the motor gave out. One of our radar

operators reported a blip on the very outskirts of our radar range.

When it did not go away, the Captain decided to take a look. Radar operates on the principle that a signal sent out bounces back when it hits a solid object. These blips were riding in what amounted to a large row boat with the only metal on board being a tiny motor, not much to send back a signal at the outer limits of our surface radar.

After this we started some serious convoying across the Atlantic. Convoying entails surrounding merchant ships with escort vessels and herding them across the Atlantic, for instance. Convoys travel at the speed of the slowest vessel in the convoy. Since every ship available was used to move supplies for the war, it seemed that we were always traveling at about five knots. You would get up in the morning, look out at the convoy and wonder if it was moving. The ships were so stationed as to allow a torpedo to pass through. There were so many ships that it also allowed for a randomly fired torpedo to hit something. One day while standing on the flying bridge we observed a torpedo pass close by our ship on its way into the convoy. A ship was struck and sunk.

Our initial duty was to take a convoy to the Straits of Gibraltar. The British then escorted the convoy through the Mediterranean. Docking at Gibraltar was an experience. The Spanish claimed to be neutral, however they had pill boxes with cannons aimed at Gibraltar and we had to post guards armed with rifles at night because the Spanish sent rowboats out to try to attach explosives to the anchor chains.

Gibraltar was interesting. The Rock had many caves with very large caliber cannons on retractable mounts and pestering monkeys. We also went down the coast to Casablanca to await the return of the convoy so that we could take it back to the States. Casablanca was the jumping-off place for all who were escaping the war. I did not, however, see Humphrey Bogart.

Docking in Gibraltar next to a British ship made you happy that you were in the U.S. Navy. The British did not require the cleanliness that we did and crossing over the British ships to get to the dock would almost require you to hold your nose. A fighting ship has no portholes so that compartments can be

waters brings about an oven effect. Bread could bake in mid afternoon.

The trade winds that blow from Africa to the New World blew Columbus to the Western Hemisphere. They also blow storms across the Atlantic. On one occasion we encountered a storm outside the straits of Gibraltar. We were escorting a rather large and slow convoy. We and the storm made it across the Atlantic in 18 days. It was necessary to use the inner passageways to go from bow to stern because of the constant violent movement of the ship. A DE is like a small cork in the ocean. We survived on sandwiches and soup.

You could not sit at a table. You had to grab a sandwich with one hand; use a bowl to dip out some soup; wrap your arm around a stanchion and enjoy. After this trip it was difficult to walk on solid ground.



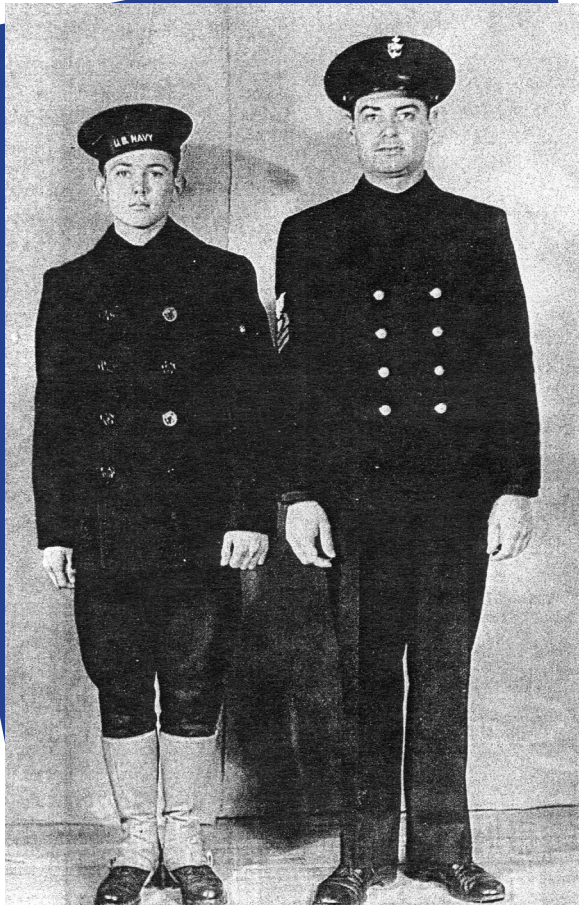
Souvenir photo from the Plantation Room in Hotel Dixie, 43rd. St. West of Broadway, New York. Charlie Becherer is on the right.

made water tight if necessary. Crew's quarters were therefore filled with the odors of men in spite of the air conditioning gear. Whenever possible, we took our mattresses topside to air them. Scrubbing, scraping and painting were the order of the day for ordinary U.S. seamen.

