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President's Message

Walt Cooper

GREETINGS from your Village President! Since we've had to cancel two recent quarterly meetings, we haven't had the chance to update you on Village matters. So here's a rundown to bring you up to speed. I'll follow the format we usually use in the "Business Meeting" portion of our quarterly meetings.

Membership. Membership is holding steady at about 80 members, two-thirds of whom are full and one-third social members. We are always looking for new members, so please put the word out. We invite prospective members to our Coffee and Conversation gatherings as well as our monthly Happy Hour to give them the opportunity to meet members and to learn more about the Village.

Events. Every month we conduct at least a dozen events—Silver Fox luncheons, book discussions, walking groups at Green Spring Gardens, memoir writing, and the Mandelbergs' wonderful happy hours, to name a few—to bring members together and keep in touch. Cindy has been kind enough to put together the monthly schedules for us, but we need a volunteer to come forward to chair our Programs Committee. It only takes a few hours each month, mainly during the first week or so. Please consider stepping forward to take this on.



Family photo

Finances. We've wrapped up 2023, which featured a nice celebration of the Village's 10-year anniversary in June. Because of this one-time event, we had anticipated drawing down our assets by about \$10,000. Thanks to significant end-of-year contributions from individuals, we came very close to that figure. We're now working on the 2024 budget. As I mentioned at our September 2023 meeting, we need donations and sponsorships from individuals and organizations alike to continue to provide services to our members. Our fundraising committee has mailed letters to more than 60 local businesses to inform them of Village programs and to invite them to support us. (We are a non-profit

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President's Message

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501c(3) organization.) Speaking of fundraising, an interested neighbor approached me after the September meeting and suggested that the Village consider establishing a legacy program in which members could designate the Village in their trusts and wills. We will follow up on this suggestion.

Coming Soon. Looking forward, we have some important events coming up.

- Our next quarterly meeting is scheduled for March 28 at the Mason District Governmental Center located on Columbia Pike. You'll receive reminders from Cindy as we get closer to that date. We will host an important presentation on fall prevention; please plan to attend! As Cindy has recently pointed out, according to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, one out of four older adults in the United States will fall each year. The CDC estimates that about 36 million falls are reported among older

adults each year—resulting in more than 32,000 deaths. Some of our own Village members have fallen over the past several months. A training coordinator from the Northern Virginia Falls Prevention Alliance at Marymount University will make this presentation. Also, we will conduct elections of new Directors. Cindy will be distributing ballots as soon as the Nominating Committee has completed its work.

- Each year, under Cindy's management, the Village provides hundreds of service calls to members. Services run the gamut: home maintenance and repair, help with computers and technology, and, most frequently, transportation to medical appointments. The Village could not possibly pro-

vide these services without the participation of our volunteers. We have about 60 of them, and we'll host an event in the spring to express our appreciation for the work that they do. We can always use more volunteers, so if you or someone you know would like to volunteer, please let Cindy know. Volunteers do not have to be Village members.

- We're planning to reprise the very successful wine tasting event we conducted last year. We're looking to do that in June. Look for more information on this in the coming months.

It's a real honor for me to serve as your president. I look forward to working with all of you to make our Village as successful as it can be!

WALT COOPER, *President*

A Walk Down Memory Lane for the Lake Barcroft Village Memoir Group

Jan Barrett



Photo by Jan Barrett

THE Villager

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Why would anyone write a memoir essay? Maybe they would like to pass their memories on to a future generation. Perhaps it's an opportunity to explore old recollections and

possibly to connect with family or friends who shared those times. Or maybe they just want to do some creative writing,

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Every other Saturday a group of Lake Barcroft Villagers meets to read essays written as part of the Village's Memoir Writing Group. The group is celebrating its five-year anniversary this year and seven of the original members are still participating. Over the years, the group's composition has changed a bit, with a few people coming or going, but there is consistently a group of about ten participants. Shirley Timashev, a Villager, started the group with the idea that it would benefit greatly from having participants with diverse backgrounds. In an era of deep divisions, being able to say, "I see where you are coming from" is hugely important.

For each meeting the participants tackle the assigned topic from their own personal perspective, with a limit of 500 words. Some of the topics they have addressed are: "A memorable person," "Family holiday celebrations," and "A most challenging time." Group members interpret the theme as they wish, or they might choose to write on an original topic. At the meetings, members share their stories in a supportive environment.

