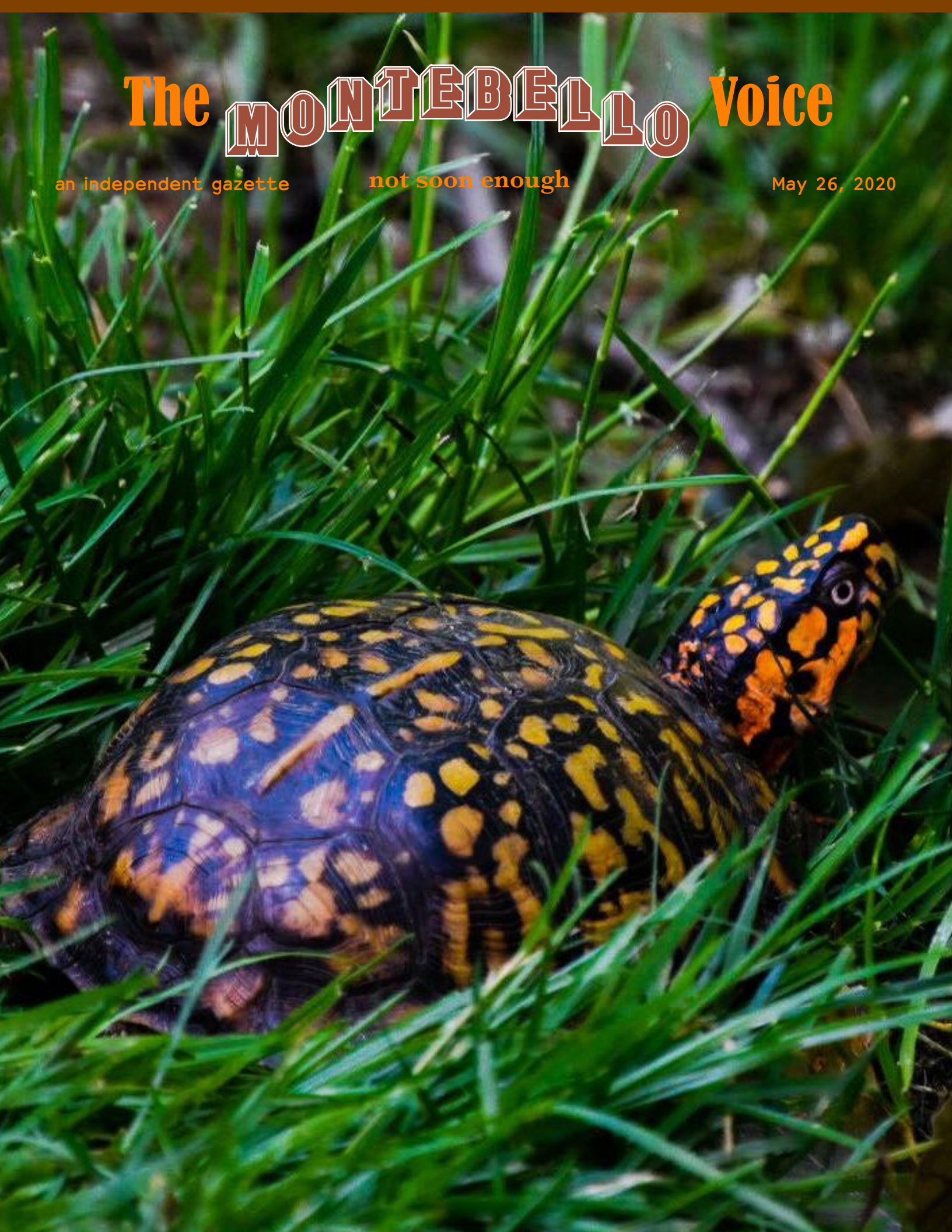


# The MONTEBELLO Voice

an independent gazette

not soon enough

May 26, 2020



## A few quick comments on Amy Friedlander’s excellent “COVID-19 at Montebello – Are we fortunate or prudent?”

1. It’s my understanding that it’s at age 50 that the curve of serious complications and death takes a pronounced turn upward. If so, many more than 50% of MB residents are at risk. And of this larger total, some unknown percent have a comorbidity and are at a greater risk.

2. Experts tell us that a vaccine is a year away, or further. And that until then, a key leg of the stool – testing – is central and is at present woefully inadequate. What percent of MB residents has been tested? What is being done to help get more of us tested?

3. Commercially available masks protect others from us, but not us from others. Can MB do more to find a source of the fully protective type of mask for us? – *Richard Titus*

## Yes to CC renovation

We strongly support the Board’s decision to continue the renovation of the Community Center. It is important to maintain Montebello, including our physical plant, to ensure that our property values are maintained and over time increased. – *Chuck and Bitsy Bullock*

## County and state resources for those in need

We have neighbors who are in need and will hopefully request an advocate. <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/mountvernon/get-help-give-help> – *Guin Jones*

<https://www.va.gov/WHOLE-HEALTH/features/Discovering-Self-Care-Practices.asp> – *Paul Foldes*

## Spring showers

Ever since I was a teenager, the main reason I took a shower every single day was so as not to offend other people I met, not to be offensive in the elevators, in the hallways. Only occasionally would I actually look dirty – like after working in a garden or painting a wall. Now, for the last month, I’ve hardly left my apartment, except to get on the elevator to go to the mail room. I wear a mask. But I find myself taking a shower every day anyway. I ask myself why do I do this? I think it’s the germs, I think it’s wondering what’s floating around in the air, those invisible droplets. I think it’s because I’m not ready to give up. – *“Corona Costanza”*

*Photo by Jackie Fleming*

## Celebrate with Class of 2020

A red, white, and blue celebration that Montebello residents with a view of Old Towne Alexandria will be able to see on June 13.

