# The montrepleno voice

love is love

February 7, 2023

# voices on the 37

## Buy your Girl Scout cookies from Ziya

I got my first experience talking in public when I was six years old. I know it encouraged me as girl to face my fears and become courageous. Later, I spent 10 years working as a Girl Scout executive in my hometown of Houston and later in NYC in the national office of Girl Scouts.

My granddaughter, Ziya, has continued the legacy and is a Girl Scout Brownie at Cameron Elementary School. She wants to become a high cookie seller and she welcomes your help. Montebello is a caring community and we are grateful to our Montebello family for supporting us. The cookie adventure is open to all who want to participate. To place an order, please email me at dridley3@icloud.com, text or call 713-824-4650.– Delphia Ridley



Ziya (second from left) with her Brownie troop

#### Only in the movies



In the past there was a theme popular with makers of low-budget sci-fi films. On Earth, each nation was at war with at least one other nation. Then, alien invaders appeared from another galaxy. At that point, Earthlings were able to stop fighting among themselves and unite to repel the outsiders.

Maybe a bit too optimistic? Earth is now under attack from climate change, as well as from this pandemic or that. The ultimate damage could easily surpass whatever harm space invaders might inflict. And what has our response been?

Little wars and bigger wars, almost anywhere one looks. With very scant evidence that anyone thinks we may have important more things to be thinking about. Like, preserving the environment in which we evolved. depressing, Kinda

really, if one thinks about it. So, we don't. – *Richard Titus* 

Cover photo by Patricia Jacubec These pear-shaped puffballs (Apioperdon pyriforme) have taken over one of our fallen trees – exactly as they're supposed to. Fungi are superb at decomposing woody plant material.



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# the hill

## And we are expected to address them as the Honorable?

#### By Chester Taylor

s we start 2023, most of us are ready to get on with our daily lives. We have felt the effects of the pandemic, the war in Ukraine, and the price of energy surge upward. We are worried about the increasing frequent severe weather events, the southern border being overrun by 1.7 million refugees each year from failed states, the possibility of nuclear war, and the increasing amount of national debt (now at \$31 trillion) and the rising amount of interest that is costing us more than \$400 billion each year, greater than the

defense budget. We are tired of conspiracy theorists (liars) like Alex Jones who made a million dollars denying the Sandy Hook massacre and those like Marjorie Taylor Greene who support Trump's false claims of a stolen election in 2020. Most of all, in the midst of all this, we are completely fatigued by the political infighting in Congress.

Our hope that things will be better for 2023 were abruptly dashed when we witnessed the four-day-long congressional chaos and 15 rounds of voting to elect a Speaker of the House. While the Republicans had the majority in the House, they couldn't get the required majority votes needed to elect Kevin McCarthy as Speaker. That was because a group within their own party, the Freedom Caucus, made up of hardright conservatives, took the opportunity to demand more favorable committee chairs, guarantees on spending and other bills, and more favorable rules to control the House and replace the The Montebello Voice

Speaker. Once McCarthy caved into these demands, he made the Speaker authority weaker and bipartisanship much harder.

One of the ring leaders of the Freedom Caucus is Representative Matt Gaetz, a far-right Republican from Florida, and an ally of former President Donald Trump. Gaetz's shenanigans during the Speaker election procedure included rallying Freedom Caucus members against McCarthy and mocking McCarthy as a weak conservative. Matt Gaetz has been called a "circus jerk" for his history of these sort of antics. For example, in 2019 he led a chael Cohen testifying about the "dirty deeds" of the Trump organization, and numerous House ethics violations. Gaetz was against student loan forgiveness but had \$476,000 of his debt forgiven through the Paycheck Protection Program. It goes on and on with Gaetz and members of the Freedom Caucus members, and they are entitled to be addressed as the Honorable for life.

