

# The **MONTTEBELLO** Voice

an independent gazette

truth matters

August 28, 2020



# The pleasures of Montebello

By Anonymous

Officially, they'd be called "amenities," but there are certain pleasures of Montebello that deserve lovelier names, and one of these is our wonderful Picnic Hill. I was reminded of that recently when my son and daughter-in-law and their two children wanted to visit me here. They live 45 minutes away, south of here, and usually during the summer they visit me a few times a month so that we can all sit around our wonderful outdoor swimming pool, swim for a while, order pizza from our café, and enjoy the shade under the poolside umbrellas.

All that is different, now, since the pandemic changes that started in March. I haven't traveled to their house, and they haven't visited me here. Our café is allowed to provide take-out only, the pool doesn't let more than a few people in the water at a time, and the pool furniture is outside the community center rather than situated around the pool.

BUT: Picnic Hill still exists. Montebello residents weren't able to use it for our annual July 4 community barbecue, or for Memorial Day events, but my children and grandchildren came here on a Saturday evening not long ago. I hadn't seen them in person since March – only on Zoom.

We arranged to meet at 7 p.m., after the heat of the day would subside. They brought take-out food with them (it happened to be steamed lobster plus several salads). I brought cookies from the Montebello Market for dessert. We sat at the top of Picnic Hill, well away from another family that was meeting at tables on the side of the hill as we walked up to the top. I'd brought insect repellent, but no mosquitoes or bees bothered us.

We enjoyed our picnic dinner. I sat at a table more than six feet away from my family, facing them, and we all could enjoy dinner together and hear each other speak. I kept my mask on except when I was eating. We had wine and lemonade and iced tea. It was lovely. 🍷

The Montebello Voice

# Update on Virginia election laws

By Diane Schrier

Virginia election laws have been simplified this year and voting is more accessible to everyone. Election Day, November 3, is a state holiday. Polls will be open from 6 a.m. to 7 p.m. Any qualified voter may now vote in person or by an absentee ballot up to 45 days



★ VIRGINIA ★  
DEPARTMENT of ELECTIONS

before the election. Make sure that you bring a form of ID showing your name and address. Registration or change of address must be completed by October 13. Go to <https://vote.elections.virginia.gov> to register.

The last two Saturdays before the election must have early voting availability. As long as the ballot is post-marked showing that it was mailed by Election Day, it has until noon on the third day after Election Day to arrive at the General Registrar's office. Absentee ballots must be requested by 5:00 p.m. on October 23. October 31 is the last day to vote Absentee in Person. Emergency ballots, due to illness, hospitalization, family death, or travel can be requested in person or by a designated representative up until 2:00 p.m. on the day before Election Day.

However, due to reorganization of the Post Office, it is highly recommended that all ballots be mailed at least 14 days ahead of time. If you know whom you are voting for, then mail it in immediately. If the ballot arrives too late for that, bring the ballot to the specified absentee vote in person sites.

After you have submitted your ballot, contact the Supervisor of Elections to make sure your ballot is accepted. Wait at least 3 days before doing so. Go to: [vote.elections.va.gov](https://vote.elections.va.gov) and apply to vote absentee by mail. Fill out the form and then click on voting history and find ballot.

If it is not, then you must arrange to vote again. If you have questions, call Fairfax County Office of Elections at 703-222-0776 (TTY 711) or the Alexandria Office of Registration and Elections at 703-746-4050. 📞



## Woodlands

Cover photo by Miriam Rosenthal

The **MONTEBELLO** Voice

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## Reporting falls

Nearly a month ago, when our neighbor fell on the trail and broke her leg, numerous residents commented on a Montebello Facebook page about their falls and injuries.

“I’ve fallen badly many times at Montebello, due to the white rocks behind Building 3 (which were promised to have been removed years ago!), the gray rocks on the trails, hills, and steps (all of which were promised to be rectified), and the crumbling uneven black-top!”

