

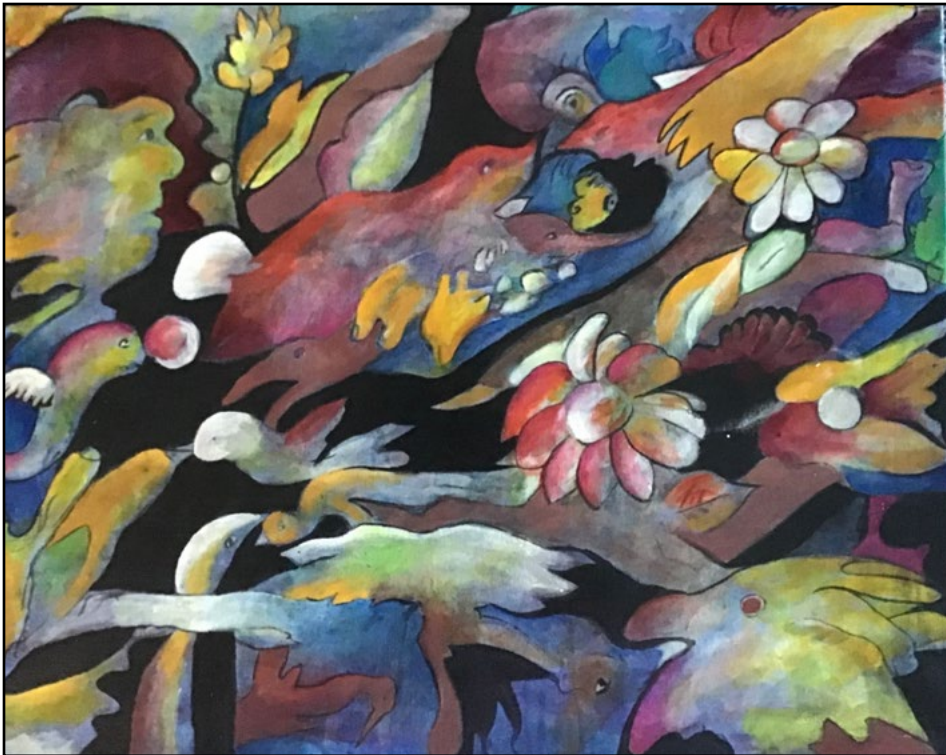
# The MONTEBELLO Voice

an independent gazette

oh, heavens!

April 14, 2023





**Gail Goriesky’s painting earns First Place**

The painting *Strange Dreams* was painted in Albuquerque, New Mexico. It’s one of a series of imaginary birds, plants, humans, and creatures. The beautiful purple and pinkish metal oxide pigments used in the painting are vintage and no longer produced or available, due to their potential carcinogenic nature. The modern synthetic versions of these pigments are in no way as compelling – or as easy to work with – and do not have the archival stability.

The work is 24”x30” oil on canvas, and is currently on display as part of the exhibit *A Tale of Two Studios* at Del Ray Artisans Gallery, 2704 Mount Vernon Avenue in Alexandria from April 7 to April 29. It was awarded First Place in the juried exhibit for Del Ray Artisans. – *Gail Goriesky*

**Steve Rosenthal stars as Mayor Meekly in *Unnecessary Farce***

<https://www.viennava.gov/residents/concerts-and-events/theatre-companies>



**Cover: *Montebello from the air* by Nikki March**

**The MONTEBELLO Voice**  
 an independent gazette  
 Alexandria, Virginia

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**Music For Your Life's Special Events**

My DJ services started with a small private event 4 years ago, and today, I'm regularly playing for a wide variety of special events in the DMV / Northern Virginia area ranging from private event themed music nights to large local community gatherings. I work hard to make every event special for my clients with curated playlists crafted in consultation with and aligned to the tastes of the host for the event.

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Scott's Music Place

## Is Fox News credible?

By Chester Taylor

Like most of you, I like to watch the evening news. I have noticed that in the past, some of the Fox News hosts lied. They lied, in part, to keep their viewers happy. This appears to be the case when Fox News echoed many of Trump's lies about how the election was stolen in 2020 and that the Dominion and Smartmatic voting machines had been fixed so that Biden would win. Dominion is suing for defamation and now Smartmatic is also headed to trial after the New York Supreme Court squashed Fox's attempt to block the suit. Defendants in the Smartmatic suit with Fox include Lou Dobbs, Maria Bartiromo, Jeanine Pirro, Rudolph Giuliani, and Sidney Powell.