Without cross aisle support and the extremist views of its own members, the Republicans will have a difficult time to pass day-to-day business legislation, much less tackling the immigration/border enforcement issues and

ratcheting down the national debt. While they say they will fix these major challenges, they have no real plan and no real support. Speaker Kevin McCarthy has not been a strong leader in the past. Now he is further weakened by rule changes and the infighting of his own party. He will only be able to create a lot of smoke, hate, and divisive-

group of Republicans to storm a Sensitive Compartment Information Facility uninvited to hear a deposition from a Pentagon official during the impeachment inquiry against former President Trump. Gaetz with Marjorie Taylor Greene continues to promote that the 2020 election was stolen. He has stated the Second Amendment was for "maintaining, within the citizenry, the ability to maintain an armed rebellion against the government if that becomes necessary." Besides a DUI earlier in his career, he has been investigated for sex trafficking a 17-year-old girl, witness tampering/intimidation against Miness. Clinging to conspiracy theorists and cheerleaders like Marjorie Greene Taylor and his inability to put Trump in the rearview mirror, he will grind down what little respect is left for the Republican Party. Liz Cheney's recent assessment of him is spot on when she stated on her appearance on the ABC News program *This Week*, "He's been completely unfaithful to the Constitution and demonstrated a total lack of understanding of the significance and the importance of the role of speaker."



3

## Sense and Sensibility of feline Persuasion

By Aria

y name, dear readers, is Aria. Some of you may recognize me from my strolls and carriage rides around the Montebello towers, drawn by my lady in waiting Miss L While my feline beauty and regalness is generously celebrated along the winding lanes of our condominium, the part I have played in developing a great love story in our midst is lesser known.

Our romance begins one early evening in May last year, when Miss L and I were out for an airing beyond the Montebello back gate, one of our first promenades after taking up residence here.

A gentleman of middling years taking his exercise in Mount Eagle Park approached and engaged Miss L and myself in conversation after catching the curious sight of myself (a cat) on a leash. My lady was enthused as always to expound upon the finer points of leash training and feline foraying to the pleasant bespectacled stranger.

"She walks when the spirit moves her," my lady quipped, a favourite line she felt sure would provoke a smile in her generous audience. Mr. L, a fel-



low admirer of my species, shared his own foiled attempts at harnessing one of his feline wards, Watson, who fell over as one deceased, then miraculously arose and attempted to evacuate the harness by shimmying backwards. In what proved characteristic compassion, Mr. L abandoned the scheme and freed the hapless retractor from his restrictive vestments.

Miss L recounted my similar initiation, though she gently decried the ease with which most humans

abandoned the course of training required to produce an itinerant feline. As an ambassador of cat walking, she recommended her phased approach to gently but proactively acclimating

> felines to the outer world with a series of brief sit-abouts in a quiet area, until the spirit eventually animated the student or they proved solely suited for indoor repose.

> After some more polite têteà-tête I moved along the grass so as not to linger indecorously, and Miss L and Mr. L bid their farewells before Mr. L returned through the gate to the Montebello grounds.

> Some days later, Miss L reported having encountered Mr. L waiting to ascend the elevator in our tower, and I was gratified to hear he had



kindly inquired after my welfare. My lady recognized the gregarious rider as the gentleman who had favored us with pleasant conversation on the aforementioned excursion. Miss L responded warmly though bashfully, since his name had regrettably quit her memory. Mr. L took his leave on the seventh floor, and Miss L traveled onward to the ninth with some lingering curiosity about the amiable gentleman, though she was soon distracted by the tribulations of domestic duty and management of my daily affairs.

Lounging in the parlour together one afternoon soon after, my lady found herself perusing personal ads on a popular courting application and raised a surprised brow when she came across the now familiar face and name of Mr L. She was pleasantly intrigued to see his personage outlined in colorful detail, with biographical bits and humorous quips forming a charming picture



The Montebello Voice

of his character. His delight in sailing and classic Anglo-American composition appealed to my lady's proclivities. She had recently joined a social sailing club, and throughout her youth devoured a steady literary diet of Austen and Dickens and the like. These passions, along with his book shop and rock wall climbing addictions (apparently in remission), were all pleasing indicators of Mr. L's suitable tastes, advanced intellect, and a useful ability to scale small platforms with dexterity.

