

THE ACORN

SHERWOOD OAKS NEWSLETTER
100 Norman Drive, Cranberry Twp., PA 16066
www.sherwood-oaks.com

December 2020 “For the residents, by the residents” Vol. 21, No. X

*“Oh, Christmas Tree, Oh, Christmas Tree,
How lovely are thy branches”*



Photo by Jan Wendt

2020 Hat Tree (See Caps for Kids, p. 11)

Gentle Readers,

We are gearing up for the holidays, whatever that means this year, and people are asking, "When will we return to normal?"

Let's be grown-up and say instead, "When will we learn to enjoy the NEW normal?" After all, we are living in it now.

The December ACORN usually lists two pages of scheduled holiday celebrations such as dinner for Oak Grove residents and families, an eggnog party, the handbell and choir concert, an employee holiday party, the resident holiday party, luncheon for Skilled Nursing and Personal Care residents and families, and the residents' New Year's Eve party.

Once upon a time, we all got gussied up, ate mountains of shrimp, pounds of roast beef sandwiches, and platters of brie enrobed in elegant pastry, and drank as much wine, punch, and you name it as we wanted.

But not this year. Ruth's sequin jacket will sit in the closet, though she might don her Russian shawl as she watches the Create channel on TV some evenings in December. Rosemary's long gown from Nigeria is also unlikely to see the light this year.

Those of us who have lived here since before the pandemic have a chance to look back and thank the staff and resident volunteers who knocked themselves out arranging and hosting these delightful tributes to our community. We have a chance to recall high-lights and not-so highlights of years past.

Equally important, all of us, both new and well-seasoned residents, have an opportunity to mull over the joys of our community life, the beauty of our landscape, our sense of mutual responsibility, and the care and contentment that are here for the asking.

Maybe that process will introduce us to our "new normal." And maybe we will even learn to celebrate it.

Ruth Becker and Rosemary Coffey

THE ACORN

Editors

Ruth Becker

ruthbbfoof@gmail.com

Rosemary Coffey

rosemarycoffey@aol.com

Staff

Rabe Marsh, Photographer

Jan Wendt, Profile Coordinator

Production Editor

Tabby Alford

Ex Officio

Annette McPeck

Submissions for the January issue must be sent to the Editors no later than December 15, 2020.

REMINDER!

Please take a look at our high-school-aged selves on p. 7 and then at the identification box on p. 17. **There's still time to share your college photos for the next issue!**

Meanwhile, we apologize for two errors related to last month's photos. No. 1 was of Jean Henderson, *not* Julie Eden, while no. 7 was definitely of Kathy Boyle, *not* Sarah Jane Naylor! Oops!

DECEMBER HOLIDAYS

St. Nicholas Day	Dec. 6
Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day	Dec. 7
Hanukkah (sunset ff.)	Dec. 10
National Poinsettia Day	Dec. 12
Winter Solstice	Dec. 21
Christmas Day	Dec. 25
Kwanzaa	Dec. 26
New Year's Eve	Dec. 31

WARREN AND HEDY HOWE - #337

By Harriet Burress - #112



Photos by Mike Mills

The lure of family; the call to return to the familiarity of earlier years; the appeal of Sherwood Oaks found on the internet – all played a part, but it was primarily the loving need to be near grandchildren before they grew up that brought Warren and Hedy Howe across the United States from Oak Harbor, WA, to Cranberry Township, PA.

Warren and Hedy met in Rochester, NY, where he was a resident in family medicine, and she was a registered nurse in newborn intensive care. Now married for 50 years, they have two daughters and two grandchildren. “When we came East for a family wedding, our younger daughter toured several colleges, felt Grove City was the one for her, and met the love of her life there. After graduation, his job was in Pittsburgh, and now we are close enough to enjoy frequent visits with them,” commented Hedy. Their older daughter lives in Portland, OR.

Warren was born in Queens, NY, but spent most of his younger years on Long Island. He attended the U. of Rochester for his BA, and Washington Univ. School of Medicine (St. Louis, MO) for his MD. He interned at Philadelphia General Hospital before returning to the U. of Rochester for his residency. For the first half of Warren’s career, he had a family practice and did volunteer sports medicine. “I was one of the

volunteer sports medicine. “I was one of the early sports medicine docs before it became a ‘specialty’ and was involved in developing the specialty curriculum. My favorite sport – medically speaking – is wrestling, and I have spent much time and effort developing medical coverage standards for that sport. For the second half of my career, I did full-time sports medicine as team doc for Western Washington U.” “Being involved with 16 collegiate sports made for a busy life,” Hedy added.

Warren was in the US Navy as a medical officer from 1965 to 1971, at sea except for temporary duty at Naval Hospital Da Nang in Vietnam. His ship was docked in Subic Bay for four months, while his commanding officer was investigating an accident, until Warren requested a more complex assignment.

Hedy grew up in Duquesne “way back when. I am 100% Polish. My dad immigrated from Poland in the late 1800s as a 12-year-old, came through Ellis Island, and worked for U.S. Steel for 50 years.” She is a graduate of West Penn Hospital’s School of Nursing. Although she and Warren moved to Washington soon after they married, they returned East every couple of years to visit relatives in Pittsburgh and New York.

