

VINSON HALL RETIREMENT COMMUNITY CAMPUS NEWS & VIEWS



Summer 2023

CEO Corner

Moving Forward

I hope that everyone is having a great summer so far. As I enter into my ninth month here at Vinson Hall Retirement Community, I have had the opportunity to enjoy a number of traditions and events at VHRC. One of these was the celebration of Vinson Hall's 54th birthday on June 23. As someone relatively new to our community, I found it a particularly special opportunity to learn even more about VHRC's storied history. Our Chaplain Scott Harrison did a wonderful job describing some of the important events and people that have influenced our community's mission and direction, and many residents shared their own stories with me following the formal program.



My experience at the birthday celebration left me with two key thoughts. First, it gave me an even deeper appreciation of how lucky and humbled I am to be part of this community. Second, it put the strategic planning process – which we have embarked on this year – in an even greater context, as we think about how to best position ourselves for the next 50+ years.

As many of you know, we have spent the last few months gathering information to help ensure that our planning is based on good data. A very important part of that process was the Resident Survey that was completed in the spring and that has provided extremely helpful insights to this work. Your feedback on what you most appreciate about the community – as well as your perspectives on opportunities for improvement – is invaluable.



I'm also grateful that we are working in partnership with our resident Strategy Committee – Bud Dougherty, Cheryl Gayton, Ronnie Hountz, Bill Morris, Ted Russell, and Emmy Simmons – along with the NMCGRF Board's talented Strategy and Market Intelligence Committee. Both committees are helping to review the considerable data we are gathering and think through important decisions that will guide our future direction. I also appreciate the continued input of all our residents and thank you in advance as we move forward in this process.

Whatever decisions we make, they will be grounded in Vinson Hall Retirement Community's mission and values, as we work together to ensure the continued success of this community well into the future. I look forward to many, many birthday celebrations to come!❖

— Chip Warner, CEO

Summer Fun at VHRC

Our days and weeks have been filled with events big and small since the publication of our Winter 2023 issue. At VHRC there's always something engaging and interesting going on! In March, we Walked to End Alzheimer's. In April, we celebrated the birthdays of the oldest among us at our party for those turning 95 or older. In May, we gathered for a Kentucky Derby watch party, and crowned the winners of the annual Derby Hat Contest. Later that month, we golfed in our Throw for Show, Putt for Dough putting contest.

Meanwhile, our creative arts community regaled us with shows and performances throughout the spring and summer: the Vinson Hall Players presented *Complaint Department and Lemonade*, the second play the group has produced since they formed last fall. The Arts Center hosted a two-day Art Show featuring hundreds of works created by VHRC artists in classes and workshops. And Vinson Voices performed its annual recital of patriotic music at VHRC's July 4th celebration, one of its four annual concerts.

As a community, we came together for special celebrations, whether it was a holiday meal – from Easter dinner to a Passover Seder – or to celebrate Military Appreciation month in May, or VHRC's 54th birthday in June. And we traveled the culinary world, tasting the wines of Portugal and Australia or the food and music of the Ukraine. Summer at VHRC is all about fun, with more to come in the weeks ahead! ❖



About Campus News and Views

Campus News and Views is Vinson Hall Retirement Community's quarterly literary magazine. The goal of this newsletter is to share stories and remembrances from VHRC residents and staff. All residents and staff are invited to submit articles for inclusion. All items must be original pieces and must be submitted by the author. This publication is reviewed by an editorial committee comprised of VHRC residents and staff.

Campus News and Views is designed and edited by
The Office of Philanthropy & Engagement

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Campus News & Views Summer 2023

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Navy Marine Coast Guard Residence Foundation News

Not-So-Lazy Days of Summer

Here we are, in “Those Lazy, Hazy, Crazy Days of Summer” that Nat King Cole sang about. But at the Navy Marine Coast Guard Residence Foundation, this summer has actually been an incredibly busy – and exciting – time!

Right now, we are deep into planning mode for this year’s Gala on September 16. And what fun it’s been to plan! After keeping the theme a secret for months, we began slipping cryptic quotes into elevators each day (“Here’s looking at you, kid”), then made the announcement at the on-campus movie in early July that this year’s Gala would be *An Evening in Casablanca*. The evening will start at the Casablanca Casino (Fred Johnson’s Bistro), where guests can try their hand at the roulette wheel to win prizes, or just mingle and savor the scene from a bygone era. From there, we will move on to Rick’s Café Americain (The Ballroom) for an exotic three-course meal and live music. To our surprise and delight, tickets to the Gala sold out within a week! This is the Foundation’s only major fundraiser, with all proceeds going toward supporting the residents and staff of Vinson Hall Retirement Community. We hope to create a night to remember at VHRC, and so appreciate your support!

