

The **MONTTEBELLO** Voice

an independent gazette

aflutter

July 25, 2020



Renovations are good for business

By Carole Appel

When talk about updating the Montebello community center first started, I was fairly neutral about it – favorable, but not feeling a need to be in the forefront of the residents who want to see that building updated. But I have always been influenced by a comment made by my brother's father-in-law more than 50 years ago.

My father was an optometrist in Clifton Heights, PA. When my brother and Lea Felzot, whom he met at Penn State University, got engaged, my parents invited the Felzots to Sunday dinner at our home in Philadelphia.

Mr. Felzot was a successful businessman from New Jersey, where he owned a liquor store. His wife helped him run it. He had immigrated to the United States in the 1920s from Ukraine, and was not well-read in English literature. That didn't keep him from running a very profitable store. After dinner that Sunday, my father did for his guests what he did every Thanksgiving when my aunts and uncles from New York came to Philly for our family holiday celebration: my father invited Mr. and Mrs. Felzot to come to his optometry office so that he could examine their eyes. And my father proceeded with the Felzots the same way he did with my family: if anyone needed new lens prescriptions, he ordered them and didn't charge for them. If they didn't need new regular glasses, he'd order prescription sunglasses for them – a treat most people don't choose for themselves.

The next time I saw the Felzots, some months later, Mr. Felzot said to me privately, "Your father needs new linoleum in his waiting room. The linoleum there is wearing out. Every two years, I redecorate my liquor store whether or not it needs it, because I want it to always look new."

If Mr. Felzot had been a struggling businessman, I'd have forgotten this remark years ago. But he was prosper-

ous, and could send his children to any college they could get accepted to. I took him seriously when he made that remark about my good-natured father's office.

And that's the philosophy that makes me utterly supportive of keeping our community center always looking good. Not fancy, not luxurious (though I'm not against that) – just always in super condition. Clean floors, unfrayed carpets, new-looking furniture. And – if really necessary – a whole new building. I think of Mr. Felzot's comment when I see Realtors escorting prospective condo owners through the community center – who knows what minor detail will turn off a buyer's enthusiasm – a frayed carpet edge here, an aging sofa there? We don't know those things, but I know this: I trust the board members at Montebello who see many reasons for building a new building if we can't just renovate the current one. 🏠

Who wants to sit where dogs pee and poop?

By Linda Pyne

Montebello strikes again! Our newly redesigned pet areas now have benches that are placed in the center of the pet walk area. But back up with me for a moment and start this new journey in the not pet-friendly pet area.

As you exit the back of the building on B3 (bldg 2) there is a pedestrian crosswalk that takes you to a non-handicap accessible sidewalk. However, if you want to use the ramp that is five cars to the left, you can get on the sidewalk but not into the pet area. If you are able to use stairs, (and there are plenty of them), when you get to the top of the stairs, the benches are right in front of you like a barricade. The new pet area is only several feet wide and covered in wood chips. There is no drainage and can be very aromatic.

Our dogs prefer grass, but Montebello removed our large grassy pet area and covered it with trees and smaller shrubs. We have a stairs to climb in the middle of the pet area itself. They also moved the trash cans and the pet bags to an area that is at the top of the stairs. This is not convenient for anyone. If you have a handicap/disability, it is very difficult to navigate.

Do residents want to climb a stairway to sit in the middle of pee and poop? Think about that concept for a few minutes. 🏠

Goldfinch on coneflowers

Cover photo by Linda Brownlee

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

Carole Appel, Suzanne Beerthus, Linda Brownlee, Beth Copps, Caryl Curry, Susan Dexter, Paul Foldes, Raymond Houck, Penny Jones, Cerie Kimball, Janet Gayle Lumpkins, Dian McDonald, Sarah Newcomb, Diane Pascoe, Linda Pyne, Fred Schwartz, Bob Shea, Lisa Stedge, Barbara Yost