Since retirement Warren and Hedy have traveled world-wide – mostly on cruises with Holland America. They have remained active as volunteers in their Episcopal Church. As we visited, beautiful classical music filled their home – evidence of Hedy’s love of it. She also enjoys making Shutterfly books. Warren, who maintains contact with the medical profession, enjoys target shooting, reading, and interacting with their golden retriever, Laddie. He is their fourth pet of that breed, a beautiful animal with his full winter coat.

Sherwood Oaks is certainly fortunate to have Warren and Hedy Howe as new residents. Welcome!

WELCOME TO LARRY AND SANDY BROWN - #617

By Jean Henderson - #611



Photo by Rabe Marsh

“We live for family....” Those were Larry’s final words as we concluded our interview. So let me introduce you:

Meet Larry. He was born and raised in the South Hills of Pittsburgh, after which he attended Kenyon (economics) and Emory (MBA). Larry worked for Coca Cola for three years in Boston and Providence, then for PNC in Pittsburgh for 30 years in Commercial Real Estate Lending. He’s a Presbyterian Elder, a long-time former member at Hiland, now a member of Fox Chapel Presbyterian Church. He loves golfing (mid-low 80s) and reading. His brother is a clergyman in Bethlehem, PA.

Meet Sandy. Raised in Wilmington, NC, she attended UNC-Greensboro and Pitt (MFA). She and Larry met in Atlanta, where she was teaching school in “Gone with the Wind” country and they were living in the same apartment complex. He noticed her beauty (still there!) and her tight jeans, and that was it! They married in 1967. Sandy is a Presbyterian Deacon, serves as historian for Ross Township and Hiland Church, has a collection of 150 dolls,

and taught writing at the Carnegie Museum. She’s the family genealogist. They lived in McKnight Village for 50 years – a great location for them. She recently finished reading *Just Mercy*.

Meet the children. One is a daughter in Wexford, who is a social worker at Mercy Hospital, married to an ER physician; they have four children. The other is a son in Saratoga Springs, NY, an artist, painter, builder, and house-flipper with Larry, including several rehabs in the Mexican War Streets in the North Side of Pittsburgh; he has two children. Larry and his son were born in the same hospital (AGH) under the care of the same attending physician!

Meet the grands. There are three in high school (two at North Allegheny, one in New York), and three in college (Connecticut, Dartmouth, and the University of FL). These six blessings keep Sandy and Larry alive!

Meet Andy Too. I told my cat, Kati, to close her eyes as I wrote this! The Browns have the most beautiful cat I have ever seen in my life: orange, long hair, shelter cat, friendlier than most people I know. He’s ‘Too,’ because a beloved original Andy was there before!

And now, make sure YOU meet Larry and Sandy Brown, marvelous additions to our Sherwood Oaks Family!

MORNING: God’s way of whispering one more time

[Submitted by Harriet Burress - #112]

Make a difference.
Touch a heart.
Encourage a mind.
Inspire a soul.
Enjoy the day.

- Christian recording artist
TobyMac (Toby McKeehan)

SECURITY OFFICER JAMES GEIGER

By Denton Bond - #736



Photo by Denton Bond

James Geiger was born on the North Side of Pittsburgh, but his family moved to Cranberry Township in 1973. When he was a boy growing up in the area, there was no Sherwood Oaks – just a lake where people had great success fishing and plenty of space for baseball games on the property.

James graduated from Seneca Valley High School. At home, his father had weights and other equipment stacked outside, and the local police would stop by to work out with him. This was a big influence on James's life's work choice. Moreover, exercise has always been a big part of his life. After attending Butler Community College, he joined the Marine Reserves, graduating from the Police Academy at Indiana University of Pennsylvania.

James became an employee here 26 years ago! During the time, he has seen the range of Pennsylvania wildlife such as bear, deer, coyote, and the usual

small game. When asked to share an unusual situation that he had encountered in his years here, he recalled a serious event with a resident and her 15-year-old dog. When the dog died, Security was called, and James came to her patio home. He helped her box the pet's remains and thought she was teasing when she said she "wanted this dog to have an autopsy right away." In the end, no autopsy was performed, but you can see that our security folks "do it all"!

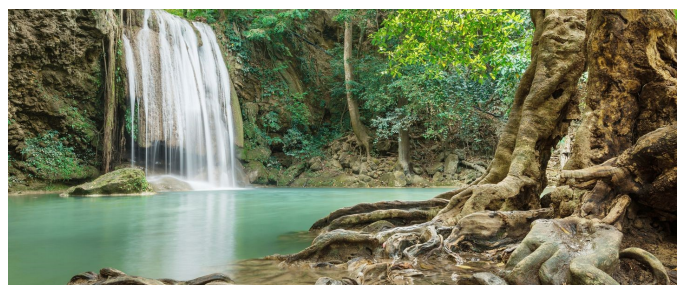
James relaxes with a beer or wine in each hand (not really), as he especially enjoys supporting both the Steelers and the Penguins. You may have a hard time finding him, as he works the 11:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m. shift. James is a very engaging guy, and we are blessed to have him here at Sherwood Oaks.



CASCADE FALLS

By Mike Rose

Falling water ...
A woodland symphony ...
Transitory whitecaps
disappearing in the pool.
The shadow of a man
floats gently on the pond.
Soon the shadow will be gone,
the sun will set,
or I will move.
The water will flow on,
and only I will care.



RECYCLING PLASTIC BAGS INTO SOMETHING USEFUL

By Joni Pun - #304

Work has started on converting plastic bags into mats for homeless people – as announced on the 900 channel and in the FYI of Nov. 13. Bags are being collected, and the quantity is daunting.!