Meanwhile, our annual Membership Appeal campaign is going strong. We recently sent out 1,500 letters inviting VHRC residents, family, friends and staff to become 2023 members of NMCGRF, and are delighted with the response so far! Our largest source of revenue each year comes from our Annual Membership campaign. We are so grateful to our 2023 donors for making our work possible through these gifts!



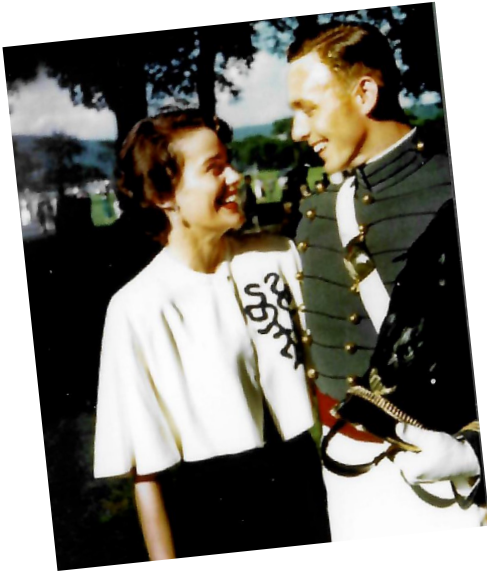
From left: Carol Saunders, Senior Director of Philanthropy and Engagement Michelle Crone, Lynne and Carl Schone, and NMCGRF Board Member RDML Michael Browne at the 4- and 5-Star Donor Happy Hour on March 20.

Let me give you some recent examples of how your donations to just one of our four funds, the Innovation & Enhancement Fund, are making a difference. Thanks to a generous gift to this Fund by resident Bob Springer, the Foundation was able to upgrade the sound system in the Alford Auditorium. Every audio component in the room has now been replaced with state-of-the-art equipment that includes new speakers, amplifiers, processors, hearing assisted listening devices and an easy-to-operate touchscreen.

The new fire pit at the Sports Park is another improvement on campus made possible by donations to this Fund. So is the new computer and printer in the library, open for all to use. Still other donations have gone toward the purchase of new frames for the Visual Arts Committee’s displays of resident artwork all across campus, including in Arleigh Burke Pavilion and The Sylvestery. Your generosity inspires us daily and continues to keep us busy. So stay tuned for more news, as we in the Foundation strive to make a difference for all those who live and work in this exceptional community! ❖

— Michelle Crone, Senior Director of Philanthropy & Engagement

Unwanted Encounter, Marvelous Result



By Roy Easley

**This story was originally published in the Winter 2017 issue of the Campus News and Views. It was the first of 15 pieces that Roy Easley has written for this publication over the years. It is reprinted here with the author's permission.*

It has been almost 70 years since that unwanted first encounter in the summer of 1948. Sara, one of my married sisters, telephoned me. I was home in Louisville, Kentucky, on summer leave from West Point. Sara was going to model in a fashion show at the Brown Hotel and invited me. I did not want to attend as I was maximizing day and evening dates with young ladies, however my better self came forward. I did not want to disappoint Sara and therefore accepted her invitation. Life was about to begin!

I entered the Brown Hotel Roof Garden and there she was, the most beautiful girl in the world! She was standing by a small table handing out miniature sample bottles of perfume. Possessing a slender and graceful figure, she was attired in a simple yet elegant manner. She wore a straight black skirt, black high heels, and a beautiful white blouse with long sleeves. Wow! I was locked on to her firmer than a target tracking radar. I could not take my eyes off her. I knew I was being extremely rude.

I took a seat and the fashion show began. I

was attentive, but I was also reviewing my thoughtless behavior towards that gorgeous young woman. Had I blown my opportunity to meet her? Probably. For sure now was not the time to meet her. I hastily departed at the show's conclusion.

Arriving home, I invented a reason for my hasty departure and waited long enough for Sara to return to her home before telephoning. I praised the performance of the models, thanked her again for the invitation, and popped the question: Who was that gorgeous girl handing out the perfume samples? Sara's (summary) response: Elizabeth (Betty) Boone, junior model, age 17. The fashionable outfits modeled were designed for older women, hence the perfume job.

