

The MONTEBELLO Voice

an independent gazette

dog days

August 14, 2022



Ready to let the dogs out Montebello pooches and their parents look forward to the dog run that is coming to the woodlands this fall

Life’s a pickle

The darkest of clouds gathered on the horizon. The villagers gathered and looked to the sky in fear. What was upon us?

Small groups met to discuss what all this meant. Was life as they knew it about to vanish? Was the end at hand?

As the sky lost the sun, and darkness came to the village, a frightening sound echoed across the village square.

It was the dreaded “thock, thock” of Pickleball made worse by the sounds of laughter and merriment of the players. The hordes of some distant land were upon us, daring to have fun. “Who are these people?”

“What is upon us?” they shrieked. “Can we live in a village where people have fun and enjoy themselves?”

The elders gathered to calm the residents. “Fear not,” they counseled. “We must forbid all nature of activity that causes times of merriment and joy.” They spoke at length about the coming of dreaded noise pollution, discussing prohibitions on shouted greetings among residents, on boisterous patriotic parades, and surely on children laughing while splashing at the village pool. The fearful residents looked to them for guidance and wisdom.



They called The Scribe of The Elders to write on parchment the list of prohibitions. It was posted throughout the village. The villagers were silently happy. Peace and quiet had returned, but the dark clouds remained in the sky. They walked in quiet processions back to their dens of meditation.

The Land of Eternal Silence was at hand – solemn, quiet, people walked with bowed heads, the children had duct-taped mouths, small dogs no longer barked. Peace and tranquility reigned in the village.

Then the alarm clock went off. We awoke realizing it had all been a bad dream. Thank God! – *Bob Shea* 📍

FYI: undesirable side effects

I am not a doctor, nor do I play one on TV. That said...

A few months ago I was quickly and unexpectedly struck with a case of diarrhea. The usual remedies (anti-diarrheals, broth and crackers diet) did nothing to help. My daughter-in-law is the customer service person for a company that develops digestive products, so I called her for advice. She sent products that were very slowly helping, but the condition persisted.



Her boss happened on an article in the April 17, 2022 issue of *New York Times Sunday Magazine*, which described in some detail a man whose symptoms were virtually identical to mine. The man was in and out of the hospital while doctors tried to determine the cause of his malady. A few days in the hospital, and his symptoms would subside; then when he got home, they would resume. Finally one of his doctors noted that when hospitalized, he was off all his medications; when he went home, he resumed them. And he would develop symptoms all over again.

Among his medications was a blood pressure medication that had very low potential side effects of stomach distress and diarrhea. Bingo! A few days without that med and his stomach was back to normal. When I read this article, I immediately stopped the med and my stomach was back to normal in a couple of days. The name of the medication is Amlodipine-Olmesartan, and the culprit seems to be the Olmesartan part of it. Amlodipine by itself does not have the same side effect.

Hopefully, you won’t suffer this side effect if you’re taking this medication, but forewarned is forearmed. – *Carol Coyle-Shea* 📍

UFOs – real or not?

People in authority are speaking more openly lately about the possible existence of UFOs (which now are being called something else). NPR just did a special on it.

Two quick comments. It is Earthling exceptionalism run amok to imagine that there is not intelligent life elsewhere in a universe of billions of galaxies. The relevant question is: given the awesome size of the universe and the enormous distances involved, will any of these beings ever be able to pay us a visit? For them to do so would require space vehicle velocity that are orders of magnitude greater than anything we can achieve. Or, some form of biological dormancy, or, of teleportation.

Who knows? Man only started flying about a century ago. The valid question is not whether they’re out there, but, whether we’ll ever be able to do a meet-and-greet. – *Richard Titus* 📍

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Local students to gain on-the-job training at Montebello

By *Mikhailina Karina*

This fall, Montebello will host a group of students with disabilities to help provide life and career skills in a professional environment, announced General Manager Eric Finke at the last board work session.

Six students ages 18 to 22 with supervising teachers from the nearby Earl L. Pulley Center at West Potomac High School will be onsite weekdays from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

According program website <https://pulleycenter.fcps.edu/program>, the center provides “career and independent living skills training to students with disabilities, empowering a diverse

population of students for transition to a variety of post-secondary options, providing students with the requisite skills for self-determination, independent living, and education for employment, and coordinating the transition of all students with post-secondary service providers.”