If you have an hour or two to work, come down to the Craft Room on Tuesday afternoon (1:30 ff.) or Thursday morning (10:00 ff.). Having just discovered the process, I hereby detail it for you:

1. Bags are sorted into like colors, sizes, and types of plastic.
2. Next, they are carefully flattened out.



3. Then they are folded, with the bottoms and handles trimmed off, and cut across into strips about 3 inches wide.

4. The resulting strips (loops) are joined into long chains. Think of how you can connect gum bands (that's "rubber" bands to you foreigners to Pittsburgh) to make chains.

5. The chains of plastic yarn – or "plarn" – may be rolled into balls or kept in bags.

6. The plarn is then crocheted into mats, much as one would crochet with yarn.

Help is needed at any of these steps, especially 1 and 2 right now because of the huge number of bags being collected. Once you know the process, you can go to the Craft Room at any time to work, or even take bags home for conversion. If you can help with this project, give Ruth Inkpen (#8225) a call and we'll get you started.

In the meantime, there is a video to guide you through the process, if you're interested: The link is as follows: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v=yrWHW_tGSE. Please take a look!

See Emma Peters' mat below:





1

Can you recognize our residents as high-schoolers?

Answers on p. 17.



4



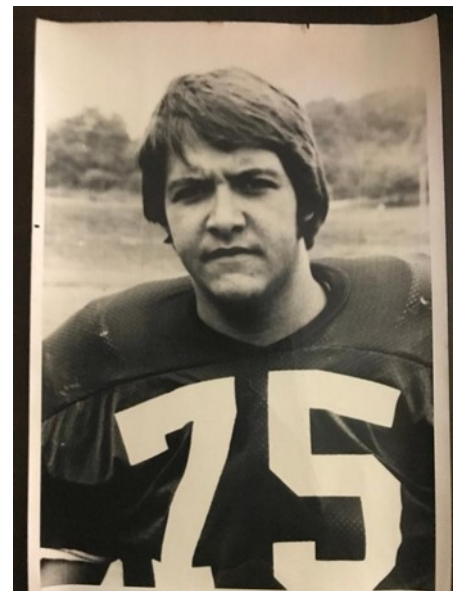
7



2



5



8



3



6



9

7

BELLS OF THE HOLIDAYS

By Rosemary Frelke - #348

The Bell Choir of Sherwood Oaks is planning to broadcast a video of holiday songs for your listening pleasure on Channel 900. The viewing date has not yet been set, but, if all goes well, it should be just before Christmas. Please watch for information about the program in the weekly bulletin, posters here and there, inserts in our cubbyholes, and announcements on Channel 900. Enjoy!



LOOKING A GIFT HORSE IN THE MOUTH

By Connie Brandenburger - #602

Have you heard the expression, "Never look a gift horse in the mouth?" Ruth Becker and I were commiserating on dental problems recently before our Yoga class began. She had just had some major dental work done, and I sympathized with her. Over the years, I have had significant problems with my teeth. While I cannot say that I still have all my teeth, I can tell you that I still have all my roots! Not a real tooth can be seen in my mouth, but there are bridges, crowns, and implants to fill in the blanks.

Of course, all of this came at a price, in terms of both pain and money, but it was well worth it. My dear husband Gary has been my faithful companion through this entire process. However, his words to me concerning this dental experience were that, if he ever marries again, he will be sure to check out the woman's teeth as

you would those of a horse. So I researched the meaning of the old expression, discovering the following: "Looking a gift horse in the mouth could be considered rude because the person is essentially examining the horse to see if it measures up to their standards." Should I be offended? Oh, well, it's too late now!

TWO MUSTANG GUYS

By Joanne Weiss - #154



Photo by Joanne Weiss

Here they are enjoying a gorgeous day in November and recalling fond memories. Emerick Zovko remembers his white Mustang of 30+ years ago, while Frank Weiss takes his 1967 Mustang GT for one last spin before tucking it away for the winter.

IN MEMORIAM

Memories are precious possessions that time can never destroy. For it is in happy remembrance that the heart finds its greatest joy.

Martha King

November 5, 2020

Regis Blahut

November 20, 2020

CALLING ALL BOOK ENTHUSIASTS!

by Mary Bouwkamp - #181
For the Book Selection Group

Have you ever wondered how new books for the SO Library are chosen? A dedicated group of residents research and rate new titles, vote for their favorites, and submit their choices for possible purchase. As the new Chairperson of the SO Book Selection Group, I would like to open up this process to all residents.

We want the library to stock the books you want to read. So, if you've heard about an upcoming book by a favorite author, or a buzz about a new title chosen by your book club, or one that covers a topic of interest – let us know. Drop me an email at marybouw@aol.com, or put a note in box #181, and we'll add your suggestions to our monthly list for consideration.

Happy reading!



CHRISTMAS DISPLAY

By Monika Dalrymple - #200

For you to enjoy the coming holidays with a little more joy in your heart, there is a large Nutcracker/Christmas display set up on the first floor of the apartment building. It has been in place since Thanksgiving and will stay there until early to mid-January. It is easily accessed in the main building by taking the elevator to the lower level and following the signs leading to the display. I hope it will give you a few fun and happy moments!

COOPER'S CLIMATE CAPSULE

By Bruce Cooper - #715

This column highlights information from U.S. government agencies that authored the 4th National Climate Assessment in 2018.