Fox News hosts later admitted that the allegations of election fraud were baseless. Embarrassing emails surfaced

between Fox executives, producers, and anchors that they had knowingly lied and decided after the lawsuit was brought against them that it would be better for hosts not to endorse lies on the air. Is Fox guilty of defamation in this case? The Supreme Court's decision in *New York Times v. Sullivan* says that to establish defamation in cases of public importance such as this one, the defendant(s) must have knowingly lied or if not knowingly lied, acted with reckless disregard for the truth. Ultimately, it will be up for a jury to decide.

Then in March of this year, Fox News host Tucker Carlson released cherry-picked moments of the January 6, 2021, surveillance footage of the insurrection of the Capitol building given to them from House Speaker Kevin McCarthy. Carlson inaccurately portrayed the event as peaceful and the Trump supporters as "orderly and meek" sightseers. When you have seen

windows smashed, police barricades breached, police officers assaulted, and desks being pilfered, you know it is just another lie being touted by Fox News. As former Fox News host Gretchen Carlson [not related to Tucker Carlson] angrily stated, "This is F'in bs — have your 'straight' news anchor call out total fabricated lies and an injustice to the American public by promoting lies via Tucker Carlson and pretend it's not your network."

Fox News and some other news organizations don't care about words like credibility, but they do understand money. Hopefully, Dominion will win its \$1.6 billion lawsuit for defamation against Fox News. It's time for the courts to clean up America's sleazy news organizations. Fox, who has long advertised themselves as "Real Journalism, Fair and Balanced" has probably never achieved that goal and certainly lost its credibility. 📌

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### Stranger danger

Within the past week – once in the Safeway parking lot and once in Old Town – some guy in another car was blowing his horn at me and pointing urgently at the rear of my car. Having worked in crime prevention, I was suspicious. I ignored him, made sure I wasn't being followed, and drove to a safe place to examine my car. There was no problem.

It was daylight, in a busy area, with only one offender in the other car. Other situations could turn out worse.

Criminals have fads. The fads come and go. Right now carjacking has become fashionable, and perhaps also the scam I am describing. Twice in one week, two different offenders. Be alert out there! – *Richard Titus* 📌

### North and South

In Tennessee, two Black legislators were expelled [and since reinstated, *ed.*] for advocating gun control legislation in response to a school shooting.

There is this myth that the North won the Civil War. Really? The South gets more in federal dollars from Washington than it sends to Washington in taxes. Politically, it has exerted a conservative influence nationally very disproportionate to its population size.

Might the North – as a gesture of good sportsmanship – grant the South, now, what they asked for back then? Little would be lost beyond a few quality college football teams. Global warming is steadily reducing the importance of Florida as a place to grow oranges. The handover terms would specify that reinstatement of slavery would not be an option. Overall, the benefits would far outweigh the costs. The only question is why this wasn't done a long time ago. – *RT* 📌

### To nuke or not to nuke?

North Korea and Russia have brought the prospect of nuclear war back to the fore, but the USA is in the history books as the first nation to actually nuke anybody. And we didn't have to do it. After Coral Sea and Midway there was absolutely no question about how the war in the Pacific was going to end. With control of the sea and the sky, we could starve Japan of vital resources, wait for it to collapse from within, and turn almost all our attention to Europe. Which is what our allies wanted us to do anyhow.

Instead, we squandered the lives of thousands of American young men with our island-hopping. And, we annihilated the populations of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. We have managed to convince ourselves that all this was good and necessary, but it's unlikely that posterity will agree with us. Knowing our species, the USA will probably not be the last nation to use nukes, but we will always be the first. – *RT* 📌

# easter egg hunt

*Photos by Dian McDonald*



# The final bill for the Community Center

By Rolf Dietrich

In the interest of transparency: how much did the work on the Community Center really cost?

Although there are likely some final invoices still to be paid for the work in the community center, the costs incurred as of December 31, 2022 are probably getting close to what the overall cost will be. **As of end-of-year 2022 the total was:**

**\$9,259,950**

That number comes from adding the costs recorded in the end-of-year audits from 2018 through 2022. Specifically:

2018	\$ 43,412
2019	\$ 299,122
2020	\$1,291,788
2021	\$5,397,248
2022	\$2,228,380
<b>Total (so far):</b>	<b>\$9,259,950</b>
2023	Unknown

This compares to the \$7 million budget for the project that the Board initially approved.

**Why is this number so different from what some others are saying was the cost?**

That’s not clear. However, two fairly common mistakes that may be the problem are:

**Erroneously not including prior-year costs.** It is a mistake to believe that preparation work “shouldn’t count” because it wasn’t actually during the time the project was underway.

**Project costs include all the costs necessary to complete the project, regardless of which year they were incurred.**

The costs for a project include all the work – including preparation work – necessary to accomplish the project. The costs associated with the preparation work must be included in the cost of the project.