Originally the group met in person at participant's homes and then went to a Zoom format during Covid. Now the bi-weekly meetings are a hybrid with some members in person and others connecting via their computers.

To date several members of the group have published their work much to the appreciation of family and friends. Children and grandchildren of the memoir group have been especially interested in the essays—expressing delight and even tears after reading their relative's essays.

Memoir group members agree that their participation in the group has brought them joy as they recollect their life experiences and creatively share those memories. Members who thought "no one cares about what I've

been through" found that storytelling is interesting and satisfying. Families and friends care a great deal about stories that could have been lost to history. And good storytelling has broad appeal,

as several members of the group have found after publishing.

The group is open to all members of the Lake Barcroft Village. Contact Jan Barrett at: jan5008@hotmail.com for more information. ■



Book Review: *The Covenant of Water* by Abraham Verghese

Karen Ackerman

ABRAHAM VERGHESE'S NEW NOVEL (2023) tells a complex tale of three generations of a family in Kerala, on South India's Malabar Coast. The family suffers a peculiar affliction: in every generation, at least one person dies by drowning. At the turn of the century, a twelve-year-old girl from Kerala's longstanding Christian community is sent by boat to her wedding, where she will meet her forty-year-old husband for the first time. The young girl—and future matriarch, known as Big Ammachi—will witness unthinkable changes over the span of her extraordinary life.

Verghese places this family, their friends, relatives, neighbors, and servants in India over 77 years of the twentieth century, pivotal years in India and worldwide. India's caste system and independence from Great Britain shape the characters as some strive to maintain their lifestyles and friendships in Kerala and as others try to adapt to lifestyles in large Indian cities.

The author, a professor and the Vice Chair of the Department of Medicine at Stanford University School of Medicine, weaves the evolving study of medicine into the narrative of the family's medical issues. Two doctors, one from Scotland and a second from Sweden, find their way to work in rural southern India where they become entwined with Big Ammachi's family and their family medical mystery. As more women enter the field of medicine in India, a young woman descendant of the family and training doctor studies the evolving medical research to find an answer to her family's affliction.

This story of Big Ammachi's family and the people in their lives is engrossing. The author's descriptions of India, and in particular rural South India, over more than seventy years opened a window for me into a new world. The story twists and turns over time and a changing cast of characters. I did not want the story to end. ■



VILLAGERS TRAVEL

MY CHRISTMAS VACATION

A Family Adventure to South Africa

Linda Woodrow

DECEMBER 16TH WAS THE BIG DAY—I flew with my family (son, daughter-in-law, and two granddaughters, ages 10 and 12) to Cape Town, South Africa. We soon met our two National Geographic guides and headed South to the Cape of Good Hope - literally the end of the continent. The coastline was breathtaking as we drove the scenic route stopping to see the lighthouse and then to visit the African Penguin colony at Boulders Beach. Hundreds of penguins were enjoying the surf or just lazing around. They were fun to watch as they waddled about.

Visiting Table Mountain at 3,585 feet was high on our list (pun intended). The girls and I went up on the cable car to the summit while their parents climbed the mountain on foot. Quite a feat! This cable car holds 45 people and takes 5 minutes to reach the top. It is unusual in that it rotates while you are riding so you get a 360 degree view of Cape Town. Neat but a little scary!

The following day we boarded a plane to fly to Kruger National Park for our safari adventure. Sanbonani Resort was our base to drive into Kruger to look for animals. We were off at 5 a.m. in our safari vehicle for our first game run. Cameras ready, our guide soon spotted elephants, giraffes, zebras, lions, impalas, wildebeest



and many more animals. Even a Hingeback Tortoise ambled across our path. Our picnic stop was a welcome break, but while we were entertained by a cute Vervet Monkey, his sneaky cohort stole my son's hard boiled egg and apple. Watch your back around monkeys!

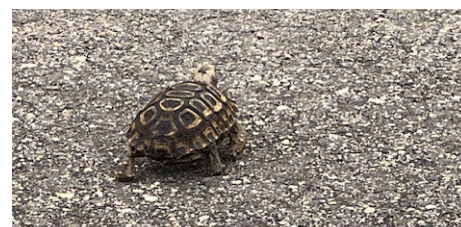
Our guide said "Every day is a challenge" so off we went the next day again at 5 a.m. to tour a different area of Kruger. Success: we found a white rhinoceros guarding "his" water hole. We watched as he claimed the pond and chased off three buffalo. A leopard was discovered hiding in the grass with his kill, an impala, hanging in a tree. We patiently watched but he waited for a quieter time to climb the tree and reclaim his meal. By the second day, we had spotted all the big five of Elephant, Lion, Cape Buffalo, Leopard, and Rhinoceros.

