

THE Villager

◦ NEIGHBORS HELPING NEIGHBORS ◦

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Questionnaire Elicits Interest in New Village Activities

Cathy Williams

THANKS TO EVERYONE who responded to the Lake Barcroft Village Activities Questionnaire. The Programs Committee designed the questionnaire to learn what types of things we might offer for members during this period of social distancing. With enough interest, we could continue some of these activities when we are able to convene in person.

Ellen Raphaeli compiled the questionnaire results. Of the 14 responses, seven would like to watch and discuss Road Scholar’s Home School lectures, streaming videos on history, and/or Smithsonian Resident Associates streaming programs on art and history. Note: There is a charge for the Road Scholar and Smithsonian Programs. Seven would like to participate in bird-watching discussions. Five would want to watch and discuss favorite movies, books, participate in online games such as Trivial Pursuit, and/or discuss current events. Two topics suggested for the latter are how to effect political change and climate as it relates to animals.

One new idea has already been implemented. Our inaugural LBV Book Recommendations Zoom call was a success. Here are the books mentioned today as “keepers” by our participants:

News of the World by Paulette Jilles; *Before We Were Yours* by Lisa Wingate; *Prisoner of Azkaban* by J.K. Rowling; *Man’s Search for Meaning* by Viktor Frankl; *How to Read a Book* by Mortimer Adler and Charles Van Doren; *The Girl with the Louding Voice* by Abi Dare; *How the Penguin Saved Veronica* by Hazel Prior; *10 Minutes 38 Seconds in This Strange World* by Elif Shafak; *The Secret Diary of Hendrik Groen* by Hendrik Groen; *Lilac Girls: A Novel* by Martha Hall Kelly; *Countdown to 1945* by Chris Wallace; *Lessons from Lucy* by Dave Barry; *1421: The Year China Discovered America* by Gavin Menzies; *1434: The Year a Magnificent Chinese Fleet Sailed to Italy and Ignited the Renaissance* by Gavin Menzies; *Birding Without Borders* by Noah Strycker; *The Things with Feathers: The Surprising Lives of Birds and What They Reveal about Being Human* by Noah Strycker; *The Thunderbolt Kid* by Bill Bryson; *Salt Houses* by Hala Alyan; *Where the Crawdads Sing* by Delia Owens; *Overstory* by Richard Powers.

The committee will meet in early August to discuss these ideas. In the meantime, if you have additional thoughts, or if you are willing to volunteer to convene one of the above discussion groups (via Zoom, email, or conference calls), please contact Cindy. After the group’s first meeting, members can decide whether to have a permanent chair or to rotate leadership responsibilities. ■

Vests

In 2019, Vic Utgoff, who was the Lake Barcroft Village Vice President at the time, proposed to order a minimum quantity of reflective safety vests with the Village logo on them and sell them to Village members. In May of this year, Richard Morton, one of the Co-Presidents of the Village, proposed to sell the same vests, but this time to anyone who wanted one. The minimum order was 35, so the announcement on LakeLink said that if we did not get orders for at least 25 vests by the end of June, we reserved the right to cancel the project. By early June we had orders for 59 vests and placed the order with the supplier for 70. After delivering the 59 pre-ordered vests, we again advertised the remaining 11, and within a couple of days had sold eight or them. As of this writing, there is still one vest available. If you want it, email Richard at rmorton1941@verizon.net.

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Creating a Family History Video

Cathy Williams

THE LAKE BARCROFT VILLAGE memoir group discovered that one member has ventured outside the medium of writing family history and personal stories. Video is another way to preserve memories, and Cathy Williams says that her family has done this. Other members of the Village might like to take this on as a summer project. Planning comes first. Getting participants together can happen later.

"We invited several family members to participate in our production of *The Bedfords and the Loonans in History*," Cathy explained. She described the project: "The story centered around my maternal grandmother and grandfather and their ancestors from England, Ireland and Wales."

Cathy wrote the script for the production and family members played the roles of various ancestors, each wearing a photo of the relative they were representing. "Aunt Jean read the narration about what was happening in our family's life at a particular date, and Mom alternately read about what was happening in the world at the time," said Cathy, adding:

"Our future son-in-law Jason, a very good sport but slightly bewildered by all the fuss, played the part of my grandfather."

There was a large map of Europe and the U.S. on the wall in the background, and players moved pins around the map as they were born, moved to the U.S., were married, or died. Cathy's brother taped the production. "Between scenes he did close-ups of family memorabilia – old photos, a quilt made by Great Grandma from feed sacks, a wind-up Edison record player with ¼-inch thick records, and a china-head doll owned by Grandpa," said Cathy. The production had a musical ending: "The finale of the production was Jason and our daughter Laura singing the 'Iowa Corn Song' accompanied by one of the old records from Grandpa's collection."

"We taped it twice," Cathy said. "The first time was rehearsal, and we were a bit silly. The second time we were serious." Cathy's husband Clyde chimes in, "Actually, the outtakes from the rehearsal are the most fun to watch!" ■



Tech Topics Zoom Meeting August 26

Mike Sternad, Richard Morton and Ross Kory will host a Tech Topics meeting via Zoom on August 26 at 2 p.m. The subject will be Organizing and Storing Digital Photos. The discussion will cover both Macs and PCs. Please register for the meeting with Shirley Timashev, dguide@cox.net. Once you register, a Zoom link will be sent to you so you can enter the meeting "room." If you aren't sure how to use Zoom, please contact Shirley.

Interview: Ellen Raphaeli

Anne Murphy O'Neil

ELLEN RAPHAELI has taken a long way 'round to the back of our house, and up the spiral staircase to the O'Neil deck overlooking the Lake—all for maintaining safe boundaries to protect her granddaughter and two great-granddaughters visiting Ellen's daughter in Lake Barcroft. We have just met for the first time and are getting to know each other.