**Erroneously not including unplanned costs.** It is a mistake to believe that costs “shouldn’t count” because you didn’t plan for them.

The costs for a project include funds for planned costs (the things you knew you wanted to

accomplish) and for unplanned costs (the things you ended up having to do to finish the project, but you didn’t know in advance you’d have to do them).

Unplanned costs are tricky. By definition, they are hard to plan for. After all, they involve many unknowns. Construction projects (like the Communi-

ty Center effort) typically encounter unexpected situations that require unplanned work in order to complete the project. **That unplanned work becomes part of the project.** That’s why in budget planning for construction projects, they usually limit the scope of the project to ensure that their planned costs only consume 70 to 80% of the available budget. That way they can set aside 20% to 30% within the budget for unplanned costs – with higher numbers being more appropriate for older facilities. Then, when unplanned efforts must be accomplished to complete the project, those unexpected costs can be paid without an overrun. The intent is that once the project is complete, the total project cost (planned costs plus unplanned costs) is under the budgeted amount.

**Project costs include all the costs necessary to complete the project, whether they were for planned items or for unplanned items.**

Bottom line: More invoices are likely to be processed, but as of **December 31, 2022**, the cost Montebello has incurred to do the Community Center work is:

**\$9,259,950. 🏠**



Photos by Dian McDonald

## Life's snapshots

By Bob Shea

**A** “vignette” is defined as a brief incident or scene. It is like a snapshot of a brief event of which we are a part. It may last only a few seconds, but it registers in our mind. Only later, when we have more time, do we think about it, ponder what really happened, learn a little, and maybe draw some conclusions. We all have them.

Let me share a few of mine. When they happened, they were stored in my memory bank, but only later did I take the time to analyze what I had been part of and what I may have learned, somewhat like a much delayed instant replay.

### The crowded Student Union at the University of New Hampshire during a political rally

Being in the right place as the candidate exited, I was able to shake his hand, and in the jostling, he also stepped on my foot. Ouch! It was only later that the significance of being that close to future president, John F. Kennedy, sunk in. Up close and personal – historical!

### The headquarters of a brigade in the 2nd Armored Division at Fort Hood, Texas

As a newly minted second lieutenant, gung ho, just out of the Armored Officers' Basic Course, I was reporting to my first permanent duty assignment. A gray-haired lieutenant colonel who seemed to be about 9 feet tall stared at me, shook his head, and shouted to someone, “Holy s....., are we even authorized any f#@\*\*% second lieutenants?” Welcome to the real Army. Be all you can be!

### Saint Peter's Basilica in Vatican City with Pope John Paul II speaking to the crowd

I figured out the door through which he was probably going to exit and moved in that direction to get a close-

up picture of the Pope. So did a tiny nun in her habit holding her camera. As we both moved, she threw a body block on me that got her to the front of the rope line and a better picture. Worthy of a determined and bulky NFL linebacker – from the convent!

### The German autobahn south of Bremerhaven

I had picked up my car at the port and was driving south. I knew that I would have to buy a minimum amount of gasoline at German prices (about \$7.50 per gallon) before I reached the first Post Exchange gas station near Kassel. Being new in the country, I practiced my best German for miles before stopping, rolled down my window and said, “Zehn liters, bitte.” The attendant smiled and replied, “Regular or high test?” Most Europeans are multilingual. Americans are not!

### In the souk in Marrakech, Morocco

I was taking in the exotic sights, sounds, and smells of the crowded marketplace. Directly in front of me was a local young woman wearing the traditional hijab and face-covering. However, she also had on tight jeans with a bare midriff. A battle of cultures. Bravo teenagers!

### My family's small parish church when I was a boy

I read my unemployed father's name on a list in the parish bulletin, highlighting people who were behind in voluntary pledges made to a funding campaign. Public shaming – a Christian value?

### The Red Center of Australia

I was sipping champagne and eating finger food in the late afternoon.

Watching what was once called Ayers Rock, now Uluru, the gigantic sandstone monolith changing colors from the sunset behind us and recognizing why the local indigenous people considered that place to be sacred. It seemed to be alive in changing color. Mother Nature as a landscape artist. Yes, a sacred place!

### A relative's home in Dover, NH

The children of active duty military members receive their official Department of Defense identification card when they turn 10 years old. It is a big deal for most military kids, a rite of passage. My 10-year-old daughter was talking to her male cousin who had also just turned 10 and whose dad was not in the military. The conversation went something like this: “Did you get your ID card?” “Why should I get an ID card?” “How do you get into the PX or commissary?” “What's a PX or commissary?” Two kids, two very different cultures.