[https://www.alxnow.com/2020/05/19/special-masonic-temple-lighting-planned-to-celebrate-t-c-graduates/?mc\\_cid=5b5feb9666&mc\\_eid=a81e5eefc3](https://www.alxnow.com/2020/05/19/special-masonic-temple-lighting-planned-to-celebrate-t-c-graduates/?mc_cid=5b5feb9666&mc_eid=a81e5eefc3) – *Diane Bastin*

*Cover:*

*Turtle by building 2*

*Photo by Linda Brownlee*



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

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# Weighing pros and cons

By Matthew Marlay

Recent editions of *The Times of Montebello* and *The Montebello Voice* have contained several articles related to the Community Center renovation, with those in the *Times* being almost uniformly pro-renovation and those in the *Voice* being almost uniformly anti-renovation. This flurry of articles has perhaps given the impression that a large majority of residents is adamantly opposed to a renovation and that only the Board of Directors is adamantly pro.

My guess is that most of us owners/residents are somewhere in between these two extremes.<sup>1</sup> In an attempt to find some middle ground between the two factions, I went back through the articles to see what each side had to say. Unfortunately, I think both sides have failed to make convincing cases for their respective positions. Below I have summarized the main arguments that each side has made, and noted what I find problematic about each.

### Pros:

**“The renovation is already paid for – we have the money in the reserves.”**

Sure, this is true as far as it goes – we DO have the money in our reserves. However, just because we have the money in the reserves doesn't mean we need to spend it, and it doesn't mean we have to spend it on this particular project. We have a long list of reserve projects, and many of those projects are not optional (e.g., the fire system replacement). We could redirect our reserve spending there.

1 In the interests of transparency, my own position is that we should do the renovation, at least parts of it. However, I think some parts of the plan are problematic/unnecessary and could be reconsidered. And the eye-watering expense makes me nervous.

**“This will have no effect on condo fees because it is already funded.”**

See above – yes, we have the money in our reserves. However, if we spend down the reserves, they will have to be replenished; if they have to be replenished, that money will come from condo fees. Since I moved to Montebello in 2011, condo fees have increased by 30%; in that same time, inflation has only been 14%.<sup>2</sup> A trend of fee increases twice the rate of inflation is not sustainable.

**“We need the additional space.”**

Maybe we do, maybe we don't. However, perhaps the better question than “Where do we put new staff?” is “Why do we need new staff in the first place?” Our physical plant (grounds, buildings, etc.) has not changed, so it isn't clear why we need additional people to run Montebello than what we've had in the past.

### Cons:

**“We shouldn't spend the money during a recession.”**

Why not? It's not obvious to me how the two things are necessarily connected. If we have the money saved already, it shouldn't matter when we spend it. Additionally, if we do construction during a time when few other people are, we might get a better rate on the labor and materials because we are not competing with other construction projects.

**“This will lead to condo fee increases.”**

Not necessarily – it might well keep condo fees *high* (since, as noted above, we would have to replenish the reserves), but it would not necessarily lead to fee *increases* beyond what we would otherwise see.

2 Based on the CPI, from the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

**“The Board is acting unilaterally.”/ “The Board is acting against the wishes of most owners.”**

We have been positively deluged with requests for input, focus groups, info, etc. Plus, we voted; disliking the outcome of a vote is not the same as the vote being unfair. Yes, the Board is certainly pushing aggressively for the renovation, and often comes across as haughty in its dismissal of the concerns of the antis, but they are definitely not acting unilaterally.

**“We can do some of the renovations without doing everything.”**

Can we? It seems that once you gut the CC to, for example, replace the HVAC system, you might as well replace all the systems that need it. That makes more sense than doing the HVAC system one year and the wiring or something else the following year.<sup>3</sup>

This is just a quick summary of what both sides have been arguing. To be clear, I am not saying that these arguments are incorrect or do not have merit; instead, both sides need to make more of an effort to prove their respective cases. I invite representatives of each side to address the points I raised above and make a convincing case for why we should (or should not) proceed with the renovation. 🏠

3 To be fair, Gregory Copley's article in the most recent *Voice* (5/18/20) discusses this point in greater detail and acknowledges that we might want to bundle some of the interior changes.

# In support of the CC renovation

By Ludwig G. Kuttner

I must disagree with and comment on the recent article attacking the reconstruction of the Community Center. Preparation for the reconstruction began almost 10 years ago. Significant portions of the Community Center are no longer up to building code. Their replacement is vital, particularly the electrical and HVAC systems. Bringing the building up to code will increase the safety of Community Center users. Some of the costs attacked in the article are beyond the control of the Board of Directors, including property taxes and insurance among other things. I have checked prices in other condominiums and contrary to what the article states the value of units in Montebello has held up well. As Amazon implements its plans to move 25,000 high-paying jobs into Arlington, the value of units

in this condominium will increase substantially.