Sara volunteered to telephone Betty, identify me as her brother on leave from West Point, and to expect a telephone call from me. Betty dreaded the expected telephone call as she anticipated my request for a date. Given my terrible behavior at the show she wanted to avoid me, not date

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Guadalcanal

Arma Jane Karaer and Roy Easley are friends and neighbors in Vinson Hall, and when he urged her to contribute to *Campus News and Views*, she wrote him this message and submitted the following piece:

Dear Col. Easley,

Thank you for the opportunity to read the 15 stories you have written and which were published in the Campus News and Views. Your wife was truly beautiful and your tribute to her is lovely as well.

Your stories about fighting in the Pacific reminded me of all I learned about the history of WWII when I was ambassador accredited to three small Pacific Island countries from 1997 to 2000: Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu. This is a speech I wrote and gave at the annual ceremony remembering the battle of Guadalcanal. I knew that Japanese veterans as well as American veterans of that battle would be present. I was told both groups organized and played a baseball game together that afternoon.

By Arma Jane Karaer

Americans and their friends gather on Guadalcanal on August 7 each year to recall a mighty battle of 1942-43 and honor the men that took part in it. The monument which surrounds us stands silent witness to the terrible sound of war that shattered the isolation of this island and the life of its people 55 years ago. It is also witness to the valor of the men that made that war and the peace they achieved thereafter.

Americans, good and bad, had come to these islands before, some in search of souls, others in search of fortune. But the invasion of Americans that began on August 7, 1942, was of a scope and reach that this region had never seen before and, God willing, will never see again.

Those of you here today are as familiar as I with the story. Following the bombing of Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, the forces of America and her allies in the Pacific were pushed back relentlessly by the Japanese Imperial Forces. Australia and New Zealand laid exposed to invasion. Many ANZAC fighting men were either captives elsewhere in Asia, pinned down in North

Africa or assembled to defend New Guinea. And so, American Marines found themselves in a place of which few of them had ever heard, to protect an airstrip that their enemy had built.

The high commands on both sides estimated rightly that air power was key to victory in the Pacific. The Japanese already had an air base at Rabaul. Another on Guadalcanal would complete their command of the sea lanes to Australia. The Allies needed that base for themselves. The Marines took it.

The taking was daring, swift and effective. Keeping what had been taken was more difficult. Keeping involved disaster, as for the good ships that now line Iron Bottom Sound. Keeping required heroic persistence, as at Bloody Ridge, where a casual visitor can still find casings from the thousands of bullets fired on that position. Keeping meant painful, miserable sickness and death from diseases to which no American of that generation had ever been exposed. Keeping meant building on what had been taken, a launching pad for the reconquest of the Pacific.

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Guadalcanal

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Credit: USMC Archives. U.S. Marines leaving Guadalcanal, circa 1942. From the Thayer Soule Collection at the Archives Branch, Marine Corps History Division. Official USMC Photograph.

The U.S. Forces we are here to honor today did all that. They did it with the help of the Solomon Islands scouts who fought with courage and loyalty alongside foreigners for a cause that was barely theirs. They did it with the help of lonely coast watchers who, surrounded by the enemy, clung bravely and stubbornly to the land they had made their home.

Yes, as we remember their victory, we are bound to remember a strange truth of war. That while victory is won with the help of one's friends, glory is bestowed by the bravery and tenacity of the enemy. The troops on Guadalcanal met such an enemy. They were among the first, but not the last, Americans to win that bitter glory. My generation and that of my children rejoices that their enemy is now our friend and that we need never be enemies again.

Many here today, like me, have never been in battle. We can only imagine dimly, with the

help of poets, what it was like. James Michener contends that soldiers are helped through battle by a conviction that they will not die, but in telling us so, he paints an unforgettable image of the sacrifices of war:

"Before me lay the dead, the heroic dead who took the island. Upon a strange plateau, on a strange island, in a strange sea, far from their farms and villages, they slept forever beside the lagoon which bore them to their day of battle. Over them the sea birds dipped in endless homage. Above them the deep sky erected a cathedral. Never once during this operation did I believe that I would die. No more did any man who now lay still in death. The Marine in the prow of the ship, he might die. The Seabee who made noises when he ate, he might topple from the crane. But not I. Yet, there lay before me almost three hundred Americans who thought as I had thought. They could not die. But there were the white crosses."