This Month's Agency – Smithsonian Institution Website: <https://www.si.edu>

From the Smithsonian Statement on Climate Change:

Rapid and long-lasting climate change is a topic of growing concern as the world looks to the future. Scientists, engineers, and planners are seeking to understand the impact of new climate patterns, working to prepare our cities against the perils of rising storms, and anticipating threats to our food, water supplies, and national security. Scientific evidence has demonstrated that the global climate is warming as a result of increasing levels of atmospheric greenhouse gases generated by human activities. A pressing need exists for information that will improve our understanding of climate trends, determine the causes of the changes that are occurring, and decrease the risks posed to humans and to nature.

The Smithsonian responds to climate change in four ways: by increasing knowledge of the human and natural environment through research; by making its findings available to the public; by protecting the Institution's core asset, its national collections; and by operating its facilities and programs in a sustainable manner.

Current "Carbon Tax" Legislation

Learn more about the Energy Innovation and Carbon Dividend bill, with 82 co-sponsors, at www.energyinnovationact.org. For constantly updated information on the climate crisis, follow @CCLSlippery Rock on Facebook.

A SERVICE OF LOVE

By Jean Henderson - #611

A Service of Love, often called the Longest Night Service or Blue Christmas Service, will be held Monday afternoon, **December 21**, in the Auditorium. This is a traditional service that is Christian-based, but that can be of help to all of us facing the holidays with heavy hearts for a variety of reasons.

The service includes music, candle-lighting, prayers, and holy readings. A small symbol of love will be given to all who attend. Leaders will be members of the Living with Loss Team.

Seating will be limited because of COVID-19, so please contact Jan Wendt at 724-776-8158 as soon as possible to register for the service, which begins at 1:30 p.m.

PLEASE NOTE: If registration exceeds capacity for the 1:30 service, a second service will be offered at 3:30 p.m. **The registration deadline is Wednesday, December 16**, and only those who register will be permitted to attend.

CAPS FOR KIDS

By Phyllis Franks, Ruth Becker - #340,
and Sally Hollister – #175

Since the mid-1990s, Sherwood Oaks residents have been a part of the local Caps for Kids campaign. Each year, all year long, a group of residents knits and crochets caps to contribute to this charity. Employees get involved as well, with donations of either handmade or purchased caps at their annual Christmas party in December. The caps are then picked up by a representative of the Caps for Kids program and distrib-

uted throughout the area and beyond. For the 2020 campaign, as of mid-November, residents had made 881 caps, with more expected before Caps for Kids makes its final pickup for the year.

The “Hat Tree” in the lobby will be decorated throughout the season to show off the residents’ handiwork and to showcase the Caps for Kids program. This year, located in the lobby of the Community Center rather than, as in previous years, in the corner by the Card Room, the tree is dressed with more than 160 caps.

On an early November Tuesday morning in the lobby, four people were busy decorating the tree. John from the Maintenance Dept stood on a ladder and did the high wire work. Jim and Sally Hollister and Janet Gorman trimmed the rest, sometimes using long-handled grippers to reach the tricky spaces. Thanks and hurray to the craftspeople and the decorators!



WHAT'S NEW WITH SORA? (SO Residents Association)

By Jean Henderson, Secretary - #611

NOTE: Complete minutes are always available for review on the SORA mailroom bulletin board, on the SO APP, and in the SORA Library binder.

Summary of reports and actions for the **Nov. 10, 2020**, board meeting:

TREASURERS: The Memorial/Special Projects Fund balance is \$61,381.75, and the Employee Appreciation Fund balance is \$143,719.54. More funds are needed ASAP for the EAF.

LIAISON REPORTS:

Bells and Chorus. Bells plan to record a holiday concert for Channel 900. Chorus will not be meeting for now.

Dining. Staff is planning for winter and holiday food distribution.

Security/Transportation. The Board approved the distribution of a document about scooter safety.

Sherwood Gifts. September sales were \$700; profit margin was 80%.

Curio Cabinets. Upcoming displays will feature holiday themes.

Drama. Documents related to changes to the auditorium set-up have been prepared.

Living with Loss. A Service of Love will be held on campus Dec. 21 [see p. 11].

ADMINISTRATION: Annette McPeck reported that the census in IL is 217 units. Four homes are under contract. SNU is 36/43. Personal Care is 36/42. Oak Grove is 26/30. SORA committee chairs should contact Tabby Alford to schedule meeting times. Cranberry Police will be notified about trespassers fishing in our lake.

OLD BUSINESS:

Stan Foster, Name Tag Task Force chair, gave information regarding the new tags, which will be available soon.

Board members suggested projects to improve Sherwood Oaks. They will be reviewed in December.

NEW BUSINESS:

A motion from the Bell Choir related to its director's pay was approved.

The next SORA Board meeting is planned for December 8, 2020, starting at 1:30 p.m. The December 15 quarterly

residents' meeting will not be held in person or virtually. Hard copy reports will be distributed. Please watch the 900 Channel, the SO APP, and FYIs for updates.