Delaying implementation of the Community Center reconstruction will only increase costs. Rather, once construction commences it should proceed with as little delay as possible to keep costs down. The costs of labor and materials will only increase over time. The most recent issue of the Montebello Times includes a letter from John Powers of Building 4 who has changed his mind about the need to proceed with the reconstruction of the Community Center. I urge all to read that well-thought-out article

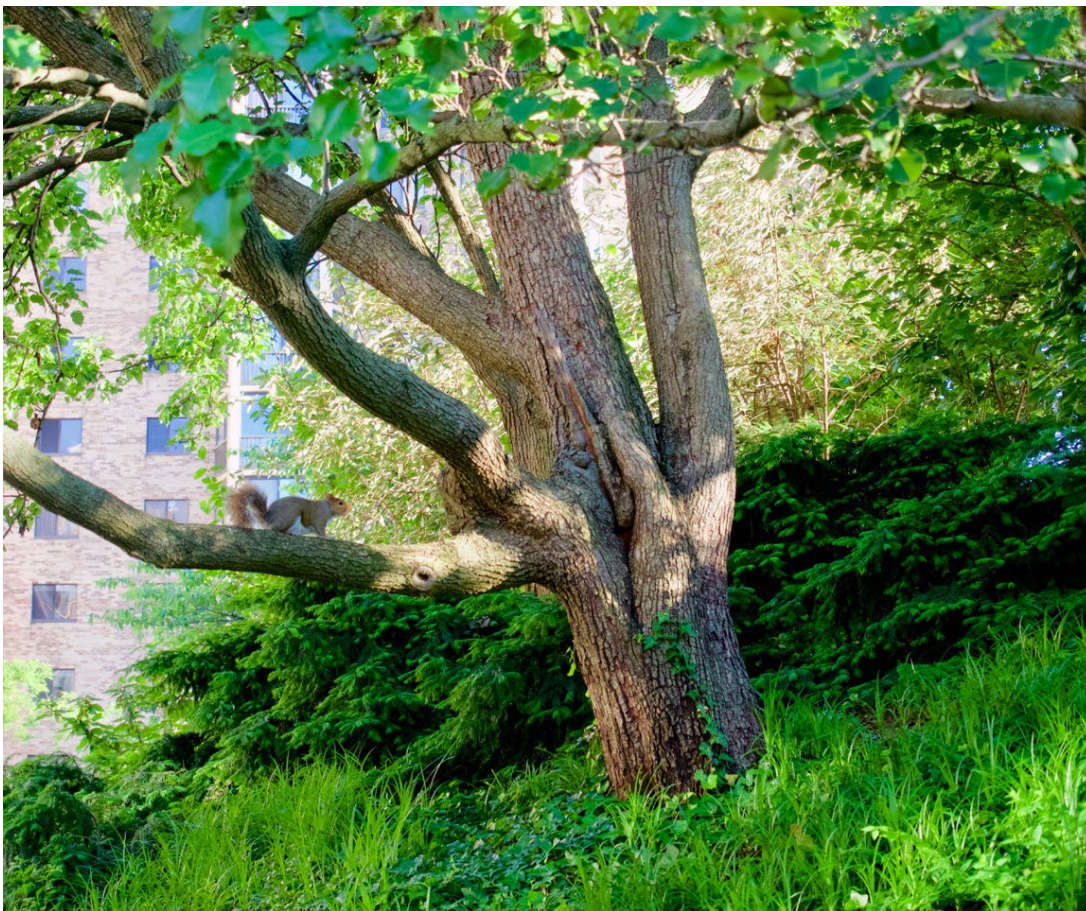
In decades of experience as an executive in industry and government, including a stint as Deputy Assistant Commissioner for Procurement of the Internal Revenue Service, I have encountered no one with more expertise and integrity than that of our Board.

Our finances are in excellent condition, thanks to the management of this Board and its predecessors. Thanks to their expertise and integrity, Montebello meets or exceeds the standards established by the Virginia Condominium Act. Our independent audit has found no need to restate or revise any portion of the financial statements. We have more than enough cash on hand to execute this necessary project, and will have substantial funds on hand for future requirements. Every owner is encouraged to familiarize her/himself with the financial statements and budget of Montebello.

My wife and I attended a number of town halls dealing with the Community Center renovation. Board member presentations were cogent and informative. All questions were answered. I am mystified why none of those expressing negative opinions in the earlier article bothered to express their views at these or earlier town hall meetings dealing with the Community Center.

If someone drunkenly insulted the Copleys as asserted in the article, the approximate date that those insults occurred and the names of those whom the Copleys accuse of insulting them should have been reported to the office for investigation. I have yet to encounter anyone disorderly in the Café while it was open, and we dined there frequently while it was open.

In closing, let me assure readers that any offense caused by this letter is unintentional. 🙏



*Photo by Dian McDonald*

# Tough love from China

By Donald and Karen Barnes

**I**t is good to know that bonds forged in happier times can continue to bind us together in spite of forces that would pull us apart.

During our ten years in China, we met many wonderful people who helped us immensely in bridging the cultural gaps that exist between our two countries. These gaps include both “natural” ones (e.g., their enamel-peeling Chinese Sichuan hotpot vs. our stout German potato salad) and “unnatural” ones (e.g., over-statements and trade wars initiated by our countries’ respective leaders). In the unsettling climate of today’s COVID-shrouded world, the forces of nationalism, the penchant to blame-and-shame the other guy, and the divisive effects of rancor-raising rhetoric can be seen daily.