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Unwanted Encounter, Marvelous Result

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me. Yet, just as I did not turn down the fashion show invitation and disappoint Sara, Betty did not want to disappoint Sara by refusing me a date. How lucky could I get!

That first date with my future wife was a complete success. Betty rendered a silent forgiveness for my crass fashion show deportment, and our personalities magically merged in a complementary way that expressed courtesy, respect and admiration.

The unwanted 1948 encounter produced marvelous results. The most important of which were a 60-year marriage and a very large and loving family, of which my wife was

the lodestone. The front of our gravestone in Arlington National Cemetery honors my wife:

Remarkable and elegant wife, mother

Grandmother, teacher, and friend

Elizabeth Boone Easley

December 8, 1930 – February 13, 2011

What a marvelous difference Elizabeth's life made. ❖

What is a Poem

By Margaret Dean

The What of a poem

A line to fill a page,

A stab from the heart

Deft, painless and quick

Why bury your heart

Defenseless and cold

In a structured line?

Why cry aloud with that silent voice

Tears blurring that poetry?

He's gone; she's gone; they are gone.

I am alone.

The Why of a poem?

A smile, a memory

An image etched

In words

That warm feeling

Nestled so close

To the heart.

The When of a poem must be

When all the tears are spilt

When all the smiles are gone

When love dies or is reborn again...

That's when. ❖

Under the Sod



Jerry Norris's father is wearing the fedora and holding the left side of Al Capone's coffin as it was carried from the tool shed to the grave site at Chicago's Mount Olivet Cemetery.

By Jerry Norris

On the cold day of February 4 in 1947 at Chicago's Mount Olivet Cemetery, the era's most notorious gangster, Al Capone, was laid to rest. He had passed away in Miami, having been absent for some years from his former base in Chicago. Earlier on that day, around 7 a.m., my father, Foreman of the Cemetery, had arrived to open the massive wrought iron gate. While it was locked, he noticed that inside and off to his left there was a large black hearse parked near the Administration Building. He was puzzled as to how it got there — since the gate remained locked. He approached it and as the driver's side window was being lowered, he asked, "Is that himself back there?" The driver answered, "Yeah, where can we stash him for a while?"

My father directed the driver to a nearby tool

shed where they hid Al's coffin from public view. The reason for secrecy: Chicago police were anticipating something like a shoot-out at the front gate as Capone's coffin passed through. Given his long absence from the city, competitive gangs might well be drawn to the event. It was arranged that there would be a fake cortege at the gate while simultaneously my dad and his immigrant Irish crew of grave diggers, now transformed into official pall bearers, would man-handle Capone's coffin out of the tool shed and escort it to the grave site. The next morning, this picture appeared on the front page of Chicago's leading newspaper, *The Chicago Tribune*. Of the immigrant Irish pall bearers wearing caps, the only one wearing a fedora was my father, on the left side of the coffin. Watching the proceedings are

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Rate Your Life, If You Dare



Priscilla and Gene Wentz, also known as "Frick and Frack," in August 1982 when Gene was studying Italian at the Defense Language Institute at Monterey.

By Gene Wentz

The title for this article was the identical and very provocative newspaper headline for a story that recently commanded my rapt attention.

The writer explained that at the age of 87 he composed a memoir that traced the different aspects of his existence and assigned a numerical grade as to the happiness for each segment.

On a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 as abject failure and 10 as an excellent outcome, he calculated a score that summed up his time on earth. Those segments included schooling, jobs, human relationships and such.

Health and happiness were key words to begin his appraisal. He counted friends, vacations, nights on the town and good experiences as pluses. He took points off for bad things, bad decisions, bad bosses and bad luck. Financial security played a huge part in his overview of a lifetime.

While never trying to quantify the different

sections of my life, I, too, wrote a memoir that began as a Wentz family history and segued into a 325-page family autobiography. It explored my life as a teenager, college undergraduate, 27-year Navy career, 16-year stint in higher education, freelance journalist and essentially total retirement.

At graduation from high school in 1952, I reminisced about the good times (English, history, friends, sports, dating), factored in the minuses (detention, algebra) and concluded: These were the happiest four years of my life. I would grade it at an 8, very good, leaning toward excellent.

