

The MONTEBELLO Voice

an independent gazette tomorrow is another day

July 27, 2017



Sign up for Montebello Bowling League's Monday and Wednesday sessions League starts on September 6

By Mark Woods

The Montebello Bowling League is now looking for a few good men and women to join the fun. The start of the 2017-2018 season is right around the corner. No experience is necessary. No, really! Do you have a smile? Then you can bowl. Montebello supplies the lanes, the balls and the shoes. In fact, if you need a refresher or just want to roll a practice game to see "if you still have it" or want to learn, we will make arrangements for one of our league captains to join you at the lanes to encourage you. Just give League President, Mark Woods at call at 703 498 0143 or email him at mjddwoods@earthlink.net. We are looking for subs and/or regular bowlers for either Monday or Wednesday night. The league is coed and it's handicapped so it really doesn't matter how good you are. Trust us on this one. It's just a matter of having fun!

Free electronics recycling service

By Diane Bastin

Recycle your old fire extinguishers! Sarah and Sophie's next recycling date is September 9. If you have electronics or hazardous household recycling items, please send an e-mail to montebello_e_cycles@icloud.com to arrange a pick up after Labor Day. These are the types of electronic and hazardous household items we can take to the Fairfax County recycling centers: electronics such as computers, TVs, phones, printers, cords, and fluorescent light bulbs, rechargeable batteries (not alkaline, which must be disposed of in the trash), paint, solvents, articles that contain mercury, fire extinguishers, and aerosol cans. Please make sure items are sealed and contents marked.

voices on the 37



Once again, the restaurant across from Montebello is changing its nationality. The new Taj of India Indian Cuisine & Bar is replacing Balkan cuisine at the Euro Bistro & Grille.

Home shopping network

By Mikhailina Karina

Two weeks ago I purchased a 1995 edition of the Montebello Garden Club cookbook. For a buck at an estate sale in Building 3. By now, many neighbors know about the estate sales that frequently take place at Montebello on the weekends. It's a pleasant way to score some finds without leaving the premises. One company that frequently hosts these sales is Items of Value. Get on their email list at www.itemsofvalue.com and you'll be in the know about the next opportunity to find a collectible at a bargain price.

Cover photo by Dian McDonald. Taken at L'Auberge Chez François in Great Falls

The **MONTEBELLO** Voice

an independent gazette
Alexandria, Virginia

This publication accepts no funding or oversight from advertisers, residents, or the Montebello Condominium Unit Owners Association. All opinions are encouraged and reflect the diversity of views in the community. All articles and photographs come from Montebello residents. To receive or contribute to this email-only gazette, contact montebellovoice@cox.net or visit on the web at www.montebellovoice.com.

Editor & Designer.....Mikhailina Karina

Contributors.....Diane Bastin, Jackie Fleming, Dian McDonald, Brian Nance, Kim Santos, Mark Woods

How well do you know Montebello's rules and regs? The Communications Committee has put together an attractive and informative primer with useful information for new residents and old-timers. Check it out on the association website at http://www.montebello.org/document_view.asp?id=2747

Board plans new furniture for outdoor pool, names chair for the new Grounds Committee and resident consultant

By Mikhailina Karina

The 1980s was known for a lot of things, but few aficionados are scouring vintage stores in search of iconic furniture from that epoch. Montebello's white-and-yellow outdoor chairs that leave 2-inch stripes on people's derrières (when they don't fall through the straps) have been around since the early days of the Reagan Administration. Many of the tables have cracking tops and umbrellas that metamorphose into missiles that fly out from their bases on windy days. Lots of great memories.

Next summer, the board plans to replace all the outdoor pool furniture with something more comfortable and attractive. A story board with proposed furnishings will go up in front of the office later this week.

According to a resolution in the board's packet, the new set-up will include "60 chaise lounges; 68 chairs; 16 round tables; 1 rectangular intake table; 13 umbrellas of 7.5-ft. dia., with

bases (5 with wheels); 3 umbrellas of 6-ft. dia.; 1 off-set single-post umbrella; 4 wall-mounted storage cabinets; 2 trash containers; and signage." Best of all, General Manager George Gardner said at the July 25 work session, the total cost of \$65,000 is a 30 percent discount off the regular price because it will be purchased at the end of the season. New furniture will be delivered next spring.

