

# The MONTEBELLO Voice

an independent gazette

new growth

April 11, 2022



## Donations for Ukrainians

By Karen Barnes

Northern Virginia organizations are partnering together to collect donations for Ukrainians who fled their country amid the Russian invasion. Dozens of locations around Northern Virginia will begin accepting donations through April 15.

Needed items include new and gently used coats, new blankets, new pairs of sweat socks or heavy socks, and new pairs of gloves. Donations will be shipped to Poland and made available to people in Poland and Ukraine.

### Alexandria City Hall

301 King Street, Alexandria

### Beatley Central Library

5005 Duke Street, Alexandria

### Office of Lee District Supervisor Rodney Lusk

6121 Franconia Road, Alexandria

### Office of Mount Vernon District Supervisor Daniel Storck

2511 Parkers Lane, Alexandria

### Office of Prince William County Board of Supervisors Chair Ann Wheeler

1 County Complex Court, Woodbridge

Other options, for monetary donations providing relief to Ukraine, include:

### Razom for Ukraine

<https://razomforukraine.org>

### Nova Ukraine

<https://novaukraine.org>

### Ukrainian National Women's League of America, Inc.

<https://unwla.org>

### International Rescue Committee

<https://www.rescue.org>

### World Central Kitchen

<https://wck.org>

### Ukrainian Bible Society

<https://unitedbiblesocieties.org/locations/ukrainian-bible-society/>

Source: Fairfax County Board of Supervisors 📖

## A virtual tour around beautiful Ukraine

As a native Kyivan, I am biased about my hometown's natural and architectural beauty. Watching the devastation taking place in Ukraine, I see familiar city names that are likely new to many American viewers. Before Putin's barbaric war, Ukraine was...and will be again. Click on these links to see for yourself.

For on-the-ground English-language news, I read Kyiv Independent at <https://kyivindependent.com> – MK

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=siGijqE1lrg>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V-SIdgJVfjw>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wYIA3210Y8A>

### “I think we have company, Wilbur.”

Some people were debating Super Bowl TV commercials. It brought to mind my “best ever” nominee. I saw it in Detroit in 1979, where the local beer was Stroh's. It wasn't very good, but did have its adherents, while others would maintain that the little taste it had came from the pollution in the water.

In the commercial a couple in their 30s are in the kitchen of a suburban house. Above we see an enormous space vehicle, modeled on the one in Close Encounters of the Third Kind. Slowly and soundlessly it moves, right to left, until it fills the sky. The couple are aware of it, but unconcerned.

When it's above their house, it stops. A green ray comes down and enters the kitchen. It opens the refrigerator, emerges with a six-pack of Stroh's, and returns to the space vehicle, which moves off and disappears.

The woman, in wonderment, says, “All that way for a Stroh's.” The man replies, “Don't surprise me none.”

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_S6OTDe9XxY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_S6OTDe9XxY) –Richard Titus 📖

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cb5gJdaQVAo>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3Bq517Kqfik>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l-CXyD9Eddnw>

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3PAFFM1m4\\_o&t=514s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3PAFFM1m4_o&t=514s)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Du5mBcFwF3M>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y-dyOKIzOp5I>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i2PLl-xm-WY>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-C50lY0hp960> 📖

**Слава Україні!**

Cover photo by Miriam Rosenthal

**The** MONTEBELLO **Voice**

an independent gazette  
Alexandria, Virginia

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## Here's how retirement got so busy

By Sarah Newcomb

Retired several years ago. At least, I thought I had. My expectation of “retirement” included that I would not be working. But I was wrong.

I wondered why I was so busy. Now I understand. An insidious camel's-nose-under-the-tent thing started right after retirement. I already had gotten used to pumping my own gas at what once were “service” stations. Now they are “filling” stations. And you do the filling.

You might locate a squeegee. Then you can wash your own windshield with brown water. The paper towel dispenser – if there is one – will be empty. You insert your credit card in their pump to pay, seeing no one. Then you print your own receipt. The charge for filling up your tank could cause Afib.

Need air in your tires? Get down on your knees and prepare to put in enough air for the appropriate inflation level. That level may be contained in the owner's manual, if the book is still in the glove compartment. You must test proper inflation with a pressure gauge. The single staff person, boxed in a small enclosure, only collects money. He or she doesn't have any tools. Be ready to pay for air you use, if the air machine works. The last time I tried to put air in my tires, the station proprietor wanted \$10 for customers to use the air machine. I am over 60. He was not going to help me use it.