Another condition was brought on by heat. Everyone is aware of the buildup of heat in their automobile when it sits in the sun for a period of time. With no portholes, a bright sunny day and the ship surrounded by warm

The British were having a rough time of it escorting convoys through the Mediterranean so they asked for help. We then continued the convoy we were escorting through the Mediterranean to Bizerte in North Africa. The reason the British were having so much

trouble was that the Germans were still in Italy and France and could easily launch air attacks. Our convoy hugged the African shore line to avoid the open sea. The Germans took off from Italy, circled around over North Africa and flew low to avoid radar detection. We were alerted but they seemed to suddenly appear out of nowhere. My station during a surface action was on the flying bridge relaying the Captain's orders. The planes were so low you felt they would hit the mast or that you could reach up and touch them. The



Charlie Becherer (left) at the Great Lakes Naval Training Station

escort ships tried to fire directly at the planes. The merchant ships fanned the sky with their 1.1 and 50-caliber anti-aircraft guns. With the tracer shells, it looked like all the Fourth of July fireworks you have ever seen rolled into one. The German planes flew right through it. Surely they were hit but none were downed. The German planes dropped bombs and released torpedoes as they passed over. Do you have any idea of the sensation to see a rack of bombs fall close to your ship or to see a torpedo pass by? My vantage on the flying bridge was all too vivid.

You felt quite vulnerable on the bridge with no way to return the fire so the next day we got a few guys together with a torch and stole some 50-caliber machine guns from disabled and abandoned tanks which

were mounted on the flying bridge. Bizerte was a jumping-off place for the Allied forces leaving Africa. It was a devastated city with hardly a wall without a shell hole in it.

A side story really made me laugh. A small group of Italian prisoners were assigned the task of clearing the rubble from the streets in Bizerte. They must have disliked the job because they were sitting on the curb, on strike. Prisoners on strike, really!

The German planes were more effective.

Theirs was a bigger, slow moving target.

In addition to merchant ships, the USS **HOLDER**, one of our escort vessels, was hit. We fished survivors out of the water and the escort was hauled into Algiers. I understand that the German bombers did not fare so well. After passing over our convoy they were attacked by British Spitfire airplanes.

We anchored offshore when we reached Bizerte and the supplies on the freighters were transferred to landing ships and taken up to the Anzio beach where the Allies were entering Italy. We were given a beach party. Half of the crew went ashore at a time with beer, sandwiches, and our swim trunks. We always carried beer in our forward peak tanks for just such an occasion. I doubt that there is a regulation for this. Did you know that the Mediterranean is so salty that you can hardly swim for bobbing up out of the water?

Our ship was sent to Boston. The Navy was testing the guiding of the

ship and the firing of its guns from a plane flying above. In addition to the use of radio control, they also used television to view the action and surroundings. Seems elementary by today's standards, but you could see the utility. You could storm a beach with no one aboard. While in Boston we docked close to **OLD IRONSIDES**, the legendary U.S. fighting ship made entirely of wood with huge masts. It is still commissioned and manned by sailors. This, for them, was good duty. We went out to sea to test the equipment each day. Lots of liberty and a chance to meet some of the nurses at Boston General Hospital and to have lobster and clam bakes on the beach. At one of these picnics we stole an old row boat and took it out to sea a short distance. You have no idea how hard it is to row a waterlogged old boat back to shore against an outgoing tide. Sailors indeed.

Some of our training was in Casco Bay, Maine, in December, January and February. Casco Bay was cold in the winter. On one occasion we had to break the ice that had formed on the water of the Bay. This was salt water. The air temperature was 40 degrees below zero. We took turns standing out on the flying bridge 10 minutes at a time. We wore foul weather gear which covered everything but our eyes. We were still cold. I know that the story of salt water freezing sounds a bit fishy, but it does happen. Duty in the North Atlantic will convince you that it is possible. The seas are usually very rough and the bow of a DE would dive into a wave. The spray from the bow would freeze and hit the flying bridge as sleet.

When we were attached to the killer group to go after German subs we were a detachment of Destroyer Escorts and the Escort Carrier USS **CROATAN**. The **CROATAN** was a converted freighter with a very short flight deck. The job of the **CROATAN** was to send planes aloft to search for submarines. Taking off and landing on this short deck was difficult, to say the least. The pilot had to catch the **CROATAN** with

its bow up and its fantail down. To miss the deck was easy. We always had a DE following the CROATAN to hopefully pull the downed pilots from the freezing water. The pilots had about seven seconds to get out of the cockpit because these big snub-nosed Gruman planes sunk immediately. We had a small group of very good swimmers with attached lines to get the pilots out of the water as quickly as possible. The STANTON fished one out of the water. We sent him back to try again, poor fellow.

