

THE Villager

◦ NEIGHBORS HELPING NEIGHBORS ◦

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Village Quarterly Meeting

GEORGE WATERS TO BE FEATURED SPEAKER

George Waters will speak on “The Unique Nature of the Relationship Between Indian Tribes and the Federal Government” at the November Quarterly Meeting of Lake Barcroft Village. The meeting will start at 7 p.m. and will be held via Zoom. George has been working with American Indians since his college days. He started his lobbying firm in 1985. Some of the tribes who joined him in 1985 are still clients over 35 years later, a fact of which he is quite proud. He presently represents five different tribes in Washington State, Montana, Nevada, and South Dakota and one national organization, the Inter-Tribal Buffalo Council.

George Waters was born in Chicago in 1954, and while people are familiar with the term “military brat” to reference the child of a parent who served in the military and therefore grew up in numerous locations, George sometimes calls himself a “faculty brat” as his father, who was ultimately a tenured Political Science professor at Wayne State University in Detroit, got many teaching fellowships so he also lived in Wisconsin; Detroit; Oak Park, MI; New York City; Yellow Springs, OH; and Kingston, Jamaica.

Not falling far from the tree, he graduated from Michigan State University (MSU) in 1977 with a degree in Political Science. At MSU he took an elective course on contemporary

American Indian Affairs taught by an Ottawa Indian and did a term paper on pending legislation that would have been injurious to the treaty fishing rights of tribes in the Great Lakes. During his senior year he interned in DC for the Congressman who represented East Lansing and was coincidentally on the committee where the fishing rights bill was pending. He immediately was assigned as the “Indian Affairs staffer” and after being lobbied by tribal advocates decided to do a second internship with the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI). He had one semester left at MSU and just prior to graduating, NCAI offered him a job, so he returned to DC three months later, got full-blown Potomac Fever, and never left. He eventually became Legislative Director for NCAI and when a Chippewa attorney who had been working for the Senate Indian Affairs Committee started his own lobbying firm, George joined him and stayed five years until starting his own firm in 1985.

He married Cindy Waters in 1982 and he, Cindy and their daughter Caitlin moved to Lake Barcroft in 1996. He has served on the LBA Board for two different six-year terms and chaired or co-chaired the LBA Maintenance Committee for the past 11 years, focusing mostly on the community’s infrastructure. ■

Village Starts Singles Group

Sue Morse

THREE VILLAGE MEMBERS, Louise Ziebell, Marie-France Smith and Sue Morse have formed a singles group in Lake Barcroft Village. Starting in September, the Lake Barcroft Village Singles Group has enjoyed several gatherings, including a potluck at Louise's home, a two-hour barge cruise on Lake Barcroft featuring boxed dinners from Windows, and a winery outing with lunch and tasting.

Photo by Linda Woodrow



Singles Group wine tasting

Sunday, October 3, was a lovely day for a drive to the Bluemont Vineyards in the foothills of the mountains of Virginia. The



Welcoming Pig

hilltop location was perfect for viewing the rolling hills of vineyards. A delicious lunch was served at patio tables covered by



Photo by Linda Woodrow

Dawn Donald and Louise Ziebell red umbrellas. After lunch the group was escorted to the indoor tasting room to sample several of the choice Bluemont wines.

Meeting new friends and renewing old acquaintances were great ways to spend a beautiful autumn day. For more information about the Village Singles Group, please contact Louise Ziebell, at her email address, louiseziebell@yahoo.com. ■

The Lake Barcroft Singles Group Halloween Party



Photos by Linda Woodrow and Marie-France Smith



THE Villager

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The Lake Barcroft Village Singles Group held a Halloween party at the home of Louise Ziebell. Many of the guests came in costume. They enjoyed good food and good conversation.



Book Review: *Braiding Sweetgrass* *Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teaching of Plants* by Robin Wall Kimmerer

Judy Hilton

IT SOMETIMES HAPPENS that a book is published and gains little acclaim from the general public at the time, then suddenly starts popping up on the best sellers list years later. *Braiding Sweetgrass* first came out in 2013 and until recently was mainly read by ecologists and other earth scientists. Now it frequently heads the current list of best non-fiction books. The author, Robin Wall Kammerer is a mother, scientist, and SUNY Distinguished Teaching Professor of Environmental Biol-

ogy and the founder and director of the Center for Native Peoples and the Environment. She is an enrolled member of the Citizen Potawatomi Nation

* * *

“In winter, when the green earth lies resting beneath a blanket of snow, this is the time for storytelling. The storytellers begin by calling upon those who came before who passed the stories down to us, for we are only messengers. In the beginning there was the Skyworld.”

