

# The MONTEBELLO Voice

an independent community gazette

for the birds

August 20, 2023



**All you need is love**

It's interesting to speculate on why there are so many love songs. Hundreds at any given time, and more every day. With the rare exception of one or two surfer songs, we however do not have songs about skiing, playing golf, sunbathing, fine dining, etc. People enjoy these activities, know that they enjoy them, and don't require constant reminders.

We do have singing commercials. Their purpose is to convince people that here is something you might really like if you would just give it a try. Is this what love songs are all about?

Perhaps, but there is another, darker, possibility. During WWI and WWII the public was inundated with songs about what a beautiful thing it would be to die in battle for one's country. Such songs were not about something that people want to do, but about something that people should want to do, but don't.

Bottom line: Love songs and war songs appear to have much in common. Could it be that love is not a thing that people really want to get involved in? Could all the love songs help explain why half of our marriages end in divorce? Should the current cadre of public library censors reorient their focus to a harder look at the possible effects of love songs, and perhaps their abolition? – *Richard Titus* 📖



**Club med**

Residents are invited to Mala Kalyan's meditation group meeting every Tuesday evening at 7:30 via Zoom. Please contact Mala at [malakalyan@gmail.com](mailto:malakalyan@gmail.com) for more information and Zoom link. – *Diane Schrier* 📖

**Book drive**

Building 1 residents Margarita Rodríguez and Bob McClure are collecting gently used children's books for our Rotary Club on behalf of [InspireLit](http://InspireLit.org), an Alexandria-based non-profit that promotes literacy by increasing access to engaging books. Books must have been published in the last 10 years. Geared to ages 1-12, they can be board books, leveled readers, decodable books, chapter books, graphic novels, activity books and non-fiction. You can leave them at my door, 1-115. Your contributions will be appreciated. – *Bob McClure* 📖



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**Free for all**

Do you ever have a perfectly good object you no longer need but someone could use? Lobby tables are inappropriate for unwanted snacks, random mugs, toys, or other household ephemera. If going to Goodwill is too much hassle, perhaps Montebello could devote an inconspicuous space in each building for a still decent piece of furniture or a bag of wrapping paper. I suggest the small curb next to the recycling bins on B3 – where people already bring down such items – as a logical place for “too good to throw out” cast offs. If they stay on the curb for an agreed number of days, then housekeeping can walk them over to the nearby dumpster.

In addition, durable medical supplies, such as walkers, wheelchairs, and other hardware, could be centrally located – such as the former Activities closet in building 4 – for anyone needing it.

If the community thinks it's a good idea, I hope the management agrees to implement this no-cost solution to our decluttering efforts. – *MK* 📖

*The Montebello Voice wants to hear from you: musings, travels, announcements, photos, book reviews, commentary, memoirs, essays, analysis, poems, suggestions, club news, recipes, and free ads*  
*A publication for the residents, by the residents*

*Cover photo by Linda McCauley Brownlee*

**The MONTEBELLO Voice**

**an independent gazette**  
 Alexandria, Virginia

*This publication accepts no funding or oversight from advertisers, residents, or the Montebello Condominium Unit Owners Association. All opinions are encouraged and reflect the diversity of views in the community. All articles and photographs come from Montebello residents. To receive or contribute to this email-only gazette, contact [montebellovoice@cox.net](mailto:montebellovoice@cox.net) or visit on the web at [www.montebellovoice.com](http://www.montebellovoice.com).*

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## Like a good neighbor

By *Mikhailina Karina*

**R**ecently, several spirited discussions on the Montebello Facebook page brought up problems with noxious odors (specifically, marijuana smoke) and noisy activities that cause unpleasant disturbances to fellow neighbors. Although the association has rule against both, residents would agree that enforcement is challenging and awkward. When odor or noise disturbances occur, residents are told to contact the security staff rather than deal with the problem on their own. My understanding of how the process works, security document the complaint and in some instances contact the offending party. In case of persistent odors or noises, such documented events – with several significant subsequent steps – become the basis for the hearing by the Covenants Committee, a three-member board-appointed body tasked with enforcing rules.

Per Montebello's [Rules & Regulations](#): "No noxious or offensive activity shall be carried on in any Unit or on the Common Elements, nor shall anything be done therein that may be or become an annoyance or nuisance to the other occupants. No UNIT OWNER shall make or permit any disturbing noises in the building or in any other part of the condominium complex or do or permit anything that will interfere with the rights, comforts or convenience of other occupants....Except during construction/repair work, all Unit occupants shall keep the volume of any sound producing device in their Units sufficiently reduced at all times so as not to disturb other Unit occupants."