GM Finke said he learned about the program from an article last spring and thought it would be a good fit for Montebello to give students experience with housekeeping and clerical jobs. Students will “perform a variety of tasks, including but not limited to housekeeping, grounds, clerical, and organizational. This will be a tremendous opportunity for Montebello to assist those with disabilities in our Community while helping complete tasks around the Community that will allow us to focus on more special projects,” GM Finke wrote in his report in the board packet.

Students will be easily identifiable with blue vests. The school is about a mile, or three minutes, away from Montebello on Quander Road and will provide transportation.

Teams of students from Pulley work at area hotels, Reagan National Airport, Greenspring Village, retail, and community centers, program website states. 🏠

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Let's Pickleball! Court 3 is open for fun and games. Paddles and balls are available in the Community Center

Safety advice from Mom and the DMV

Montebello residents come to Virginia from many different states, some of which have different traffic laws from those in Virginia. For example, Virginia’s Department of Motor Vehicles says, “If there is no sidewalk, walk facing the traffic.” That sounds like good advice for all of us who walk around Montebello’s campus. With all of our hills and curves and lush plantings, let’s make sure we can “see ‘em coming” and are ready to step quickly to the side of the road for safety’s sake. – *Karen Barnes* 🏠

Polymer Clay Play! Make It! Bake It! Take It! Tuesday Sep 6, 2-5pm and of course : eat chocolate! Where: The Underground CC



keychain

Come join us for a fun afternoon with soothing clay. Simply roll it, squish it, and make it! In this month's event, you can make a bead, a keychain, a zipper pull, or whatever else your heart desires!

Thanks to the Activities Group support for our AiM Polymer Clay Group, we will have everything, clay, tools and ovens onsite so you can make and bake your piece and take it with you. Just bring yourself — and a friend! Relax those hands with clay and have some fun with us!



Luggage tags.

What is Polymer Clay?
Polymer Clay is a non-toxic synthetic clay that can be baked to strong hardness in a toaster oven. With lots of colors and a myriad of techniques, it can be used to make pretty much any type of art — whether it is wall art, jewelry, or home decor, or utility items.



Heart beads - pendants, or brooches

AiM Polymer Clay

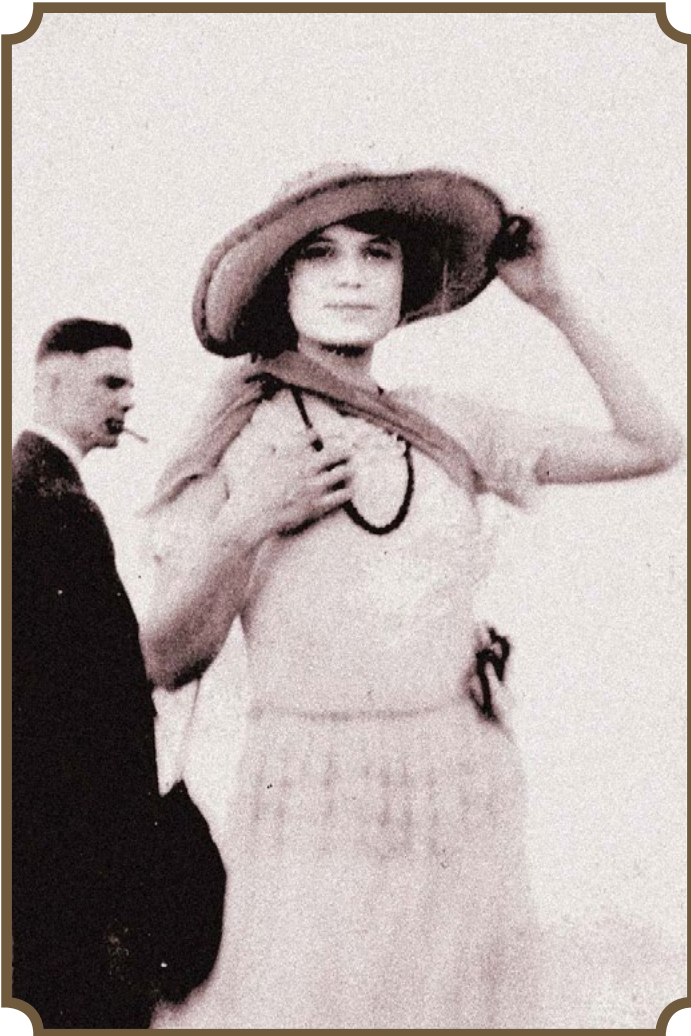
you may leave your hat on

Arts in Montebello presents

Places and Faces – Montebello & More

Opening Reception

September 10 at 4 p.m. at the Montebello Grille



Restored photo by Joel Miller



Photo by Dian McDonald

Two of AiM's photographers, **Dian McDonald** and **Joel Miller**, will be using the Community Center's vast display walls to exhibit everything from today's portraits to restored vintage photography from a century ago