Our next destination was Chimp Eden or Jane Goodall's



L to R: Linda, Charlotte, Ken, Morgan and Jean Woodrow

Chimpanzee Sanctuary. Thirty-three chimps that had been orphaned or mistreated are cared for there. We enjoyed viewing the chimps and learning about life at Chimp Eden.



Christmas had arrived and we found ourselves at the Zebra Country Lodge in the middle of a 700-acre private game preserve. A delicious Christmas luncheon was prepared complete with Christmas crackers (pop toys with paper hats); it ended with dancing and singing by a native group. South Africans do decorate with Christmas trees, lights, Santas and even gingerbread houses.

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South Africa

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More adventures lay ahead as we boarded a plane in Johannesburg for Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe. We stayed at an interesting resort with thatched roofs and mosquito netting around the beds. The Victoria Falls were magnificent. Recent rains increased the volume of water and the sound was deafening. A fine mist from the falls covered you as you went to the different viewpoints reminding you that this is called the “smoke that thunders.”



L to R: Ken,, Charlotte, Morgan and Jean Woodrow

We had decided to spend our final day in Botswana. So after going through customs and immigration in two countries, we climbed into our safari vehicle for a final game run. We were rewarded with elephants with their young and antelopes of many

kinds. After a lunch overlooking the Chobe River we boarded a boat to discover many hippos, buffalo, birds and an 80-year old crocodile on the bank. Our great adventure was coming to a close as we reversed our journey across the two countries and back to Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe.



An African Braai, or barbecue, was prepared for us on the last evening. Interesting African dishes cooked in black pots with succulent meat turning on spits gave us a delicious feast. The evening ended with singing, dancing and drumming. Each person had their own drum to join in the festivities.

Regretfully we started our flights home the next day. This had been a fantastic family adventure to remember forever. ■



All photos by Linda Woodrow



✓ Check Your Mail

A ballot for the upcoming Village election will be arriving soon.

The Villagers and Their Hobbies

A College Lark Gone Viral

Early in my college career I started displaying samples of the beer bottles I spent my time happily emptying. This quickly got out of hand as college dorm rooms were small with limited shelf space and my taste for beer wasn't.

My major was graphic arts and I liked the designs of the beer labels. I decided the only way I could indulge in saving beer bottles and their labels was to remove the labels from the bottles and mount them in a loose-leaf binder. In those days, beer labels were applied to the bottles with a thin strip of glue down each side of the label. It was a simple exercise to slice the labels free by using a single-edged razor blade. I had plenty of razor blades since I used them for cutting mats in art classes. I began carrying a razor blade in my wallet so that I could remove a different label wherever I found one. This eventually created a problem when going through scanners at airports and some buildings. I have had many razor blades confiscated. I am an inveterate collector and finding different labels soon became an obsession. I started haunting the



All photos by Don Christian

beer aisles in stores searching for different labels. One binder became many and trips to distant states and Europe added many exotic labels.

Fast forward to a few years after getting married and my wife, son and I now had a ski cabin. We hosted friends for weekends of skiing. Some of these friends worked at embassies and brought beers not available by the usual channels in the states. Many of these beers came in cans and of course, the cans went up on a shelf. Here was a new facet of beer label collecting. The labels on cans could not be removed and mounted in binders. I had to find shelf space for cans. Kent, my son, and I would find empty cans tossed by the wayside when out walking. He gathered them and brought them home. Now things were getting a bit out of control. The cabin walls were getting full of shelves for the cans and I was buying ever more binders to house the labels.

Word got around that I collected beer memorabilia and friends started bringing me cans and

labels they found on trips. One friend wrote to her cousin in Germany asking if she had any labels she could send. The cousin started hosting parties and asking the invitees to bring unusual beers. After the party, labels were soaked off the empty bottles and sent to the U.S. in large envelopes. Annually, I would get these packets of labels from my friend. Beer labels were multiplying like rabbits.

Now I share a new and larger ski cabin with Kent and his wife.