See page 44, Section 10 for Due Process Procedures:

- a. Actions Prior to Initiation of Formal Special Resolutions Process.
- b. Written Complaint.
- c. Preliminary Investigation.
- d. Notice of Hearing.

- e. Service of Complaint.
- f. Notice of Hearing.
- g. Cease and Desist Request.
- h. Amended or Supplemental Complaints.
- i. Discovery.
- j. Statements.
- k. Constraints on the Committee.
- m. Decision.
- n. Suspension of Privileges.

Very few people have the time or the stamina to undergo the 13-step process to resolve an everyday situation that could be civilly addressed by reasonable adults. This is absolutely the worst-case scenario when the parties decide to become Montagues and Capulets in their entrenched warfare that hopefully will not have tragic consequences.

### Noises off

If someone has moved to Montebello from a single-family home or a townhouse, sharing a building with 500 other souls requires numerous adjustments and compromises. Firstly, there are people above, below, and on each side. While the thick concrete walls provide excellent insulation, the same concrete also carries sound throughout the column and points beyond. Occasionally, when a neighbor is installing new floors or cutting tiles, the noise feels as if it's overhead, when in fact, it could be five floors above or in another tier. Much-needed construction and renovation are one of the facts of maintaining a 40-year-old building and although no one enjoys hearing the racket, it's an accepted temporary reality.

Montebello's acclaimed developer, Giuseppe Cecchi, must have been inspired by his Milanese heritage when he designed the curved towers – if all four were connected, they would end up resembling another famous circular Roman structure. No matter the inspiration or what if's, the effect of Cecchi's design has a direct bearing on outdoor acoustics. The front of our concave

buildings is conducive to concentrating sound waves and creating sound amplification that happily bounce off thousands of bricks. In other words, people whose windows face the front of the building are privy to conversations that take place on adjoining balconies and by the entrance. As much as I enjoy eavesdropping on the latest gossip, I'd rather not be drawn into loud discussions against my will. I doubt whether people sharing confidences are aware of this acoustical anomaly and I hope I speak on behalf of numerous neighbors who like to open their balcony doors and windows when I ask for conversationalists to use an indoor voice. We don't want to hear you and you probably don't want your life to be on display in front of strangers.

Sounds between units are another problem that sometimes arises from loud music, loud TVs, or loud conversations. Walking down the hallway, I often hear all of the above emanating from different homes. Fortunately, all sounds cease when I close my front door. But some people are not as lucky and have to endure their neighbors' music, TVs, and conversations that travel between units. Not cool and definitely not considerate. Please turn down the volume.

### A big stink

What we do in the privacy of our homes is our private business. However, it becomes our neighbors' business when certain habits spill out via kitchen or bathroom vents, open windows/balconies, or under the front door. Sometimes walking in the hallway, I enjoy smelling my neighbors' baking or frying. What I don't enjoy smelling is cigarette/cigar/pipe/marijuana smoke. Smoking in units is not against the rules at Montebello, although smoking is no longer allowed in garages and the community center. Outdoor smoking is limited to a small (rarely used) chained-off area at the outdoor pool, outdoor café deck, 25 feet away from buildings, and

pretty much everywhere else.

Fewer and fewer people at Montebello are smoking these days, especially since the advent of e-cigs and the realization that it's a supremely unhealthy habit. But times they are a-changin' and recreational marijuana is now legal in Virginia. This is not a discussion of whether marijuana should be legal or its pro's and con's, but about neighbors enjoying an occasional (or a frequent) joint in their home and how it affects people around them. The pungent, skunky odor of weed has become a common occurrence in all four buildings. The Facebook discussion has raised problems associated with second-hand smoke: headaches, nausea, and respiratory issues. Plus their homes stink and they are rightfully angry.

According to the [Center for Disease Control and Prevention](#), "The known risks of secondhand exposure to tobacco smoke – including risks to the heart and lungs – raise questions about whether secondhand exposure to marijuana smoke causes similar health risks. Secondhand marijuana smoke contains many of the same toxic and cancer-causing chemicals found in tobacco smoke and contains some of those chemicals in higher amounts."

Montebello's leadership and Realtors are working hard to promote our condos as a safe, well-managed, gen-

teel community rich in cultural offerings and social events. Smelling weed in hallways, elevators, and stairwells sends a certain type of message about the kind of people who live here and what activities are tolerated. Again, it's not an attack on smokers, but the simple fact that their habits have a direct impact on our quality of life and, potentially, property values.