Mr. L's principal photograph was striking, slightly angled to show a fine nose, Victorian-esque sideburns, and lightly stubbled chin accompanied by eyes of azure blue, slightly squinted in a gaze that suggested a man of intention. His subsequent snapshots portrayed a tall, trim, brainy figure loosely crowned with sandy-hued strands trying not to be red. Mr. L hailed most serendipitously from Miss L's home state, a Pisces with liberal leanings who indicated he can and, in a most attractive offer, will, cook for his reader (an activity my lady was loathe to partake in herself, though she is a creature of discerning taste who delights in being a beneficiary of those with opposing dispositions).

Miss L studied the advert with some interest. This virtual encounter with the genial seventh floor cat lover struck her as serendipitous. If she swiped right on his profile and they managed to match, it would bring the thing to a considerable head. My lady in waiting was hesitant to put herself or Mr. L in a potentially uncomfortable position, considering their unusual proximity. Miss L posited to me that lovers were discovered within blocks of each other in times gone by, and herself and Mr L were both likely of a maturity to comport themselves with grace should romance not be their destiny. Having never taken a lover and preferring dogs myself, I felt no great harm could come from the motion.

She moved the image of his stalwart face to the right.

They matched instantly, Mr L had previously swiped right on Miss L so

the interest was mutual!

After exchanging messages of friendly delight at crossing simulated paths yet again, Miss L asked Mr. L if a walk about the Montebello grounds in the near future might be favorable to him. The excellent gentlemen responded warmly, and sealed his good graces by suggesting they include myself as chaperone. He jested that Miss L might start a Montebello cat walking community, and Miss L coyly rejoined that she had considered a cat lover walking club at least, since the lovers are more likely to be friends than their felines.

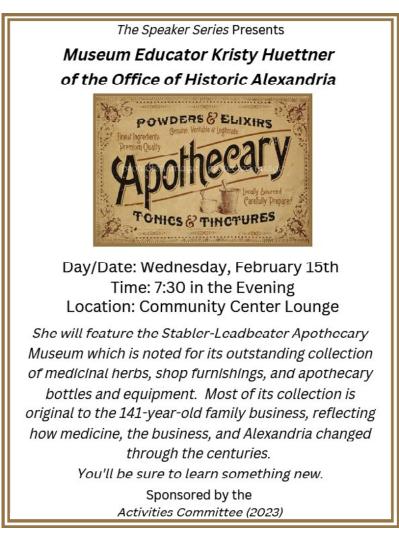
A feline of my station often wishes to take the air without applying my delicate paws to rough pavement, and Miss L had procured a pet stroller carriage for occasions where I preferred less of such exercise and she more. A date was set for the auspicious perambulation. As we rolled around the grounds myself and Miss L found ourselves delight-

# love story

ed by the kind, thoughtful, comedic Mr. L, who later acknowledged it was Miss L's lively laugh which fueled his feats of humor and her tranquil yet enthusiastic spirit that began to capture his heart.

Through many pleasant carriage rides and walkabouts and parlour chats, each discovered in the other a most fitting, joyous companion and by the fall Mr. L professed his most ardent feelings to Miss L, whose love she heartily returned.

The two remark frequently on their miraculous good fortune in having both come to occupy the Montebello towers, as they take turns ascending and descending the stairs between our respective suites (coincidentally the same unit, two levels apart), and their fortuitous meeting that fateful day. Thanks above all, to this cat on her leash.





**A Love Poem** By Joe de Angelis



The following is a poem that I wrote for my wife for our 50th wedding anniversary. As this St. Valentine's Day approaches, we are only six months away from our 60th anniversary and my feelings, so inadequately expressed in my poem, have only grown stronger, as has my love for my dear wife, Hedi.