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Book Review: *The Sellout* by Paul Beatty

Dottie Bennett

The *Sellout* by Paul Beatty won the 2016 Man Booker Award among other awards. It took me several attempts to get into this biting satire about race that challenges everything many hold sacred: The US Constitution, urban life, civil rights and the Black Chinese restaurant! I'm glad I stuck with it. The narrator

sets out to right a wrong: Dickens, California has been erased from the map to save it from further embarrassment. Much of the book follows the character ME who runs an "agrarian ghetto farm" and Hominy Jenkins, the last surviving Little Rascal.

The book is full of outrageous actions including reinstating slav-

ery, segregating a high school and painting a white stripe down the middle of main street where the town used to be! These actions are the basis of a Supreme Court case.

The denouement is a fitting end as it successfully points not only to the problems of the inner city but shares its complexities and nuances. This book is not for the faint hearted. The language is often raw and gritty. In the turbulent world in which we live, Beatty reminds us that the effects of racism are alive and well. ■

Beer

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The basement is one large room with a full-sized pool table and — you guessed it — walls covered with custom-built shelves to accommodate the beer cans. But, that wasn't enough. Shelves started multiplying into other rooms and even the garage. My kids spend a good portion of each year in France. I visit them annually. There were cans and bottles of beer as well as wine emptied during Happy Hours and those cans/labels came home with me. Imagine going through customs and being asked about the contents of your luggage — beer cans: empty beer cans! And beer labels? What started as one small binder has grown to many linear feet of binders crowding out the shelf space in my den. Oh well, this has become a hobby which costs me little since I enjoy beer and the time spent saving the labels and cans adds little to the expense. Thank heavens I have not started in on wine labels.

Don Christian



Books we liked

January 202 Favorites

- Aurelius, Marcus, *Meditations*, translated by Gregory Hays (Walt)
- Beach, Edward Latimer, *Run Silent Run Deep* (Clyde)
- Beatty, Paul, *The Sellout* (Dottie)
- Brooks, Geraldine, *Horse* (Walt)
- Doctorow, E.L., *Ragtime* (Cathy)
- Hemingway, Ernest, *The Torrents of Spring* (Walt)
- May, Peter, *The Black House and Lewis Man* (Cathy)
- Mouk, Yascha, *The Identity Trap: A Story of Ideas and Power in Our Time* (Sunny)
- O'Connor, Joseph, *My Father's House* (Cathy)
- Slocumb, Brendan, *The Violin Conspiracy* (Sunny, Jane, Dottie)
- Patchett, Ann, *Tom Lake* (Cathy)
- Simmons, Dan, *The Crook Factory* (Clyde)

Dark, but well written:

- Oates, Joyce Carol, *Sourland: Stories* (Ellen)

Interview: Meghan Whaley, LBA Newsletter Editor

Marcia Grabowski

WALKING INTO THE ENTRY of the Wentworth Drive house, which opens to a light-filled kitchen and living area with a wood-burning fireplace, I was greeted by Chili, a large extremely friendly Portuguese Water Dog. Chili is almost three, still in puppy mode, and a warm and energetic welcoming crew of one. He was well-behaved, quiet company throughout the conversation.

Meghan was born in Alabama and grew up in the southern part of Atlanta, attending a private military school there, Woodward Academy; she followed this up by attending Florida State University in Tallahassee. After having visited a friend in DC, she was convinced this was the area for her, and took a job in DC with the non-profit Dreams for Kids, which promotes equity, sustainability and social entrepreneurship to children through real-world learning experiences.

She subsequently moved to Lake Barcroft, where she and her partner, Mark, love the quiet nature of the street, and share a dock with several neighbors. All three members of the household enjoy boating and swimming in the lake. An interesting fact about Chili's heritage is that these dogs were originally bred to gather

fishermen's nets and bring them in. They can actually dive underwater to retrieve items; Chili was fortunate to attend water camp last summer where he did well in honing his natural skills.

One of Meghan's jobs in this area was working for a commercial real estate company for several years, prior to switching over to residential real estate three years ago. She had assisted with buying and acquiring several buildings in the metro area, also supporting the Boston and Chicago territories, among others. However, the personal side of residential real estate is well-suited to her personality. Currently, her business is focused in Springfield, Alexandria, and other areas of Northern Virginia, with some in Montgomery County. She and her team have developed a niche for "sight-unseen" State Department and military transactions. These clients are buying a house from overseas, usually, or at least while living somewhere else, and they don't usually see the houses until after they are bought.