Although the board does not vote at work sessions, two residents were named to leadership positions. They will be confirmed at a regular meeting: Virginia Hodgkinson will head the new Grounds Committee. Watch MMLs for meeting times and opportunities to participate. In addition, Peter Aliferis, who regularly attends board meetings, has been named resident consultant for construction development and oversight. His impressive résumé in the board packet, lists extensive experience in managing a variety of large federal government projects. 🏠



Fire extinguisher training session on July 13. Photo by Jackie Fleming

Deadwood

RIP the lopsided cherry tree next to Building 3. Some people thought you were an eyesore because of the misshapen branches that could barely generate any foliage. You taught us to find hidden beauty in what others considered conventionally ugly. Now you're a pile of mulch enriching the lives of your forest brothers and sisters. There is no other like you.





The beautiful original woodwork still frames the room's quartet of tall windows and French doors leading to the balcony. Photo courtesy of Joy Piazza, East Campus Bed & Breakfast

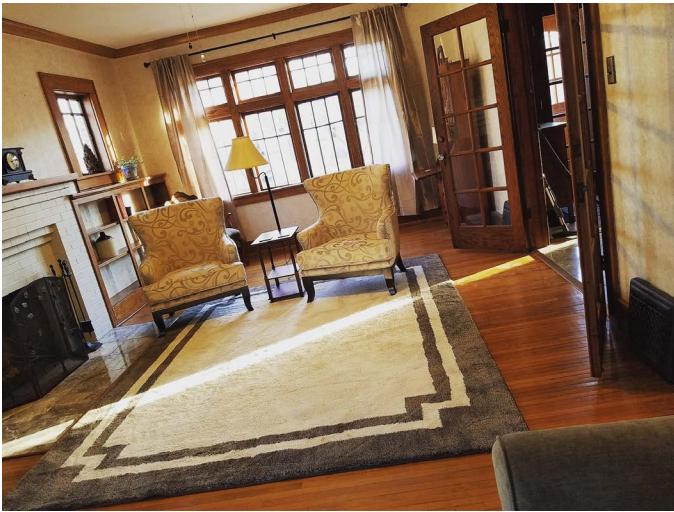
I used to live across the street from Brad Pitt in college,” I like to tell my hard-to-impress high school students as an ice breaker. It never fails to grab their attention, even though Brad Pitt is now in his 50s and no longer a heartthrob for the younger set. My statement has a teensy grain of truth cushioned by random facts strung into an impressive statement. The truth is that Brad Pitt is from Missouri and attended the University of Missouri-Columbia at the same time as I did. When I was a freshman in 1985-86, he was a senior in the Journalism School. Did our paths ever cross on a campus of 26,000 students? Perhaps, but not likely. And since he didn't look like Brad Pitt back then and resembled hundreds of other Midwest-

ern boys with blond hair parted in the middle, I am sure I paid him no attention. According to some sources, he was affiliated with the Sigma Chi fraternity, which was across from my first apartment. The fictional part of our neighborliness is that by the time I lived across from Sigma Chi, Brad Pitt had had his bit part as a hot hitchhiker in *Thelma and Louise* and was on his way to super-stardom.

The sunroom at 1315 University Avenue, just off College Avenue, in Columbia, Missouri, was the first apartment I rented on my own. I lived there just for one year, until the building was sold for a bed & breakfast, but memories of that time exactly 30 years ago became so strong during a recent visit to Columbia, I heard Nora Ephron's sage advice, “Everything is copy.” On a recent pilgrimage to Columbia to show

my teenage sons where I'd spent four years, our first stop was at this address. I pointed out the Sigma Chi house and recounted the obligatory Brad Pitt story with all the caveats. We walked to the building's parking lot and I pointed out the row of windows that lined the wall of my room. The little balcony that clinched the deal for me had different wrought-iron furniture and still looked like a charming outdoor nook for a romantic 19-year-old.