Hedi and Joe on the steps of the Standes Amt Courthouse in Wiesbaden, Germany on the day they got married, 23 July 1963

My Dearest Hedi,

As I look back over the last half century I am overwhelmed by the good fortune that has befallen me. However, I am fully aware that all of my accomplishments could never have been achieved without your loving support and guidance.

We have transversed the sea of life together, but you have always been the wind in my sails. We have trekked through the valleys and scaled the mountain tops and you have always been there to guide me. I am forever grateful for our life together and over the years my love for you has grown more and more. I love you more than words can express and I always will no matter what the future brings.

Love,

Joe



## Once upon a high school ring!

#### By Joanne Conte

pring 1954. Summer vacation is almost here. Busy time in school. All ninth graders were heading to the local high school. Excitement was everywhere. I had just been selected to join the cheerleading squad. Quite an honor.

The high school choral group was giving a concert during the last week of the semester. They also auditioned students who would like to join the group. I was sitting with a group of my friends as the group entered the stage and took to the risers. This one student stood on the first riser with the retainer of the group lined up behind him. As I looked up I thought I was going to faint. HE was gorgeous. Six feet, black hair, duck tails, totally out of the '50s. A lovely combination of John Travolta and Henry Winkler. I turned to my friends



and said, "Next year HE's mine!" HE had the most beautiful voice. Every girl in the school was in love with HIM.

Well, summer soon past and it was time for school to start. As is with most schools, the football team and the cheerleaders started rehearsal about two weeks earlier. I was a nervous wreck! New faces to learn, new school to learn, new teachers to learn. Wow.

So off I went to the first rehearsal. It was wonderful. Such nice girls. After rehearsal was over, I was waiting in the parking lot for the squad leader to give me a ride home.

I has talking with a couple of friends

and looked up and there HE was and HE was heading straight for me. I was awestruck.

"Hi, I'm Al Conte. Can I give you a ride home?"

"Thank you so much, but I don't have my folks' permission."

(Oh my goodness. A whole chance blown.) HE drove a 1936 powder blue Ford coupe with a rumble seat in the back. Phew! That night I asked my parents for permission. They said yes.

So the next day HE came up to me and asked if HE could give me a ride. Of course, I said yes. However, what I didn't know was that HE had a girlfriend and she sat next to HIM while I got the rumble seat with two



other cheerleaders.

That evening after dinner there was a knock at the door. Would you believe? It was HIM and HE handed me a notebook that I had left in the car. (no name, nothing on any page.) HE thought I might need it. Now, I lived 10 miles from school and gas was 25 cents a gallon.

School started about a week later. I walked into the alcove where my locker was located and there HE stood. His locker was directly across from mine. (Kismet) Hmmmmm

HE began leaving me little notes that stuffed in the locker. And then finally asked me if I would like to go out with a bunch of friends after school on Friday. I asked for permission and HE came to pick me up. We went over to the shores of the Anacostia River (Haines Point) to watch the submarine races. Boy, was I dumb. We all started singing and telling jokes and having a wonderful time. Didn't see one submarine, though.

We began dating fairly steady – going to all of the dances and activities at the school. Senior rings were given out the first week in December. So exciting. On the 10th of December, we had a date and HE asked me to go steady and to wear HIS ring. I was in wonderland. When I told my folks the next morning

they were less than excited. It caused quite an argument and things got really hard. They didn't like HIM. HE was 180 degrees from me. He was Italian and Catholic. In fact, my father even asked why I couldn't find a nice white boy. I was crushed.

We stayed going steady through the entire school. I truly loved HIM. Shortly after graduation we both realized it was going to be very hard to keep up our romance. My folks had a summer home on the Bay and I was forced to spend the summer there. We would write to each other and HE would try to visit, but it just didn't work out. So before school resumed, we decided it was best to see other people and move on. HE was going to college and working a part-time job. I wept and returned HIS ring.