Operating below the constant exchanges lobbed by the protagonists who are playing to their respective domestic audiences, especially in an election year, we have maintained our regular exchanges with Chinese friends and colleagues via English conversations on Skype and technical scientific exchanges by email.

Still, we were not quite sure what to make of a small, football-sized package from an unknown address in Beijing that was left at our door last month by a DHL deliveryman. We were pretty

sure that it was something from one of our former students or colleagues on the Chinese mainland, but we did not know for sure. So it was with some trepidation that we brought the package inside, “baptized it” (the Methodist way, by sprinkling) with dilute Clorox solution, and gingerly unwrapped it.

We reacted with a mixture of relief, gratitude, and affection when we saw that the package contained more than 30 KN95 masks, one of the types in limited supply in the U.S. that provide some recognized level of protection in

had been made and left on our doorstep by new Chinese friends with whom we have become close since returning from China in 2015.

Therefore, in these days when national leaders of all stripes in the U.S. boast and bluster about how they are the ones who will be “tough on China”, our vision is of a loving Chinese people who demonstrate the depth of their affection by freely sharing their gifts of life; indeed, a tough love in deed. 🇺🇸



a SARS-Cov2 virus environment. The package arrived at a time when healthcare workers in New York City were literally dying for want of such protection. Without hesitation we took the masks to a nearby hospital for disposition to places where they would do the most good. In making our delivery we donned our hand-crafted masks that

*The Montebello Voice wants to hear from you*

# Watch out for poison ivy!

By David Furth and Paul Zeisset  
Grounds Committee

*2020 is proving to be a prolific year for poison ivy along Montebello's woodland trails.*

Most people get skin rashes after they touch poison ivy leaves or stems, rashes that can last for days or weeks. Poison ivy has a persistent oil, urushiol, that can easily be transferred to your skin not only by direct contact but also by way of your dog's fur or clothing you touch later.

The photo illustrates the 3-leaf arrangement typical of poison ivy. To help you recognize the plant, volunteers from the Grounds Committee have placed over 100 green marker flags near poison ivy along the trails in the woodlands.

Montebello management is arranging for a contractor to apply herbicide

to kill the plants near the trails in the near future. That will keep the plants from spreading further, but, even after being treated, the wilted leaves and stems can still transfer their toxic oil on contact. People with bare legs or ankles should be particularly cautious when using the trails. Long pants, closed shoes and socks are recommended. Avoid stepping off the improved trail unless you know what you are stepping into.

If you think you may have come in contact with poison ivy, immediately and repeatedly wash your skin with soap. Dawn dish washing liquid, rubbing alcohol, or Tecnu and other



commercial preparations can help remove poison ivy oils, as long as applied promptly.

Watch out for poison ivy, or at least for the green flags. 🚩

- 1 Can be either a **vine, bush or single plant**
- 2 Poison ivy plants tend to **choke out other plant life**
- 3 In the fall, **leaves turn red, orange and yellow**
- 4 Mature plants **grow white berries**
- 5 The **urushiol oil** causes the **allergic reaction**
- 6 The oil in **dead or dying plants is still active**

Leaves are **lighter and fuzzy-looking from below**

The leaves are **waxy green on the top**

The **side leaves connect directly to the main stem**

Vines look **furry at the base**

Grouping of **three leaves**

The **center leaf is slightly larger** and has a **short stem** leading to the leaf base

a moment of zen



*Photos by Beth Copps and Azita Mashayekhi*

# My first love – the daily comics

By Carole S. Appel

Ever since I was a four-year-old in Upper Darby, Pa., in the 1940s and my father would come into our apartment from his optometry office and read the comics from *The Philadelphia Inquirer* to me, I've loved the comics. The earliest ones I remember are "Mutt and Jeff," "Fritzi Ritz," and "Blondie and Dagwood." When *The Washington Post* comes to my Montebello



door each morning, I still look forward to reading the paper's comics – and on paper!

"Blondie," created by the cartoonist Chic Young in 1930, has been published without interruption since then. Dean Young is the current artist and John Marshall has written it since 2005. A typical strip has Dagwood sitting in front of a television set (these days a flat screen at chair level) while Blondie sits near him, facing the other way, and usually sewing on some fabric or playing a game like Ken Ken. In the first two panels, they exchange opinions about something, in the third Blondie says something provocative, or strange, or amusing, and in the fourth panel – inevitably – Dagwood stares in amazement at



the reader. The fourth panel is so common that I suspect the writers simply drop in a panel from any previous strip. Nevertheless, it's one of my favorite strips. Why? Because I actually get to laugh at it once in a while.

Someone once pointed out that Dagwood's neighbor, who borrows lawnmowers and other stuff from him all the time, looks exactly like the postman who sometimes rings the Bumsteads' doorbell.

And I love "Zits," the strip about a teenage boy and his interactions with parents and girlfriends. The strip is written by Jerry Scott and illustrated by Jim Borgman. Borgman has a wonderful way of stretching, bending, and in other ways distorting Jeremy Duncan's body to suit the day's plot. Equally wonderful are the expressions he puts on the faces of Jeremy's parents when their son says something ridiculous.