In front of the building, a large sign proclaimed East Campus Bed & Breakfast with bold, minimalist brush strokes. Feeling my old J-School chops (and to the horror of my sons) I knocked on the door. A very friendly woman in her early 50s was surprised to see a small delegation of time travelers. After I'd explained that I used to live in this house when I was a student, she in-



The elegant living room today is a far cry from run-down student housing of the past. Photo courtesy of Joy Piazza, East Campus Bed & Breakfast

vited us inside and showed around the first floor. I immediately recognized the original dark-stained woodwork that still framed the doors and windows. My room at the back of the house seemed smaller than I remembered. Joy Piazza, the innkeeper who lives on the premises, explained that the original bathroom was not up to code and a chunk of the room had to be sacrificed for a new bath. The gaudy dark green and gold wallpaper that fired my imagination was also long gone and the room was tastefully appointed with antique-style couches as a light-filled haven.

Oddly, in spite of low rent and crazy proximity to campus, I was the only student living in the house at that time. The owner had told me he was planning to sell it and didn't feel like dealing with students. But he must have seen how I'd fallen in love with an impractical sunroom that lacked heat and ventilation, so he let me have it for \$150 a month. My neighbors on the first floor, in the living room, was a developmentally challenged couple with a young son. The super skinny guy bagged groceries; his wife was perpetually angry at our upstairs neighbor for walking too loudly on the stairs to his room. Since my room didn't have a phone jack, I stretched a long extension cord through a small closet that connected our rooms and plugged it in their room.

Gary, the "noisy" man upstairs, turned out to be a quiet local man in his late 20s who liked to wear cowboy boots, which made a bit of noise as he walked upstairs. After the couple with

the baby moved out, he was no longer afraid to come downstairs and we talked in the kitchen. He was impressed with my budding culinary skills, which often included sautéing onions in butter that sent wafts of aroma throughout the house.

Remember velvet paintings people used to buy at gas stations in the '80s? Gary had a velvet painting of the country singer Tanya Tucker in a sexy, half-clad pose. Since I was not familiar with Tanya Tucker's oeuvre, Gary used to blast her music for me from his powerful ste-

reo. He also slightly creepily caressed her velvet portrait. When his girlfriend dumped him for someone with a traveling carnival, he played Little Lies by Fleetwood Mac over and over and over. Also at full volume.

For a while, it was just Gary and me in the house. The dining room was shut off and other upstairs bedrooms were vacant. Then Gary's half-brother, Michael Jackson, moved in. Short, bespectacled, and slightly cross-eyed, Michael worked as a cleaner at Wendy's and loved his job. He was also very sweet to me and the brothers were protective of a quiet young college student living downstairs. When my 1974 Chevy Vega was consuming oil by the quart, they taught me how to operate the dipstick and pour in oil. Weekly. And when I kept losing my muffler and my car sounded like a hog coming down the street, they directed me toward the nearest muffler shop.

Since Gary and Michael did not cook, the kitchen was mine. Before the renovation, the kitchen had very tall wooden cabinets that matched the rest of the house's cherry woodwork. I was able to reach only the lower shelf to store my minimal supplies. The break-



The author during a July 2017 visit to the house at 1315 University Drive in Columbia, Missouri

fast nook was my work space where I kept the typewriter. During one particularly brutal Missouri winter, the furnace had died and the house was frigid. My room with a wall of windows offered no insulation against the subzero temperatures and my parents brought me a space heater. For a few days I slept wearing all my sweats and woolen socks in multiple layers and could still see my breath. Fortunately, the gas stove was operational and I had the bright idea to turn on the burners and open the oven door to heat the kitchen while I typed papers with half-frozen fingers. In retrospect, I am relieved I didn't go out in the blaze of glory. On the flipside, a scorching Missouri summer sent me to spending most of my days in air-conditioned spaces and made my airless nights drenched in sweat.