Yellow Passionflower (*Passiflora lutea* L.)

By Patricia Jacobec

There are perhaps only a few patches of yellow passionflower (*Passiflora lutea*) on our grounds. This perennial, trailing vine is easy to miss, even when in flower. Its delicate, saucer-shaped,

are narrow, curved filaments, and the reproductive parts rise above the petals like an alien tilt-a-whirl. While the vines will sport blossoms throughout the warm months of summer into fall, each flower will bloom for only one day. In the fall, the flowers give way to bitter, marble-sized, ovoid, purple-black berries.



chartreuse-colored, fragrant flowers are only about an inch wide. From a distance, the flowers appear unremarkable. But viewed up close, the flower is strange and unusual. The petals

P. lutea is native to the eastern and south-central parts of the United States, seen from Pennsylvania west to Kansas, and south to Florida and Texas. It is the northernmost of the more than

500 species of *Passiflora*. As its common name hints, yellow passionflower is related to the passion fruit (*Passiflora edulis*), which is native to Brazil, Paraguay, and Argentina.

For all its small size, yellow passionflower is important to wildlife. Birds and small mammals enjoy its fruits. The vine is a host plant (plant upon which an insect lays eggs and the hatched larvae feed), for several butterfly species, including the gulf fritillary (*Agraulis vanilla*), julia butterfly (*Dryas julia*), zebra longwing (*Heliconius charithonia*), and variegated fritillary (*Euptoieta claudia*).

The most peculiar aspect of *P. lutea* is the relationship it has with the tiny passionflower bee (*Anthemurgus passiflorae*). This solitary and uncommon bee feeds its larvae solely on pollen from the yellow passionflower.

Lore has it that in Brazil, European Christian missionaries called the passionfruit flower *flor de las cinco lagas*, flower of the five wounds or *fior della passione*, flower of the passion. They used the various flower parts as teaching aids or symbols in their missionary work for remembering aspects of Christ's passion – hence passionflower or *Passiflora* in Latin. 📖



What a deal! Really?

By Bob Shea

Everett Dirkson, the late senator from Illinois, once said about federal spending: “A million here, a million there, and pretty soon you are talking about real money.” As taxpayers, it is your money and mine “real money.”

Let me share a story that illustrates the veracity of the senator’s words and a questionable government expenditure that went so very, very wrong, and which cost “real money.”

In the early 1960s, the U.S. military had over a half million service members and dependents in West Germany. The U.S. Army operated a huge North Sea port facility in Bremerhaven in the British Zone through which most American goods entered the country: all military supplies, hardware, and equipment in addition to household goods and retail stock for the commissaries and post exchanges – everything 500,000 Americans needed. This is about the population of Austin, Texas or Tucson, Arizona but scattered all over the U.S. Zone of West Germany.

To provide the long-haul capabilities from the port to the countless small and large *kasernes* scattered throughout the country, the 37th Transportation Command was given the mission. Supplies were moved over the modern German autobahn system in a series of relays with each transportation battalion moving loaded or empty trailers, pony-express style, along a designated portion of highway. A trailer, loaded or empty, would be passed from one unit to the next at a series of locations called trailer transfer points. The tractor and a new trailer would reverse direction and drive back to its unit area of re-

sponsibility.

In the days before containers and mega-container ships, most military cargo was “break-bulk” shipments. Think of the stevedores and cargo nets in the Marlon Brando film *On The Waterfront*.

The prime movers were standard and very expensive military M-series 5-ton tractors, designed to stringent military standards: all-wheel drive, able to ford deep water, powerful and robust for the expected secondary road requirements of the European battlefield, but



certainly over-designed for the modern interstate-type highway system that the autobahn provided.