“I have tripped and fallen more times since living here for two years than in my entire life.”

But this is not about the dangers of walking on the trail – it’s about reporting *all* incidents that result in injury. According to a former board member, “there is a mechanism for anyone who has had an accident (or near accident) of any kind on Montebello property to report it to security,” she wrote to the *Voice*. “The *Times* publishes a safety and security report every quarter on issues such as parking violations, excessive noise, and pedestrian safety. When I was on the board, I got this line item included in the report because of several accidents on the property that should have gone to security and management as a ‘heads-up’ about unsafe conditions. The concern at that time was crosswalks... If there is no information about pedestrian accidents reported to management, then nothing will be done.”

Neighbors, if you experience any pedestrian mishaps in the woodlands, along the walkways, or inside buildings, please send this information to Earl Roberts, head of our safety and access control. If you don’t report dangerous conditions and injuries, no changes will be made.

*Update:* An editorial in the last edition of the *Voice* about unsafe stairs received the customary crickets from the management. But in case anyone falls, it’s on the record that the issue has been raised and put on the back burner. – MK 📧

The Montebello Voice

## voices on the 37

### Nell Ford Brill

July 20, 1929 – August 21, 2020

Nell Ford Brill, 91, of Alexandria, went to be with the Lord on Friday, August 21. Nell was born in Montross, VA, and moved to Washington, D.C., to work for the IRS. She continued working for the government with Senator Clifford Case (NJ) and the Consumer Product Safety Commission. She also worked for Cafritz Hospital in D.C., and Black, Manafort, Stone, and Kelly of Alexandria. Nell was a member of Sweet Adelines International for over 35 years and specifically with Potomac Harmony Chorus of Arlington.

Nell had an undeniable warmth about her. She touched the hearts and lives of everyone she met. Her sense of humor and willingness to help others brightened everyone’s day. She loved life and was passionate about travel, singing, and her church. She loved her family and friends deeply and unconditionally. She is survived by her daughter, Sharon Brill Douaire, son-in-law, Ray Douaire, grandchildren, Krista Douaire, and Mike Douaire (wife Kristine), one sister, Sylvia F. Beauchamp of Ft. Myers, FL.

Reverend Elizabeth Gardner will officiate the church service at St. Mark’s Episcopal Church on S. Kings Highway



in Alexandria at 2 p.m. on Saturday, August 29. Burial at 3 p.m. at Mount Comfort Cemetery. The service will be live-streamed through Facebook: [t.ly/hpHI](https://t.ly/hpHI)

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to Potomac Harmony Chorus, c/o J. Tuttle, 4000 Terrace Dr., Annandale, VA 22003. To leave a tribute, please go to <https://www.everlywheatley.com/tributes/Nell-Ford-Brill> – Submitted by Loretta Ratkus 📧



For some local history between 1960 and 2010, check out this 9-minute video, *Rolling Along Richmond Highway at* <http://www.fcrevit.org/> & <http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/news/>

# Adios, Yo Semite

By *Mikhailina Karina*

A few old-timers still miss the original building lobbies that featured classical icons, such as St. George slaying the dragon or the dour-looking Dutch men and women. None of these images had anything to do with Montebello, *per se*, but they were considered classical works of art to make our marble lobbies convey a museum-y, upscale ambiance that would appeal to potential buyers. They made sense with brass chandeliers, heavy drapes, camel velvet sofas, high-back chairs, natural plants, gilded trunks, ashtrays glued to tables, and imposing wooden furniture.

When the association changed lobbies' décor more than a decade ago, it was met with opposition from numerous residents who loathed the dark, bulky new furniture and an utter lack of flair. Residents with design experience shrugged their shoulders and

couldn't come up with a (polite) style to describe it. Case in point: the three sofa cushions, which could have provided some visual interest to break up the taupeness, are plain orange without any patterns or texture. Doctors' waiting rooms are more chic than our upscale lobbies. The coldness was improved with the addition of "silk" plants.