Then there's the tiresome James Allen, who writes and illustrates "Mark Trail," and

extends the plot line for months, using an event that in real life that would take five minutes to provide fodder for his strip for weeks on end. In 2012, the year I moved to Virginia and started to read *The Washington Post* every day, Mark was running down the side of a volcano that he had climbed to rescue a woman



*The Tower Theater, at 69th and Market streets in Upper Darby, Pa. The window that's closest to the top of the tree was a window of my family's apartment. My father's optometry office and waiting room were in one part of the 6-room apartment, the other four rooms were our residence. The theater is still there. It features special events, not everyday movies the way it did when my family lived here.*

trapped there. Week after week, Allen showed Trail running down the side of the mountain. Week after week after week. Week after week after week. Sometimes, instead of four panels for the day, there would be one wide panel showing Trail running down the mountain. It's as if I filled space in this article by repeating the same words, over and over again. (Sort of like an elected politician I see on TV from time to time.)



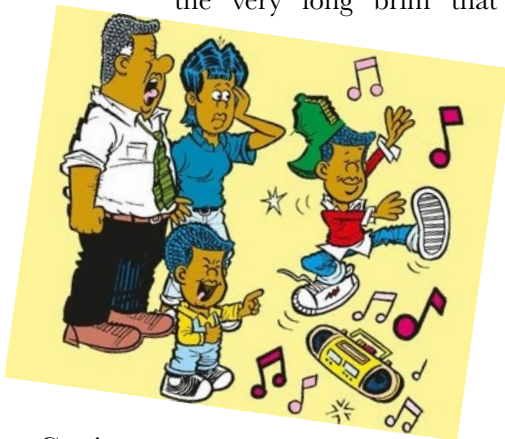
## passions

Some other observations: for a long time, I'd been reading "Frank and Ernest" without noticing that they did not wear pants. They wear short skirts that seem drawn simply to fit into the height of the strip. It's still true – sometimes we actually see legs in the panel, but they are always short.

Or consider Scott Stantis, who for years used his "Prickly City" strip to show Hillary Clinton as an ugly bird called Hunny Bunny. Then, guess what: Clinton lost the election to the Orange One in 2016, and suddenly the dog Winslow and his friend Carmen seem really sad. It probably has never occurred to Stantis that his years-long ridicule of Clinton contributed to some readers' lack of respect for her abilities.

Other observations:

“Curtis” is lovely. The parents are charming. I'm amused that the hat with the very long brim that



Curtis wore for years suddenly became a smaller cap a few months ago. And Curtis's brother seems to be in the strip more often. "Frazz" is also endearing. The conversations between Frazz – the young-looking school janitor – and the pupils he meets are charming. I thank Jeff Mallett for making me happy each day with that strip.



“Sally Forth” is boring. Same plot for years.

“Liō” is eerie – Mark Tatulli has been drawing it since 2006. It's been seen as having international appeal given that it's a pantomime strip.

The two girls in “Agnes” are more homely than the characters need

to be, it seems to me. And the strip is rarely amusing.

“Baldo” has charm. “Sherman's Lagoon” and “Brewster Rockit: Space Guy!” are boring.

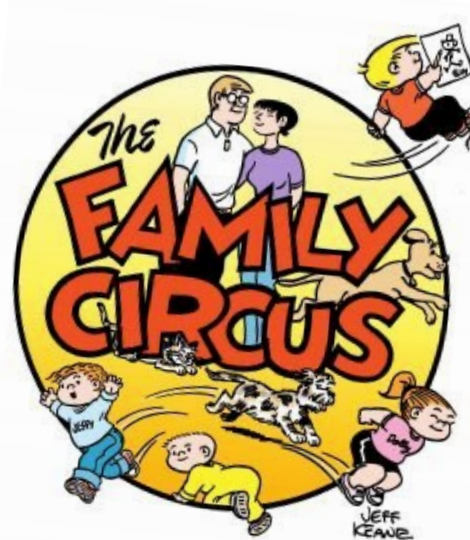
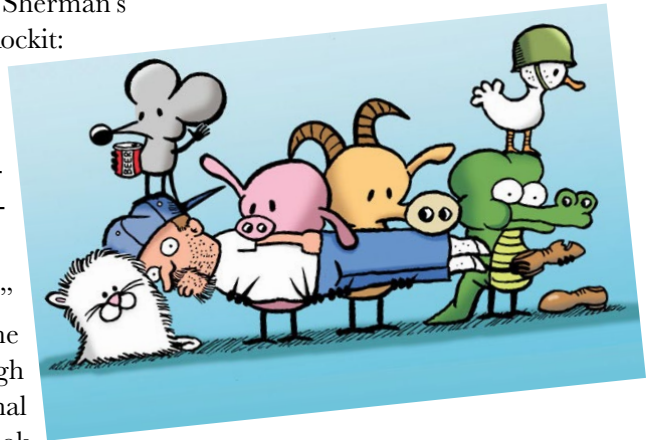
“Dustin” is often amusing, and the comments in the parents' balloons are perfect!

“Pearls before Swine,” by Stephan Pastis, is one of my favorites, although in this strip, too, the animal characters all seem to look alike.