### Chu Lia, Vietnam, standing outside what had been the tropical hut that housed four of my fellow officers

A Viet Cong mortar round had penetrated the tin roof and exploded. The blast was contained within the walls by the thick rows of sandbags ringing the hut. It was about 25



feet from my hut where I had been sleeping. I lost four good friends. Life and death are so random. Why them?

**A late Friday night at a gas station in a small town in Ontario, Canada, November 1963**

While stationed in Detroit, the best route east to New Hampshire to visit family was to drive across Ontario and exit back into the USA around Niagara Falls. In those days self-service gas was not an option. As the attendant, an elderly grey-haired man, was filling my gas tank, he looked at my car's license plate, turned and shoved me to the point that I was almost knocked down. He snarled, "A nice damn thing happened in your part of the country today!" He had noticed the Texas license plate on my station wagon. I explained that I was not a Texan, that I was in the US Army, and had been stationed in Texas. He then apologized, gave me a hug, and offered condolences on behalf of all the people of Canada. Some tragedies have international implications – both anger and sympathy.

**An intersection in Washington, DC, on Saturday, April 6, 1968**

As part of applying for Army-funded graduate study, I was required to take the GRE. Being stationed at Aberdeen Proving Ground, Maryland, there were no nearby colleges that could host the administration of the exam; so I was scheduled to take it at Howard University in DC. With another captain, I left well before daylight (with him driving) to get to DC, find Howard, and locate the correct building on campus. We ended up at an intersection somewhere in DC, stopped at a red light. The buildings on three corners of the intersection were on fire; fire trucks were on the street with armed soldiers protecting the firefighters; angry crowds were all around us; we sat motionless at the red light. I suggested to my friend that he step on the gas and get out of the area. He replied, "The light is red." We sat mo-



tion- less until my law-abiding friend had a green light. We exited the area and returned to Aberdeen. We had stumbled into the aftermath of Dr. Martin Luther King's assassination on the previous Thursday. Law-abiding motorists always stop at red lights. More frightening than downtown Saigon!

**The Drake Passage between the southern tip of South America and the northern peninsula of Antarctica**

It is known as one of the roughest passages in the world for ocean-going ships. As a tourist going to visit my seventh continent, I laughed when I saw seat belts on the cabin bed. During that night with 50 MPH winds and 35 foot waves, I became a believer. Without them I would have ricocheted around the cabin like a ball in a pinball machine. Don't laugh at something strange – someone else knows best!

**On a Saudi Arabian Airlines 707 between Beirut and Riyadh**

I noticed an attractive young Middle Eastern woman across the aisle in a mini skirt, heels, and perfect make-up. Her ap-

pearance seemed to contradict all I had been told about customs in the country where I was to spend the next 12 months. As we taxied on the tarmac en route to the terminal in Riyadh, she stood up, opened her large purse, and retrieved a dark piece of cloth. She skillfully dropped it over her head and suddenly became something that looked like a dark haystack with feet. When in Rome, do as the Romans!

**Outside Charles de Gaulle Airport in Paris**

A group of us were waiting for our guide to collect us and our luggage to take us by coach to our waiting river cruise ship. Suddenly a stranger started poking his finger into my chest and loudly complaining that I was not doing my job. He asked why I was making the group wait. Only then did I realize that I was wearing a complimentary vest with the travel company's logo on it. I was not the guide, just another traveler. I tactfully explained this to him. He apologized, and did so again probably once a day during the cruise. Looks can be deceiving – and humbling!

Vignettes are snapshots of a place and time, the real significance of which can only be appreciated after the event. They provide food for thought and things to ponder well after they happen.



## You can't take it with you

By *Mikhailina Karina*

**W**e follow directions to a secluded, unexpectedly rural area of Mason Neck with wide verdant pastures. A gated modernist mini-chateau flanked by life-size golden Pegasus breaks up the rustic vista. We turn off onto a narrow unpaved road that leads to a grassy expanse filled with dozens of parked cars. Several shabby buildings are scattered around the property, one inaccessible off in the brambles and smothered by vegetation. As soon as we enter the house, a bouquet of old age and mold assails us. Every room is filled with innumerable rugs, decorative plates, glassware, vases, artwork, heavy furniture, old records, figurines, bedding, silverware, and books on every subject. We walk around in disbelief, not sure where to begin. The kitchen appears to be original with dingy (umm, unhygienic) cabinets. Upstairs, we find albums filled with beautifully drawn ice-skating costumes, often signed by the skaters who wore them. Some of the drawings are embellished with beads, fabric, and feathers. We also see an immense collection dedicated to ballet: books, artwork, programs, photographs. After perusing through the

ice skating and the ballet rooms, we walk into a library filled with medical books

dealing with cancer. Who were the people who lived here such rich lives?