However, my personal pet peeve are the plastic green apples in the clear bowl glued (!) to the low table. Who has plastic fruit...anywhere...on coffee tables? Many of these apples are sadly past their prime with bite marks and shriveled coating. Besides being a perplexing choice for lobby décor, their shabbiness reflects poorly on our overall upkeep. Certainly a long way from St. George. One building added a few colorful spheres from Pier 1 Imports to their bowl; yours truly spent \$5 at Ikea on a bag of natural, neutral spheres in different sizes.

But this article is not about sofas and balls. It's about what's hanging on lobby walls and what I think should be hanging. When our friends at Kerns (designers of the future community center) reimaged our lobbies, they must have spent about five minutes contemplating the artwork to adorn our walls. "Hmmm," they racked their creative brains, "what do people of a certain age like?" Ansel Adams! No one dislikes Ansel Adams' stunning century-old photographs of the Yosemite National Park. Classic, ubiquitous black-and-white images of natural wonders can go

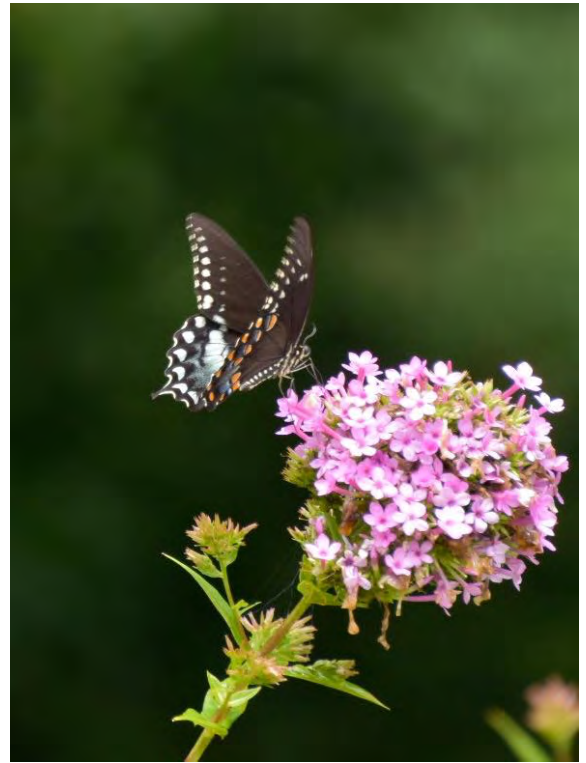
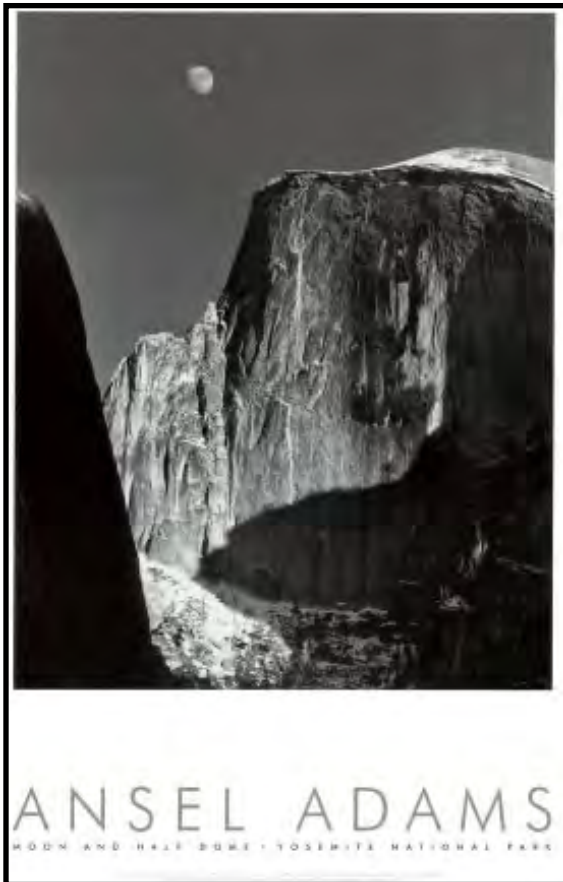