At some point a light bulb went off in someone’s head. Why are we operating such unique vehicles on long-haul autobahn routes? Why not use commercial tractors much like those used all over the United States on our own interstates? A valid and serious question, seemingly a good way to maintain service while saving a ton of taxpayer money. As someone once said, the devil is in the details.

Specifications were written and bids were solicited. The baseline objective was to purchase a tractor that was commercially available with a proven history of use by U.S.-based civilian long-haul trucking companies. It had to be compatible with the existing mil-

itary trailers for 5th-wheel attachment and braking systems with the objective to purchase a fleet of tractors for the 37th Transportation Command and all its miles of autobahn routes.

Bids were received, and a U.S.-based manufacturer of trucks and industrial equipment, well known by its distinctive logo (not the bulldog of Mack trucks), was awarded the bid. The price of a ready-to-drive cab-over-engine tractor, delivered to an East Coast port, was approximately \$8,400 in 1964 dollars. It was significantly cheaper than

the price of the standard military tractor with its unique and unneeded battlefield capabilities that were superfluous on the autobahn.

The company also wisely included in the contract a stipulation that it would be the sole supplier of repair parts which would be readily available from its own bonded warehouse in West Germany. They claimed that it would

save the military the cost of having to maintain an extensive stock of repair parts with the resulting predicted reduction in inventory, warehousing, and related expenses. All the military had to routinely stock were low-cost expendable items like oil filters, tires, tubes, and windshield wipers. It all made good sense at the contract signing.

As they say in television commercials: “But wait, there is more!”

Once the new tractors were in Germany and on the autobahn, problems surfaced. Significant problems.

The trailer transfer points where trailers were transferred to other tractors were mostly unpaved. The tractor’s air filter intake was located inside the right front wheel and low to the ground, in and of itself a strange place to locate the engine’s air filter intake.

In the unpaved and often rutted trailer transfer points, with 24-hours a day and all-weather operations, the air intakes tended to be dislodged and destroyed at an alarming rate, an unexpected and costly repair with lost time on the autobahn. The tractor was deadlined until the repair was completed.

The cab-over engine design was touted as making maintenance easier as the whole cab tilted forward providing the mechanics complete access to the power train. Unfortunately, if the driver had to make an abrupt stop at highway speed, the cab had a nasty habit of tilting forward, much to the dismay of the driver, not to mention his well-being.

The tractor tires and wheels were of a different size than those on the tractor. While each trailer had the integral ability to carry at least one spare tire and wheel, there was no way for the tractor to have a spare tire available without having to carry its spare tire and wheel loaded in the trailer with the cargo. Since the spare tire and wheel belonged to the tractor, it too had to be moved between trailers at each transfer, a very less than efficient way of providing a spare tire if needed on the road. More unhappy drivers.

The front grill of the cab looked like a cross in a picture frame, made of fiberglass. To clean the windshield, the GI drivers tended to use the grill as a step to gain height. Normally the fiberglass cracked and broke. German technicians in one of the Army maintenance facilities designed a press to fabricate a new grill made of steel that was strong enough to support a windshield-cleaning driver as well as costing much less than the manufacturer's replacement item. The company sued the Army and won a settlement due to their exclusive contract to provide all repair parts. They continued by contract to supply

the fiberglass grills, a poor and fragile product design at a greater cost.

Despite the company's low bid to deliver the tractors FOB at an East coast port for approximately \$8,400, the price of just a new power train, engine and transmission, from their German warehouse was almost \$9,600, roughly \$1,200 more than the cost of the entire tractor, taxpayers' money, yours and mine.

As problems developed and an investigation was conducted, it was learned that the tractor was not, as promised, the readily available off-the-shelf commercial model used by U.S. transport companies, but rather a model cobbled



together from various parts available at the manufacturer's plants, parts left over from other various models, but never all used on the same model tractor.

The model sold to the U.S. Army was an amalgamation of parts that were left over from other models, an effective way to clean out unneeded and warehoused overruns of truck parts. It makes one think of the expression that a camel is a horse cobbled together by a committee. The Army bought the camel, thinking it was getting a horse – with no disrespect intended to the camels of the world.

This was a case of a flawed invitation for a bid, a less than thorough and thoughtful examination of the proposed product, no field evaluation as it was a “proven commercial” product, no questioning of the repair parts stipulation, and a bid price that was almost

too good to be true.

