

# The MONTEBELLO Voice

an independent gazette

yes we can

January 19, 2017



*Mayan women, Guatemala, January 2017*

*by Rebecca McNeely*

## ***Pet peeves: piles of papers and misplaced recycling***

We have two residents on my floor alone who pretend to live at Montebello but actually do not. One “resides” right near the elevator so I have to see Montebello flyers piled outside the door on a daily basis. The OCD in me is constantly on overdrive and I find it my duty to stop what I am doing and shove these papers under the door knowing that if I don’t they will lay there all month. I find this to not only be an eyesore, but makes our home appear like a frat house. Would someone be interested in writing an article about what our policies are concerning pretend residents? It seems not only a waste of our condo fees but a hazard to our environment to keep shoving notices under doors where there is no sign of life.

My second concern is the lack of knowledge some of our residents have over the recycling procedures. Instead of taking their recyclables down to B3 we have residents who pile boxes with bottles of wine and plastics in the trash room expecting our Montebello workers to take them down to B3. The shelves are clearly marked, “newspapers only.” Perhaps we need a reminder that it is our duty to take these items down? – *Catherine Cooke*

## ***On a fun ship Montebello***

It amuses me to see someone refer to the current lobby TV screens as looking like a cruise-ship’s events announcement. When I first moved to Montebello, in a cold December four years ago, I went to coffee hours, potlucks, and any event that would let me get to know my new neighbors. One Friday, after a day spent unpacking boxes and hanging up clothing, by evening I was tired. But I got dressed anyway to go down to my building’s party room for a scheduled Meet and Greet. I saw David Morrissy there, one of the people I’d gotten to know at an earlier event. I said to him, “I was tired from unpacking and almost stayed home, but then I decided that Montebello was like a big

## **voices on the 37**

cruise ship: if you don’t take part in everything that the ship has to offer, you aren’t getting your ticket’s worth.”

David laughed, and announced to the others in the room, “Carole Appel thinks that Montebello is a cruise ship.” And he told me that night that the theme of the forthcoming Montebello dance night was, indeed, The Love Boat.

I don’t mind seeing those screens in our lobbies; I trust that they will get more informative as time goes on. And I wouldn’t mind seeing old-fashioned bulletin boards in our garage lobbies either. – *Carole Appel*

## ***Bulletin boards ideas***

I have some thoughts on the bulletin board issue. I was not pleased when the boards were removed. Yes, I know there is the Neighbor-to-Neighbor site, but so little information is posted there. I always stopped to look at what was on the boards.

I like Lynn Tjeerdsma’s idea of having resident-run boards. We would set up rules such as the size of the ad, designating which board for types of ads, and require that a current date be placed on each ad. Folks wanting to post will have to go to each of the buildings and put their ads up. I am sure we could find some residents in each building who would be willing to look over the ads and remove those which are outdated, say one-month old. This does not require use of condo money except for purchase and placement of the boards.

Those insisting that electronic listing is the only way to go are simply not taking into consideration limitations or apprehension of some residents in our community. Just look at the limited number of ads in Neighbor-to-Neighbor and you can see how infrequently ads are placed there. When have we ever learned about the passing of a neighbor in a timely way? Not via the monthly newsletter! – *Jo Weber*

## ***Sexy Shakespeare***

This show was so H-O-T: bright colors, Latin-infused music, high-energy dancing, sensuality, skimpy costumes, and humor – I regretted putting it off until the final performance to see Synetic Theater’s *The Taming of the Shrew*. Fortunately, Synetic is bringing the show back: February 15 through March 19.

Over the years, I’ve enjoyed a number of Synetic’s innovative interpretations of Shakespeare’s plays, but this one remains my favorite. Watch the trailer from the original production at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=xfMYU-Aw-RHY&feature=youtu.be](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xfMYU-Aw-RHY&feature=youtu.be).

For ticket information, go to [www.synetictheater.org](http://www.synetictheater.org). – *Mikhailina Karina*

## ***Looking for poker players***

I am seeking fellow poker enthusiasts for a fun, low-stakes home game. Texas Hold-’Em preferred, but other variations are also OK. If interested, please email Matthew at [mmarlay@yahoo.com](mailto:mmarlay@yahoo.com). – *Matthew Marlay*

**The** **MONTEBELLO** **Voice**  
an independent gazette  
Alexandria, Virginia

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## Hooray for old geezers

Attached is an article I cut from the newspaper while living in Florida a few years past. Considering the state of decisiveness in our nation today, I am appreciative for the persons (some much older than I) described in the article. — *Thomas Lasch*

### Be patient with elderly

By John T. Madigan  
Rockledge

The other day at our local Veterans of Foreign Wars post in Rockledge, the term “old geezers” came up and got bandied around, as is our custom.