The actions of the STANTON during the killer group operation and the attack by the Germans on the convoy in the Mediterranean have been recorded in various books, which I have included in another chapter. Here I would like to give you a personal account. Our killer group was part of a vertical line of killer groups in the Atlantic intended to intercept the German U-Boats being sent to the East coast of the United States to interrupt the flow of supplies to the Allies. It was a last-ditch effort that if successful, might also have included the firing on coastal cities. We already know that during the war there were U-Boats that plied the inner waters off our coast.

On this particular night, Radar had picked up a signal that alerted us to the possible sighting of a sub. I was on my regular tour on the Sonar gear and gained contact with an object. I alerted the Officer of the Day. We immediately went to general quarters. Jim Griffith took over on the Sonar gear and I switched over to the attack plotter. Jim was able to maintain contact and we made several attacks. After one of the attacks there was an explosion that was heard by ship crews some 15 miles away. The sea rose in a huge red ball of fire under the surface. It is hard to imagine such an explosion. Somewhat the same scenario occurred with the second submarine. I do not remember being on the Sonar gear to spot that one but under general quarters I did again man the attack plotter. Obviously, the good work of everyone on board

During the war the newspapers regularly listed service personnel who were missing in action. In September of 1944 I was so listed in the newspaper. My father sent a telegram to Washington to ascertain the validity of the article. The Navy sent a radiogram to the ship. The Captain came up to the bridge that morning and looked me up and down with no explanation. When I asked him why the inspection, he said, "you look pretty good for a dead man." The Navy sent my parents a correcting telegram.

contributed to the success. Awards were given to gunner mates and officers as well as Sonarmen. Even though German submarines inflicted much damage in sinking many ships with the loss of many lives during the war, I take no pleasure in being part of an action which killed so many men. The older I get the more I realize the absolute stupidity of war.

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When the Germans surrendered we were sent to be outfitted with more surface guns. They took the torpedo tubes off and put quad 40mm guns in their place. I do not remember that we ever practiced firing a torpedo. I know we never fired one at anyone. After this reconfiguration we went through the Panama Canal to the Pacific Ocean.

We went up the coast to San Diego. I got a one-day pass and took the bus up to Hollywood to visit with my Uncle Ollie and his family. They had a very nice little cottage that had an apple tree in the back yard with a bench circling the tree. It was very pleasant. They did not expect me since I had no way of telling them I was coming. The ship made its way through the Panama Canal. It was quite a sight and a first experience for most of us. Locks in the canal were made to transport the largest of ships. We were on one of the smallest of Naval ships.

When the water was out of a lock you could envision yourself at the bottom of a well. Passing through the waterways between the Atlantic and the Pacific we saw quite a number of birds of paradise fly over with their long tails and bright colors.

We traveled on to Hawaii and were anchored in Pearl Harbor when we heard of the dropping of the atomic bomb. I remember that I was standing on deck by myself when someone came up to me to tell me the news. I distinctly remember a sick feeling in my stomach. Destroying an entire city's inhabitants cannot be envisioned or understood. The war with Japan was over shortly thereafter.

The President had declared that servicemen would be brought home as quickly as possible. Our ship loaded as many soldiers as possible and set out for San Diego. Our first meal out to sea was normal for us. The soldiers ate first and then the crew as each group came off watch.

After eating I went on deck where I found a lot of sick soldiers. I immediately thought them seasick. Then I found out that they had overeaten. Some of them said it was the first good solid food they had eaten in four years. The Navy ate well. The only hardship we had was when we were out to sea for extended periods of time. You started getting lots of reconstituted powdered eggs and milk; bread that was at least

half green; almost no fresh vegetables and fruits and lots of ground beef. We would also run out of fresh water. It was easy to spot because the water began tasting or smelling of diesel oil. Other than that, our chow was wonderful.

Showers aboard ship were also quite interesting at times. Certainly you wouldn't waste fresh water for bathing. That was for drinking and cooking. Salt water came out of those pipes. Since soap would not lather, you had to find something that did. Can you guess what we used? Everyone went around smelling like Colgate. Toothpaste would lather.