On to buy groceries. Also “sundries,” which are anything you need but can't eat. I have begun working for the grocery store, too. First, it seems any employees I can find don't know where their store keeps anything, so they can't help me find what I need. If I find some of the food/sundries I am looking for, only one or two check-out lanes are open and staffed by humans.

Working for the store, I can go to the euphemistically named “Self Check-Out,” hoping to speed things up. There, I must present a store ID to the

self-check machine. This card enables the store to link anything I buy with my personal information and track every purchase I make. If I do not turn over my information, I will not be able to buy anything that is on sale at the store's lower sale price. I fish the card out.

My store has stationed a number of employees in a walled off self check-out “corral.” The corral and its employees are there to make sure I do not steal anything while I am checking myself



out. In my Route 1 neighborhood, self check-out machines are set for high security. “PLACE your items in the BAGGING area!!” the machine loudly commands in order to attract attention from nearby employees. I am struggling to move items and now bags I must bring from home from my cart. Placing my items in the tiny “bagging area” already crammed with store bags makes little sense – especially since it is never cleaned by employees standing around. We are still fighting Covid, after all.

To prevent theft, self check-out machines in my grocery store are set to freeze up after each item not placed in the **bagging** area. An employee must unfreeze the machine after each item you self scan and fail to place there. Employees must come over to determine whether you have stolen anything. Satisfied, the employee types in a code to unlock the machine and walks away. Next item: same thing. Dead stop.

“PLACE your items in the BAGGING area!!” I need the employee again to monitor my potential theft.

Employees do not seem interested in helping customers unfreeze their system. Consequently, self check-out can take even longer than waiting in lines forming at the two human checkers. Customers are treated like criminals, not “guests.”

I also work for several doctors and hospitals. One physician told me they cannot identify or afford to hire capable staff. Many members of the medical profession then put patients immediately to work as health secretaries. Doctors demand that patients type highly personal information into online “Patient Portals.” Each doctor or hospital system has their own portal, so patients have to input data over and over again, posting in multiple data bases.

Physicians talk up the portals as offering great benefits for their patients. For example, you can communicate with your doctor using the portal. So, instead of calling the office and relaying your problem to a capable administrative assistant, you have to log into a website and write an email outlining your symptoms and then hit “Send.” And wait. I am pretty sure the doctor does not get the messages directly, but that a staffer triages them beyond recognition about what your issue actually is.

It seems to me that patient portals organize highly personal, protected information required to steal your identity, defraud you – or blackmail you – in one convenient location for hackers. Honestly, do you use illegal drugs? Check this box. Losing bladder control? Right here. Family history of mental illness? That goes there. If the U.S. Department of Defense can be hacked, no one can convince me that Dr. Smith's or any Virginia health system's portal is all that secure.

One DC practice I visited handed me an Apple tablet and required me (and

everyone else) to use it to enter all my personal data into their system. Their staff only answered the phones. Another practice I am going to visit announces on its website that their doctors will not see patients unless patients have all required information typed into their portal **before** patients come to an appointment. This is so as not waste their doctor's time.

The situation never gets equitably reversed. Put in your data for free, and let the doctors waste **your** time. At the practice that was passing out the Apple tablets, an appointment for, say 10 a.m., meant that some time before lunch that day I would get to see the doctor. Sitting in waiting rooms with a lot of sick people for long periods is not good for anyone's health.

So this is why I am so busy, folks. Retired and working every time I interface with any organization I need something from, there is a price to pay. Maybe I am kneeling in dirt to pay \$10 for air, or typing information that would make my mother blush into multiple online websites for who-knows-whom to see. Maybe... I should just get a real job. 📞

## It's 2022: is email over?

By Sarah Newcomb

**E**very morning, after a cup of coffee to become conscious, I start checking. This used to be fairly simple. Throughout the day, I would occasionally check a device called an "answering machine," connected to my phone. A "phone" was a device that sat on my desk in my home. I used it for oral communication.

My phone was wired to a simple recorder so the answering function was triggered by an incoming call. You could audio tape a message for the incoming caller, claiming that you were not at home or were indisposed, and asking callers to leave a message. As the machines got more sophisticated, they came with a pre-recorded message. This was especially handy for single women because usually the voice was a man's, and unidentified callers with evil intentions would not be aware you were living alone.