With this introduction the au-

thor provides the setting for the legendary creation story of the falling of Skywoman from a hole in the Skyworld, cushioned by the beating of the wings of geese, and finally landing on the shell of a great turtle. Skywoman did not come empty handed, She brought fruits and seeds of all kinds of plants, scattered them and carefully tended them until the world was green.

This is a book for anyone who enjoys a good story and Robin Wall Kimmerer is simply a good storyteller. She relies on examples from her own life’s journey interwoven with the legends of indigenous tribes. She tells of maple sugaring with her daughters in upstate New York, of years of effort mucking out a pond to make a swimming hole, of adventures in the woods and fields with her students, canoe camping in the Adirondacks with her parents, and her struggles to learn the almost forgotten language of her ancestors. It comes as no surprise that she once contemplated becoming a poet, for her descriptions of nature, of plants and raindrops and lichens are quite beautiful.

In each essay or chapter Kammerer highlights her love of nature. She brings us into a reimagining of new ways to understand our relation to the natural world, of sorrow for the broken link between land and people and the need to give thanks for the gifts of the earth and to care for them.



Halloween party photo by Marie-France Smith

How I Wrote a Book

Cathy Williams

I didn't really intend to write a book about my life. But like a lot of things I've done, it just kind of evolved. It all started when I was asked to find a photo and write a remembrance for my friend Kathy's funeral. In looking high and low for a photo, I discovered many caches of information about my past that I had quite forgotten – scrapbooks in the attic, photo albums, drawers and boxes holding loose clippings and photos, DVDs of old home movies, and digital photos stored on cellphones and computers.

I decided it might be interesting to try to organize some of these items and try to recall some of the long-forgotten stories from my life. It might come in handy, I thought, the next time my granddaughter asks me to tell her a funny story about our family. That's how it all began.

I took an adult education class on how to organize photos. The class turned out to be with a man who brought different conversion devices for people to use to digitize photos and slides and movies. Using his equipment I scanned many old photos. Then I watched all the DVDs my brother had converted from home movies my parents made when we were kids and made screen shots of some memorable moments.

I sorted the photos into a semblance of chronological order and started to write about what I could remember. As stories began to develop I separated them into chapters based on significant time periods in my life. I found that memories come back slowly. One story or photo reminded me of something else, and over a period

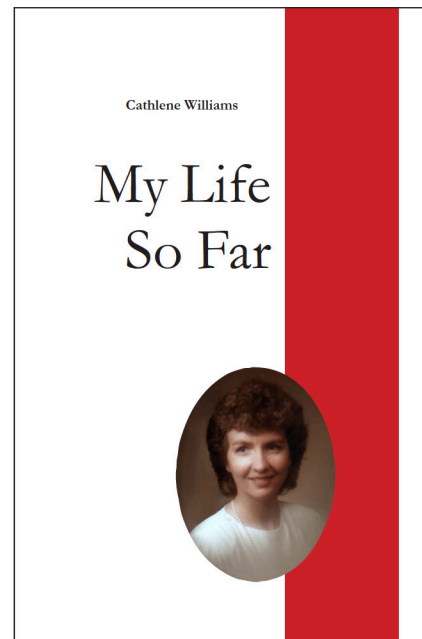
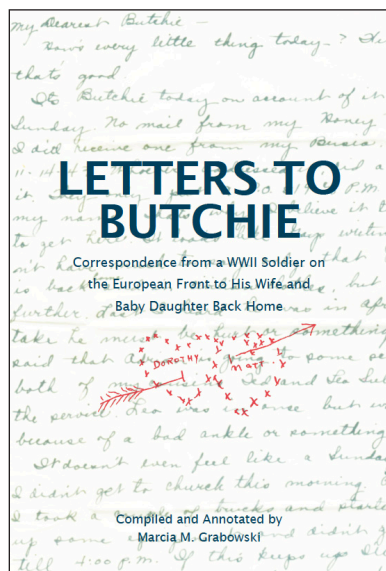
of 2 years I gradually added new stories. Each chapter was kept in a separate Word file, with photos embedded.