MISSING GNOMES

By Joni Pun - #304



Have you seen any of these mischievous creatures who have escaped from the Craft Group? We have been told that twenty-nine of them, 5"-9" in size, are hiding in the independent living areas of the campus. They vary somewhat, but all have scraggly grey beards; moreover, they pull their caps down around their big noses so that you won't recognize them. If you see any of them, do not remove them; instead, jot down on paper or your smartphone where you have seen them – for example, "near Unit 300." They are not allowed to hide in shrubbery or in trees; rather, they have to be in front of homes or on the walkways. They are also not allowed to hide inside the #600 units or the #700 apartments. The first person to find all of them will win a prize. Please leave the gnomes in their hiding spots for others to find as well. The contest ends December 20. Happy hunting!

[Questions? See Ann Ferguson, Jean Henderson, Joni Pun, Joan Reynolds, or Judith Shifrin]

ESPALIERS OF SHERWOOD OAKS

By Rabe Marsh - #187

Espalier is the horticultural practice of controlling woody plant growth by pruning and tying the branches of trees into decorative shapes that lie flat against a wall or other structure. Sherwood Oaks has two such espaliers. One lies against a wall along the drive-in circle next to the building that houses Skilled Nursing. The other lies against the large chimney of the Oak Lodge.

The two espaliers have no apparent religious significance but are memorials to departed loved ones. In 2012, Jean (Rusty) Sweitzer donated the seven-branch Crabapple espalier on the Oak Lodge chimney in memory of her husband, John Sweitzer.



Photo by Rabe Marsh

Current grounds supervisor Jeff McGaughey said that this was done when Andy Moran, grounds supervisor at the time, and the Grounds Department re-landscaped the entire hillside in front of the Oak Lodge.

In 2003, Louise Frame donated the Crab-

apple tree with five branches on the wall by Special Nursing in memory of her husband, Yale Frame.



Photo by Rabe Marsh

The two espaliers are in the shape of menorahs, or candleholders. Both are decorative Crabapple trees, which bear flowers and small apples (which are too acidic to be edible.) Sheryl Bittel of the Grounds Department cares for these espaliers and trims them each year.

Since these trees lend themselves to decoration, wouldn't it be a nice touch for the holidays if they were adorned with lights and Christmas ornaments? That certainly would brighten up the campus during this festive but limited season. There are espalier Christmas trees on the market, some of which sell for over \$1500, but we could do it here for much less. It might not be easy, but it would be a nice touch for the holidays. Think about it!



OUR RESIDENTS SHARE THEIR HOLIDAY MEMORIES

Distanced from our families this holiday season, we have been given the gift of time to think back on joyful get-togethers and memories of Christmases past. Acorn readers have generously shared a few of their choicest recollections of holidays gone by. Some speak of the holiness of the season, others of the special joyfulness known in youth; but all highlight the starring role played by family in how we savor the season. As you partake of their offerings, may it "springboard" you into some sweet memories of your own! Look for more holiday recollections in the January Acorn.

MEMORIES, MEMORIES

By Harriett Burress - #112

Those special, favorite ornaments on the tree.... Red stockings hung from the mantle Patricia and I usually woke up around five o'clock to see what Santa had left us under the tree – unwrapped. Oranges, nuts, and firecrackers tumbled out of our stockings, but I do not remember what else.... Christmas dinner with cousins in Williamston, SC, was fun, noisy, and delicious, with the children always eating in the kitchen. Aunt Louise's yeast rolls baking and coffee perking made the home smell so good!

HOLIDAY DECORATIONS

By Rae Nancy Zuberbuhler - #604

The first years we were married, Dick and I decorated our Christmas trees with homemade gingerbread men and hand-strung popcorn and cranberries. One year, we packed the gingerbread men in large coffee cans to see if they would hold over until the next Christmas. They did! So we used them over again.

As I was sitting on the couch one day near the newly decorated tree, I saw some movement out of the corner of my eye. One of the men was moving! Then another!

I quickly discovered that little worms were wriggling around inside the cookies, causing animation of a sort. Clearly, it was time to bake new cookies.

FOND CHRISTMAS MEMORIES

By Jan Kimball - #226

My fondest Christmas memories were train trips into New York City the day after Christmas with my adventuresome aunt. Our favorite spots were the Baroque Nativity all the herald angels dotting the display at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the massive tree at Rockefeller Center, and all the herald angels dotting the plaza, along with walking around St. Patrick's Cathedral and absorbing the energy of the holiday through the crowds. We started going on those train trips when I was about ten years old. At that time, the shops on Fifth Avenue had mechanical figures and displays in their windows. We always visited those first, before the crowds got too big. Sometimes we took a taxi back to Grand Central Station, and I was so in awe about how my aunt would get into conversation with the cab driver. Since we did those trips for over 25 years, I got very comfortable traveling around the city, seeing all the great sites and museums there.

SHARING THE HOLIDAYS

By Ruth Becker - #340

When I was a kid, on most holidays there were neighbors at the table along with family. During World War II, some new neighbors joined us when they could not

travel back to the Midwest to celebrate with family.

Mom always cut the pie at the dinner table. She asked Frank, one of the guests: "Mince or pumpkin?" He answered, "I'll have a touch of both."

For over seventy years I have envisioned "a touch of both," whenever I think about pie.

REMEMBERING THE ATTIC DOOR

By Joanne Weiss - #154

My mother, Rose Auburger Kretz (1907-1998), wrote poetry during World War II. It became a family holiday tradition on Christmas Eve at our former home in Ross Township for one of the grandchildren to read one of her poems. The one most often chosen was this:

The Attic Door

Mom's locked the attic door again,
She did that last year, too;
I wonder why, when Santa Claus
Comes down the chimney flue.