My Penn State college years were excellent because of graduating without debt in four years, the camaraderie of Theta Xi fraternity life, weekend parties and all-around academic and personal enrichment. I remember thinking: These, now, are the happiest four years of my life. Give it a 9.

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My BIG Litte Baby



The Sri Lankan subspecies of Asian elephants are the biggest land animals in Asia and can reach a height of 13 feet and weight of 4,400 to 12,000 pounds. This photo of a baby Asian elephant is by Kabomani-Tapir from Pixabay.

By Carol Saunders

Decades ago, while visiting Sri Lanka during a lull in the tensions with the Tamil Tigers, we spent a day in Kandy at the Elephant Orphanage. Although most of the residents were adults who bore the scars of poachers, males missing tusks, injured limbs, scars from previous wounds, my attention was immediately drawn to a calf who called out to me. I'm always a pushover for critters, so this baby stole my heart immediately.

I walked straight over to her, and began to talk softly. She was about hip high, with soulful eyes, and tall bristles sticking up all over her baby skin. We'd already started bonding when the mahout, or elephant keeper, brought me a huge baby bottle. She immediately raised her trunk to allow me to put this in her triangular pink mouth. The contents disappeared in record time. (I learned calves drink up to three gallons of milk per day!) We kept conversing — she was a good listener. However, our conversation was interrupted when I was invited to watch the adults bathe — standing back to avoid the playful spray. Watching their dusty light gray skin turn dark in the water as they obviously enjoyed bathing made me smile.

The mahouts have worked out a management relationship with these huge animals that outweigh them many times over. I remain

impressed by the handlers' expertise and varied means of communication. The mahouts remain safe, while succeeding in getting the elephants to perform their job. These jobs are not circus performances, but heavy work best suited to male elephants who can weigh up to 5 tons and stand 13 feet tall.

You may have heard of a younger member of an elephant herd going off with a dying member, remaining with him or her until the end, then being joined by the others for a communal mourning. Elephants are proven to be among the world's most empathetic animals, whose brains have three times as many neurons as human brains. I am privileged to have witnessed this empathy firsthand from an orphan who would have died of grief or starvation without the intervention of this wonderful rescue organization.

All good things must come to an end. When our time at the orphanage had come to a close, I went to say goodbye to my BIG baby. She immediately wrapped her trunk around her "Mama," obviously not wanting me to leave. With tears in my eyes, I assured her of my love, while stroking her soft bristles. I promised that I'd always remember and miss her. That's an easy promise to keep. Here's the proof.❖

Under the Sod

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several men dressed in black — Capone's former gang members right out of Hollywood's Central Casting.

Afterwards, Capone's mother, Teresa, would come out on a streetcar to visit her son's grave. My father would meet her at a floral shop across the street from the cemetery's front gate. He would help her select a floral arrangement, get a pail of fresh water, then drive her out to Capone's grave site. As she planted the flowers and watered them, he would step back and give her privacy as she knelt down and prayed. He would then drive her to a streetcar stop and see her aboard. When he

came back from that chore, there would always be a "consideration" left by her on the front seat. On those nights when he came home, he would say to his family, "Ah, lads, we placed one under the sod today and there will be meat in the stew pot tonight."

P. S. When Teresa planted those flowers on her son's grave, it was in the depth of a raw winter's day with rock-hard ground to dig into. Thus, some doubt that she could have planted those flowers. But, who would want to tell Mrs. Capone that she couldn't plant them! ❖

Rate Your Life, If You Dare

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After college I had a military obligation looming and opted to volunteer for Navy service. That resulted in a commission and 27 years of interesting duty, accelerated promotion, world travel, good benefits and a secure pension. There were some blips along the way (ethical clash with a boss that I won) but nothing so disastrous as to detract from assigning an 8.

After discharge from the Navy in 1984, I spent the next 16 years in higher education, with time spent gaining a PhD from the London School of Economics and subsequent lecturing before bright, disciplined and motivated college students. Another 8.

For the past 72 years and counting, I have earned a paycheck, from someone willing to ante up for my freelance writing. I have had some health issues, five invasive surgical operations, that all, thankfully, cured the underlying maladies. Give it another 8.

Adding up and dividing the sums assigned above reveal an overall score of 8, which equates to a life assessment, thus far, of "great, borderline excellent."