“Old geezers” remember the Great Depression and World War II, Pearl Harbor, Guadalcanal, Iwo Jima and the USS Missouri in Tokyo Bay. Old geezers remember Korea, the Pusan perimeter and Inchon.

They remember the Chosin Reservoir and Heartbreak Ridge, Vietnam, the Cold War, the Space Age and the moon landing.

If you see an old geezer at a sporting event, he will place his hand over his heart as he sings our national anthem. He sings with gusto and knows the words.

Old geezers get embarrassed when someone curses in front of women or children, and they don't like the violence and filth on TV and in the movies.

They seldom brag unless it's about their grandchildren. It's old geezers who know our great country is protected by young men and women in the military serving their country — not by politicians.

More than ever in these trying times, this country needs old geezers and their values.

So if you get exasperated at some old geezer who is driving too slowly, remember this: If it weren't for old geezers, we all might be speaking German or Japanese today instead of English.

## voices on the 37



### Cool shops

Select Seconds (*top photo*) is an INOVA Mount Vernon Hospital thrift shop with an extensive selection of clothing and household goods. Voilà Pastry and Café will satisfy your sweet tooth. Both are within walking distance, just across from the Metro. — *photo by Regina Ryder*

**Wednesday Champions**  
(From left) **Bill McNary, Michelle Melik and Scott Choinski.** Not pictured are Jackie Fleming and Jim Weatherly.

## Montebello first half champions 2016

The Montebello Bowling League recently crowned their First Half Champions for both Monday and Wednesday Nights.

The Monday Night Champions for the first half were: Virginia Nickich, Joe McNeely, Carolyn Strano and Jim Weatherly. The winning team was not decided until the last night of bowling before the break.

The Wednesday Night Champions for the first half were: Bill McNary, Scott Choinski, Jackie Fleming and Jim Weatherly with Michelle Melik filling in nicely for Jim while he was away. The winning margin was just one game! The rest of the league is looking forward to a spirited challenge in the 2<sup>nd</sup> half.

It's not too late to join the fun. We have openings for full-time and substitute bowlers on either night. Come join the fun by calling Mark Woods at 703-498-0143 or just stop by the lanes on Monday or Wednesday nights at 7 p.m. — *Mark Woods*



**Monday Champions**  
(From left) **Virginia Nickich, Joe McNeely and Carolyn Strano.** Not pictured is Jim Weatherly.



# Do you want the board to curtail your amenities?

By Peg Wesbecher and Ruth Hieneman

In the last quarter of 2016 the Board of Directors established the Ad Hoc Committee on Cost Savings (AHCCS). Was the committee established because of our condo fee increase for 2017? Did the \$1.5 million fitness center construction and the costs associated with all of the equipment purchases, TV monitors, cabling, and Internet access contribute to the condo fee increases? Yes, the fitness center amenity was needed, but perhaps the concessions are less than equitable.

Presently the AHCCS has received suggestions that include some of our premier amenities, such as:

- Reducing the number of days/hours for indoor pool availability;
- Eliminating bowling alley contractor during league play; and
- Decreasing/eliminating some shuttle bus runs.

One of the pool users had this to say, "What is the current cost of this benefit?" The budget shows the pool contract cost is \$116,900. This represents about \$9.59 of the average unit monthly condo fee (\$116,900/1016 units/12 months = \$9.59), which is less than 32 cents a day for the average unit owner.

The cost of the benefit is even lower when you consider only the cost of operating the indoor pool – for the average unit owner about \$6.39 a month or barely 20 cents a day. This estimate is premised on the fact that during the summertime we maintain three lifeguards at a monthly contract cost of about \$19,483, while we maintain only one lifeguard the rest of the year at a monthly contract cost of about \$6,494 (\$6,494/1016 units = \$6.39).

In summary, it is our belief that any cost-saving reductions to pool hours should preserve the opening of the pool seven days a week and include both daytime hours in the morning and/or afternoon for our retiree communi-

ty and evening hours for our working community."

Another resident states, "Our family would consider this a huge loss of a valued amenity, and a significant reduction of our quality of life at Montebello if you were to make the pool available only certain days of the week or fewer hours during the day."