Because of the house was so close to campus, I always came home for lunch. One time I was glued to my kitchen chair as I read Erich Segal's *Love Story*, a sliver of a novel at 131 pages, in about two hours. My clock radio, a cheap record player/tape deck, and a 13-inch black-and-white TV I'd received for my Bat Mitzvah were my only electronics. Living in that room I began my lifelong love for NPR, which broadcast from a campus studio. I watched J-School's local channel, where my broadcasting sequence friends delivered the news. I had a daily delivery of *The Columbia Missourian*, our school's city newspaper that was required reading for all journalism students. Living on the bottom floor with a balcony that was climbable in three easy leaps was not safe and I kept a can of mace next to my bed.

I moved to the house on University Avenue after living in the dorms had become intolerable due to clashes with other students. I was one of maybe five Russian students at Mizzou. Ronald Reagan was in his second term as

lectured me about what it meant to be an American and basically gave me the "love it or leave it" line. In fact, my roommate was so offended by my views, she moved out mid-semester and crowded with two other people in a tiny room. I was happy to have an unexpected single room and felt better about bringing by unsavory characters. Sadly, three decades after the end of cold war, Russia is considered America's enemy once again. I've always been quick to point out that the beef is between our governments, not our people.



The notorious Vega that roamed the streets of Columbia in 1987

president and the cold war was winding down with crazy nuclear weapons build-up and the Evil Empire speech. My liberal political views and active participation in anti-apartheid campus protests were viewed as unpatriotic by many people in my dorm. They

At the end of my sophomore year, when I planned to remain in Columbia for the summer to take some classes, I needed a place to live. I'd heard about "Ho houses" managed by Grace Ho, a local slumlord. One such edifice had a room for \$90 a month – it was a basement cell wide enough for a bed and small side table; a gurgling pipe

was directly overhead and a window the size of dinner plate provided what natural light it could siphon in. I also considered communal living at the coffee house I frequented on most weekends, The Chez, in the basement of the Presbyterian Church on Hitt Street. I knew all the residents of that hippie establishment because they had to operate the coffee house as part of their deal. Their rent, per semester, was an incredible \$75. But since this was a church, the front door was always open to anyone who needed a shower or a hot meal. Even though I didn't have much common sense back then, I was iffy on the strangers in the shower idea. Which is how I stumbled upon the house on University Avenue, a few blocks from the

J-School and downtown. Always an apartment dweller, I'd never lived in a house before (or since) and was taken by the romantic balcony, gilded wallpaper, and roomy kitchen. The house certainly had character, which is a euphemism for something that needs a bit work. But since I myself was a work in progress, that sunroom was my architectural soul mate where I felt at home and safe to become a nonconformist.

Even though the university was smack in the middle of a conservative state, it had a strong liberal vibe I quickly found in the anti-apartheid movement and in the new fringe classes, peace studies and women studies. One of my first acts of rebellion was to stop shaving my legs. I am a natural brunette with a thick head of hair, so my leg hair growth has always been robust. I cannot recall the exact reason for the wild-and-wooly lifestyle choice, but it probably had something to do with society's patriarchal standards about female beauty. Not shaving my legs was an easy way to shock people.

This being the '80s, I forged my own fashion style with '60s clothes and lots of scarves and jangly jumbo jewelry. I was enamored with my mom's 20-year-old button down skirt that was completely threadbare and ripped in the back. Because the large (and growing) rips exposed my backside, I used to wear pajama shorts beneath it. When my parents saw that I was basically dressed in rags, they expressed their opinion, but quickly gave up on that fight.

Another unusual lifestyle choice was becoming a strict vegetarian. I watched for animal stock in sauces and carefully read all labels. This was probably the hardest to achieve in a meat-and-potatoes culture when veggie burgers were not widely available, but



A portrait of Mikhailina as a young rebel. This photograph on the balcony of the sunroom was taken by Jeff A. Taylor and accompanied a story in the Columbia Daily Tribune in March 1987.

since I still ate dairy, omitting meat and seafood was not hard. And tofu wasn't as bad as it looked. I am still what I call a "vegetarian at heart" and eat seafood. However, it's true that I haven't had a burger in 30 years.