Photo by *Linda Brownlee*

with any décor and any setting – living rooms, dorm rooms, doctors' offices, non-profits, corporate suites. In their earnest effort to bring the outdoors in, folks at Kerns picked images a mere 2,500 miles away from our front door. Like St. George and the *Nederlandse mensen*, we have artwork that has nothing to do with where we live or who we are (not to be mean, but a few of the grim Dutch bear an uncanny resemblance to certain residents).

I recently spoke with a neighbor who, upon moving to Montebello, decided against putting up her own Adamsees after seeing them in the lobby. She felt they had become cliché, like Monet's and Van Gogh's greatest hits you can find on just about every piece of merchandise.

I respectfully propose that we bid adieu to Yosemite and welcome the stunning photographs of our woodlands produced by our resident photographers. Without naming names (okay, Linda, Miriam, Jeanne, Joel, Dian, Azita, *et. al*) we've had an explosion



## Unhappy campers



Photo by Jeanne Tift

of birds, flowers, trees, pathways, butterflies, sunsets, mushrooms, deer, and foxes that truly convey the richness and beauty of our setting. Instead of making each lobby look indistinguishable from the other, let's have different photographs in each building. One neighbor suggested each building featuring a different season. Likewise, instead of letting Kerns rack their brains on decorating our community center with some generic wall art from Wayfair, let's have our resident photographers really bring the outdoors in – the proposed swatches of green, blue, burgundy, and yellow will undoubtedly harmonize with images of nature.

The current issue of *The Times of Montebello* has an article that invites residents to submit photos to the Grounds Committee photo contest. Right there, we're going to get about 100 (last year it was 90) entries that could become semi-permanent fixtures on our walls.

So, powers-that-be, if you're reading this, please consider zhooshing up our lobbies and community center to reflect our much-lauded natural setting. Retire the tired old monochromatic photographs and let us appreciate natural beauty outside our windows. 📷

Seventy years ago was my first summer in the US. The Quakers in Philadelphia reached out to the refugee community announcing that they will be running a summer day camp for boys 8 to 10. The gathering place was about 8 blocks from where we lived. Once there, we would go on a trip to one of the parks or swimming pools in the city. There were about thirty boys, about half from the refugee community (mostly Ukrainian) and half from the local Black neighborhood. The Quakers structured our activities so that we interacted and got to know each other.

Several weeks into the summer, squabbles developed between the refu-

gees and the Blacks. The Quakers got all of us together and wanted to know what we were squabbling about. I do not recall what complaints the Blacks had about the refugees, but we did not like to be called DP. What does DP mean, the Quakers asked. We did not know, but felt it was insulting.

The Quakers explained that America was a destination for many pilgrims. Many, like the Quakers, came centuries ago; some very recently. DP was a designation for Delayed Pilgrims. With that bit of Quaker wisdom, for a while, peace was restored.

DP stood for Displaced Person.  
– Andrew Masiuk 📷

### The Washington Post

*Democracy Dies in Darkness*

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For 23 years, Bob Levey, a prize-winning Washington Post journalist, covered the Washington scene since the Johnson Administration and wrote a daily column, "Bob Levey's Washington." Mr. Levey will share some of his memories at the Post and introduce his most recent novel, Larry Felder, Candidate, the story of a famous Washington columnist who abandons journalism to run for Congress in the Maryland suburbs. Mr. Levey's book, Larry Felder, Candidate, is available via [www.bobleveypublishing.com](http://www.bobleveypublishing.com).

**Wednesday, September 16th, 7:30 p.m.**

The speaker will be presented via ZOOM. The meeting I.D. and password will be posted the day before Bob Levey offers his talk.