Before we cut amenities, can we consider motion sensors on lights in the public areas (lobbies, community center, fitness center, locker rooms, trash rooms, garages, etc., etc., etc.)? This reduction in energy use would be a considerable cost savings to the community.

Please join in on this discussion. The AHCCS will meet in Building 3, Party Room 3 at 7 p.m. this Thursday, January 19. Director John Powers has stated the pool will be first on the agenda for this meeting. If you have suggestions/comments, please email Director Powers at [jrpowers@us.net](mailto:jrpowers@us.net). We strongly encourage your attendance. 📍

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## Notice to all residents:

### The board is considering reducing the hours of the indoor pool!

By Diane Bastin

On January 12th we received a Montebello Condominium eMail Bulletin inviting all residents to attend the Ad Hoc Committee for Cost Savings meeting on Thursday, January 19th at 7 p.m. in PR3. If you clicked on the attachment you may have noticed that one of the proposed cost savings is to reduce the number of hours our indoor pool is open. I am concerned that most residents are completely unaware that the board is discussing condensing pool hours. The email in no way provided sufficient notice.

John Powers, who will be facilitating the meeting, informed me that the current proposal is as follows:

#### Monday -Thursday

*proposed* 8 a.m. - 8 p.m. (12 hours)

*current* 6 a. m. - 2 p.m. and

4 p.m. - 10 p.m. (total 16 hours)

#### Friday

*proposed* 2 p.m. - 9 p.m. (7 hours,

no change)

#### Saturday - Sunday

*proposed* 11 a.m. - 7 p.m. (8 hours)

*current* 11 a.m. -9 p.m. (total open 10 hours)

This would result in a condo fee saving of \$1 per owner per month, or \$12,480 per year. Every dollar saved is definitely worth considering, however, there are some overarching concerns at stake.

A few observations:

(1) A number of regular users swim every morning before 8 a.m., similarly

a number of regular users like to swim and/or soak in the hot tub at night after work.

(2) Under the new proposal, most residents who work full-time will effectively be unable to access the pool during the week, and the weekend hours will be condensed.

(3) This Sunday (January 15th) there were six people in the pool at 8:30 p.m., more than in the fitness center at the same time. Practically every weekday morning my daughters see at least two people swimming at 7:30 a.m. when they walk to the school bus. My family likes to swim after 8 p.m. during the week and most nights we are not alone in the pool. Clearly there is demand for the pool in the mornings and evenings.

A few issues to consider:

(1) To date, the board has failed to articulate a comprehensive approach to spending and cost cutting. Communications between the board and the residents are definitely improving, but there is such a long history of arbitrary/preferential spending that any restriction of access to amenities we all pay for and take for granted should only be considered after thorough vetting and input from all residents.

(2) Every owner pays a condo fee and must have access to all the amenities, whether or not he/she uses them. To maximize the market value of our condominiums, all the amenities must be available to every resident seven days a week. By condensing its hours, our pool, which is one of Montebello's premier amenities, no longer would meet this criteria.

(3) Just one recent example of controversial spending: the fitness center was lavishly furnished with hardly any input from residents. Some would like to install even more machines in the fitness center. Do the pool users now have to sacrifice to help make up these funds? One resident calculated that it will take 125 years to recoup \$1 per month on our condo fees on that investment. Montebello did need a more modern fitness center, but...

Most importantly, there are so many obvious alternative ways Montebello could realize significant savings. Ultimately it is up to the residents to speak up. I have been in communication with John Powers and several board members on this issue. A few other people have shared helpful feedback as well, but the board needs to hear from you.

Whether or not you use the pool is not as much the issue as what your opinion is about access, maintenance, and spending on Montebello's amenities. What type of community do we aspire to be? Do we want to make sure all residents have equal access to the amenities? What do we want to be able to tell prospective buyers? Should our board provide better notice to all residents when it is considering changing long-standing rules that all of us have been relying on? Do you have helpful cost saving ideas that you wish to share with the committee?

Please consider attending the meeting on Thursday, January 19, from 7 to 8:30 p.m. in PR 3 and/or sending an e-mail to John Powers at jrpowers@us.net. This is a fact-gathering meeting. The board wants to hear from you. 📧

## Hacked?!



The Montebello Voice

Was it the Russians? The Chinese? Or a fat guy sitting in his mother's basement in Jersey? At least 17 respected Montebello residents agree that our cruise ship monitors in the lobbies are impossible to read.