My sons are shocked that I'd managed to attend a Big 12 school and never set my foot inside the football stadium. Or its parking lot. Likewise, I'd never been inside the sports complex for a basketball game or any other sporting event. "But I had season tickets to campus theater and went to the movies three or four times a week," I justify my lack of solidarity with the university's pervasive sports culture. As a member of the Films Committee, I had free access to campus movies that featured all the possible genres and art house films we could bring. I befriended the projectionist, who also worked the light booth in Jesse Hall Auditorium, where high-ticket national and international acts performed. Several

times I watched grown-up concerts while perched on a stool under the dome.

My mom has a framed black-and-white photograph of me sitting cross-legged on a metal chair with scuffy whitewashed bricks behind me. This photograph was taken on my balcony. The photographer shot me from below and captured a haughty expression on my young face. My hands hang forward and reveal two watches on the left wrist. A second-hand denim jack is covered in buttons that range from the artsy, Matisse's Blue Nude, to the political, Divest Now! This photograph illustrates a short profile from the March 26, 1987 Our Town article in the *Columbia Daily Tribune*. Jeff A. Taylor, the paper's photographer, thought I'd make an interesting subject because of my unusual background. Reading the profile now I cringe at how idiotic I sounded back then. Did I really say that and Jeff A. Taylor quoted me out of context?

Here is the opening paragraph:

Mikhailina Karina's passport marks her as a citizen of the United States. But her accent betrays her roots. "I was very self-conscious for many years," she says. But no more. "I'm Russian and damn proud of it." Yikes!

Humility was not my strong point back then:

Karina and her family moved to the United States from Kïev in the Soviet Union eight years ago, when she was 11. "One of the reasons we left was because of me," she says. "I always spoke out against unfair grading. My parents saw I was a smart kid, and they realized I wouldn't have been allowed to grow." Please, get this twit a publicist!

Karina, now a journalism student at the University of Missouri-Columbia, says she is disillusioned with the United States. She has become involved in the shantytown protests on campus. She cried when UMC police carried away her fellow demonstrators last month. "This country is supposed to be so great," she says. "I don't believe in the limitations of the



Mikhailina in front of the Memorial Union, a Mizzou landmark, in 1986.

law. I rely on my own good common sense that I will not kill or steal.” Jeepers, while it’s true I said all those things, the context makes me sound like a total douche! I feel like I was saying stuff because I was immature, angry, and scared. I certainly didn’t have “good common sense”!

As a journalist, Karina says, she can speak out against injustice both in the United States and the Soviet Union. And then Jeff A. Taylor ends the piece with this non-sequitur: *“I would like to live in France or Italy.”* I live in a high-rise home with an Italian name, Montebello, and my husband is French, so I guess if you squint through my Brad Pitt prism, that dream has come true.

Another act of defiance I committed at that house was festooning my Vega with political slogans. I am not sure where I got the idea to transform my car, which was barely operating on two cylinders and had no working radio or defroster (in the winter, I had to clear the inside condensation with a rag while

driving), into a moving leftist billboard in a conservative town. A body shop gave me a few almost-empty cans of paint and I convened a painting party on the parking lot. Across the hood of my beige jalopy I scribbled “born in USSR.” A quote by Emma Goldman, “The most violent element in society is ignorance,” was beneath “soul power, baby!” Remember, I was “damn proud” of my enemy state heritage. Other slogans included “no more apartheid, I’m crying,” “sacrosanct pillars,” and “imperialism sucks big time.” Needless to say, the car stood out in Co-

lumbia. One time I found a lemon stuffed in the exhaust pipe. A muffler shop refused to service me. Someone smashed a beer bottle on it.

My parents were horrified at my living conditions: the very vintage bathroom, an unhygienic (equally vintage) carpet, and lack of security. Actually, it took very little for me to horrify my parents during those years and I did it with relish. What I saw as romantic and social with my interesting neighbors, they saw as run-down communal apartments of the Soviet era. After a year of this youthful experiment, they made me get a non-descript one-bedroom apartment way off campus on Southpark (a.k.a., Sin City), behind the dorm, Schurz Hall, where I first lived. My rent increased by \$100 and the commute had tripled – I still walked to campus with all the heavy books we had to haul – but I’d gained laundry facilities in the basement and a building full of college students. I also adopted my first fluffy black cat and regularly shaved my legs. I began dating a grad-

uate student in English literature. I got a job at Columbia Mall and found that minimum wage retail is soul-sucking and physically draining. I covered my car with ugly brown primer and sold it a year later, on the day I graduated, for \$50 to a junkman. I was on my way to becoming respectable and losing my sunroom edge.