Sponsored by the Activities Committee

# Slices of Wonder

By Raymond Houck

Once the school year began, every Sunday night my mother would ask, “What do you want packed for lunches this week?” My answer could be bologna and cheese, or peanut butter and grape jelly. It really did not matter just as long as it was on Wonder Bread! Yes, that soft, squishy sliced bread I loved – and the *only* type I would eat.

Right from the get-go, Wonder



Bread’s success was a result of technology and clever marketing – the twin pillars of economic advancement in the first half of the twentieth century.

The loaf that came to be called Wonder Bread was developed by Taggart Baking Company of Indianapolis, Ind. Taggart was an early pioneer in automated baking with what was considered a state-of-the-art factory in 1920. First it launched an ad campaign with a series of print advertisements that talked intriguingly about “wonder” as something to wonder about. There was no mention of bread, and that unique promotion built a mystique for the loaf unlike any on the market.

When it reached stores in 1921, each loaf was one-and-half pounds, half as large as other loaves. Wonder Bread with its soft, springy texture, even crust and bright white color did not taste like the crusty, rustic loaves made at home. Within a few short years, Wonder Bread was on a roll to becoming a lunch box

staple for generations of school kids.

With a rise in diseases caused by vitamin deficiencies, white bread produced with flour stripped of nutrients was criticized as being empty food. Under government pressure, Wonder Bread added vitamins and minerals to its flour and touted the its bread as “enriched.”

In the 1950s Wonder Bread advertised that it “builds strong bodies eight ways,” and by the end of the decade (and with a few more healthy ingredients) the claim had grown to *twelve* ways!

Perhaps the brand’s most successful slogan was, “Make the most of their Wonder years,” promoting

the health benefits of feeding children Wonder Bread during their formative years up to age 12. That phrase seeped into the national consciousness and in 1988 was borrowed for the title of a hit TV show *The Wonder Years*.

Wonder Bread advertised its successful product saying it “achieved a great step forward in the baking industry” and over the years, it kept up its steady campaign touting the virtues of pre-sliced bread. Comedian Red Skelton is believed to be the first to utter the phrase we all know today in a 1952 interview with the *Maryland Salisbury Times*, “Don’t worry about television,” he told the reporter – “it’s the greatest thing since sliced bread.”

Happily for me, Wonder Bread was in my school lunch every day, and the only other requirement was for Mother to slice my sandwich in half with a *slanted* diagonal cut. 🍞



# A mentor: did you ever have one?

By Bob Shea

Webster defines a mentor as “a trusted counselor or guide.” I think that definition is too broad, as it could include almost anyone in one’s life from a concerned work supervisor to a grandfather who dispensed advice to anyone who would listen. To me, a real mentor is someone who had such a profound impact on your life that you can honestly say, “I would not be where I am today had it not been for that person.” Think about it. Based on my definition, did you have a real mentor?

With Covid upon us, and time on our hands, it might be a good time to look back and think about our own mentors.

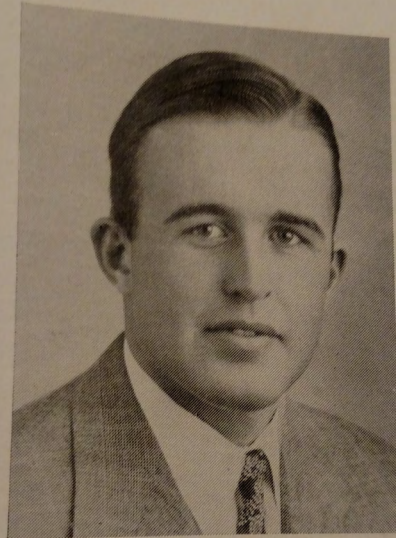
In my life I can identify three mentors who fit my definition. I would call them two “lesser” mentors and one with “major” lifelong influence.