It seems incredible now, but there was a time when the "phone company" actually published a weighty book listing the phone numbers of all its residential and business subscribers. Residential listings contained your name and address as well as your phone number so that anyone could find you.

Maybe not a good thing.

It opened the door to unidentified callers who got your number and called you for nefarious purposes, not only cold call sales, but dangerous scams. Today, rafts of phone calls are pretty universally ignored by recipients unless

caller ID shows that names on their list of contacts are calling.

Currently, I have a "smart phone." Instead of sitting on a desk, it is "mobile." Consequently, I am expected to carry it everywhere I go so that I can be reached at a moment's notice. This was a good idea when mobile phones were first used in combat in World War II. I do not want to be reached driving among Daytona-like speeders on the Beltway or shivering in my doctor's examination room.

So at least every morning, I must check more than one email address on my laptop, and look for voicemail, then monitor text messaging – the last two locations on a phone that is smarter than I am.

I don't fully understand the utility of text messaging. If you can just record your speech in a real-time message while speaking, why would you want to waste time typing each word out using tiny little keys? Phone manufacturers have tried to make this easier by guessing which word you might want to write next and flashing it at the bottom of your screen. You can just click on it and it pops into your message. You may end up saying something you really did not intend. Depending on your "data plan," each text message may cost you. So, one more option of three gets checked. Twenty minutes of your life is lost that you won't get back, but you avoid being asked, "Didn't you get my text?"

Given this scheme of options, email for every user now seems mostly use-

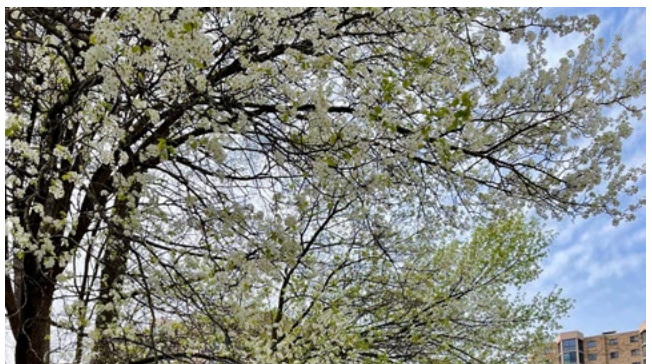
less. Almost everyone has one email address for doing business, like ordering from websites, paying bills electronically, and collecting receipts. That address might have been your original "email address" when we all were discovering email. But as soon as you give your email address to any organization – whether or not you have joined or purchased anything – it relentlessly spams you with unwanted ads, filling your online space. Your job becomes constantly trying to clear spam or trying to contact shadowy corporate spammers to beg them to stop. In 2022, it is still the Wild West on the Internet.

Spam is the reason we all set up that second (or more) email address. We hoped that if we never used the new address for public business, we would open it only to friends and family for email that we actually wanted to engage in. Alas, the new address soon filled up after one or two inadvertent mentions by someone somewhere on the Internet. Soon, it was almost as bad as the original address. Trying to find an incoming email message that is actually important? Forget it.

This email situation is why texting has become so popular. It is the least accessible system to unwanted intruders and the most immediate contact anyone can make. That phone in your pocket is going to ping or vibrate when a text comes in. If you are living in 2022, you are expected to answer it right away. As for email as an efficient method of communication? You'll get around to reading it. That love affair is over. 📞



*Photos by Dian McDonald*



## A logistician's lament

By Bob Shea

**I**n the mid-1970s, the Army sent me to graduate school, full-time, to get a masters degree in Logistics Management. It was a time in our history when the word “logistics” was new to the popular lexicon. Some civilian friends had no idea what it was I was studying. What is this thing called “logistics?”

In the Army's world, wholesale logistics is quite simply everything that happens to an item once it is acquired by the military and before it arrives in the hands of the ultimate user: warehousing, inventory, services, distribution, maintenance, and eventually disposal. The same system exists regardless of what the item is: a tank, a uniform, a gallon of fuel, food, bridging material, razor wire, underwear, night vision goggles, boots, and on and on. Today many companies are called logistics systems such as Amazon, FEDEX or UPS, but in reality, they focus on just one facet of logistics, the distribution, and they do that one portion very well.

In the military, logistics is often the forgotten part of the equation. It is said that logisticians must work with facts for men who traffic in theory. They emerge during wars because war is very much about facts, but they are obscured in peace because in peace, war is mostly about theory. Statagists hate logisticians.