The kitchen smells like fruitcake,
And there's cookies by the score,
But what gets me is why Mom went
And locked that attic door.

The funniest package came today;
The truck man brought it in,
He looked at Mom, then looked at me,
And OH Boy, did he grin.

And then before I turned around,
Like that! It disappeared,
It was the quickest getaway
Mom ever engineered.

Just then I heard her footsteps sound
Across the bedroom floor.
I raced upstairs; my hopes ran high,
But Shucks! She locked the door.

I wonder if it's possible
To wait till Christmas Eve?
'Cause three weeks is a long, long time
To hope and plan and b'lieve.

Oh, Christmas is a lovely time,
With games and fun galore,
But I'm still awful curious
About that attic door.

The whole year through, from New
Year's till
Thanksgiving Day rolls 'round,
That attic door's as open as
The Great Outdoors, I've found.

But when December comes again,
It's just the same old string,
A guy can't go up there to play
Or LOOK for anything.

Someday, when I grow up to be
A man, if not before,
I bet I'll find some link between
Saint Nick and the attic door.

December 3, 1941

CHRISTMAS MEMORIES

By Barbara Rankin - #123

At Christmas in 1957, a teaching colleague came to my home. When we went back to school in January, she told the other teachers how much my family decorated for the holidays. When I passed this on to my mother, she said, "Next year, let's have a party." So, in 1958, "The Party" began. Participants were the five women teachers at the school, the woman principal, my mother, and me. Over the years, some people left, and others were invited to join. It began on a Friday night before school was out for the holidays, moved around several times, and ended up being the Saturday after New Year's. When I moved to Sherwood Oaks in 2013, "The Party" continued in my patio home. Finally, at "The Party" # 61, I said I could no longer do it, so that was the end. One other original member was still attending at that time. Many of the ornaments on my tree are favors I made for "The Party," so I still have wonderful reminders of those times.

HOLIDAY MEMORIES

By Janie Naylor - #139

Ninety years of memories ... where do I begin? In York, PA, where I celebrated one Christmas with whooping cough, there were no masks or social distancing when visiting Santa Claus, and I got my most coveted gift – my first wristwatch. Gold foil-covered chocolate money was in my stocking, and my mother disposed of the tree in the living room fireplace – whoosh! Don't try it!

Then in Pittsburgh, PA, there was shopping at Horne's Dept. Store, with the animated windows and the Christmas Tree lights all up and down the corner of the building. Salvation Army Red Kettles and bells seemed to be on every street, while the International Santa Claus, St. Nick, or Father Christmas was at PPG Place. There was a family outing to the Christmas tree farm to select a tree and then decorate it. Other markers of the season were finding just the right gifts for our three children and each family member; writing Christmas cards to one and all; baking cookies, fruit cakes, and steamed Christmas pudding; Dad tasting the sage dressing before stuffing it into the turkey or goose; candlelight Christmas Eve services and pageants.

Most memorable included a Thanksgiving snowstorm of 3.5 feet, which led to my isolation as a probationary nursing student at AGH, where I was put on eight-hour duty until the roads were cleared and the trolley cars were moving again in order for the staff nurses to return. The following Christmas, I was on night duty on Pediatrics and was Santa Claus's elf, which meant that I removed my white cap and apron and then, in my blue uniform, with black shoes and stockings, quietly delivered a stocking of treats to the bedside of each child in the hospital.

Below is a photo indicating what happened when our growing family meant that we ran out of space in the house for a Christmas

tree, so we put it on the front porch to be admired inside and out.



The family gathering that Christmas (1990) included three children and spouses and six grandchildren, plus Grandma "GG" Mary, who lived with us for 25 years.

After all the gifts and the feast of the day, as our guests were leaving, the only one to say "Happy Birthday, Bye Bye" to the Baby Jesus in the manger was the youngest granddaughter, little Rachael.

God bless us, everyone.

CHRISTMAS MEMORIES

By Joe Schewe - #105

I recall the joy of having a home with a large fireplace so that Santa could come down the chimney on Christmas Eve with presents for all the family. Our two children put out a snack for Santa; we told them he would most like a ham sandwich and a bottle of Iron City beer. On Christmas morning, there were the empty plate and empty beer bottle to prove his appreciation!



MY LIFE WITH SANTA CLAUS

By Rosemary Coffey - #113

"It is hard to believe that a man is telling the truth when you know that you would lie if you were in his place." – H. L. Mencken

I find this a very challenging statement. It takes me back to the time when I was seven years old, in the fall of third grade, when my neighbor and classmate Rollie told me that Santa Claus was a fake. I responded, "But my mother puts my letters to Santa Claus in the mailbox every year!"

Rollie retorted, "Yes, and then she takes them out, before the mailman comes by."

"Well, I know my mother wouldn't lie to me," I said. "Ask her!" she said.

When I got home that afternoon, I told my mother about the conversation. She replied, "Your friend is right. But don't tell your little brothers!" I was shocked. I felt betrayed.

In mid-December, when my two younger brothers gathered around me to have me write their letters to Santa Claus, I did start out intending to obey my mother. But after a few minutes, I put down my pencil and said something like, "I'm sorry to disappoint you, boys, but there is no Santa Claus, and this is a waste of time." I do not recall what happened after that, except that I did not write any letters from any of us ever again.