Several weeks ago, my husband and I walked around the burgeoning Eisenhower area and visited the swanky lobbies of new apartment buildings next to Wegman's. A resident of one of the towers, thinking we were prospective renters, gave us a complete run-down on the character of each building and the differences between luxury finishes. Completely unprompted, she mentioned that since smoking marijuana is now legal, it's common to smell it outside around the movie theater and the restaurants. But in the building? A big no! Although it's an apartment, not a condo building, management doesn't want to have a "reputation" and smoking is dealt with swiftly and effectively. Let's say it's nipped in the bud.

As I wrote, I am not philosophically opposed to people ingesting intoxicants of their choice. For me, and many others, the problem is when these noxious intoxicants enter our living spaces and subject us to the unpleasant and un-

## manners matters

healthy odors. Just because something is legal, doesn't make it right for everyone. Instead of being selfish jerks (as proven by so many complaints) cannabis aficionados either need to explore other methods of intoxication via gummies or edibles or take it outside. If you're reading this and you're one of the several people who smokes in their unit or balcony, please know that you're being extremely inconsiderate to your neighbors. You may be an otherwise fine human being, but your choosing to smoke inside is disrespectful and discourteous. Please light up outside where no one would be disturbed.

The good news is that it our elected leadership is being responsive to complaints about smoking. At a recent work session, board president said an upcoming survey from the QI Committee will gauge the residents' views regarding smoking inside buildings. It is my sincere hope that people will come out in support of a smoking ban in our community. While it may inconvenience and anger a handful of die-hards, I hope the vast majority will support banning indoor smoking, as so many other local condos have done in recent years. It's time to clear the air. 🏠



*David Pedraza, viola; Janghyo Yoo, piano*

*Photo by Dian McDonald*

## Reflections on evolving health care, chapter 1

By Bob Shea

Donald J. Flanagan was middle-aged, portly, never smiled, always wore a suit, and drove a dark green DeSoto sedan. He also carried a black medical bag. He was our family doctor and made housecalls. As a youngster, he was my only contact with the medical profession. He handled the usual childhood problems like measles, whooping cough, and mandatory immunizations.

His work was supplemented in the winter-time by daily doses of cod liver oil and something called Father John's Medicine (which tasted like an elixir of molasses, Drano, and kerosene administered nightly by my mother). It all apparently worked as I am here today.

Later, as an adult, I saw a doctor about once a year for my mandatory military physical examination. My medical records were paper-thin and uninteresting.

I was healthy until I was not.

Now I have a primary care physician, an audiologist, a pulmonologist, a dentist, a cardiac specialist, an orthopaedist, an optician, a spine and pain specialist, a retinal doctor, a physical therapist, a dermatologist, and various technicians who poke and prod me as directed by the attending medical doctors. Consequently, I think I have earned the right to make observations on health care from a patient's viewpoint.

Most doctors seem as young as my grandchildren, and they are more often than not female.

Some young doctors prefer T-shirts, jeans, and a lab coat rather than neckties and long white coats.

Waiting for an appointment is generally good as that means the doctor is hopefully spending more time with the patient ahead of me in the queue.

He/she is not practicing conveyor-belt medicine.

Emergency rooms, designed for trauma, are filled with people who do *not* have emergencies. Rather, they do *not* have primary care doctors.

Pandemic precautions have caused medical offices to terminate magazine subscriptions. Bring a book, a newspaper, or a cell phone for games as you wait.



There seems to be a growth industry in communication companies who fiddle with the phone lines of medical practices. Thus, the common "Listen carefully as our menu options have changed" warning.

A single erroneous keystroke by a clerk handling an insurance claim, especially with lab results, can create an almost endless spiral of telephone calls, waiting on hold, listening to dumb music, and frustrating conversations with bored clerks to correct an obvious billing error.

The chairs in waiting rooms are not designed by orthopaedic doctors. If you did not have a back problem on arrival, you may have one before you leave.

Do MRIs really have to be that noisy

to do the job? They sound as if a thousand monkeys were beating on a steel drum with ball peen hammers.

Most medical offices have more insurance clerks than healthcare professionals.

Why do they call it "practicing medicine?" Does "practice" make perfect? Do they ever get it right?

Waiting rooms are filled with canes, walkers, and wheelchairs belonging to folks who are all obviously *much* older than I am.