Joining the Lake Barcroft Village Memoirs group was very helpful in evoking additional memories and encouraging me to embellish my stories with more interesting details. Our leader, Shirley Timashev, asked all of us to consider publishing our work so I explored ways to publish my book for my daughter and granddaughters. I asked Don Christian if he would be willing to help me design a cover and opening pages for each chapter. To my surprise he offered to design the entire book! Having someone waiting for me to send him the material was my final impetus to complete the book.

Don gave the book a polished appearance and was patient with my last-minute corrections. He suggested McCabe Printers, and I was very pleased with that suggestion. McCabe's printed 5 copies of the book for a very reasonable price.

Letters to Butchie

What started as a box of old letters was transformed into a lovely 330-page book, printed in October 2021.



Writing the book has helped me recapture long-forgotten events in my life. Now if those memories float away again, I'll have a way to recall them. And the next time my granddaughter asks to hear family stories, I'm ready! ■

Marcia Grabowski

I had been the keeper of more than 450 letters that my father wrote to my mother during WWII, from 1941 through 1945. During a conversation with Shirley Timashev at a Sunday afternoon house concert a few years back, Shirley suggested that I might want to join the Memoirs Group of the Lake Barcroft Village, and work on compiling them into a book. So the process started; it was completed approximately two years later.

LT Matt Grabowski was inducted into the Army in March 1941, and left for England on the RMS Aquitania in October 1943, to serve in a Gas Supply Battalion in England, France, Belgium and Germany. Approximately two years later, he returned via ship from

Continued on page 5

Antwerp, arriving in NYC in October 1945. At the time he was inducted, the Japanese had not yet attacked Pearl Harbor; given that, Matt reasonably thought he would be home by early 1942. When he returned in 1945, he saw his oldest child, Madeline, for the first time. As she was born at the end of January 1944, she was almost two years old when he met her.

The letters are revealing, mundane, heartfelt, informative and touching. They speak to our father's successful communication attempts at maintaining his relationship to his wife, our mother, during the most stressful and traumatic time of his life. In reading them, our family discovered much about our father's thoughts about life in general and his deep feelings for our mother. Since he died at a young age, much of this was new to us. We also found answers to some things that had puzzled us for many years.

I would encourage those who have similar correspondence from family members to take the time to read them and share the information with family members, for this and future generations. You might be surprised by what is revealed, and by what the authors have endured and survived.

One final note: The book was printed by McCabe's Printing Group in Fairfax. They were professional and responsive, and I wouldn't hesitate to work with them again. ■



The Power Is Out—Again

A MEMBER OF THE VILLAGE was relaxing and watching television in her basement when suddenly the world turned pitch black. There was no light from anywhere; the shades had even been pulled down. Fortunately, she had her cell phone with her and was able to use that for a bit of light. It would have been dangerous to climb the stairs with very little light, so she called Dominion from her cell phone and then sat and waited. The lights came back on after fifteen minutes.

Since the power goes out rather frequently here, it was necessary to find a solution. A place to begin was an Internet search for “dawn to dusk battery-operated night lights.” There actually is such a thing and the night lights are quite inexpensive. The lights come on when the room is dark and shut themselves off when the light comes back. The lights even come in a rectangular model perfect for staircases—one on the wall next to each step.

Amazon has six for under \$50: <https://www.amazon.com/Mr-Beams-MB500A-WHT-06-00-Stair-Night/dp/B07HKX94YG>

You can also get them from the manufacturer—two for under \$10: <https://www.mrbeams.com/mr-beams-amber-led-stair-light/>

Home Depot sells this unit for under \$10 for two. <https://www.homedepot.com/p/Mr-Beams-Indoor-Outdoor-Battery-Powered-Dusk-to-Dawn-Amber-Sleep-Friendly-Guide-Lights-White-2-Pack-MB500A-WHT-02-06/306839553> Unfortunately, when we last checked they were out of stock.

The lights can also be used outdoors. Other battery-operated night lights can be activated by touch or motion. If you prefer not to use batteries, some units are rechargeable.

Before the next power failure, it would be a good idea to prepare. ■



NOTE: When reading this article on the computer screen, you can jump to the page listed above by placing your cursor on the link, pressing Ctrl and clicking the mouse.