After a bit of poking around, we find the name: Gxxx. A story of a prominent family emerges from what they left behind in a home that is a time capsule of their lives. In January 2021, the 76-year-old Jacqueline G, the sole resident of the house, died after a brief illness. She was a graduate of Sidwell Friends and American University, where she majored in art history. Until retirement, she worked as an editor of the National Geographic World Magazine. She became passionate about 18<sup>th</sup>-century history after a family vacation to Colonial Williamsburg and had become an expert on Virginia's colonial and Early Republic period, which explains her taste in furniture and wall paint reminiscent of those in Colonial homes. Jacqueline was an ice skater and lover of ballet. For many years, she was a frequent backstage visitor at American Ballet in New York and the Kennedy Center. She was also a fierce protector of the family 34-acre farm, as she explained in a 2003 Washington Post article: "My whole life, all I wanted to do was protect this place," Jacqueline G explained of the land she had lived on since she was 11. "I just want it to be green after I'm dead." She wanted to keep seeing foxes, screech owls, spotted salamander, and bald eagles. "There used to be whippoorwills, there used to be quail," she said. "They're all gone now." She was talking about forfeiting the rights to develop the property, which made the 2003 appraisal drop from \$1.73 to \$1.28 million as she rejected lucrative calls from developers. Instead, she entrusted the property to the Northern Virginia Conservation

**Restored American Radiator Company Roccoco radiator Purchased for \$20**

Trust, a nonprofit dedicated to land protection. The house was built in 1943, which explains the kitchen's original state; has three bedrooms and three

full and two partial baths in a space of 4,413 square feet. Current home estimate is \$1,608,478.

*Our haul: \$4 for a reproduction of 1493 French playing cards by Jehan Personne, Master Cardmaker, at Lyons*



As empty-nesters, my husband and I have unexpectedly discovered a new weekend pastime: going to estate sales. We justify it with a legitimate reason: refurbishing our sons' childhood bedroom into a multipurpose adult space as a guest bedroom (for their visits) and office space. I can finally put my personal stamp onto a room that has gone through many transitions and wall colors as their clothes became larger and toys became smaller. Albéric, 22, is living on his own in Charlottesville (in a creatively decorated room, I must humbly brag); Amédée, about to turn 21, is finishing his third year of college. Redoing their room is a bitter-sweet project because of all the memories it holds and the importance of moving on. Decorating it with unexpected, interesting, and beautiful objects will make the transition less traumatic for their mother.

I am a little embarrassed to share the facts of our estate sales hobby because the last thing anyone needs is more stuff. The trend is to declutter, recycle, give away, downsize, and spark joy by getting rid of worldly possessions to make life easier for you kids after you've kicked the bucket. I can't imagine our sons and their future spouses being sentimental about our beloved books, dishes, clothes, and myriad tchotchkes. As much as it kills me, I know I won't be able to tell them what to do with our stuff from beyond the grave.

Our weekend forays into dead people's homes started quite innocently at Montebello. Several years ago, I received a mass email about an estate







*Mid-century forged aluminum Bali Bamboo tray by Everlast.*

*\$70 on Poshmark*

*Purchased for \$8*

sale. Curious about what interesting treasures my former neighbors had, I walked into a home teeming with fellow Montebelloans on the hunt for collectible figurines, kitchen ware, furniture, jewelry, and clothing. I was taken aback by such blatant disrespect for a stranger's private world that had been turned inside out and displayed on every surface. I couldn't bear to touch anything that was worn on the skin or held food. I limited myself to the overflowing bookshelves stacked with tomes on history. With some disdain I watched the Hunger Games of snatching up armfuls of clothing and hauling out furniture. I walked out stunned and depressed by the spectacle that was unceremoniously stripping a home of its life. I feared that I'd witnessed a preview of the materialistic carnage that would take place in our home. I didn't attend another estate sale for several years.

Our two-bedroom condo is what is considered maximalist with lotsa meaningful stuff mindfully organized and displayed. It's filled with the past quarter century of our life raising two sons with hundreds of books, hundreds of thousands of Legos, enough dishes for several families, and artwork on every inch of wall space (in one room, the artwork is literally floor to ceiling).