School started and as soon as people knew that we were

no longer an item, I began to have guys ask me out. My parents were ecstatic. It was about the middle of October. Homecoming weekend! A really nice young fella who I had been seeing asked if I would go with him. I said yes. When it was time for the entertainment, HE had come back to school to sing the alma mater. It was all I could do not to cry. When the entertainment ended, the dance music began again. My date and I went out on the floor and began to dance. Suddenly from nowhere, HE taps my date on the shoulder and asks if HE can cut in. My date stepped aside and we began to dance. The floor cleared and everyone clapped to see us together.

After the dance was over, my date intended to take me home. HE was standing next to my date's car. HE turned to me and said, "You have to



choose. It can't go on this way." I was dumbfounded. But I knew in my heart it was right. I turned to my date and apologized, turned to HIM and kissed HIM.

I knew it was going to be hard. Lots of battles to be fought on the home front. Male friends would come to pick me up and we would meet HIM a few blocks away. Toward the end of October, HE asked me to go steady again and regave me HIS ring. There are no words to express how I felt. How was this going to work. We talked a long time and decided that the only way to solve the problem was to elope. So on December 30, 1955 we eloped. We kept it secret until HE could finish the semester and we managed to get an apartment and furnished it with meager stuff. Then we told our parents. HIS Dad was heartbroken but gave us his blessings and a

> little money to get started, while my parents proposed everything from a distant boarding school to having the marriage annulled. It was a trying time. Most would have said it wasn't worth it.

> The bottom line here is that we were very much in love and wanted to be together.

As the years passed my family came to know and love HIM. We had four beautiful and wonderful children and despite many obstacles, we educated them and married them off (which is another whole story). We are the lucky grandparents to 12 amazing kids and the great grandparents to 4 precious little ones. We have traveled far and wide, had a wonderful time, and enjoyed every day as though it may be the last. But as the years passed each 10th of December HE would come to me

with his high school ring and ask me to go steady. And of course I always said yes. This last December 30 we celebrated our 67th wedding anniversary.

I would do it all over again if I had the chance and HE would give me HIS high school ring and ask me to go steady. Some day when we have gone to another place, I hope that on the 10th of December HE will ask me to steady again.

## How we got married

#### By Erwin Jacobs, MD

n June, 1953, I was finishing my first year of psychiatry training at the Institute of Living in Hartford, Connecticut. I already completed an internship and three years residency in neurology. The salary was a whopping \$100 a month plus room and board for working 7:30 a.m. to 5:50 p.m. every day and every third weekend. My date for starting Army service was August 1, at Ft. Sam Houston.

I was invited to dinner with a family I had met and talked to an elderly lady there. She told me she had a cousin who was just graduating from Smith College and thought I should meet her. I took the number and called one morning after this young lady came home. At 9:30 her mother answered and said she was still sleeping. I called an hour later and she was just getting up. At 11:30 she was in the shower. A few hours later I got to talk to her and made a dinner date.

I took her to the best restaurant Ι could afford. Coming from a non-smoking, non-drinking, Kosher family I was a little taken aback when she started smoking and ordered two Manhattans plus lobster. When I drove her home in my rusty Studebaker, we parked in front of her house where there was a street light. A short time later we heard a window open, and her mother called out,

"Joan, do you know what time it is?" It





w what time it is?" It was about 9:30 and she went in.

We had a few more dinner dates and her parents took us out a couple of times. About two weeks before my active duty date, we were sitting on the back porch of her house and I told her I thought we should get married. She was shocked, dropped her cigarette and burned a hole in the sofa. She said I should discuss it with her father.

A couple of days later I spoke to him. He was a wonderful person, Yale-educated engineer, and we were on very good terms. I told him that I wanted to marry Joan but had no money. I explained that as an officer I would have an adequate salary. He said, "Why not elope this weekend, and I will give you \$7,000 right now to get started." I did not know if he was joking, so I said, "I can't. My mother bought a dress for the wedding."