Bill Bricker, the Director of the Manchester (NH) Boys’ Club saw something in me worthy of attention. He guided me and connected me with the people who recruited average “poor” boys from across the nation to apply for scholarships to Phillips Exeter Academy. He opened a door for me, and I walked through it. As an aside, Bill Bricker later became the National Director of Boys’ Clubs of America.

Hamilton Bissell, the Director of Scholarship Boys at Exeter, had two duties: (1) Find and recruit boys from across America who would add economic and social diversity to the school, and (2) Be their godfather once they were on campus. He gave us pep talks, had a “slush fund” for specific needs we could not afford like a lacrosse stick or a slide rule, and made sure we adapted to the totally foreign environment of wealth and privilege. Hammie Bis-

sell was about 5’1”, resembling a bald Santa’s helper, but he was ten feet tall in our minds. We were Hammie’s Boys. He gave us the chance to go to the school and sustained us.

My main mentor, fitting my definition, was John B. Heath, my English 1 instructor. Mr. Heath lived in a dormitory apartment with his wife and young daughter, had dorm responsibilities, coached three sports at the intramural level, and taught four sections of English 1. Needless to say, he was a busy man with much on his plate. In class



JOHN B. HEATH, B.A.  
*Instructor in English. Appointed 1949.*  
 B.A., Yale, 1946; Phi Beta Kappa.

we sat around an oval table, read great works of literature, discussed them, and wrote and wrote and wrote. He did not teach as much as act as a moderator, posing questions, and steering our discussions. Based on my meager pre-Exeter education, I struggled, and Mr. Heath knew that.

In late October of my first year, he asked me to stay after class. He told me that “I was not going to make it, that

my preparation in English was totally inadequate.” He told it like it was.....no sugar coating. He then made a proposal: He would volunteer to tutor me two nights a week to help me catch up. He gave me a parachute, and I grabbed it.

Between dinner and the 8 p.m. curfew from October to March, I sat at his kitchen table as he drilled me on writing, critical thinking, and more writing. His wife would provide milk and cookies, and keep his young daughter from being disruptive. Every Tuesday and Thursday I labored. This was in addition to my normal workload of his class plus four other subjects.

Sometime in March, Mr. Heath said, “I’m done, you’ll make it.” His smile, quiet demeanor, and willingness to complicate his life paid incredible dividends to me. He could have given me an F in English 1 and gone on with his life, but he didn’t. He was my most significant mentor as he made it possible for me to thrive eventually in an academic setting where writing was the foundation of almost every course.

Bill Bricker opened a door for me. Hammie Bissell nurtured us. John Heath, as my major mentor, worked to keep me there. I can honestly say I would not be where I am today had it not been for John Heath. I graduated on time from Exeter.

My challenge to all is to identify your mentor...the someone who influenced you in such a way that you can say, “I am who I am today because of that person.” If it is not too late, thank them. I saw John Heath at a class reunion. He was retired and a grandfather. I thanked him. John just smiled and said, “you did it....I thought you could.”

That is what mentors do. I wish John B. Heath could read this. Again, thank you, John. Rest in peace! 🕊

## land fill

*A decades-old trash heap is finally getting hauled away. Recent landscaping work in the woodlands uncovered old construction debris in the north corner of the property behind building 1. Tetanus-friendly rusty pipes, broken tiles, painting supplies, bottles, and cinder block formations were dumped in the out-of-the-way corner by careless workers. When reported to the office, a cleaning crew was expeditiously dispatched and most of the junk was removed. – MK*



*Before (left) and after: the rock pile is slowly shrinking*



*A mystery object emerged from the ground*



*The dramatic before (left) and after photos of tetanus zone*



*Vintage Pepsi and Upper10 glass bottles salvaged from the site*

*Photos by MK and Christine Winter*



## dog days



**final glance**



*A striped sock and a leather shoe in a picnic area*

*Snapshot by MK*