For the past few years, I've been stressing out over inheriting my parents' possessions. My mom has a hard time detaching herself from objects most would consider worthless: broken costume jewelry, outdated clothing that no longer fits anyone, touristy knickknacks, and old papers. My older sister, who has a house, dutifully takes my mom's "treasures" to her basement. Or so she says. Every time I visit my mom

in St. Louis, she offers me the same array of garments or mementos. And every time I lose my patience when I tell her that we live in a home with limited space and can't physically fit her offerings. Nevertheless, we have hauled back my uncle's fragile tea set that went straight to the top shelf of our kitchen cabinets. The last haul was so extensive with a 1970s 12-volume set of the Soviet children's encyclopedia (these propaganda-filled books gave me my first look at the world during my childhood in Kyiv), old vases belonging to my grandmothers, a replica of an old telephone, 18<sup>th</sup>-century faux French coffee set, and the remnants of an old lamp base that we had to get a new display shelf to squeeze into our living room. The items on the shelf represent a shrine to my family's past and I sincerely hope it's the last of what I'll wedge into our home. Or at least until the next visit to St. Louis.

Considering my love-hate relationship with cumulative muchness, it's ironic that I'd be drawn to estate sales and occasionally walk away with some items to add to my accumulating guilt. It started with books – inexpensive reading pleasure and then put back into circulation in our lobby book cabinets. Then I started to notice pretty bracelets and necklaces. I adore costume jewelry and make my own earrings and necklaces. But some of these pieces had such delightful patterns that looked so interesting layered with complementing bijoux that I couldn't resist grabbing a few and a few more because they're inexpensive and have something irresistibly unique about them. A classic slippery slope.

From then on, our foraging around (mostly dead) strangers' homes became weekend excursions around the region. First, we checked the contents of the sale on an app, [estatesales.net](https://www.estatesales.net), and zeroed in on upscale neighborhoods.

Most of the photos showed an endless display of figurines, sets of dishes, artwork, and random collectibles. Our voyeurism had a purpose: exploring homes that were perfectly preserved time capsules from different eras. Occasionally, we'd find something we didn't realize we were missing.

Unlike garage sales, where most of the items are decluttering efforts to get rid of outgrown children's toys and clothing as well as unused household crap, estate sales are not cheap and attract a demographic that frequently resembles us: middle-class, middle-aged couples. Garage sales are for buying second-hand items from respectable-looking people for a few dollars; estate sales draw a discriminating throng of collectors, decorators, resellers, hobbyists, and middle-aged couples with a bad case of FOMO who don't blink at shelling out a few hundred dollars.

Although acquiring something is the unstated goal of these excursions, we also appreciate seeing homes as people lived and aged in them – faded wallpaper, scuffed paint, worn out carpets, outdated cabinets, old furniture, too many records from the 1960s, and movie DVDs before streaming – that don't resemble tastefully staged homes or anything in interior design magazines or shows. Just authentic, unadorned life that is not meant to impress anyone and shows all the living that took place behind those walls.



One Saturday was a memory walk through three different lives. We started in the Del Ray neighborhood of Alexandria in a house untouched by remodeling for the past half century: cramped rooms covered in fading floral wallpaper, dark brown wooden cupboards, Christmas décor in the basement, and boxes of records from the 1950s and 1960s with smiling Lawrence Welk and other pop icons from the era.

*No haul*

Our next stop was in the District, in the vicinity of American University. Another family home rich in memories of dinner parties – so many sets of dishes and glassware! – a grand piano in the living room, and books in every room and hallway. One bedroom, presumably an office, housed physics textbooks that were likely used by an academic. Other hundreds of volumes dealt with Jewish history, biographies, travel, art, and the United Kingdom.

*Our haul: \$20 for a hand-painted Oy Vey! mug, an ice bucket festooned with vintage opera posters (the theme in our bathroom), and six darling Japanese dipping bowls*

Our final visit was in a high-rise condo in Bethesda. Since we live in a high-rise condo, we are always interested to see other buildings' lobbies and floor layouts. This one was on the 16<sup>th</sup> floor perfectly preserved 1980s bachelor pad with a mirrored bar, beige leather furniture, Danish dining room set, and an original off-white Formica kitchen. Very few books, but many paintings by Hungarian artists. The gentleman who lived here had served in the Coast Guard and his den was dedicated to old audio and radio equipment. A stylish dandy, his collection of Hermès scarves, designer jackets, and expensive watches were quickly snatched up from the cedar-lined closet.