“The Family Circus is drawn these days by Jeff Keane, who is the son of Bil Keane, who illustrated a column for teenagers in the *Philadelphia Bulletin* in the 1940s and 1950s. Bil Keane actually printed some of my news items about my junior high and high schools in those days. I wrote him a letter around 10 years ago to which he responded in a lovely way – I wish I could find his letter now. I said to him then that he couldn't change the race of the children in the strip's family, but when

they went out to play with their friends, he could include children of other races; or when one of the kids in the family sat by the side of a river and imagined those who'd sat there years before, he could include drawings of children of several origins. He wrote back immediately, and agreed with me. And forever after, that's what he did and Jeff Keane does now.

I stop here, and ask *Voice* readers to send their own opinions about the comics to this gazette. 📧



# Ready... Set... GO!!!

By Raymond Houck

When I was a young boy, as spring wound down, classes ended, and schools closed for summer vacation, it meant it was time for the Memorial Day holiday weekend!

Memorial Day is a federal holiday in the United States for honoring and mourning members of the military who lost their lives while serving in the United States Armed Forces. The holiday is now observed on the last Monday of May, having previously been celebrated on May 30 from 1868 to 1970. Along with the holiday came parades, cookouts and – importantly for me – the Indianapolis 500 Race.

Other boys my age followed summer sports such as baseball and softball, and I played them as a kid with my buddies. But while they collected cards of baseball icons like Pee Wee Reese, Joe DiMaggio, Roberto Clemente and many others, I was collecting car magazines. I poured over them, memorizing pages and pictures until I could tell the make of a car by its hub cap or hood emblem. My Dad, a policeman, worked part-time at a local racetrack as a tow truck driver during weekend demolition derbies. Often, I would accompany him just to get close to the cars and the action.

Ernest Hemingway said, “There are only three sports: bullfighting, mountaineering and car racing. All the rest are merely games.” After all these years I still have a passion for cars and car racing, as anyone knows who has been to my home and seen my collection of die-cast classic cars.

Memorial Day also meant it was time for my boyhood summer thrill – the Indianapolis 500-Mile Race – the world’s oldest currently operational automobile race. Better known as the Indy 500

paved in brick in the fall of 1909, with a yard of brick remaining exposed at the start/finish line.

In late March, organizers for the 104th Indianapolis 500 announced the race will be postponed. Originally set to take place on May 24, it will now take place on August 23, the latest major motor sport event to be impacted by the ongoing coronavirus pandemic.

On-track action will begin on Wednesday, August 12, for first practice sessions. Another practice session will



or the Indianapolis 500, the race is held annually at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway in Speedway, Indiana, an enclave suburb of Indianapolis. Traditionally held over Memorial Day weekend in late May, the race is part of the IndyCar Series, the top level of American Championship Car racing with an open-wheel open-cockpit formula colloquially known as “Indy Formula Car Racers.” The track itself is nicknamed the Brickyard, as the racing surface was

take place on Thursday, followed by Fast Friday on August 14. Qualifying will take place on Saturday and Sunday, August 15-16. Pit-stop practice sessions and Indy Lights qualifying will occur on Thursday, August 20. I can’t wait to hear these words... **Gentlemen: start your engines!** 🏎️



# On understanding China

By Joe de Angelis

**We have often heard the lament that our adversaries are playing chess while America is playing checkers.**

This may be somewhat true concerning Western countries; however, when it comes to China, it is a completely different story. China is playing the ancient Chinese game of Go. As evidenced by its name, which translates to “a game of surrounding or encircling.” The principal goal of this game is to gain and control territory, as opposed to the game of chess, which is about total victory.

If we examine this game more closely, we may gain a better understanding of China’s grand strategic plan to not only maintain its current world position but to extend its influence and control worldwide. The rules of Go are quite

simple: players strategically place black and white stones on a board at the intersection of grid lines, of which there are 19. The idea is to build positions of strength and control on the board, while at the same time working to surround and capture your opponent’s stones. Black always plays first, and once a

stone is played it cannot be moved. An opponent’s stones may be surrounded and even captured, in which case they are removed from the board. However, capturing stones is only one way of gaining territory. In the real world, the capturing of a stone (territory) is usually a military action tantamount to war. Control and domination are the ultimate goals. One of the least understood subtleties of Go is that aggression does not always yield the desired result. Crucial to winning the game of Go is recognizing and analyzing the strengths and weaknesses of one’s opponent before playing a stone. Just as important is balancing and timing one’s attacks with one’s defenses. Remember, the primary object of the game of Go is to gain and control more territory than your opponent by surrounding him more efficiently. In this game or attacking your opponent’s stones in an effort to capture them is

often inconsequential to the outcome because the player with the most territory is considered the winner.

As we know, China is not part of the West and as such it has developed its own distinct form of Realpolitik over the centuries. In his book *China*, Henry Kissinger points out that the Chinese

are “students of a strategic doctrine distinctly different from the strategy and diplomacy that found favor in the West.” He goes on to say, “Where the Western tradition prized the decisive clash of forces emphasizing feats of heroism, the Chinese ideal stresses subtlety, indirection, and the patient accumulation of relative advantage.” It is in

this philosophy that we can see the basic tenants and strategies of Go in play.

Historically, China has not always been in a military position to conquer its neighbors (barbarians) who presented a threat to the Middle Kingdom. Consequently, China developed a unique strategy to rule over them: sometimes by using “barbarians to check barbarians,” and when necessary using “barbarians to attack barbarians.” One of China’s major objectives has always been to prevent its barbarian neighbors from forming coalitions or alliances that would strengthen their position against China. Today, this ancient mind set is fused together with China’s Communist ideology.