The Army had to live with the consequences. Once the new tractors were purchased and on the autobahn moving goods, and the former tractors were mothballed for battlefield transport, the Army had little it could do but to make the best of a bad situation – pave the huge trailer transfer points all over West Germany, re-design and replace all the tilt cab latches, train drivers to use step ladders to clean windshields, jerry-rig a way to attach a spare tire to the tractor – all expensive but totally necessary. Buying all required repair parts from the company was never resolved.

I have often wondered if the military contracting officer, once retired, went to work for the company as a sales representative or a lobbyist. I have no proof that ever happened, but one can certainly speculate.

At least this would make an excellent case study in some business school on how to succeed in business with stealth, distortions of the truth (alternative facts²), and innocent-appearing repair parts stipulations – or conversely, how to avoid making a really stupid procurement decision by thinking through the process. There are enough lessons for all.

Senator Dirkson was right. “Real money” was involved. The unsuspecting, and naive, Army paid the price for a contracting process gone totally awry. Sometimes deals are just too good to be true.

Remember the used car salesman or that Nigerian prince who needs your help in recovering his lost fortune. 🐪

Butterflies and bees

By Chester Taylor

In a late summer day, I was playing golf at Hilltop just off Telegraph Road. As I approached the crest of one of the hills, I suddenly saw thousands of beautiful monarch butterflies enjoying the nectar of blooming goldenrods that surrounded most of the fairways. Their beautiful orange and black wings turned to the warm sun as they swayed gently with the breeze. It made me think, how easy it was to create habitats for animals and plants and support biological diversity or biodiversity.

Biodiversity includes plants, animals, bacteria, and fungi that live on Earth's land and water – the oceans, forests, deserts, mountains, caves, and glaciers. Because every species plays a specific role in our ecosystem, biodiversity and its maintenance are very important for sustaining life on Earth. Biodiversity gives the planet vital environmental life support of air, water, and nitrogen, for example. It gives us food, clothing, and shelter and medicine. We need biodiversity to protect our ecosystem from environmental stress. Our human existence depends on it. Unfortunately, the lack of habitats is the biggest threat to biodiversity.

Raised on the coast of the Gulf of Mexico, I think of the mangrove forests that use to protect Florida and Louisiana from hurricanes. As these habitats were destroyed to make way for urban and commercial development, these coastal states have become more vulnerable to violent storms. These same saltwater forests help mitigate global warming by removing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. They improve water qual-

ity by filtering pollutants and trapping sediments from the land, and they reduce land erosion. They provide us with crabs, fish, and shellfish. They become recreational and tourist areas. Many like to kayak through mangrove forests just to see and photograph the variety of bird species.

With help of our environmental scientists, we can improve and create additional green areas that support biodiversity. We can have city parks, with their cooling effect, gardened with native species of flowers, scrubs, grass, and trees. Scientist can recommend

pesticides, and chemical fertilizers. But some courses are starting to change to help the environment. Take Pinehurst No. 2 as an example. The course was redesigned and restored 35 acres to its original condition with native sand, wire grass, pine straw and other grasses. The concrete cart paths were removed (you must walk) as were 650 irrigation heads. The centerline watering system of the fairways saves millions of gallons of water each year. The bunkers were also transformed into a more natural state. After the restoration, Pinehurst No. 2 was the site of the U.S. Open 2014 won by Jordan Spieth and the U.S. Women's Open 2014 won by Michelle Wie. Audubon International estimates there are at least 100,000 acres on golf courses that have the potential to become suitable habitats for butterflies and bees if managed appropriately.

During the time of Sputnik, we held rocket scientists in high esteem. Now, during global warming, we must recognize that our environmental scientists are the ones who will help us during this crisis. Much is needed to be done by all. Some good news is that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is reviewing the wildlife protection rules to expand habitats and better protect endangered animals.

Here at Montebello, I applaud the efforts of our Grounds Committee and others for supporting biodiversity, creating a pocket forest, and maintaining beautiful gardens with flowers that attract butterflies and bees. 🐝



adjustments to the habitats for climate change (warmer temperature and less or more rain). We can have recreational areas for camping, canoing, hiking, and sports that serve the public and yet can support biodiversity.

Take golf courses, for an example. We have about 18,514 golf courses in the United States that occupy 2.5 million acres. None are free of herbicides,







Photo by Miriam Rosenthal