Photo by Jane Guttman



Village Member Wins Three Gold Medals in NV Senior Olympics

Beth Auerbach

WITH THE GOALS of fostering fun, fitness, fellowship, and competitive fire, the Northern Virginia Senior Olympics is a proven winner. Initiated in 1982 and sustained by a large cadre of dedicated volunteers, the NVSO's offerings have expanded to more than 50 events, ranging from track and field, swimming, and diving to the now-popular pickle ball and bocce ball, as well traditional favorites like bowling and horseshoes. Mental agility competitions can include Scrabble, Sudoku, bridge, dominoes (although some events with players in close proximity temporarily were off the program in 2021). While the volunteers span the age spectrum, participation in competitive events is for Northern Virginia residents aged 50 and above, with some enthusiasts competing well into their 90s. Taking home a medal feels special, but so does the experience of mingling with contemporaries who share the excitement of racing to cross the finish line or

being quickest to solve a Sudoku grid.

I was over 65 when I first heard about the NVSO but had been a committed swimmer for decades. As a native Southern Californian, swimming and the attraction of the water came with the territory. As an average athlete, the only awards I won were for archery at summer camps – no speed required. I started lap-swimming in my 20s, after hurting my back spiking a volleyball. I was working at EPA in its original southwest DC location, and many of us swam in a modest pool in an apartment building across the street. That, followed by a sandwich from Blimpie's, was as good as lunchtime could get. Swimmers were identifiable by the bathing suits drying on their office air vents. Over the years after that, wherever I was, I found a pool and a routine.

Not long after I turned 50, I realized my dream, and we put a long, skinny, lap pool into our Barcroft Woods backyard. So I cross-train in an unusual way – outdoor swimming from May into October, indoors on my stair machine the rest of the time, and weight training mixed in with both. I swim 100 laps a day (about 1.25 miles) when my pool is open. I've not been part of a Masters Program or any other organized group of swimmers. My companion in the pool for the past 30 years is music, through an evolving set of devices, from a Sony Walkman in

a protective pouch to my current waterproofed iPod Shuffle. Music counteracts the boredom that can beset lap swimming; with the right playlist, I can swim forever.

Freestyle is what I swim, but the NVSO has races also in backstroke and breaststroke. Participants, grouped by sex and age cohort, can compete in the 50 meter and the 100 meter for each of these three strokes, plus a 900 meter/half mile freestyle event. The long swim, the event that comes closest to swimming laps in my own pool, is my favorite, but I've competed in the NVSO in the sprints as well, even though they aren't my strong suit. I've been lucky enough to leave three NVSO competitions with at least one gold medal, but this past September, I won three golds, one in each freestyle events. My reward? My husband treated me to lunch for my favorite meal – fish tacos – and then I took a long nap with my dog. A perfect day. ■



Photo by Jane Guttman



Interview: Cindy Waters

Anne Murphy O'Neil

CINDY WATERS, Executive Director of our Lake Barcroft Village, is here for a conversation on a clear October morning in the O'Neil great room.

I first met you in 2004 when you were co-president of the Lake Barcroft Woman's Club with Burma Klein. Now I hear about the work you do for the LB Village. I wonder how you first developed an interest in citizen groups.

Cindy: It actually happened the other way around—an organization involved in serving the citizens of our country became interested in me. In the mid-1970s, I had graduated from Cornell University with a concentration on early childhood education and family relations. At the time, my particular interest was in social psychology, and I was working in the university law school. I had no previous notions of serving in the government, but a colleague of mine suggested that I apply for a job with Howard Robison, the senior representative to the United States Congress from the State of New York. I was amazed when they offered me a job.

I worked in a variety of related positions for the next thirty years. Looking back over all those years, is there one job you found most engaging?

Cindy: Working for Senator Bill Cohen—one of the smartest men I've ever met. He approached the

work with great integrity, bucking his party during the Watergate, and Iran-Contra episodes. I was one of the three most senior people on his staff. Later he became Secretary of Defense under President Clinton. I also served in Nelson Rockefeller's President of the Senate office while he was Vice-President.

How did you first become interested in the Lake Barcroft Village?

Cindy: I was serving on the LBA Board when Ann Cook and D'Wayne Grey approached us with the concept in its very infancy. Stuart Feldstein took a strong interest and suggested that I become part of the task force which at the time consisted of about 20 members. When the Village opened, Moya Atkinson was hired as the first executive director. Moya did a splendid job of getting the nuts and bolts in place. I was hired as Executive Director in August of 2014.