China is a bad actor on the world stage. Whenever and wherever China sees an opportunity to further its goals, even at the expense of other nations, it does not hesitate to do so. China is steadfastly committed to a Communist ideology seeking its advancement in every way possible throughout the world. Within its own borders the Chinese Communist Party thoroughly controls its country’s military, commerce, technology and education.

China has embarked on a mission, which has been explicitly stated publicly and documented, to overtake the United States as the world’s leading power by the year 2049, the centennial of China’s Communist revolution. For many years now China has been aggressively extending its soft power around the world. This expansion is often punctuated by threats of military force or economic disaster. The Chinese are slowly but surely placing their black stones around the world, and they are tightening their grip in every sphere of influence in its global game of Go.

Let us now take a little closer look at some of China’s more recent actions. For several years now, China has been casting its stones into the South China





Sea, extending its territorial claims well beyond the traditional twelve nautical mile limit. Beginning in 2013, China has been dredging the ocean floor and artificially expanding natural island in the Spratly Islands. China has seven outposts in the Spratly Islands and 20 in the Paracel Islands. It also controls Scarborough Shoal. These islands are peppered with long-range radars, port facilities, runways, and reinforced bunkers for fuel, weapons and aircraft which, when taken together comprises a quite large military footprint. Keep in mind that these are disputed islands that China has seized, and they are still under contention. Although contested by Malaysia, the Philippines, Taiwan, and Vietnam, China continues to claim a vast area of the South China Sea as its sovereign right to control. The international waters of the South China Sea sees approximately \$3.5 trillion in shipping pass through its waters each year. China is also using foreign aid to secure greater influence over the small Pacific countries that currently control vast swathes of the resource-rich ocean. At the same time China continually harasses and coerces these countries with its maritime militia based in the Spratly Islands.

China also potentially controls the fresh water supply of the world's largest and most diverse continent: Asia. Great power competition and water security

in Asia is not just about the control of crucial waterways in the South China Sea, but also about who controls Asia's fresh water. Through its presence in Tibet, China controls the headwaters of ten of the eleven major rivers of Asia including the Indus, Sutlej, Brahmaputra, Irrawaddy, Salween, and Mekong. Several of these international rivers originate in China. For example, the Mekong River, which flows through six countries, and the Indus and Sutlej rivers, which flow through India and Pakistan, originate in China's Tibetan Plateau. Approximately 60 million people depend on the Lancang-Mekong River for food, water and transport. China,

through its political control over Tibet, has complete upper riparian control over all of the major rivers flowing out of the Tibetan Plateau. Consequently, the future of Asia's fresh water supply and distribution lies in China's hands.

Because China requires water to meet the needs of its people, which is approximately 20 percent of the world population, it has built dams, irrigation systems and developed water diversion projects to meet its own food and water requirements. In order to do this, China has harnessed fresh water from the Tibetan Plateau; however, many, if not all the rivers originating in China which have been dammed or diverted are now polluted. China has more large dams than any other country in the world, including the world's largest, the Three Gorges Dam. Today there are more than 87,000 dams in China, and because of this, China's rivers have reached their ecological tipping point. If these strategically placed stones are not washed away in a flood, China will continue to maintain control of Asia's fresh water supply ad infinitum. Dwindling water sources in the trans-boundary rivers of the Tibetan Plateau threaten water security and therefore have the potential to ignite military conflict among neighboring countries.





To date, China has been relatively cooperative in sharing its water with its neighboring downstream countries.

In October 2013, President Xi Jinping of China announced one of China's most ambitious external projects: The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), sometimes referred to as the New Silk Road. This initiative would significantly expand China's economic and political influence throughout East Asia, Africa, Europe and even in Jamaica and Argentina. Through the use of infrastructure investment and construction projects, the initiative would improve international commerce and trade throughout the region. According to the BRI plan released in 2015, the initiative would encompass land routes (Belts) and maritime routes (Roads) involving billions of dollars' worth of projects in more than 100 countries. These projects include land and maritime corridors such as roads, rail lines and new port facilities and channels to accommodate major shipping routes. Over the next several years impacted countries could

see major investments of up to \$500 billion according to Credit Suisse: most of which will go to India, Russia, Indonesia, Iran, Egypt, the Philippines, and Pakistan. Altogether there are six main economic corridors associated with the BRI: 1. The New Eurasian Land Bridge; 2. The China-Central Asia-West Asia Corridor; 3. The China-Pakistan Corridor; 4. The Bangladesh-China-Myanmar Corridor; 5. The China-Mongolia-Russia Corridor; and 6. The China-Indochina Peninsula Corridor. Not all of these countries share America's interests, however many are close economic or military partners of the United States. There are several energy projects already under way, including oil and gas pipelines between China, Russia, Kazakhstan, and Myanmar. Roads and infrastructure projects are also underway in Ethiopia, Kenya, Laos, and Thailand. It appears as though China is placing its stones worldwide.

Under the guise of fostering globalization, China has been successful in

placing its black stones across Asia, the Middle East and Europe with its grandiose global BRI plan. There is fear among some analysts that China's BRI is a Trojan horse in that it is a pretext for China to gain regional economic inroads while at the same time expanding its military base. For example, although not a member of the Arctic Council, China has recently declared itself, unilaterally, a "near-Arctic nation." This action was primarily prompted by global warming that is opening up new Arctic Sea lanes and creating commercial and military opportunities heretofore unimaginable.