When I grew up, I decided that I would never deliberately lie to my children. I told them that Santa Claus was a symbol of the spirit of giving, the spirit of Christmas, but that he did not ride a sleigh pulled by reindeer, filled with presents, around the world on Christmas Eve. The power of the cultural environment was such that they initially did not believe I was telling the truth. Once, an elderly lady spoke to my little girl when we were downtown in December, asking if she was excited about Santa Claus coming; she responded by

saying *not* that he did not exist, but that "Santa Claus doesn't come to our house."

A couple of years later, when a nearly four-year-old little girl from Chicago joined the family just before Christmas, we all listened to my older daughter, then in Kindergarten, talk about her class's visit to Santa Claus at a downtown department store. "Now this was the *real* Santa Claus," she said. "How do you know?" I asked carefully. She replied, "Because he promised to bring me whatever I asked for." So I went over the story again, emphasizing that Santa Claus was not a real person but an embodiment of the spirit of giving, and ending with the statement: "So on Christmas Eve, the man whom you saw dressed up as Santa Claus will *not* be riding around the skies in his sleigh pulled by reindeer; instead, he will be home with his family, just like *your* father will." Our new daughter protested: "Don't say that! He'll hear you, and he won't come!" I decided to let it go for that year and try again in the future.

My son, the only one of my children who has children, and his wife have chosen to let their children believe. A number of years ago, I was spending Christmas week alone at their house to care for the elderly dog (who was "too old to go to a shelter"). They were about to head out for a family skiing vacation beginning on Christmas Eve day, when the oldest child told me not to forget to leave milk and cookies out for Santa Claus. I promised I would do it, and indeed did so. I drank the milk and ate the cookies before I went to bed. When the family came home, my granddaughter quizzed me: "Did you leave out milk and cookies for Santa Claus? Were they gone in the morning when you woke up?" I answered "Yes" to both questions.

I still do not lie. So, the above quotation speaks to me, but probably not in the way Mencken intended!

SHIRLEY; or AN ODE TO THE FRONT BENCH SEAT

By Dennis Lynch - #335

My good friend Bernie and I were exchanging emails about missing enjoying a quiet beer together, and we got to talking about a young woman who often acted as Hostess at the Church Brew Works, trying to remember her name. She was a very attractive woman we both watched eagerly, but she was the girlfriend of one of the managers, so we didn't flirt. We decided her name was Shirley, and I thought that was that – but that reminded Bern of a girl at his high school named Shirley, and for some reason that reminded him of the back seat of his old '57 Chevy.

This got me to thinking about cars and girls. I remember my first really serious romance – not high school, but not far out. This was back in 1957 or thereabouts. She attended a college about a 45-minute drive from where I was still living with my mother. I picked her up and we were heading back West to L.A. or somewhere to do something. It was maybe our third date. My car was a '47 dark green Plymouth Business Coupe: no back seat (but room for your sample cases), and a trunk big enough for four golf bags (they were smaller then) or two Democratic ward heelers and an Attorney General. But it had a bench front seat. (There were forward gears, a starter button, and a high-beam light pedal switch on the floor. Signaling? Something wrong with your arm?)

My date, Sara, was 'way over on her side of that bench seat, sort of up against the door. But her hand was out at the edge of her dress, toward the middle of the seat. I was shy then than I am now, so I glanced at that hand and thought hard.

Should I try to hold it? Hillary (Edmund) and Norgay had recently ascended Everest, and I remembered a Hillary quote: "Nothing ventured, nothing gained."

So I reached for her hand, and she took mine, and she slid across that wonderful bench seat toward me!

After more than 60 years, I remember that moment vividly and with great pleasure. Ha! Try that with four-on-the-floor and bucket seats!

So, after a few minutes of paddy-fingers, the obvious next line was, "Can you shift?" "Uh-huh!" So I rested my right arm around her shoulder, while her left hand moved to the gearshift on the steering column. We clutched-and-shifted merrily for the next several months.

Now I come to the point. That was a test: were we able to work together well? That we were was a good omen for the budding relationship. I think we were even able to reverse! If the shifting and the clutching became awkward or impossible, that would have said something about our chances for a happy future.

The ability to have this trial experience, calmly (well, not the first time!) and casually, is not available to kids today, in general.

So the question is: how do they test a potential relationship today? Maybe they aren't thinking of a relationship. Maybe they just get a room!

KEY TO RESIDENT HS PHOTOS

- | | |
|--------------------|-----------------|
| 1. Jane Rittelmann | 6. Julie Eden |
| 2. Al Brahm | 7. Ann Ferguson |
| 3. Frank Weiss | 8. Mark Bondi |
| 4. Janie Naylor | 9. Diane Neely |
| 5. Bill Paul | |

“Yes, Virginia, there is a Santa Claus” –
from *The New York Sun*, Sept. 21, 1897:

Virginia, your little friends are wrong. They have been affected by the skepticism of a skeptical age. They do not believe except they see. They think that nothing can be which is not comprehensible by their little minds. All minds, Virginia, whether they be men’s or children’s, are little. In this great universe of ours man is a mere insect, an ant, in his intellect, as compared with the boundless world about him, as measured by the intelligence capable of grasping the whole truth and knowledge.

Yes, Virginia, there is a Santa Claus. He exists as certainly as love and generosity and devotion exist, and you know that they abound and give to your life its highest beauty and joy. Alas! How dreary would be the world if there were no Santa Claus! It would be as dreary as if there were no Virginias. There would be no childlike faith then, no poetry, no romance to make tolerable this existence. We should have no enjoyment, except in sense and sight. The eternal light with which childhood fills the world would be extinguished.