What aspect of your work on behalf of the Village do you find most satisfying?

Cindy: Being helpful. Being a go-between, a link between us. I've been struck by how many of our members had never met before. It's a great way now for people to meet and also step up and develop activities. When we look at the LB calendar in our monthly newsletter, no week goes by without some Village get-to-

gether, and many weeks have multiple gatherings.

Mary Anne Lecos made a wonderful suggestion to Burma and me when we were co-presidents of the Woman's Club. Managing the monthly luncheon meeting had become a burden, so she suggested that we establish special interest groups to provide a variety of ways for members to get together. They continue to work very well for the Woman's Club, and now for the Village as well.

What special challenges do you see for the Village?

Cindy: The same challenge all of the Villages across the country face—signing up more members. We want our Village to be sustainable—to know it will still be here for future members of our community.

It seems that we are a Type A place—so our neighbor-to-neighbor network is made up of many high achievers.

High Achievers tend to be singularly focused on matters that engage them deeply.

Cindy: Yes. But it's also important to get out and about with friends and neighbors. It's an honor and a privilege to be part of this effort. ■

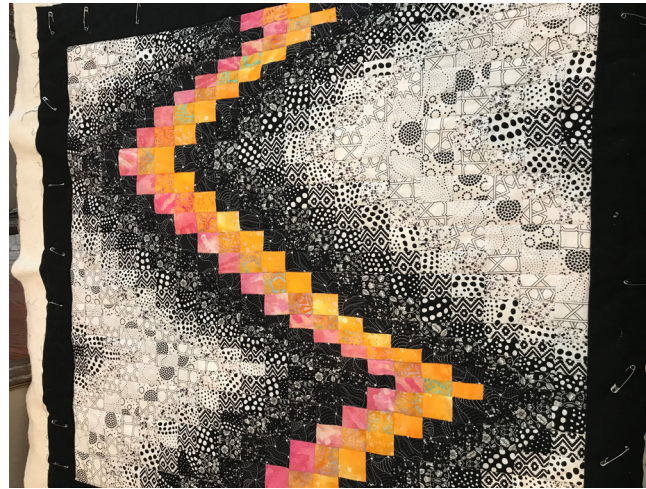


Photo by Linda Woodrow

Village Art Roundtable

What is fiber art? Is it something that hangs on the wall, something designed by an artist, or possibly something you could wear? Jan Barrett discussed the many dimensions of fiber art and showed a number of her pieces to the Art Roundtable at their recent Zoom meeting. Jan began by discussing the wide variety of pieces that may be considered fiber art: a traditional quilt, a felted scarf, a woven table runner, batik, a fabric piece that was hand stamped, lacework, and an embroidered fabric. She explained that her inspiration may come from photographs she has taken of beautiful outdoor scenes, and showed an example taken from a view of the Teton mountains. At other times inspiration may come from a historical piece, such as large old keys that belonged to Jan's grandfather.

Jan showed a few fiber techniques, such as *ice-dyeing* where white fabric is folded and bound, covered with several inches of



ice cubes, and sprinkled with dry dye. As the ice melts, the dye soaks into the fabric creating a one-of-a-kind design. If this is done with a white shirt it becomes a wearable fiber art piece, or a plain piece of fabric can be dyed and later cut up for quilt piecing. Another interesting technique is *eco-dying* where various leaves are placed on white fabric that has been treated, then the fabric is rolled up and put in steaming hot water for several hours. When finished, the fabric takes on the design of the leaves or other plant material. The possibilities are endless for creating fiber art! One might even cut out

letters from a plastic food package and applique them onto fabric.

Jan showed photos of her fiber art studio with her many bins of fabric

paint, brushes, sponges, stencils, fabric, and much more. One participant asked where one might learn to make fiber art, and Jan suggested the Alexandria Art League for classes, as well as a near-by shop called Artistic Artifacts in Alexandria. ■



Photos by Jan Barrett



All that work and expense!

Waltraut Nelson

SINCE CHILDHOOD I wanted a garden. When I went for walks with my parents I admired the beautiful plants in window boxes, in gardens, in the woods and on paintings.

When I read poetry, I came across Rainer Maria Rilke’s poem of “The Rose.” I saw the rose as a gift from heaven that enchanted everyone who loved flowers.

In Berlin on our balcony I planted a chestnut in a pot, and I watched it grow. One leaf, two leaves, a stem with more leaves; it became a little plant and was to become a big tree in the backyard of our apartment.