Like a Proustian madeleine, visiting the house at 1315 University Avenue brought back the dreamy, insecure, and hopeful girl I was in 1987. Like me, the house has undergone a respectable transformation, as described on its Facebook page:

“Opened in March 2017, we are a lovely, contemporary + historic [there is a plaque denoting Most Notable City of Columbia Historic Property] Foursquare-styled home with 4 en-suite private guest rooms, lilac flanked balcony, sun deck, private car parking, in-room flat panel cable TV w/HBO, free fast wifi, and gourmet paleo-inspired breakfast. A great choice for adult travelers for business or leisure. Not for children, animals, or parties.”

For as long as the lilac flanks the balcony, my rebel spirit lives on in that house. If life ever brings you to Columbia, Missouri, please stay at this lovely home and remember me to the unforgettable sunroom. 🏠



Joy Piazza, Ph.D.
Innkeeper/Owner
East Campus Bed & Breakfast
1315 University Ave.
Columbia, MO 65201
Ph: 573-416-0212
contact@eastcampusbb.com
https://www.facebook.com/Eastcampusbb/



Aug. 5 – Sept. 8
Montebello Café

*The Finishing Touch
Adorning the Female Crown*



Opening Reception
August 5
4 – 6 p.m.

Photo Exhibit by
Dian McDonald



Johnson family picnic



Joanne Odle and Marie Richards

Picnic sponsor Delores Johnson (middle) with former Mayor of Washington, D.C., Sharon Pratt Kelly and Sonia Johnston, regional president of the John Marshall Bank



Telly and Antonia Demeres



From left: Sally O'Meara, Terry Nettles, Dave Johnson, and Wayne Nettles. Montebello shuttle bus driver Mekonnen Wega (seated) with his children Exodus and Emmanuel

Photos by Kim Santos

montebello marketplace



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THE KING OF COMEDY
THURSDAY JULY 27 7:30 P.M. PARTY ROOM 2



While many of Scorsese's films are terrific indeed, they pale by comparison with Scorsese and De Niro's finest – and most often overlooked – work: *The King of Comedy*. The salutary tale of an aspiring comedian who kidnaps his idol, Jerry Langford (Jerry Lewis, playing close to type), in order to ensure a TV spot, *The King of Comedy* has more to say about the parlous state of modern celebrity culture than any other movie I can call to mind. As the borderline psychopath Rupert Pupkin, De Niro channels the most terrifying elements of *Taxi Driver's* Travis Bickle, his delusional (and supposedly humorous) "at home" monologues every bit as alarming as Bickle's oft-quoted "You talkin' to me?" tirade." (The Guardian)

Joel Miller will introduce the film and lead the post-movie discussion

Chess Game Night with Chess Club

All Levels! All Welcome!
Beginners to Grandmasters!
Play! Share! Learn! Practice!
No Commitment! Just Fun!

4th Thursday
of Each Month (generally)
C.C. Card Room
7:00pm to 9:30pm (latest)

Bring your own Chess Set if you like! – And, if you're brand new to Chess, but you'd like to check out our Chess Club while playing a relatively "quiet" or "cerebral" game that *doesn't* "compete" with the ancient game of Chess from a *noise* perspective, you may bring such a game and hang out with us! (Examples of Games that partner well with Chess: Scrabble, Checkers, Othello, etc.)

Contact Lisa J. Stedge at lisa@stedge.com and/or Nick Nickerson at fxnixson@gmail.com for more information.



Azita Mashayekhi
**Wheel of Life
Photography
Exhibit**

July 17 - August 20

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www.azitaphotography.com

final glance



Hand over Montebello

Photo by Brian Nance