Not believe in Santa Claus! You might as well not believe in fairies! You might get your papa to hire men to watch in all the chimneys on Christmas Eve to catch Santa Claus, but even if they did not see Santa Claus coming down, what would that prove? Nobody sees Santa Claus, but that is no sign that there is no Santa Claus. The most real things in the world are those that neither children nor men can see. Did you ever see fairies dancing on the lawn? Of course not, but that’s no proof that they are not there. Nobody can conceive or imagine all the wonders there are unseen and unseeable in the world.

You tear apart the baby’s rattle and see what makes the noise inside, but there is a veil covering the unseen world which not the strongest man, nor even the united

strength of all the strongest men that ever lived, could tear apart. Only faith, fancy, poetry, love, romance can push aside that curtain and view and picture the supernal beauty and glory beyond. Is it all real? Ah, Virginia, in all this world there is nothing else real and abiding.

No Santa Claus! Thank God he lives and he lives forever. A thousand years from now, Virginia, nay 10 times 10 thousand years from now, he will continue to make glad the heart of childhood.



THE STORY OF THE RAKE ...

By Agnes Peebles - #324

... that is, the **garden** rake!

Sometime this summer, my antique garden rake went missing – whether it was abducted, deliberately went AWOL, or wandered away and couldn’t find its way home, I honestly don’t know. I sent out impassioned pleas for it to return, but they seemed to fall on deaf ears. I kept checking the tool shed at the farm garden – nothing. Then, one day, like Mary’s little lamb or the prodigal son, there it was – just where it should be, in the shed. Where it had been, what adventures it had had, are mysteries. In any case, like the above lost beings, it is a bit bedraggled and rusty, so its foray into the wider world could not have been particularly happy. Moreover, it will need some strenuous effort to restore it to its former state. Thank you to all who were concerned! The rake, and a hoe that stayed home, were the ones my mother used in her garden, so I cherish them in her memory.

THE RIDDLE OF THE PAINTED ROCKS

By Barbara Scruggs - #317

One day last summer, as I was walking down to the Center, I spied among the stones covering the ground under one of the windbreakers a small stone painted with the word “Smile” in pink glitter. I stopped in my tracks and picked it up. It made me smile. It also made me realize that in this year of Covid-19 we need all the smiles we can muster. It had letters and numbers on the back, but they meant nothing. I wanted that stone, but I sensed it was not made just for me. I replaced it where I had found it, knowing it would make someone else smile as well.

Eventually, I found out that Jason Lyle was the mystery artist. He and his wife, Kate Donovan, have been Sherwood residents for about three years. Prior to retirement, Jason was a broadcast audio engineer, and his many talents have been much appreciated here on the campus. He has contributed to the lighting on the stage in the auditorium and also to our new Community App, accessible in our homes as well as in the Center.

Jason and Kate were at their home in the Dominican Republic last winter, when Covid-related transportation problems delayed their return to the United States. During this period, they heard about a local resident who painted rocks and deposited them along local walkways.

When they finally returned here in July, Jason, who has had no formal art education, took up rock painting solely “to bring smiles to our community.” His designs are whimsical – “something to catch the eye,” “definitely not political.” They include single words, catchy phrases, designs, cartoon characters, and the like. With the approval of the S.O. administration, he has been depositing approximately five rocks a day along

the walkways, among the stones at the base of the windbreakers.



Photo by Kate Donovan

Jason uses acrylic paints available at Walmart, Michael’s, or any store that sells art supplies. Some of them have glitter. Instead of paintbrushes, Jason uses toothpicks and stone painting tools. As it happens, it is possible to buy stone painting kits at art stores. Jason’s initials, the date, and the number of that particular rock are painted on the back of each one. Currently, he’s working on No. 312!

Jason encourages the rest of us to try our hands at rock painting. He says it’s not hard, and it is relaxing! 2020 has been a difficult year – we should paint whatever makes us happy, not to mention the delight of everybody else who appreciates the results.

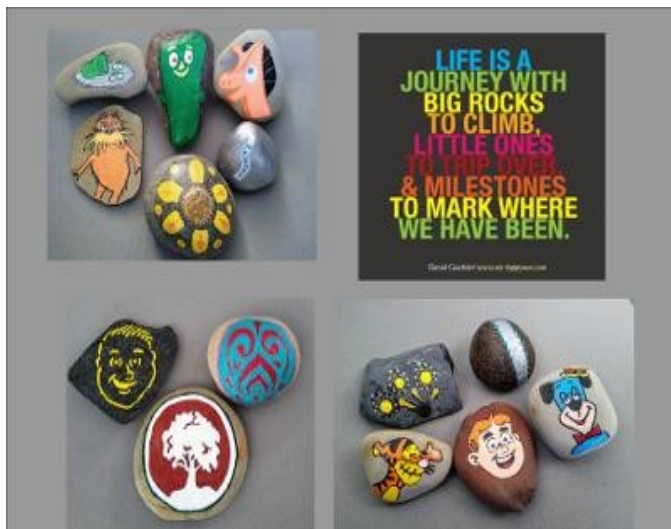


Photo by Kate Donovan

“Lo, how a rose e’er blooming...”



Photo by Jan Wendt