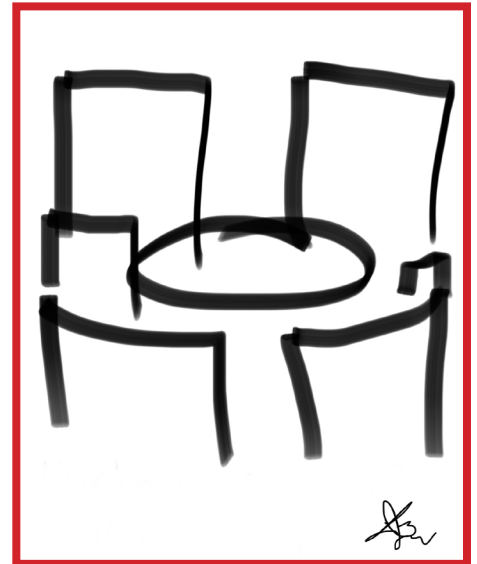
voices on the 37



Do you have new, leftover fabric, ¼ inch elastic or thread from your latest project and don't know what to do with it? The Mask-a-teers, a program under the Fairfax County CERT Program, are making masks for the Fairfax County Fire Department.



Please call, text or email me and I will happily pick up your donation from outside your door. 703-822-3995 blpascoe20@hotmail.com. – *Diane Pasco*



*Photo by Paul Foldes
Illustration by Lisa Stedge*

Chief for a day

By Bob Shea

Note to readers: This was written in the 12th grade for an "early childhood memories" requirement, dated January 25, 1956. It has been edited to shorten it. Yes, I save "stuff."

Most small boys love fire trucks, but they only catch a glimpse of one speeding down a street, or they gaze in wonderment at the red paint and shining fittings of one through the open door of a fire station. I was more fortunate than most boys, for I had a fire truck of my very own, or at least I considered it mine.

It was a 1916 NETCO Firewagon, Engine 13. It provided our small town fire protection under the auspices of the Massabesic Volunteer Firemen's Association. The Association and the antique truck, under ideal situations, had two missions: to extinguish grass and brush fires common in the spring and fall, and to help contain bigger fires until the professional fire fighters arrived from the city of Manchester. In truth, Engine 13 rarely left

the firehouse, for there were very few fires, or if there was one, the truck's battery might be dead.

Each winter, one member of the Association was designated "house man" for a week. His duties were to fill the tank of the kerosene heater to keep the station warm, thereby preventing the truck's radiator from freezing, and to start the truck's engine, hopefully to recharge the battery.

I would mark my dad's week on the calendar in the kitchen. Then each night for a week I would leave the world of sleds, second grade readers, Miss Leary, and Roy Rogers to enter my fantasy world of real fire trucks.

As soon as my father unlocked the front door, I would run for the row of helmets that hung on pegs next to a map showing where all the fire hydrants were located. I'd grab the white "chief's" helmet and place it on my head.

I would swing up onto the rear step as I had seen my father do, holding onto the chrome bar, and holding my helmet on with the other hand as we sped to answer an imaginary fire. The rear of the truck always had a mysterious odor of damp canvas fire hose and burnt wood, an exciting smell for a boy of seven.



Then I would carefully make my way up the side running board toward the driver's seat. Of course, I had to be careful not to fall off as the truck careened to a fire, going at least 60 miles an hour. I never touched the axes or other "off limits" items. Finally, by standing on the red first aid box attached to the side of the truck, I was able to hoist myself into the driver's seat.

The huge metal steering wheel always felt cold to my fingers. I could not reach the pedals even by sitting on the edge of the seat, I nevertheless had no trouble starting the engine. It was simple. All I had to do was touch a couple of knobs on the dashboard make

a clicking sound with my tongue, and stomp on the pedal I could not reach. The engine came alive. I would reach down past the hole in the worn seat where the stuffing was sticking out and gently press the siren button. That was one privilege allowed each night. All too soon my father would shout "that's enough."

Even with my finger off the button, the siren in my mind would continue as I steered the truck through red lights, around corners on two wheels, trying to reach the fire in time.

I then would check out the portable back-mounted water tanks, the coils

of rope behind the seat, and the oily rags under the seat. The large silver bell was rung by pulling the rope, completing my checks for that night.

Although the truck was mine, it made too much noise when my dad started the engine. I would stand by the open door with my hands over my ears. The sharp staccato explosions of the old engine and the choking exhaust fumes were foreign. My fantasy fire truck was much more boy-friendly.

As soon as my father's duties as "house man" were completed, he would say, "What do you say, chief...all set?" I would hang my fire helmet back on its peg, and take one last look at my fire truck. Hard rubber tires, spoked wheels, the rectangular isen-glass windshield, the three wooden ladders in their overhead racks...all was OK.