When I was so lucky as to plant a tree, I wondered, could I plant roses?

Many years passed, but the dream of a rose garden stayed with me.

In 1958 we bought our first house. I was so proud and happy and forget temporarily about being homesick [for Germany]. I thought “I want to plant roses.”

When I walked around the neighborhood, I saw a gardener who planted roses. I asked him “What should I do?” “First you must get some good soil; the earth here is like a rock.” Now I asked my husband Frank to get me some soil. This was not so easy. First, we had to discard the old clay soil and then fill in the replacement. That was easier said than done. Frank had to take an axe to break the soil, then load it into a wheel-

barrow and transport it down the hill. This was not done overnight. We had to get items for the house and make it comfortable and then do outside work.

After three years and two hot summers I started to plant my first roses. I caressed them and talked to them, and they responded with the most beautiful bloom. I loosened the soil, put fertilizer on, sprayed them with a chemical to get rid of destructive insects. I put the first roses into a vase, smelled the fragrance and every friend admired them.

My mother came in 1960 to visit us from Germany. I loved my mother; however, she did not share my love for my garden and each morning we had an argument when I went out to dust my roses.

This was to prevent the attack of lice and beetles. The beetles were hanging on my roses like grapes on a stem and enjoyed eating them. How can I get rid of these beetles? I picked them off one by one, but this did not help. I loved my roses, but they had a hard time surviving. I was devastated. An advertisement told me that an experienced exterminator would get rid of the insects. The treatment was expensive but I loved my roses. When the company applied some chemicals, the roses started to recover.

Then in 1962 my son Peter ran into the TV room and screamed: “Mom, the beetles are coming!” I looked up in dismay: “I have tried to get rid of these beetles and paid so much to the exterminator! “But Mom, they are a famous band who write their own music! I love them!!!!

A band? Really? ... Then they are no danger to my roses! ■

Memoir Writing Group Meeting October 23, 2021 Via ZOOM

Reflections on Doing Chores

Shirley Timashev

THE VILLAGE MEMOIR WRITING group meets every two weeks, and participants give three-minute readings on what they have written since the last meet-up, which is currently happening on Zoom. Anyone in the Village who is willing to commit to writing regularly is welcome to join. Writing prompts are suggested, but members are free to write about anything they wish. The topic of a recent session was “Reflection on Chores.” The responses, as always, were diverse. Here are a few of them.

Bob Schreiber said he thought

of “poor Sisyphus...pushing that boulder up the hill, eternally, only to have it roll down again every time he gets near the top.” He added, “That’s a task in every sense of the word. He’s being punished by Zeus for having cheated Death, by the way.”

Bob also recalled that his mother told him that one of her duties as a kid was to cut and trim the wicks of the oil lamps in the house. Bob notes, “before my grandfather died, Thomas Edison came along and wired everything.”

Cathy Williams said, “the word

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Memoir writing

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chores, on the Iowa farm where I grew up, meant daily activities that had to be done, usually involving care and feeding of animals. In my case, it was feeding chickens and gathering eggs; for my brother and dad, it meant feeding livestock or milking cows.”

“I very much wanted to learn to drive the tractor,” Cathy said, “but I wasn’t strong enough to shift the gears. Dad took me to the cornfield, put the tractor in second, and let me go down the rows of corn to disk the weeds while he went off to do other projects. Since I couldn’t shift to a lower gear, I couldn’t slow down when I got to the end of a row or the engine would die, so I took wide turns, plowing down more corn than weeds until I could get back in line with a row of corn.”

Slava Timashev recalled growing up years in the Soviet Union. “The first six years that I spent in Perm we lived in a rickety [wood] hut in which there was neither cold water nor a toilet. The Russian stove, which occupied nearly half the floor of the only room (approximately, 200 sq.ft), was fired with wood. So my chores included chopping wood and bringing water every day in buckets on a yoke resting on my shoulders from a water [pump] two blocks away from home, a quarter mile distance. This was especially boring on laundry days when there was a lot of water to bring. And it became tricky in winter when the roads were slippery when covered with ice or snow.”

“There were also responsibilities to stand in lines to get rationed food,” Slava added. “Near-

ly everything was rationed at that time, with two exceptions: salted whole salmon and red caviar. These two foods were in good supply and cheap. Red caviar was sold from big barrels and it was possible to buy one or two kilograms at a time (2–4 lbs) of this [luxury treat].”