That confirms the wording of the final sentence of my Wentz family history and autobiography referenced previously. I ended the manuscript with the conclusion: It has been a wonderful life. ❖

Guadalcanal

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And so, enjoying the peace that their sacrifices bought us, understanding imperfectly what they felt and feared, we have come here today to remember and thank them. To tell them that they have helped us understand the words of General

George S. Patton: "Wars may be fought with weapons, but they are won by men. It is the spirit of the men who follow and of the man who leads that gain us victory." ❖

On the C&O Canal, Then and Now



Maureen Kammerer biking along the C&O Canal, circa 1984.

By Maureen Kammerer

The Chesapeake and Ohio Canal operated from 1831 to 1924 for coal hauling from the Allegheny Mountains to Washington along the Potomac River until the railroads took its place. Its towpath trail is still in use today by cyclists and hikers. Its length is 184.5 miles of beautiful views of the river, rocks, trees and vegetation. It does not have its early function of transporting goods anymore by barge and mule, but on recent hiking outings there were frogs and a few fish and other creatures in its now grassed-in depths. It is the herons I look for in the middle of the sunny swamp, their beautiful gray plumage utterly still as they contemplate the possibility of a catch nearby.

It is the memories of other walks along the path that I savor as Joe and I walk. The ones with a younger Joe, and our kids on bikes that we hauled there on the back of an old blue station wagon. There are always dappled shadows cast between the huge sycamore trees lining the river bank on either side of the gravel path.

I remember an outing in the summer of 2021, when the cliffs seemed higher as I viewed the river below. I did not want to fall over, although I remember times of climbing nimbly down to the river years ago. As we walked, I noticed the gravel change from pale Naples yellow to gray. Some Park Service employees must have filled in the many holes. As I approached Billy Goat Trail that goes down to the river, I remember stories Joe told me of taking his boy scouts camping near here and using this trail. We did the steep trail ourselves many times years ago, but we are not billy goats anymore. It would not be wise, especially not with a cane and a walking stick.

There were cyclists and walkers, kids and adults, but only a few in spite of the gorgeous bright day. We looked to see if they were wearing their masks as they approached. There was one fisherman without his COVID mask, but no one our age. We were not fearful, merely cautious as we stepped aside and stayed away from them. We did not want to miss out on a summer's

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How I Learned to Play the Bass



Eric Henderson playing bass with the Tallwood Trio at the Lake Anne Community Center in 2014.

By Eric D. Henderson

In 1954 I was a 20-year-old GI in Japan, recently transferred from Korea to Camp Matsushima in Northern Honshu, about 40 miles north of Sendai. There wasn't much around the camp but rice paddies. The rail stop was the small town of Yamato.

At first, the base provided training for the new Japanese air force. During WWII, it was used to train Kamakaze pilots. In 1954 it housed many of the families of U.S. Army officers stationed in Korea, and there was a small engineering battalion to maintain the base and the airstrip.

One of the main functions of the base was its clubs. Housed in a large one-story building right across the parade field from my company were the Officers' Club, the NCO Club and the Service Club. All three were busy places. During the day and on weekends the Service Club was

full. Evenings and weekends the Officers' and NCO Clubs were open and lively.

One of the bands on the base was a light jazz combo that played the Great American Songbook. One day not long after I arrived, the bandleader and piano player approached me. His bass player had rotated home and he asked if I would join the combo.

I told him that although I had played bass horn, I had never played a stringed instrument of any kind. He said, "You played the tuba, didn't you? It's the same thing; I'll show you." One week later, with one rehearsal, I made my debut. It was one of the most humiliating days of my life. His instructions consisted of saying, "Stand over here and do what I do with my left hand." That was it! The band was good, which made me feel even worse.

The quartet consisted of the pianist, who had studied at Boston Conservatory, the tenor sax who'd been a club player in Chicago, and a good amateur drummer with a lot of experience. Then there was me, who didn't know what I was doing. I was told to just play and smile, but that's hard when you're lost and terrified.

Fortunately, I was blessed with a good ear. At first, that just told me how bad I was, but gradually I got better. I could hear or feel when I fell into the right chords. Once I found that spot, I learned that the same spot one string down would harmonize. That same spot on the next two strings would also blend. So, I had four notes to play with.

After that, I knew for each song I could play a progression down the top string, one note at a time until I could feel it blend, and know I was playing in the right key. Slowly I got better. I relaxed and began to enjoy myself. But still I felt like a fraud.

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On the C&O Canal, Then and Now

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day of companionship in a familiar setting with memories of a less dangerous time.