Exhibit A: The Announcement(s) page has dark writing over a dark green tree. Exhibit B: The Neighbor-to-Neighbor page has tiny dark writing over an equally leafy background. Virtually invisible to the naked eye is more information at the bottom of the page. Ditto for the Real Estate page.

Moreover, Art in Montebello, an officially sanctioned committee with TOR and all that jazz, has been downgraded to a club status on the Clubs and Activities link. And the calendar of events on the opening screen is from a week ago. Let's ask the management to make the promised "plethora of information" on these monitors readable, as well as attractive. – *Mikhailina Karina*



# A plan for the peaceful yet sporty solution to all problems at Montebello

## Diary of a new resident Entry No. 4

By Rebecca Long Hayden

*Dear Diary,*

We've reached a milestone: We've lived at Montebello six months, and we've never lived in a friendlier place, perhaps because when you leave your condo, everyone you meet is your neighbor. I'm charmed by the civility, the plethora of accents, and by the diversity. It's a smorgasbord, not like any neighborhood I've lived in, from Wiesbaden (Germany) to Memphis (Tennessee). We both love it here!

However, Dear Diary, at the six-month mark, I'm acquainted now with the tadpoles and furry things swimming under the smooth surface. Montebelloans are agreeably prone to disagree. There's fractiousness aplenty. That is to say, we're gloriously human.

There are pet people and anti-pet people, wood chippers and gravelites. I never saw the old lobby furnishings, but not everyone likes the new décor, a tasteful blandness, the usual result of trying to please a great many people.

There could never be conflict among a group called the Naughty Knitters, a delightful name, but rumors suggest an-

other gentle-sounding club went belly up because of strife among the members. I daren't repeat such rumors, since truth and rumor are distant cousins if they're related at all.

So I've been new in school, new on the job, and new in neighborhoods, and I know not to get on-board and rock the boat. Don't tell your colleagues you know a better brand of paper clip, water-cooler, or computer until you're well into the sixth month, and then proceed with caution. People don't like change, particularly when suggested by newcomers. Still, I can't help myself. I'm so excited, for I have the answer to all Montebello issues, and I can't wait to tell you. Bocce.

The beauty of Bocce:

First, the court is small. I imagine we could find a flat place on the Montebello premises that would accommodate the smaller, typical residential court.

Second, the rules are simple (see insert).

Third, it's not a physically demanding game. All ages can play.

Fourth, a bocce set is inexpensive.

Thus each team usually has a set of its own, for practice and so on (LL Bean has a nice one for \$99.00).

Last, all bocce players regardless of gender eventually morph into something like this fellow I photographed at play in France, suave, continental – the “bocce” look – European and sexy. I already possess a black sweater, jeans, and white tennis

### The Rules:

One point is given for each bocce ball that is closer to the pallino, or “small ball,” than the opposing team's bocce balls. The pallino distance marker can be used to determine which balls are closer. The game continues until 12 points have been scored or to pre-determined points set by the players before the game starts.

shoes.

Now I come to my plan for problem-solving: All Montebello disputes will be settled on the bocce court.

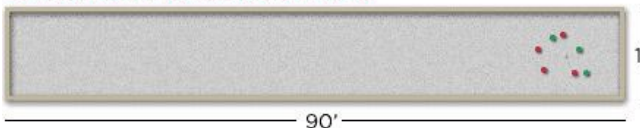
Once we get a signed legal waiver of responsibility from all present residents, past residents, their pets, and anyone considering becoming a resident, spectator, or in any way connected to the sport, we can proceed. I'm assuming this won't take more than ten or fifteen years.

Then we build the courts. Then everyone learns to play, by a mandate in the by-laws. Then each building recruits a team, and there's a tournament between buildings. The team that wins the First Annual Montebello Bocce Olympics gets to decide something important, such as whether pink begonias or red ones are planted in the flower beds by the gate.

After that, for example, if the consensus of Building 1 is gravel, and the consensus of Building 4 is wood chips, another tournament is arranged. All the neighbors come, wearing the colors of their teams. There will be cheering, dancing, refreshments, and stylish tennis shoes (that cost an absurd amount of money). Winner decides! Gravel or wood chips.

Doesn't that sound like more fun than stuffy board meetings, letters to the editor, or 30-second surveys? Well.

Official Bocce Dimensions: 13' x 90'



Typical Club Dimensions: 13' x 76'



Typical Residential Dimensions: 10' x 60' - 12' x 70'





I take it back. I love the 30-second surveys.

What's that you say, Dear Diary?

It won't work? Why?