Shirley Timashev grew up in a Midwest suburban city. The chore she detested was pulling weeds. “Family fun’ was what my father called our get-togethers on hot Sunday afternoons pulling crabgrass from our lawn,” Shirley said. “Was it fun? No. Was it family time? Yes. I was too young to have learned how to swear, but I did my best to convey my extreme displeasure at these events of forced labor. My father remained serene throughout. I did recognize that naming this activity ‘family fun’ was a little joke on his part. We simply did what had to be done.”

Bob Schreiber noted that he had subjected his own children to similar experiences. In their case the task was to go after dandelions.

Bob said he told his kids that they were to “go Lion Hunting.”

New Village member **Suad Qubain** thought about the training she gave to her two children regarding chores. She started them on doing chores when they were toddlers, when they were trained to put their toys in their toy bins after playing with them. “Slowly, they were trained to do other chores as time went on.”

Suad is reinventing her own ways of doing chores. She is trying to cut down on the use of chemicals and is making her own cleaning products. She is adopting eco-friendly practices for doing laundry and has recognized that reducing clutter reduces upkeep chores. What are your own reflections on chores? The members of the memoir writing group encourage you to write down your own thoughts and memories. If you are interested in learning more about the Village memoir writing group, contact Shirley Timashev at dcguide@cox.net. ■

El Camino de Santiago Trail

Marcia Grabowski

ON 28 OCTOBER, Lake Barcroft resident Lark Lovering presented a program for the Travel Vignettes special interest group on the Camino de Santiago, or the Way of Saint James, from where she recently returned. This is a pilgrimage route to Santiago de Compostela, a city in Galicia, Spain, in whose cathedral the body of the apostle Saint James is believed to be buried. The tradition of walking the Camino goes back to the 9th century, when Spanish King Alfonso

II completed the first-ever pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela from Oviedo; nowadays this route is known as the Camino Primitivo. The Camino de Santiago is a network of routes that start in different cities, mainly in Spain—some in Portugal and France—and finish in Santiago.

Depending on the route you choose, your walking pace, daily distances, etc., it can take between 4 days to 40+ days. The easy way to calculate how long

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El Camino de Santiago

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each Camino will take is to divide the total distance by the average distance you can comfortably walk in a day.

Any person who has walked at least the last 100 km or biked 200 km to Santiago on any of the Camino routes and has a Credential with such stamps, can get the

Compostela, a certificate confirming that a pilgrim has completed the Camino de Santiago. The Credential is a printed book or spreadsheet with pilgrim's data--name, country, birth date--and empty spaces for stamps that pilgrims get at every albergue where they stay.

Hostels for pilgrims are called albergues. They can be municipal (public) or private. The municipal albergues are run by the municipality with the help of volunteers. Private albergues belong



to a person or organization. In high season municipal albergues on the popular routes fill quickly. There are albergues for donations that can be private or public; pilgrims donate as much as they want or can.

Camino Frances (the French Way) is the most popular route, and starts in Saint Jean Pied de Port, a French town near the border with Spain. Total distance is 790 km.

Camino Portugues (the Portuguese Way) is the second most popular route. It starts in Lisbon but most people walk it from Porto. Total distance from Lisbon is 616 km, from Porto 260–280 km.

Camino del Norte (the Northern Way) is growing in popularity. The Northern Way is a great alternative to the French Camino. The total distance of this

Camino is 825 km.

Camino Primitivo (the Original Way) is one of the lesser walked Camino routes and is relatively short at 321 km, but is considered one of the toughest routes due to many steep ascents and descents. The walk starts in Oviedo, Spain.

You can start walking to Santiago basically from any more or less large Spanish city: for example, Valencia, Almería, Barcelona, and Madrid.

One can, in fact, start walking towards Santiago from anywhere in Europe and it will be considered the Camino, but outside the established routes it will be diffi-



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El Camino de Santiago

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cult to find an infrastructure for pilgrims: accommodation, route markings, etc. All established routes are well marked.

The best months for doing the Camino depend on the route you choose. The busiest time for most of the routes is July and August. The best walking months considering weather and the number of people are May, June, September and the first half of October. Winter is not the best time because it can rain quite a lot and it gets chilly; there might be snow in the mountains and some passes might be closed. However, if you want a very quiet Camino with no people, winter is a good time.