Stand-alone clinics that offer MRIs, CAT scans, and other imaging services are a godsend as they dramatically reduce waiting to get the same test/procedure at a regular hospital.

Medical professionals who can discuss treatment with a patient in layman's terms are wonderful. Far too many describe a diagnosis as if they were taking an oral exam in medical school. Just tell me what is wrong in terms I can understand, please.

Physicians assistants (PAs) are a wonderful breed of caring people.

Medical techs who smile and talk to a patient are an essential and very welcome part of medicine.

A gold standard healthcare plan for treatment, hospitalization, and prescriptions is essential. I am so fortunate that dollars do not have to complicate or compromise my care.

Healthcare is an essential part of our lives. We seniors gather and have what I call "organ recitals" as we discuss our latest adventure in the world of white coats and stethoscopes.

Regardless of the efforts of the best doctors and other medical professionals, we cannot get out of this life alive.

If I had known I was going to live this long, I would have taken better care of myself.

My thoughts on the industry, chapter 2 follows next time. 📖

## The invisible woman

By Chester Taylor

Women have complained to me that as they have gotten older, they become invisible to most men. One woman, 70-something, told me that when she is with her daughter, men will direct the conversation from her to her daughter. When I asked another older woman, if she had experienced the invisible woman syndrome, she said yes. Although she was the chairperson of an important committee, a lot of men would bypass her and speak to the younger men on her staff.

I asked 40 women participating in a senior fitness class at Ft. Myer if this was something they had experienced, all by one said yes. They pointed out not from all men, but a lot of them.

Can a 70-something woman here at Montebello be invisible to most

men even though she may be smart, well-traveled, and refined? Typically, she's a good listener and speaker, and offers sound advice. When attending functions, she is usually fashionably dressed in a silk blouse, black pants, and sometimes with a sweater or blazer. Her jewelry is always exquisite, if men cared to notice, a gold baht chain necklace or sometimes Mikimoto cultured pearls. She likes to wear comfortable shoes, but no longer wearing high heels on airplane trips. Most men not only don't know her name, but they also don't even notice her.

Most of the things that make Montebello special – the flower gardens, the artwork, the fitness classes, water aerobics classes, clubs, poetry readings, and club activities – happen in large part due to the efforts of these women.

Opinions from psychologists in *Psychology Today* vary somewhat on the

invisible woman syndrome, but they generally agree on the aging profile of women. At age 18 they have reached their physical growth, full of energy. At age 48 they start feeling the signs of getting older: achy joints, vision corrections, wrinkles, and a few gray hairs. At 55 they know they are old, but it is still hard to admit it. Even though they are past their 70<sup>th</sup> birthday, they still dress up because of their pride. They work out to be healthy. They are no longer concerned about getting a “man's gaze.” They are happy where they are in life.

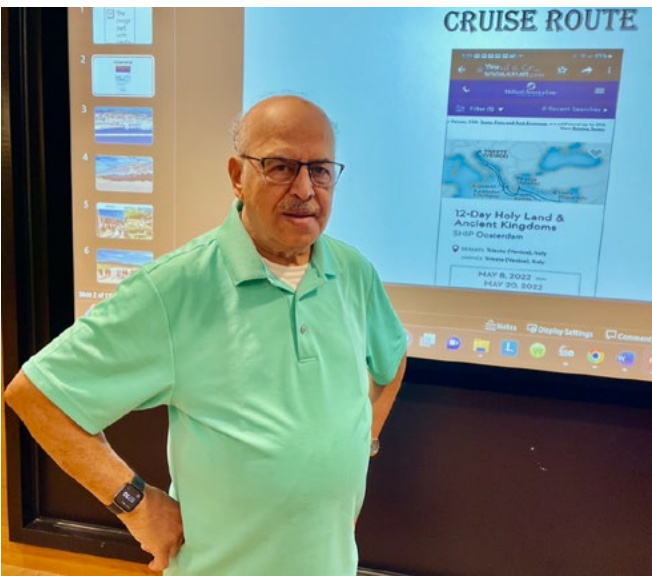
Many of us men are probably not aware that we have gender and age biases. If we took off our blinders, we would see and appreciate all the things these so-called invisible women do. And if we said hello to them, they would suddenly become visible. 📷



*Arts in Montebello jewelry artisans with their colorful creations*

*Photo by Joan Ledebur*

current events



*Cup of Joe, AiM exhibit opening, travel presentation, and happy hour*

*Photos by Dian McDonald and Joan Ledebur*





final glance



*Photo by Don Savage*