"Let's go, chief," dad would say as he snapped off the light and locked the door. Engine 13 was primed and again ready to go....we hoped. 📖

We got the beet

By *Mikhailina Karina*

I was born in Ukraine, the land of potatoes, cabbage, and beets.

Also mushrooms, pickled vegetables, and smoked *anything*. Like many immigrant children, I was not always fond of my family's Soviet-inspired cuisine that was based on making do with sadly limited choices in grocery stores.

When we came to St. Louis in 1979, we were dazzled by the produce department at our Kroger and sent photos back home to show the mounds of gleaming fruits and vegetables in unlimited supply. Yet in spite of the cornucopia of fresh produce, my family continued making familiar dishes with the same limited ingredients. We still ate buckwheat, beef stews, fried pork chops, and mashed potatoes. Along the way, we discovered wondrous American creations such as ketchup, cream cheese, salad dressings, multiple flavors of ice cream, chips, and marvelous desserts. American ingredients were adapted to Russian and Ukrainian dishes with generally good results. For example, instead of making dough for pirozhki, we rolled out Pillsbury biscuits.

But as a normal teenager, I was bored with my family's Old World cooking and craved interesting American foods such as burgers, fries, Chinese, lasagna, and pancakes.

Now I realize that I was craving flavors and textures that were lacking in my generally bland family dinners. I was thrilled whenever my mother made her garlic cheese spread, which consisted of shredded white cheese mixed with cloves of pressed garlic and mayonnaise. It's beyond easy to make, but (in the parlance of my children), slaps real hard.

Over the years, I've been fortunate to eat dishes from all over the world. My own dinner table reflects my wide-ranging interest in flavors and ingredients,

but in a bizarre karmic twist, my children often want "normal" American food like meatloaf, mac and cheese, casseroles, and chicken – not dishes in my repertoire.

Ironically, as I get older, I find myself drawn to the foods of my childhood – familiar dishes jazzed up with new flavors. I go to Russian Gourmet (<https://rgalexandria.business.site>) to contemplate pickled wild mushrooms, eggplant spreads, beloved sweets, and tinned fish.

My repertoire of Russo-Ukrainian dishes is rather limited with a handful of appetizers. Only recently I began making the classic borscht (beet soup with cabbage and potatoes) that I augment with gobs of garlic and hot peppers. When my son discovered that borscht could be made with chunks of beef and meat stock...I conceded that

comes from cooking the potatoes, plus the aforementioned can of beets. Once everything is nice and cold, garnishes include sliced hard-boiled eggs, diced cucumbers, green onions, gobs of sour cream, and fresh dill. Serve with black bread and possibly charcuterie.

Thousands of cold borscht recipes are floating around. Find one that suits you. These are good to start:

<https://www.goodfoodstories.com/cold-borscht-recipe/>

<https://www.jewishfoodsociety.org/posts/2018/7/12/the-cold-borscht-that-marks-the-start-of-a-soviet-summer> (photo on the left).

A few years ago I visited our neighbor Caryl Curry, who served me her version of cold borscht. It was delicious in a new way, so of course, I had to have her recipe.

Caryl Curry's quiekie borseht

By *Caryl Curry*

I have to call this Ersatz Borscht or Very Easy Borscht, or Something Resembling Borscht because it bears no resemblance to the borscht that comes in bottles or the very fine ones from Russia, Eastern Europe, and Brooklyn. I discovered it when I was a newlywed just finding my way around the kitchen. It was at the home of friends Francis and David Dibner. Fran was making scrumptious food at beginner's level, just right for me. The soup was attractive and delicious. I did not hesitate to ask for the vague recipe and have been making it every summer since then. (Purists beware.) Adjust the ingredients according to taste. All of the following goes into the blender:

One cup of tomato juice and 1 can of beets

Juice of one lemon

Two tbsps. sugar or to taste

Sour cream, 1/2 to one cup

Blend and chill

Serve with a dollop of sour cream. 🍴



I'd been duping him all these years.

The summer version of borscht is a refreshing magenta soup that takes very little time to throw together and can be personalized with whatever is on hand. Sorry to be a borscht snob, but the pre-made swill in a jar is a poor substitute for what you can make at home in 5 minutes with minimal ingredients.