That summer day on the canal was especially delightful with a dear companion of 60 years to share birdsong, river views, cattails, ancient rocks, and newly formed families with young children and their dogs passing by. There was the thought of safer walks in other times, but this one was joyous because being outdoors was so special.

Later, we drove to a favorite restaurant, Old Anglers Inn nearby on McArthur Boulevard, where we sat outside on their patio among red and pink hibiscus blossoms, near the beautiful big fountain, and other diners at a social distance. Some had arrived at the restaurant by hiking the path and walking up a hill and across the street. During the height of COVID, we removed our masks and enjoyed a wonderful lunch among other happy hikers.



Entrance to towpath of C&O Canal at Rowlands Ferry, Maryland. Photo by Loneshieling.

"It is the best of times, it is the worst of times," said Dickens. That day, as we took off our masks, drank a glass of wine and savored a taste of freedom from concern and fear, we, the oldest guests in the restaurant, were the most joyous and grateful. It was indeed the best of times in the worst of times. ❖

January Daffodils

By Tony Steinmeyer

Too soon, I fear, your fresh, green stems push through

The frozen ground and January snow.

Do you not know Nature's firm rule as to

The season daffodils are meant to grow?

Yet when tall trees bow down with Winter's ice,

Your sprouts stand steadfast in the ruthless cold,

Foretelling full life after sacrifice.

They say harsh testing oft rewards the bold.

But that platitude spurs human striving

Against Nature's bounds. It should not lead you

To risk, when the whole earth is renewing,

Not gracing Spring with your bright, sunny hue.

Yet if you thrive, you may show Nature and

Her mercies better than we understand. ❖

Unique Wood Carvings

By Scott Harrison, VHRC Chaplain

If you have visited our Chapel for a service or for its quiet ambiance, then you may have admired the two lovely carvings that are displayed on its rear wall.



While details of their history are few, we know they were made of Brazilian rosewood (*Dalbergia nigra*) in 1933 by French sculptor Gaston Etienne Le Bourgeois. They were part of a larger work,

Chemin de Croix (Stations of the Cross), that Le Bourgeois made for the chapel of the S.S. Normandie, a 1930s luxury ocean liner of the French Line Compagnie Générale Transatlantique.

The S.S. Normandie was, at one time, the fastest and largest passenger ship. It was famous for its enormous public spaces, luxurious cabins, and Art Deco décor. Its passengers included Marlene Dietrich, Ernest Hemingway, Fred Astaire, Irving Berlin, and James Stewart.

During World War II, the U.S. government took possession of the liner, with the intention of converting it into a troopship; however, during the conversion project in 1942, the ship caught fire, burned, and capsized in the Hudson River. Plans to use its remains were scrapped, and efforts were made to salvage its contents.

Upon their salvaging from the vessel, the two carvings were presented to the U.S. Department of the Navy and sent to the Anacostia Naval Station. Years later, the Naval Station gave them to Vinson Hall's new Chapel as it was being furnished. The Anacostia Naval Station also



gave the pews, original Communion table and stained-glass windows to the Chapel, which held its first service on Christmas Eve 1970. Dedicated and consecrated on December 12, 1971, the Chapel is open and available 24/7 to residents and staff and hosts weekly services. ❖

How I Learned to Play the Bass

...Continued from page 13

It took many years and a lot more learning before I began to feel that I knew what I was doing. In the meantime, I played in the clubs on the Army base and even played in a few Japanese bars. But that odd request to a young Army cryptographer became a lifelong and very enjoyable hobby.

Later on, after marriage and children, I played with a group in Reston, played in various Potomac River Jazz Club bands, played at Poor Richard's, at the Roma Restaurant in D.C. and formed the Tallwood Trio, a group that played often for the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute

at George Mason University. Now including resident Ron Musselwhite, the Tallwood Trio has also played at Vinson Hall. ❖

Snowflake

By Margaret Dean

Some place, not here, a snowflake falls
Floating so softly downward
That neither you nor I can
Grasp the whole fury of its
Lightness on the roof. ❖



Vinson Hall Retirement Community
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VINSON HALL RETIREMENT COMMUNITY

Campus News & Views Summer 2023



Spring and summer fun at VHRC included the grand opening of the Sport Park Fire Pit, June Art Show, a Walk to End Alzheimer's around campus, and a Throw for Show, Putt for Dough putting contest on the VHRC green.