Oh. I'm too new. I don't know the ramifications? It's been tried? No one wants this? There's no flat spot? What about the grass? Will it spark violence? Too costly? OMG! Liability issues!

Oh. OK. You're probably right, but I can't call you "Dear" Diary right now. You've rained all over my bright shining idea.

Still. If not as a problem-solving technique, how about just for fun? Even people who don't like to play bocce like to watch. It gets folks outside. Surely there's a flat space somewhere, like by the picnic area near Building 5, where the hills would make a natural amphitheater. There's a grill and tables, too, just to expand the possibilities for friendly gatherings without a trek through locker rooms, ramps, ID presentation, eyeball scans, and so on.

What do you say to that, Diary?

Right! I knew it! You agree! So see you real soon, friends and neighbors, wearing your team colors, ready to roll on the bocce court! 📧

*Yours truly,  
Rebecca from Texas*

# Montebello by the numbers

By Matthew Marley

**Y**ou see your fellow Montebellans (Montebellonians?) every day. You could be married to some (well, one) of them, related to others, and friends with still more. But have you ever wondered about the people who live in our development? If so, here is a brief statistical profile of the wonderfully diverse set of people comprising Montebello.

Montebello's four towers house 1,745 people, 52% of whom are female. We average 1.63 persons per household. Therefore, you can see that most of us (56%) live in one-person households; only 7% have four or more people in the household. About 48% of adults (15 and older) are married; 24% have never married, and the rest are widowed, divorced, or separated.

The median age of Montebello residents is 61.1 years, meaning that half of our residents are older than that and half are younger. 9.4% of residents are under age 18; those children live in 79 different households.

Eight hundred eighty-five Montebello residents are currently in the labor force. As you might expect from our convenient location and shuttle bus, a fairly high proportion of residents take Metro to work – 32%. 6.7% of residents work from home, and the rest drive to their place of work. Forty percent of those work sites are in Virginia, and 60% are outside of the state. Our average commute length is just over 32 minutes. Perhaps to combat the area's notoriously bad traffic, we have spread out our departure times: we leave for work throughout the morning, with 15% leaving between 6:30 and 7:00, 18% between 7:00 and 7:30, and so on. This pattern continues throughout the morning.

We are quite a well-educated group of folks! Of adults 25 and older, 27% have a bachelors degree, and 40% have a graduate/professional degree. These people tend to have a scientific

bent – 61% of the people with at least a bachelor's degree earned that degree in a scientific, engineering, or related field. The median household income at Montebello is \$95,313. This is somewhat lower than Fairfax County as a whole, but is not entirely surprising given the relatively high number of retired people.

Finally, about 15% of residents moved in the past year, making our population slightly more mobile than that of the country as a whole. Montebello's housing units are about 62% owner-occupied, with the rest being rented or vacant. Our median monthly housing expense is \$1,800 – not all of which, I promise, goes to condo fees.

These few numbers just provide a pretty rough sketch of what we're like. Future installments might compare Montebello's numbers to those from the U.S. as a whole, Virginia, and Fairfax County, as well as current and historical numbers.

Some details, disclaimers, and caveats:

(1) All of these statistics come from the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey, which is the nation's "premier source for detailed information about the American people and workforce." These numbers are all freely available from the Census Bureau website.

(2) Montebello makes up its own Census tract. A Census tract is a small geographic area with between 1,200 and 8,000 people. See additional explanation and details on the Census website.

(3) Sorry, Building 5 residents, these numbers don't include you. For whatever reason, Montebello's Census tract only includes Buildings 1-4, plus one house down on Blaine Drive.

(4) The American Community Survey is an annual survey, but for small geographic areas the publicly-available datasets are five-year rolling averages. These numbers are from 2011-2015.

(5) These numbers are all subject to measurement and other types of survey error, so they may not be 100% accurate. I did not include the margins of error that the Census Bureau produces for each of its statistics. These are available on the Census Bureau website. 📧

# See you at the movies

By Mitchell Levy

Here's my reviews of my choices for best movies for 2016:

## Moonlight

The coming-of-age and awareness of an African-American boy in Florida. The story, acting and directing are superb. His challenges often supercede complex race, gender, family and life's issues. The cast carries the story to new heights of cinematic achievement. Voted best drama by the Golden Globes and my choice as well. Based on true events.



## Hidden Figures

The well-crafted true story of three African-American women in the early stages of the NASA space program. Not only must they overcome gender discrimination, but more poignantly, race discrimination as they strive to contribute to the success and safety of the astronauts and the American Space Program.