*Our haul: \$10 stainless steel asparagus-shaped serving dish for younger son's girlfriend*



Emboldened by our forays, we started scrolling through the images on the app even before the estate sale address was posted. One excursion took us to a large house in Great Falls in the far reaches of the county. It was the second day of the sale, when everything was 25 percent off. I happen to love classic blazers and tried on a few that were unfortunately too snug and too worn. Then I glanced at the table with shoes. Normally, under no circumstances, would I buy worn shoes. But I saw the high-end French Arche brand on the

box and the sandals were in pristine, unworn condition in my size. Not a speck of dust on these buttery soft black suede cage sandals with a rounded mid-heel. They normally retail for over \$200. I wore out my first and only pair I purchased at the Galerie Lafayette in Paris 25 years ago and would never consider splurging again. But a perfect fit for \$20... While I was drooling over the sandals and rejoicing at such a major score, my husband



***ORA jewelry (1921-present) was started by Oreste Agnini and Ralph Singer, a combination of their first names. The Chicago-based company was the first jewelry manufacturing operation in the city. Motifs derive from nature, music and art-deco design. ORA jewelry is still being made as Ralph Singer Jewelry.***

***Purchased for \$5 apiece***

was in the basement gathering spacious new burlap tote bags from luxury Caribbean resorts.

*Our haul: \$40 for ridiculously comfortable Arche Enexor Black Nubuck Caged sandals, tote and freezer bags*

Next stop was in Falls Church, at a modest townhouse advertised as belonging to a 4-Star General. Although accurate, the description was an understatement. The house belonged to Bernard (Bernie) Rogers (1921-2008), a U.S. Army general who served as the 28<sup>th</sup> Chief of Staff of the United States Army, and later as NATO's Supreme Allied Commander, Europe, and Commander in Chief, United States European Command. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bernard\\_W.\\_Rogers](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bernard_W._Rogers) His wife of 64 years, Anne, died in October

2022 at 99. Even after their children must have taken what they desired, the three-level home was a museum to Gen. Rogers' lifelong service and accolades. As dozens of strangers rummaged through his innumerable awards and plaques, sat in the chair behind a massive desk, and basically fingered the remnants of his life, we gasped at his humble home in a nondescript suburban development. Getting ready to walk out empty-handed, my husband called me over to a large cabinet leaning against the wall in the basement. A National Geographic world map on the outside opened to 40 rolled up, pull-down maps nestled in interlocking grooves. It was something you'd find in a geography classroom. I was ready to keep walking out, but my husband thought it was a unique collection for our older son, who majored in geography and geographic information systems and is *really* into maps. No matter that these maps were from the mid-1970s and many borders had been redrawn and countries renamed. I hesitated to drag home something so large (nearly 2 by 3 feet) and weighing about 80 pounds. How were we even going to get it out of there? The price tag was a bit over \$200 – the money I'd saved from my French sandals. Seeing my husband's excitement, I couldn't deprive him of the joy of bringing home this unique collection we were not likely to find anywhere else. The nice people managing the sale allowed us to leave through the garage door and lug the cabinet to the back seat of our car. As expected, our map-loving son was impressed with the purchase but is letting us keep it. Indefinitely.

*Our hefty haul: \$220 for a map-filled cabinet currently parked in our dining room*



Walking into an enormous house on an exclusive street in Bethesda with equally enormous homes with circular driveways and elaborate gates, we gaped at the cavernous foyer with

hand-painted murals. Each room was inordinately large with massive furniture and completely wallpapered in gaudy patterns. I felt like I was on the set of *Dynasty*. The two-part closet belonging to the wife was the size of our condo. Unfortunately, her designer frocks were no longer hanging. Who were these people?? My question was soon answered by the portraits of a smiling family, judging by the clothing, taken at least 30 years ago. It didn't take me long to learn of the house's former owners, Mr. and Mrs. K, prominent local real estate magnate and philanthropists. Mr. K died in 2010 and Mrs. K died last fall at 84. During the 1980s, they were a power couple who hosted gala fundraisers attended by A-List Hollywood celebrities and politicians.

Downstairs, a ballroom with a full-size bar and mountains of hand-painted Limoges dishes (more, taller mountains were in the giant carved armoire) and French cutlery hinted at the types of state dinners that must have taken place here. My husband noticed that the salesperson behind the bar was placing bottles on the counter. The first one, a giant Disaronno we recently purchased for \$64 at the ABC store had a price of \$15. He realized that more good stuff would be coming and planted himself by the bar. The ink was barely dry when he placed another bottle in the box, including his beloved hard-to-find Pastis. Meanwhile, I chatted with a woman who was a former housekeeper in this home. The couple's wealthy children were not interested in their parents' very expensive, but outdated furniture. She told me of the weekly Gatsbyesque soirées with large crowds of clients, associates, and local fancy folks from the Ks' social circuit. The lower level was another expanse of rooms and bathrooms. A cabinet filled with buffet-style dishes and crates with several hundred glasses (white wine, red wine, champagne, water, and other beverages) were ready for a large catered affair on the scale of Jay Gatsby. Deep in the bowels was the laun-



**A set of six mid-century Poison glasses by Cera for Neiman Marcus. 22k gold, ivory and navy blue pattern of popular poisons: strychnine, curare, hemlock, cyanide, belladonna, and arsenic. A classy addition for our son's bar cart.**

**Southern Vintage Wares price \$539.98  
Purchased for \$30**

dry room, which was likely never seen by the home's masters. We could not imagine the size of staff needed to service a 16,796 square foot mansion with 12 bathrooms and nearly 20 bedrooms.