A common anecdote is that commanders and decision-makers are a happy group of men and women who radiate confidence and power. They feed only on ambrosia and drink only nectar. In peacetime they stride confidently and invade a world simply by making sweeping gestures grandly over a map, pointing fingers at objectives, spinning concepts, and defining hoped-for mission goals.

In war, these commanders must stride more slowly because each commander has a logistician sitting on his shoulder. He knows that at any moment, that logistician may lean down and whisper, “No, you can't do that.” Commanders fear logisticians in war and try to ignore them in peace.

Think about history. George Patton's armored forces rolled across France and into Germany until a logistician whispered to him, “Sir, you have run out of fuel and ammunition.” The Red



Ball Express was created overnight with road priorities to move everything that Patton needed from the French ports to the battle space. Patton is revered by some in history as one of the champions of the Allied lightning fast post-invasion defeat of the Germans. Few even know who the logisticians were who worked in obscurity and kept him supplied, moving thousands of tons of materiel non-stop over war-torn roads.

In Vietnam, one measure of success by some commanders and the Pentagon staff was how many tons of materiel moved rapidly across the Pacific. Unloading ships and quickly sending them back for more “stuff” was a metric of doing a good job. However, no one thought about the tons of “stuff” that sat in the chaos of depots at Cam Ranh Bay, Qui Nhon, and Long Binh. The logisticians were overwhelmed. Inventories were non-existent. Without warehouses, there were piles of materiel stacked in the sand. If you needed something, it was often easier to re-order it from the States than to find it in

the acres of military materiel that lay deteriorating in the sand, assuming you could identify what you had ordered when it did arrive and before it too was lost in the chaos. It was not the finest day for logisticians, but ships unloaded and sent back for more were more important than “the rest of the story.” Cargo tonnage played better in evening briefings than accurate inventories.

In Gulf War I, General H. Norman Schwarzkopf was the media darling who defeated Saddam Hussein in just days with what he called his “End Run” into the western desert to defeat the Iraqi Army. Few people have ever heard of Colonel Willam G. Pagonis (later a 3-star general) who was the resident logistician. Later General Schwarzkopf said of Pagonis, “He is the best logistics operator I've ever known.”

Wow, Norman recognized logistics and its key role. Gus Pagonis' story is told in a little known book entitled Moving Mountains, which chronicles the movement and distribution of almost 2 million tons of supplies and equipment in the first 90 days of the war's buildup into an area where we had virtually no American presence or Western infrastructure.

Lately on the nightly news, we have seen long Russian vehicle convoys stalled on Ukrainian highways, largely due to the lack of logistics support. A cable news talking head remarked, “Logisticians eat the tacticians' lunch.” Not an elegant phrase, but an accurate description of that logistician sitting on a commander's shoulder, whispering, “Comrade, no, you can't do that.” Grandiose plans, both good and bad, are at the mercy of logistics. Facts, not theory, always prevail. Again, theory failed this time, which is extremely good! A note to unhinged despots: never ignore a logistician!

## supply chain

We think of an Army needing the basics such as fuel, ammunition, and water. However, reality must include repair parts and mechanics, inventories and supply specialists, food and cooks, body bags and mortuary specialists, new uniforms, laundry, and showers provided by unsung heroes, and trucks, drivers, and traffic management specialists. The list goes on and on.

The fighting forces are truly the sharp tip of the military spear, but be-

hind them are countless logisticians – the tail of the force whose stock in trade is facts. What do they need? How much? Where? How soon? Moved by what means?

While commanders may eat ambrosia and drink nectar, their logisticians are wrestling with meeting the needs of the fighting forces with little time or desire for either. Facts always trump theories.

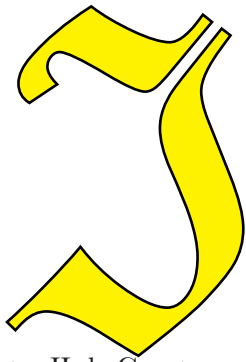
Sometime in the future say “well done” to a logistician if you know one.