She interviewed for the position of LBA Newsletter several years ago after having gotten increasingly more involved in the community. She had done editing in college for the school newspaper, then volunteered with mostly Spanish-speaking ESL students, helping with grammar, writing and spelling. She enjoyed the opportunity to tutor and help people integrate.

Meghan has recently become a much-needed and appreciated driver for the Lake Barcroft



Photos by Marcia Grabowski

Village. She also volunteers for the National Brain Tumor Society and will follow up with an article on that for a future LBA Newsletter. Both Meghan and Mark Angelini spend a lot of time on their deck, cooking; she's mainly a recipe-follower, while Mark is a bit more creative. While they do not focus on collecting art, there is a very large oil painting on Meghan's office wall, entitled "Earth Mother." This was given to them by Mark's mother who lived in El Paso and collected Indigenous American art. On another wall in Meghan's office, where we conducted the interview, is a painting done by Meghan herself, one of the Washington Monument and the Kennedy Center and surrounding buildings. They like to purchase art from various travel locations as a reminder of their activities.

By the way, Chili is turning three on March 5! A party with his siblings is planned, outdoors in the large fenced-in back yard. Ah, the life of a Lake Barcroft dog. ■





Our England Adventure

A Tale of How Two Bobbies, a Librarian and a Bus Driver Saved Us from Sleeping in Our Car

Cathy Williams

OUR TRIP TO ENGLAND in July 2011 was one of my favorites, mainly because it was somewhat seat-of-the-pants. Clyde and I were told that it would be easy to find a place to stay once we got there because of the plethora of B&Bs. So we booked three nights in London at the beginning of the trip and one night before our return flight, and planned to find other accommodations on the fly as we drove around the country sightseeing.

We quickly learned that:

- a. Within 50 miles of London it is absolutely essential to have advance hotel reservations.
- b. Information Centers are good resources for finding local B&Bs, but they close at 5:00.
- c. B&Bs are hard to find without a referral because they are not allowed to put out road signs, and they just look like normal houses.

Our first attempt to find a room was on day 4 of our trip. After driving from London to Canterbury and touring Canterbury Cathedral, we found an Information Center too late to get help finding a room. So we asked two bobbies who happened to be strolling by. They sent us to a nearby hotel which was full, but the hotel rented us a room in a guest house nearby. OK, so far so good.

The next day, after driving to Stonehenge, we went to an Information Center in the library of a nearby town, only to find that the information specialist had gone home for the day. Fortunately, the librarian knew of an old coaching inn in town. Despite squeaky floors and no hot water, we had a place for the night. (We got a discount on the room for putting up with the cold shower.)

Onward. After a day of garden touring we drove to Truro and made a bee-line to the Information Center to get assistance. They referred us to a local B&B where we booked three nights. We used this B&B as a hub for side trips to sites in Cornwall. The room was nice but unheated, and the loo was a former closet where if you tried to bend your elbows to wash your hair in the shower your elbows touched the walls, and bending over to pick up lost soap was impossible. But it was convenient, and the hosts were very nice.

Next destination: Exeter. We arrived rather late in the day. The Information Center was closed so we drove around until we saw a tour bus. We followed it until it arrived at a hotel and started unloading passengers. Voila! There was an available room here for us.

Our luck ran out the next day. After visiting Bath we headed

toward Windsor and started looking for a room around 4:30. We had a cell phone but no phone directory and no Internet access unless we were near a Wi-Fi source. We drove from service area to service area and from town to town. No rooms available anywhere. (We had one offer of a room for \$800 but we passed that one up.) Around 8:00, in desperation, we called our friends in Leister for advice. They gave us the number of a hotel at Gatwick Airport. No rooms there, but a kind hotel clerk connected us to Hotels.com, and they found us a room at a resort nine miles away.

The resort would have been impossible to find if we hadn't had a satnav [GPS] and a postal code. Traveling on a one-lane road at dusk in the middle of nowhere, we finally arrived at the resort at 9:00. Here we were treated to the largest and most luxurious room we had during the entire trip. A government conference was being held there, and we were the only tourists onsite. As a result, we got conference rates and a free breakfast, compliments of the British government.

During this trip we saw many interesting historical sites and gardens, we met lovely people, and we learned a great deal about England. We could have seen these things if we'd booked a tour with every detail planned and led by a guide, but that would have spoiled the fun. For 11 days we fended for ourselves in a foreign land, overcoming adversities and soldiering on in the face of daily challenges. I wouldn't have had it any other way. It was a great adventure! ■