In effect China has injected itself into the geopolitical battleground north of the Arctic Circle. As the polar ice cap retreats, the opportunities to tap into the oil and mineral resources of the Arctic floor will surely increase, and China wants its share. Could this intrusion be China's attempt at opening a "Polar Silk Road" extending from China to the North Atlantic and Europe to link with its BRI initiative? In real-

ity, this near-Arctic farce is yet another stone cast upon the global Go game board in an effort to surround America. Keeping in mind the strategies of Go, we can see that China has successfully kept the barbarians from surrounding the Inner Kingdom, while at the same time it has successfully surrounded the United States.

The West has experience combating Communism as propagated by the former Soviet Union. However, behind Chinese Communism there are thousands of years of Chinese thought, philosophy and strategic thinking which the Soviet Union did not possess and which the West did not have to confront. China's Communist Party's strategy for world domination has been well documented for well over 50 years. China is patient, time is irrelevant as evidenced by their many previous strategic goals, which encompass such things as gaining a seat on the UN Security Council (26 years), their efforts to regain control of Hong Kong (over 100 years) and Taiwan since 1949. Many of their long-term strategic goals may take decades or longer to achieve, but again China is patient. Another example is North Korea: China has continually supported North Korea for decades to ensure that the Korean Peninsula does not become a unified and democratic country on the doorstep of the Inner Kingdom.

Unquestionably, China is now a destabilizing factor in the Arctic, as well as in the Pacific. The American ambassador to Denmark, Carla Sands, recently accused China of pursuing predatory economic interest in Greenland, which is one of the eight Arctic nations. This is undoubtedly an effort on China's part to push its way into the Arctic. Furthermore, China has maintained, and continues to maintain control of the Tiber Plateau, a vital source of fresh water. Reflecting upon China's BRI initiatives in Asia and Europe, its foreign aid program in South America, and most recently its incursion into the

Arctic, it is absolutely clear that China's plans for world domination extend well into the future.

Most recently and most importantly, China's unconscionable response to COVID-19 is unacceptable. By acting the way that it has, China, whether wittingly or unwittingly, has contributed immensely to a global health emergency that not only endangered the existence of the human race, but also crippled the economies of the world, the United States included. China has even gone so far as to influence and take over UN agencies such as the World Health Organization (WHO). Does one think that the head of the WHO is an Ethiopian national and that Ethiopia is the recipient of Chinese aid is a coincidence? In the not too distant past, China has provided almost \$15 million worth of emergency food aid to Ethiopia. It has also made direct investment in Ethiopia for infrastructure projects to the tune of approximately \$4 billion. Additionally, its bilateral trade has grown to \$5.4 billion. You be the judge.

China is also looking to the heavens by not only building and launching satellites but by building and launching its own space station. It is very obvious that China is playing a universal game of Go by casting its stones worldwide and further in order to impose its Communist doctrine on the entire world.

Clearly, China presents an unmistakably clear and present danger to America's global strategic position that must be dealt with herewith. However, until the West, and America in particular,



*Photo by Dian McDonald*

thoroughly understands the Chinese psyche and their proclivity for long-range planning, and their disregard for democratic principles, human rights, and the rule of law, China will continue on its rise to become the world's dominant power. Past behavior is the best predictor of future behavior and China is not about to change its ways. In fact, China is becoming more belligerent as each day passes. America must stop playing checkers while China is playing a grand and global game of Go. America needs to decidedly diagnose the China problem in realistic terms and find the political and national will to craft and implement a viable solution to China's unmitigated rise towards global domination. Until America fully understand the Chinese mentality and its Communist objectives, it is going to be exceedingly difficult to retard their aggressive ascent to world dominance.



# Humor can ease safe harboring

By Sarah Newcomb

When the pandemic started, like many Americans, I thought what my country was asking of me was pretty simple. I needed to stay home, wear a mask and practice social distancing. This clearly was – and still is – my duty not just to save my own life, but the lives of others. Safe harboring at home is very serious stuff. But nobody told me how hard it would be.

I am not exactly a social butterfly. Somehow lack of social contact has been really difficult for me. Needing humanity has a way of chafing at your soul in unpredictable ways. If you're a writer like me, your creative gene steps in for a last-ditch effort at maintaining your perspective.

Consequently, my muse has suddenly presented me with the list below. Every-

one should feel free to add to it. It is in *no* way to suggest that our three main tools against this viral enemy should be taken lightly. Jimmy Kimmel may be calling me any day.

*You know you my have been quarantined too long when...*

- 👉 You start arguing with David Muir
- 👉 The UPS guy always calls you by your first name
- 👉 Your car battery dies because you're not driving anywhere
- 👉 A single tank of gas lasts 8 weeks
- 👉 You finally grow out that pesky hair style
- 👉 You can make a meal out of whatever Peapod can bring you

- 👉 Your doctor's appointments become just another Zoom meeting
- 👉 Wearing the same outfit multiple days actually seems OK
- 👉 You can't remember your next-door neighbors' first names
- 👉 You start collecting a wardrobe of trendy masks
- 👉 Your friends stop calling to see if you're OK
- 👉 You finally have enough toilet paper
- 👉 Your pets wish you would just go live somewhere else

Stay safe, and healthy, everyone! 🏠



Photo by Linda Brownlee

## final glance