We dropped off the soldiers in San Diego and also said goodbye to our crew members who had enough points to go home. With a skeleton crew we made our way back through the Panama Canal. We had so few men that I was asked to take a watch on the bridge. Thank God we did nothing but go straight ahead. We made our way up the Florida coast to Jacksonville and then up the St. James River, anchor-

ing out in the river lashed to another DE. Almost all of the crew left. I remained to place the ship in mothballs. My job was to encase the radio, radar and sonar gear in plastic. I was asked and volunteered to stay on board for this operation and to perform the same on other DEs anchored there. After a month or so I told the officer in charge that I wanted to go home. He begged me to stay, saying that he would assure me that he could get me a Warrant Officer's rating. I had had enough. I traveled by rail to St. Louis to be ushered out of the Navy. I found out that the STANTON was later taken to sea and sunk as a target. What an ignominious end for a gallant fighting ship.

I joined the Navy November 1942. The STANTON was commissioned in August 1943. I was discharged December 1945. The STANTON was decommissioned September 1945. 📖

Note: This text was taken from Charles Becherer's The Stanton Story book he researched and wrote in 2010.

The following petition has been circulating around Montebello for the past week. Nearly 100 residents have signed it. Please get in touch with Mikhailina at montebellovoice@cox.net to affix your name to this document.

**PETITION for RETURN of
BULLETIN BOARDS
in elevator lobbies
August 28, 2016**

**To Montebello Board of
Directors:**

We, the undersigned, respectfully request the return of bulletin boards to the elevator lobbies in all three B-levels of each building.

In the past, our bulletin boards were an excellent source of meeting community needs for a variety of communications and sharing of information: real estate, items for sale, services offered or sought by residents, announcements, and outside vendor services. People looked forward to reading our small-town information exchange forum while waiting for the elevator. While the online Neighbor-to-Neighbor site has tried to fulfill this function, it lacks the simplicity, breadth, and personal touch of simple index cards on the physical bulletin boards.

The elevator lobbies on the basement levels are not showrooms and do not drive away potential buyers. In fact, they demonstrate what an active, vibrant community Montebello is. We believe bulletin boards are appropriate and necessary in the basement elevator lobbies.



The August 28 potluck, hosted in Building 1 by Stacia "Lady Bird" Novy, Donald and Karen Barnes, and Carole Appel, featured a bird theme. Above (from left) Elaine and Joel Miller sharing dinner with Terry and Prudy Stefaniak.

Yes, Virginia, there *are* children at Montebello

By *Mikhailina Karina*

Children can be an elusive species at Montebello. Since they don't have to be registered like pets (or reported as pests), it's difficult to come up with an exact number of these fast-moving, noise-making creatures that occasionally pop up when you least expect them.


In an attempt to document and prove their existence, I stalked the three public school bus stops where these children make brief appearances twice

a day. Even then, my efforts were foiled by several who enjoy the door-to-door Uber-parent car service and forgo the indignities of public transportation. (Hey, Marco!)

The children in these photographs are only those who ride the yellow bus and grudgingly allowed me to corral them for a photograph. I think I shocked them into compliance because I carried an old-fashioned camera and told them it was for a newspaper, which made it sound official because they hadn't been in a newspaper before.

The biggest surprise in my field study was a puzzling absence of middle-schoolers: none got off the bus in the afternoon. Or maybe their elusiveness is downright mythical, which renders them invisible to the naked eye.

In addition, unaccounted and unphotographed are at least half a dozen elementary-age kids attending private schools, thus further hampering my inaccurate head count.

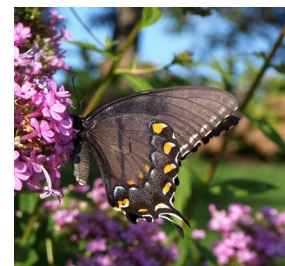
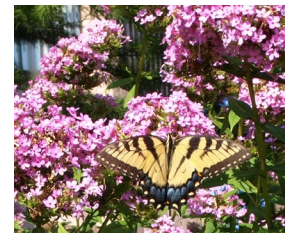
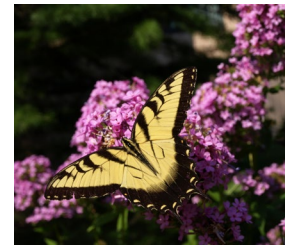
Then we have the preschoolers, a whole adorable gaggle of them, who occasionally emerge with their parents to use the playground and don floaties at the pool. I'd estimate a couple dozen members of the younger set, but then again, it's just a guesstimate based on observation. You do the math. 



Thomas Edison High School squad



Cameron Elementary School bunch



Mark Twain Middle School swarm