I left for Texas and we corresponded. Her older sister was expecting her first child in January, so Joan decided that the first day of spring would be nice. She was 23 and I was 28. So, that is how it became our anniversary for 50 years until she developed amyotrophic lateral sclerosis in 2003. It was her only illness, having stopped smoking and with minimal alcohol intake. Her love of lobster persisted.



**The Montebello Voice** 

# Key West

## Close to perfect, far from normal

#### By Chester Taylor

eed a few days to get away from the cold? Try Key West. Sun, great food, and easy lifestyle. I have been to Key West several times over the past decade. A couple of times on business at the U.S. Naval Research Laboratory located there that did studies on corrosion control of Navy ships. Then a couple times with my wife, Anita, once to meet quail. See the live cam at: Live Webcam | Key West Butterfly.

Then there are the many roosters and hens roaming the streets. At our hotel, for instance, we had breakfast served on the pool patio. There was a gate with a sign on it that said close the gate to prevent the chickens from en-



a Swedish Navy training ship and once on just pure vacation. We always had a great time and a few days worked well

for us. The best way to get there is by plane via Tampa or Sarasota, thereby avoiding Miami. Recommend you take a small carry-on with shorts, tee shirt, and flip-flops in case your luggage arrives late.

There are lots of animals to see there. On the golf course, I was startled by some very large iguanas. They would just bask in the

sun. I left them alone and they left me alone. If you like butterflies, you have come to the right place. There are close to 50 different species of butterflies in Key West. The Key West Butterfly and Nature Conservatory, which we visited, has more than 1,000 butterflies. Housed with the butterflies were exotic flowers and tropical plants, waterfalls, and several species of free flying "butterfly friendly" birds such as flamingos, canaries, finches, and Chinese painted tering, but every morning when we had breakfast, a rooster hopped on top of the fence and over to our table for cereal. I guess he couldn't read the sign.

Besides the Butterfly House, we visited the Hemingway House, a French Colonial home built in 1851. Even by today's standards, it is a beautiful house. It is the

house were Ernest Hemingway lived when not in Cuba and wrote Green Hills



of Africa, The Snows of Kilimanjaro, Islands in the Streams, and other works. As we entered the beautiful gardens, we heard a lady scream, "Help, Audrey Hepburn is trying to escape!" Audrey was a very fluffy gray and white cat headed for the gate at the entrance but was prevented by one of the employees. In fact, dozens of cats live there and around half are polydactyl, sporting six toes on each paw. An investigator for People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA)



found that the cats there were "a bunch of fat, happy and relaxed cats." When I was tired, I was looking for place to sit for a while, but a sign on the chair said "do not sit here." Curled around the sign was a little charcoal gray cat sound asleep on the cushion.

There are the usual tacky tee shirt shops, but some nicer stores sold high quality beach attire and jewelry. One of the things that we enjoyed were the many choices of great cafes and restaurants. We asked the bartender at our hotel where some goods spots were, and he pointed out some that were superb. One I really like was called Mar-

tin's where the chef was German and made the best wiener schnitzel I have ever had. The martinis were perfect, too.

There are some beaches in Key West, but we mostly enjoyed the hotel pool and the warm sun. We walked along the docks at the marina and marveled at the many beautiful sail boats. After visiting

for three days, we were recharged and ready to head back home to Alexandria.



# family update

# **Christmas letters and reality**

#### By Bob Shea

Most of us remember Garrison Keillor's radio show, The Prairie Home Companion, originated by Minnesota Public Radio. He was a raconteur and humorist who, among other things, created the fictitious town of Lake Wobegon, Minnesota where, in his words, "all the children are above average, the men are all strong, and the women are all beautiful." Additionally all events were positive and praiseworthy.