There are many pros to this type of vacation, or pilgrimage. Any relatively fit person can walk the Camino. One can walk for a week or a month, depending on the trails chosen. The location is safe, you don't walk through wild uninhabited areas, there are always people, towns, villages on the way. It's easy to plan, the route is marked, the infrastructure is there, no need to book anything in advance or to arrange special permits--you just arrive and start walking. It's not expensive; you can see many interesting places and sights without spending a lot of money.

It's not a problem to find places to eat on the Camino, and most routes, especially the more popular ones, have plenty of restaurants and bars. Menu del Día is the most popular meal on the Camino. This is a set menu that includes salad or soup, main dish (meat, chicken, fish), wine/



water/cool drink, bread, coffee, or dessert. Many restaurants, bars, and private albergues serve it for lunch, and some places offer a dinner menu.

If you want to get a different perspective on travel, the slow-travel experience of walking the Camino might be just what you're looking for. ■

All of the photos in this article were taken by Lark Lovering

Poetry Group

Ellen Raphaeli

The Village Poetry Group met for the first time in March with participants either sharing poems they particularly liked or just enjoying being exposed to poems or poets they hadn't previously encountered. Facilitator Ellen Raphaeli had announced that any kind of poem would be acceptable—anything “from CATullus to DOGgeral”; however, most people offered works by 20th century American poets. The two high points of that first session were Shirley Timeshev reading an ecologically motivated poem that her granddaughter Harley Scott had written at age 13 and Beth Auerbach reading a pre-

viously published poem of her own, “The Search for the Perfect Rye Bread,” that has appeared in several anthologies.

The group decided that beginning in May each session would have a specific focus. Channeling 16th and 17th century English poets who wrote energetically about seizing the day and “Maying,” the May gathering was devoted to poems of seduction. June's focus was very different—works reflecting the experiences of poets who had served on the battlefield in WWI or WWII.

In July and August, the Poetry Group looked at the way one art may influence another. Each of the poems read those two months

was descriptive of, inspired by, or in conversation with a painting. September was “for the birds”—poems about blackbirds, hawks, chickens, hummingbirds, and about birdwatching itself. In October, the focus was primarily on Mary Oliver, one of the poets who had been touched on the previous month.

For November's gathering, the Poetry Group has decided to return to the spirit of its first session. Once again, we are all invited to bring a poem to share—perhaps one we particularly like, perhaps one we were once forced to read and have hated ever since. Even if it isn't ordinarily our “thing,” it's good, once in a while, to put a bookmark in that 600-page history or biography and pick up a 30-line poem. ■

“The Beatle Club” performance by the Providence Players of Fairfax

Bob Berry

MANDY HOLT and new member Bob Berry recently saw the play “The Beatle Club” performed by the Providence Players of Fairfax. It was held at the James Lee Community Center Theater. For those of you who have not visited the Center, it is very close to Lake Barcroft: 2855 Annandale Road in Falls Church.

Both Mandy and Bob reported how surprised they were, not only by the acting of the Provi-

dence Players but also the excellent sound quality and acoustics in the theater.

The next scheduled performance by the Players is planned for December 10–19. Summaries and details of performances scheduled for the 2021–2022 season, including dates and times, can be seen on their website:

<https://www.providenceplayers.org/current-season/>.

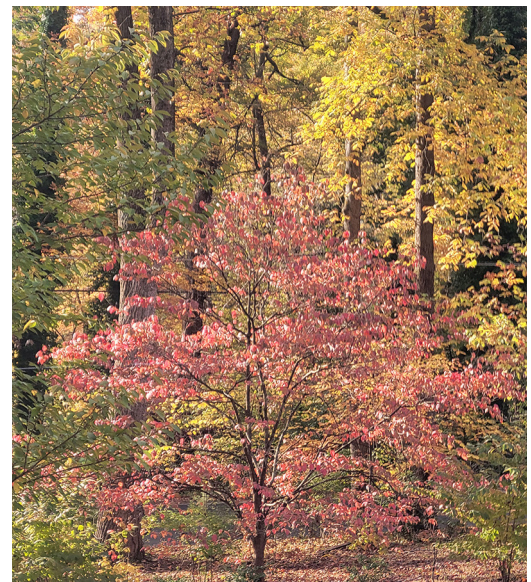


Photo by Jane Guttman