There is really no wrong way to make cold borscht, but a few basics are non-negotiable: shredded beets (either cooked or from a can, including liquid), potatoes (mashed or cubed), a splash of lemon juice or vinegar, and a pinch of salt and sugar. The liquid

Roadside rest for weary travelers

By Raymond Houck

In a burst of pastels, roadside motels beckoned families to destinations up and down both coasts, along Route 66, and alongside hundreds of highways and byways across North America at the mid-century.

Arthur Heineman built the world's first motel in 1925 on Highway 101 in San Luis Obispo, California. The Morel Inn – a short form of “motor” and “hotel” – had an innovative feature: a parking space convenient to each room. His idea took off with the booming car culture after World War II. By the mid-1960s, there were some 60,000 motels throughout the United States. These vacation necessities were neon gems as part of a new wave of budget-friendly tourist amenities.

My father held open the rear door of our new 1965 Buick Skylark for my sister and me. “OK, kids let’s go!” My mother had already assumed her post in the front seat as we scrambled in, excited to be going on a family vacation. We set off from our Pennsylvania home at 3 a.m. on a hot summer day in early August and headed for our destination, the countryside of Virginia.

Air conditioning was rare, and we certainly did not have it in our car, so we fussed a lot with the windows. Cranked too high, they would not allow enough cooling breeze; rolled all the way down, they left us shouting over the roadway noise in the windy cabin. Those silly little vent windows up front were no help at all. We never did win the battle with summer heat and humidity.

We coasted along the Virginia byways. Arriving in Winchester, mother remarked, “We are in Patsy Cline country!” referring to one of her favorite singers on the radio. We all drank in the sights of the scenic Blue Ridge Mountains. After a tour of the famous Luray Caverns, we headed south on

mentary service we offer our guests.” My mom was delighted. “Nothing like a good shine,” she said.

We were given a room on the second floor. It was quite nice – simple and clean, decorated in shades of brown and orange and large enough for two double beds, it was air conditioned



Skyline Drive. What an amazing picture postcard view of the Shenandoah Valley from the crest of the mountains! Turning east onto Route 250, the hot day became a sweltering evening. It was time to find a motel for the night. We finished our dinner at a local diner, and we all were tired and anxious for bed. It was dark when daddy found a small motel outside Charlottesville that was brightly lit and surrounded by woods.

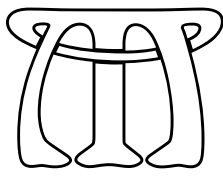
Most motels in those days were strictly mom-and-pop operations with their own quirky charm or unique amenities. This one had a feature that fascinated me – a large wooden box was attached outside each motel room door. At check-in the friendly clerk told dad, “If you put you put your shoes in the box by the door, we’ll shine them and return them by morning. It’s a compli-

and had a TV set. There was a small bathroom in the back with a sink outside the door. Dad put his shoes in that intriguing box, and we all settled in for the night to sleep. I drifted off to sleep thinking about the adventures that lay down the road like Thomas Jefferson’s House, Monticello, the Mosby Tavern, and other sites.

Years later, my husband, Holden and I visited the Charlottesville area from our home in Falls Church for an extended weekend. Of course, I kept my eyes peeled for that motel. But modern-day Charlottesville looked nothing at all like the it did back in the 1960s and I had no idea where we had stopped on that first trip. I chuckled to myself and wondered if the shoe boxes still existed. There’s nothing like a good shine. 🍷

Cows at the post office

By Sarah Newcomb



My late Mother's best friend, Pat, still resides in the Adirondacks, just a few miles from my home town. My childhood memories of Pat are of a sweet porcelain-skinned beauty. Her blue eyes popped against her jet black hair. Our family friendship is so long that I recall her bringing us freshly baked cookies and buying me puppet mittens at Christmas time.

Pat loved the wild ducks that populated the pond across from both our houses. Since she fed them, Pat was usually followed by a gaggle of wild birds around her yard. She made the most of her strong interpersonal skills and gentle nature by working in public relations for the local hospital and later for the local branch of a national charity. Her husband was an executive with a major corporation and an avid outdoorsman.

Pat will celebrate her 94th birthday this October. She lives in an independent living facility now. Pat's first husband died and her second husband also passed away. Pat's "independence" depends totally on her grandson by marriage, Bernie.