Each year at Christmas, I think about the population of Lake Wobegon when we receive family letters that are included in holiday cards. They recount with pride various family accomplishments – promotions, advanced degrees, vacations, and sundry awards. These folks must all have roots in that fictitious Minnesota town. What would a holiday letter from an honest family which did not have the benefit of residence in Lake Wobegon look like? It might read something like this:

Greetings to all our friends from the Schmitlapp family. We send our best wishes for a joyful and abundant holiday season.

We have had a busy year especially since Walter's brother, Fred, the attorney, was not here to help us with our 6th bankruptcy. It seems Fred was disbarred over his court filings in support of a Nigerian prince who was trying to move his assets to the USA. Fred is now busy in the Bahamas, actively involved in what he sees as the new financial frontier, cryptocurrency.



Our oldest son, Borís, ís pursuíng hís entertainment

career with the mobile carnival industry. His mechanical skills are paying dividends taking apart, moving, and reassembling rides all over the Midwest. He was also promoted from ticket taker on the merry-go-round to assistant operator on the spinning teacup ride.

Our daughter, Bessie, was voted Miss Congeniality and Inmate of the Quarter by the staff at the federal detention facility in Texas. We are so proud of her hard work and positive attitude and look forward to her homecoming (with continued good behavior) in mid-2025. Go Bessie!

Our youngest, Mortimer, made us equally proud in June when he celebrated his 16th birthday and his graduation from the 8th grade. What a party we had to honor his accomplishments. He is currently assessing his future career options.

Grandma Harriet still lives with us. She gave us a fright in September when she started receiving CNN via the fillings in her teeth. She would have near apoplexy each time Wolf Blitzer hosted The Sitnation Room. Fortunately, we solved the problem by persuading her to wear a tinfoil hat during the day. She is now a happy granny!

Walter is still unemployed, waiting for a true management position that meets his qualifications. He knows that corner office position is out there just waiting for him.

I am entering my 10th year at wendy's where the manager says my smile and "do you want fries with that?" create special events each day for both customers and fellow employees. In my spare time, I am part of a committee to review books at the town library. We are providing an important service to the community by identifying books that have no place in a library used by tax-paying God-fearing townsfolk.

I'll close by again wishing all our many friends a Happy Holiday. We are looking forward to a new year filled with so many exciting events just like last year.

Our best,

The Schmitlapp Family

Bless the Schmitlapp family and their honesty. They obviously live very far from Lake Wobegon. 🛄

# snow day



February 1, early morning The Montebello Voice

Photos by Robert Treadwell February 7, 2023

# fun & games





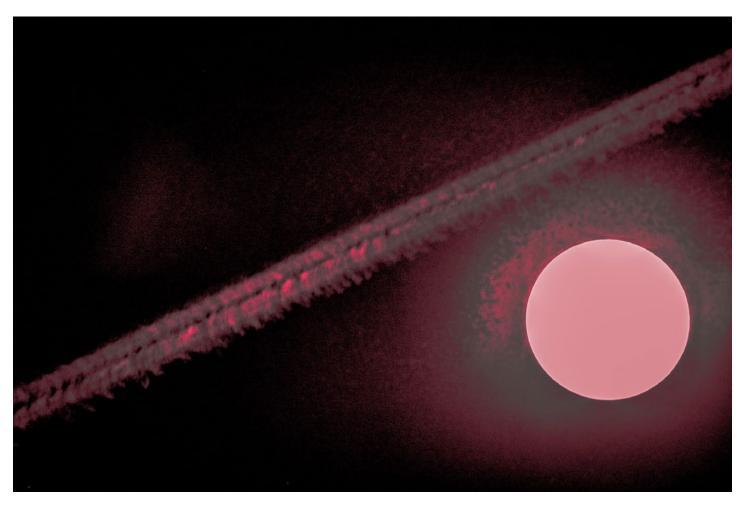








# final glance



On November 2, 2022, a comet crossed by the moon at 2:52 a.m. Taken from the balcony. Photo by Linda Brownlee