*Our haul: \$60 worth of quality spirits, retail value around \$400*



For some reason, I've always loved old radiators. Their slender columns with pointed edges were elegantly designed to bring warmth to a home with steam heat. Sometimes they hissed and gurgled as steam traveled through the pipes. Growing up in Kyiv, radiators were the best place to dry wet clothes after an afternoon of playing in the snow. Our cat usually occupied the windowsill warmed up by its heat.

An estate sale in a Capitol Hill townhouse was a walk through another old home with original woodwork and ceilings that seemed to soar 20 feet. The basement was filled with random items, including several sets of rusty, dusty old radiators. A small one with three panels caught my eye. Beneath the peeling paint and rust I could make out a delicate floral pattern of swirls. The saleswoman said it was \$20, the same price as its much larger cousins, because of its uncommonly small size prized by

collectors. Seeing my uncharacteristic excitement over a century-old heating fixture, my husband agreed to bring it home. (Remember, I let him have the maps that cost 10 times more). Made of solid cast iron, the thing weighs close to 80 pounds and the two of us carried it for three blocks to the car. Once at home, I read the American Radiator Company stamp and saw it was Rococo design popular at the turn of the century. After much cleaning, priming, and spray painting, the tiny radiator has regained its gilded glory as it sits across from my work area near the balcony. I love when the afternoon sun catches the intricate pattern that delighted and warmed another writer a century years ago.

*Our haul: \$22 for the radiator and an old slide rule*



Estate sales are our guilty pleasure. It's part voyeurism into strangers' lives and part hunt for unusual bibelot we didn't know we desired. Obviously, we don't purchase something in every home, but we drive to the next destination while discussing what we'd learned about the house's architecture and history while discovering new neighborhoods.

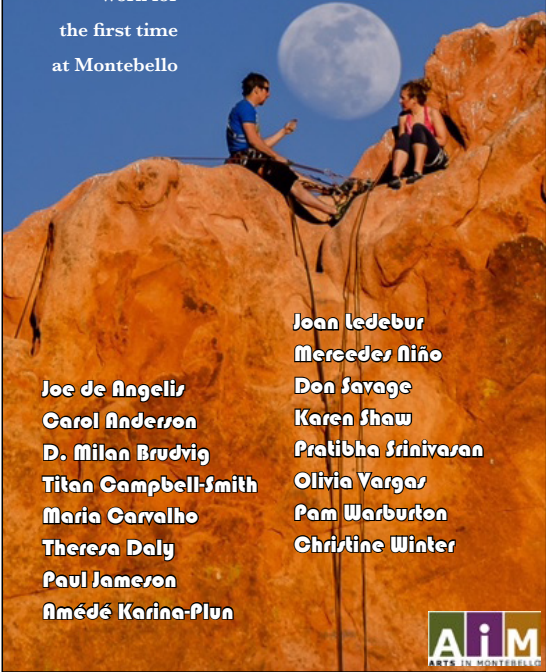
Homes are our intimate spaces, refuges, and havens that reveal who we are. Our maximalist home with collections of books, Legos, kitchenware, and artwork is the sum of our family's life. Unless we start to seriously declutter and downsize in the coming years, the thought of greedy strangers rifling through our beloved worldly possessions bothers me immensely. Sometimes I dwell on it a bit too much and feel ashamed of scrolling through the app. But then something unexpected catches my eye and we plan the next sortie. Just like we commit to enjoying other people's beloved objects, I hope ours will find new appreciative owners and interesting lives in their future homes. 🏠



Photos by Joan Ledebur and Dian McDonald  
The Montebello Voice


**hidden talents**  
*April 8 - May 10*

artists & artisans  
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Joe de Angelis  
 Carol Anderson  
 D. Milan Brudvig  
 Titan Campbell-Smith  
 Maria Carvalho  
 Theresa Daly  
 Paul Jameson  
 Amédé Karina-Plun




Photos by Joan Ledebur and Patricia Lutz



*The beautiful lunar halo, caused by ice crystals in our atmosphere, adds color to the sky*

*Photo by Don Savage*