Due to this commitment, as well as economic conditions, Bernie had to shutter his business. Kind and dedicated, Bernie is full-time ferrying Pat to medical appointments, preparing and bringing in her meals to address her medical needs, administering Pat's medications, and doing her shopping.

Bernie receives no compensation other than a small amount that may come

from Pat's will. He also diligently cares for his mother, in her 80s, and protects his sister, a single mother of a disabled child supported by government funds.

Pat always has been like a family member to me. As long as I can remember, she never failed to mark my birthday and Christmas with a gift and a card. I would get a Valentine and an Easter card, and mark Halloween and Thanksgiving as well. As I kept watch when my Mother lay dying, Pat sent Christmas decorations to my hotel to



remind me of the holiday. She was always there – even as I flew past middle age.

Over the last several months, Pat has changed. Unable to work the microwave, Pat started a fire in her oven, forgetting that she had stored plastic items there. Fortunately, the facility had faith in Bernie's diligent care, and did not send Pat to a nursing home. They settled on replacing the oven, but not plugging it in.

Since then, Pat will not touch appliances that heat anything up. She will eat peanut butter sandwiches if Bernie is not there to heat her balanced meal. She will not take her eye drops for macular degeneration and glaucoma unless

Bernie is there to administer the three-times-a-day dose. So he goes. She says she doesn't have glaucoma.

I call Pat frequently, and keep in close touch with Bernie. Recently, Pat began telling me that there had been a great storm and cows showed up at the local post office. She said she had seen the cows on TV and was sure the local paper would have a picture on page 1. She would send it to me. She would call a contact to get a copy.

I can't say for sure what the recipient of that call thought. Anyway, there was no page one story. There were no cows at the post office. Slowly and surely, Pat was progressing into dementia.

Recently, she told me that the neighbors had a horse in their kitchen. She observed this by staring into their apartment across the courtyard (day and night). Pat allowed as how the horse was a fake horse since it never moved. The residents, she said, sat near it and they must be braiding its

tail. Perhaps, Pat said, they were using it in their feed business.

Of course I called Bernie to check out the horse. He told me that the neighbors have a white, rattan settee. The back is shaped like the top of a heart. That is what Pat perceives as a horse's...well, you know.

This disease has a darker side. Pat perceives danger everywhere. She hides everything, then cannot find it. People will steal from her while she is sleeping. People are knocking on her door late at night and shining lights into her bedroom.

The worst for me is that the disease has turned Pat against Bernie. A recurring theme is that last year, when Bernie

remembering

was ferrying Pat home from a hospital stay, he called his sister. Why? To warn her because at that very moment he knew his sister was in Pat's apartment rifling through her personal items to search for anything she could steal. Because she is on government assistance. And Bernie countenanced it.

Tearing her grandson down with outrageous charges became a favorite item of her conversation with me. Pat knows I have a positive view of what Bernie is doing – and has been doing for her for eleven years. It seems she feels I have turned against her. “There are things you don't see!” Pat told me. Mostly, those things are not there.

Pat believes she is going to leave Bernie a large sum, which is paltry by today's standards. It is likely there will be nothing for Bernie in the end because everything Pat has left now will be needed for her care.

What this meant for me is that I could not countenance these unfair charges. I told Pat that if she had something to say about Bernie or Bernie's family, she needed to say it to Bernie. And that was when I lost my friend.

My failure to accept as real the thoughts the disease put in Pat's brain could not bring her back to reality. As she does when Bernie tries to explain there is no horse, but a settee, she be-

came angry. After baiting me during several phone calls I made to her, saying I had a birthday coming up, Pat did not send a card. She asked me about a gift, but did not send one. She did not mention my birthday to Bernie at all, which would have allowed him to get at least a card in the mail. She did call. Usually she cannot find the number.

This story is not about my desire for a birthday gift. Or a card. It is about my desire for my dear friend. But Pat is gone now: her sweet gentleness, her support, all the memories of my childhood.

Someone is there. But the disease has taken Pat away. 📖



Photo by Susan Dexter

nature walk



Photos by Dian McDonald, Fred Schwartz, Suzanne Beerthuis, Penny Jones, and Janet Gayle Lumpkins

nature walk



Photos by Barbara Yost, Penny Jones, and Beth Copps

dog walkers



the day of the shred



Photos by Dian McDonald

the day of the shred



final glance



Neighbors

Photo by Mikhailina Karina