Without him or her, the sharp point of the spear will be stalled on some road somewhere as the commanders eat ambrosia and drink nectar (or maybe caviar and vodka in a gold palace or a mega yacht) while someplace else a lonely and once neglected and, now berated, logistician is wrestling with facts. What do they need? How much? Where? How soon? Moved by what means? 📖



# Isabella, Queen of England, Countess of Angoulême, France

By Chester Taylor



Isabella was born into royalty. Her father was Aymer Taillefer, Count of Angoulême, and her mother Alice de Courtenay, sister of Peter II de Courtenay, Latin Emperor of Constantinople, and granddaughter of King Louis VI of France. Since she was an only child, she would inherit her father's title and lands. Isabella was looked at more as an asset rather than a daughter. Given the situation in France at the time, Aymer and Alice, with King Philip II's blessing, decided to betroth Isabella to Hugh X of Lusignan, count of neighboring LaMarche. While Isabella was still a little girl, her parents sent her to Hugh's parents, Hugh IX "le Brun" of Lusignan and his wife Mathilde of Angoulême, so that when Isabella and Hugh were old enough, they would be married.

That was the plan, but when Isabella was 12, she met John, King of England. John was 33 at the time. He was inspecting his property in Aquitaine, France. Hugh and Mathilde invited John for hunting at their place in LaMarche. That's when Isabella and John met. She was starstruck with John, not because of his looks, but because he was a king, and Isabella wanted to be a queen. He would be an upgrade, never minding the fact that John had been married before to Isabel, Countess of Gloucester. This wife he had left by claiming the marriage was illegal since they hadn't obtained the proper papal permission before they wed. John was smitten by the beauty of Isabella. She was tall, slender, blonde, blue-eyed, and physically mature for

her age. John also realized that Isabella would be the countess of Angoulême, a key crossroads for trade, and strategically located between Poitou and Gascony and adjacent to Aquitaine. John ran away with Isabella (others would say he kidnapped her) and married her in Bourdeaux on August 24, 1200. A year later she was crowned Queen of England in Westminster Abbey. Then a couple of years later, Isabella's father died and she became Countess of Angoulême.

Isabella was very happy at first with



*Queen Isabella*

her marriage. She loved being queen and all the privileges that went with it. Her relationship with John was enchanting. John and she would spend a lot of time in bed together and would often not get up until noon. As time went by, though, the complications of everyday life set in. Both were very spoiled from childhood and had matching tempers. John started having affairs

and keeping royal mistresses. He even had affairs with his former wife, Isabel, Countess of Gloucester, and his cousin, Adela, at his southern castles. He had 12 illegitimate children. When Isabella took up with a lover, John had the man executed and his body strung up above her bed. Because Isabella was a political asset, John kept things in public as civil as possible between them, giving her extravagant gifts of jewelry and furs from time to time.

John was finding out that being king required a lot of work. Because of his marriage to Isabella, the Hugh family was furious, as was King Philip II of France. Had John been smart enough at the time, he would have offered the Hugh family immediate and generous reparation for the pain and loss of their son's future inheritance of title and lands (then again, maybe he should have thought it unwise to snatch a 12-year-old girl away from her family). As a consequence, Philip seized all of John's land in France including the province of Normandy. A five-year war started. In England, a civil war was about to erupt and threatened to unseat John from the throne. During this time, John, trying to make some political amends with Hugh IX, betroths his (and Isabella's) daughter, Joan, to Hugh's son, Hugh X.

There were many nasty rumors spread about Isabella by her enemies. The French didn't like her because she had rejected the French count she was betrothed to and had married an English king who threatened France. The English didn't like her because she was French and was distracting the King from his duties. The war with France was not progressing well. John got in an argument with Pope Innocent II that led to his excommunication in 1209. He lost the war with the French in 1214 at the battle of Bouvines. Then in 1215 he was forced by the English barons to



## royal drama

sign the Magna Carta peace charter that protected church rights and provided protection against illegal imprisonment, access to swift justice, and limitation on feudal payments, a first step to guaranteeing individual legal rights.

In 1216, John was retreating home from fighting with the barons in Scotland and England, dodging rebel-held areas. During this time, his baggage train with the Crown Jewels was lost in a marshy area of quicksand that flooded during high tide. John was overcome with failure and died shortly afterwards from dysentery.

John and Isabella survived 16 years of marriage and had five children together. When their first son, Henry, was about to be king, the court realized that the crown and other royal accoutrements were lost in the marsh. Isabella knew that she must act quickly. She offered up her own golden circlet for the coronation, paid with her own money for the ceremony (since the Royal Treasury funds were depleted from war), and her son was crowned Henry III. He was nine years old.