The cast is flawless with Kevin Costner and Jim Parsons excelling in their support roles.



## Lion

Another superb movie based on true events based on a young Indian boy separated from his family and who ultimately gets adopted by an Australian couple and taken to Australia to be raised. His quest is to reconnect with his family in India after many years of separation. His journey is the heart and soul of the movie. Stay through the credits for the bonus footage.



## Fences

A brilliant adaption of the Pulitzer Prize-winning play by August Wilson about a man who is a sanitation worker in Pittsburgh and his family. Denzel Washington's acting and directing lifts the movie to heavenly heights as does Viola Davis. The movie is over two hours long and often gut-wrenching.



## LA LA Land

Reminiscent of those bright and cheery Gene Kelly and Fred Astaire musicals of the 40s and 50s. The acting, directing, script and the music and dancing is well worth the price of admission.



## Manchester by the Sea

Although an excellent movie, be warned, many of the audience, men and women, left the theater wiping their eyes. Heart-breaking. Munching on popcorn and drinking soda is not recommended. This movie will move you. Recommend this movie not be last on your list. See the others after this one.



So there you have it! MitchsMoviePickZ Best of 2016. Overall, 2016 turned out to be especially productive to release a good number of excellent movies to please devoted movie-going audiences. 🍿

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## out & about



### Farewell, Liz Foltin

*After three years as Montebello's general manager, Liz Foltin is leaving her position. The community gave her a farewell reception on January 13. Liz (center) with front desk receptionist Joyce Lipscomb and long-time former board president Doug Kennett.*

*Photo by Carole Appel*

### Riveting Rosie

*Last year, historian/actress Mary Ann Jung enthralled Montebello with her portrayal of Amelia Earhart. On January 12 she returned for another gig as Rosie the Riveter, the WWII icon of women empowerment. Two residents (with impressive improv chops) donned period hats to portray the Roosevelts.*

*Photos by Joel Miller*



### Party bus

*Our shuttle bus driver, Mekonnen Wega, celebrated his 29th birthday on January 15 with appreciative bus riders. He blew out the candles with assistance from his daughter, Exodus.*

*Photo by Kim Santos*



### Wild, wonderful

*First-time Art in Montebello exhibitor Jerry Stedje explains how he photographed wild life in Alaska and Antarctica at the opening reception on January 7. The show will be on display in the café through February 10.*

*Photo by Joel Miller*

## cup of joe



*The ever-popular Cup of Joe on the first Saturday of every month brings a lively crowd of neighbors to the Community Center. The next coffee social will be on February 4 from 9 to 11 a.m.*

*Photos on this and following page by Dian McDonald*

# cup of joe



# The Phantom Menace strikes again

By Elizabeth Card

A couple of weeks ago I got a bee in my bonnet about changing the mattress cover (you know, the one that you zip around the mattress to protect it from dust, allergens, pet dander, etc.)

So, one fine morning, I stripped off the linens, wrestled the mattress off the bed and stood it on its end on the floor, propping it upright against my husband's gentleman's chest. After removing and discarding the old (worn and yellowed) mattress cover and airing the mattress for about an hour, I began the laborious process of sliding on the new cover. (Note to self: When purchasing a new mattress cover one should ensure to get the correct DEPTH, as opposed to the one I bought, which turned out to be ENORMOUS and far too deep for our not super-extra-deep-Princess-and-the-Pea mattress).

Next thing I know ...

One inquisitive 4-year-old Abyssinian cat had leapt from the floor to the windowsill to the gentleman's chest and then atop the precariously-balanced mattress – where he settled in happily,



*King of the hill: Phantom conquers the mattress*

began to take a leisurely bath and examine the popcorn ceiling mere inches from the top of his head. This, while I am struggling to keep the mattress upright while zipping it into the too-large mattress cover before repositioning the whole thing back on the bed.

It took a while, but I was finally able

to coax the cat into relinquishing what he believed to be his new, soft, 9-inch wide perch, all the while explaining to him that this was a very temporary furniture arrangement and NOT a new



aerie for him!

I can't wait to see what he does when I attempt to replace the too-large replacement mattress cover with one that fits.

As a friend said, "Abyss are soooo helpful!" 🐾



*Beautiful day for a walk along the Potomac River at Jones Point Park near the historic lighthouse – the water was still and the sky so pretty.*

*Photo by Holden Coy*

## final glance



*A nation in peril*

*by Azita Mashayekhi*