Their second son, Richard, was named first Earl of Cornwall. Because John did not specify or even mention Isabella in his will, her future became unclear. The King's Regency Council began to marginalize her because she was French and a political liability.

Isabella, now experienced in royal politics, made her move. In 1217 she traveled to France to look after her estate in Angoulême and to escort her daughter, Joan, 7 years old, to the family of her betrothed to live until she was old enough to marry. Hugh X was now 36 and Isabella, still as beautiful as ever, was 29. When she arrived Hugh fell in love with Isabella and they married in May of that year. Because she was a former queen and received a pension from the Regency Council, she was supposed to get permission from them before marrying. Now the Council saw a political threat. They stopped her pension and took away her lands

in England. What the Council didn't realize was that since Isabella had married her daughter's fiancé, she had to find her daughter a new husband. She succeeded with a betrothal of Joan to the King of Scotland. Isabella threatened the Council saying she would keep her daughter in France unless they reconsidered. The Council, already under heavy pressure to keep the peace at home and not wanting the wrath of the King of Scotland, reconsidered. Isabella got back her pension, lands, and an arrears payment of 3,000 British pounds. Joan, almost 11, married Alexander II, King of Scotland,<sup>23</sup> at York Minster on June 21, 1221.

Isabella's other children with John married well. Her daughter, Isabella, became Consort of Frederick II, Holy Roman Emperor, and Eleanor, the youngest, married William Marshal, 2nd Earl of Pembroke, and later Simon de Montfort, 6th Earl of Leicester.

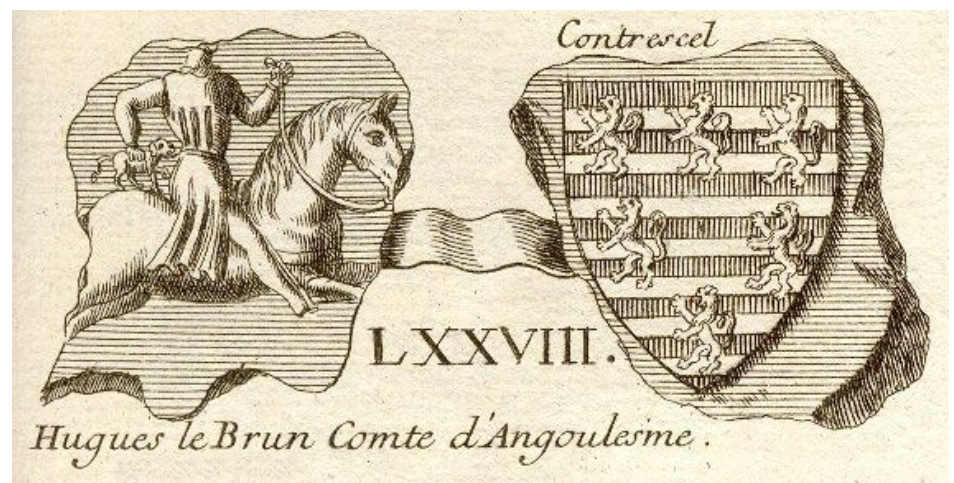
Now in France, Isabella could not accept the fact that she was no longer a queen, had to give precedence to other women, and her husband had to bow to others. Isabella, with her husband Hugh owning strategic landholdings, played France and England against each other. In the end, her plans backfired, and they lost almost everything. Isabella blamed the King of France for their downfall. She was implicated in a plot to poison Louis IX and his brother. She fled to the Abbey of Fontevaud and took refuge at a secret chamber. At the Abbey, she had regrets about some



*King John*

of the choices she had made in her life. She asked to be buried in a common grave for penance. She was 58 years old when she died.

When her son, Henry III, found out about her common grave, he had her moved inside the Abbey and buried next to Henry's uncle, Richard the Lionheart, and his grandparents, King Henry II and Queen Eleanor. Isabella and Hugh X had nine children. The eldest, Hugh XI, succeeded his father as Count of LaMarche and Count of Angoulême in 1229. Most of the other children sailed to England after their mother's death where Henry III, their half-brother, provided for them generously. ■



# wags 'n whiskers

*Photos by Dian McDonald*





*Observed in our woodlands though a wild forsythia thicket, a pair of the rare and seldom seen Phoenicopterus ruber var. plastikos graze upon their favored diet, tree chips.*

*Photo by Anonymous*