How did you decide to join The Village?

Ellen: My husband, Nimrod, and I are not by natural temperament joiners, but we have an interest in aging in place. We had a pleasant conversation with Moya Atkinson when she dropped off some material. Then we met interesting people when Linda Woodrow and Louise Ziebell gave a talk about suddenly becoming widows. We were impressed, then hired a lawyer to start making plans.

Where did you grow up?

Ellen: In Newton, Massachusetts. I was a junior at the University of Michigan when we met. Nimrod was born in Basra, Iraq, and came to the states as a Fulbright Scholar to get his M.A. He went on to UMich to get his Ph.D. Since he was interested in what makes government work, he earned his Ph.D. in economics and comparative public administration.

We met at a mixer neither of us wanted to attend. One of my friends pleaded with me to go. Nimrod and I met, danced, and got married. We had come from such different cultures—Nimrod grew up in a traditional society, and I grew up in hippie Massachusetts. We had contrasting interests. I had studied literature.

It is said when opposites get together it's a growth choice.

Ellen: And it has remained so.

Nimrod handles anything financial having to do with the house. And I take out a wrench.

One requirement for Fulbright Scholars is that they leave the country for at least two years. So in August of 1966, we moved to Israel. Tamar was an infant, and Mike was about to be born in December. In June of 1967, the children and I spent a week in a bomb shelter.

That sounds really frightening.

Ellen: I was probably more affected by a car bomb when I was saved by an eggplant. As I walked down a path to an open market, I stopped at a table to look at an eggplant. When a bomb exploded nearby, I dove under the table. If I had kept walking, I'd have probably died.

But in retrospect, it was scarier when our kids were learning to drive. Back in Boston they used to say: "You have to ding them before they ding you!" When I was learning to drive, they said I had a heavy foot.

Living in Israel with your two young children had to be quite a change.

Ellen: Everything was different. I didn't speak Hebrew, and we were at war. Nimrod is gifted in language—he speaks seven of them. He'd say I'm exaggerating, but he's definitely tri-lingual, and he can get along in the others. Our



Photo by Mike Raphaeli

children take after him. I remember we were having supper in a restaurant once. Nimrod made a comment to Tamar in Arabic. Mike responded in Hebrew. Tamar then turned it around in French. And Mike got the last word in pig-Latin. When our kids wanted to keep a secret, they spoke gibberish.

So you're not a linguist, but you love literature.

Ellen: Yes. By the time I was in 7th grade, I had decided I wanted to become a psychiatric social worker, because I had an interest in understanding dogs. I thought it would be a great way to have a career—there was no such thing as a dog psychiatrist. During my first couple of years in college, I was a volunteer tutor at a women's prison. It was the only job I could find leading to psychiatric social work, tutoring women in prison. But I fell in love with teaching literature and helping them improve their writing.

I taught literature and writing full-time for 36 years, and part-time for another ten in NOVA. I had wonderful colleagues and loved the work. ■

More Stuff About Trees

Judy Hilton

FIRST, A QUICK REVIEW of what we learned (hopefully) in high school biology class and have no doubt forgotten. A tree is a large woody, perennial plant having one, or a small number, of definite trunks to support its leafy crown. Shrubs are smaller plants with many woody stems branching close to the ground, although the distinction is not always clear-cut. All the rest of the plant world consists of herbaceous stuff, soft, green and having little woody tissue.

A tree may be an angiosperm meaning it is characterized by the formation of flowers and seeds in fruit. Many of the fruits and flowers are high up in the branches and cannot be seen from afar. Most North American trees have these fruits and flowers and this is just as true for oaks, ashes and maples as it is for tulip poplars, crab apples and magnolias. Those pesky catkins that clog our gutters in spring are the wind-driven carriers of the male pollen to the flowers of oaks, hickories, and others.

Alternatively, the tree may be a gymnosperm, forming seeds in an exposed position, frequently in cones. These are mainly the conifers. Interestingly, trees that bear cones are pollinated by wind, not animals (insects). In ancient times, before the emergence of insects, all pollination was by wind. The evolution of flowers was nature's way of enticing insects to participate in the pollination process.

Trees are about a million years older than we humans are. Remarkably, one tree from the Triassic Period, 200 million years ago, has persisted relatively unchanged into the modern era, the *Ginkgo biloba* (see photo). Once

there was a large family of Ginkgos, but only this one species has survived.

How grateful we should be to live in the Barcroft forest teeming with oak trees. Ecologically, oaks are superior plants, probably supplying more ecosystem services than any other tree genus. There are ninety species of oaks; most are massive and sequester tons of carbon in their wood and roots and they pump even more carbon into the soil. They are long-lived with some species as old as 900 years. Oaks in our region support more than 500 species of caterpillars making more food for birds than any other tree. Indeed, their contribution to the food web is nothing short of astounding. In addition, their huge canopies break the force of pounding rain before it can compact soil and their massive root systems prevent soil erosion.

Can it be just a lucky coincidence that trees provide us with refreshing shade during the hot summer months, then shed their leaves in winter to allow the sun to warm us in its rays?

Nothing in this world is more beautiful than the leafing out of trees in the springtime, the green colors gradually changing from a



Photo courtesy of Wikipedia

pale apple green to a more standard color as the leaves mature. Spring, it is said, advances northward in our hemisphere on the average of about fifteen miles a day. What joy when spring has finally reached us and we wake up one morning and see the first faint glimmer of green in our beloved trees. ■

Book Review: *The Hidden Life of Trees*

Elizabeth Berry

The Hidden Life of Trees by Peter Wohlleben, a German forester, is the perfect book for this period of time when we are staying at home and staying safe. It provided me with some resources to evoke the calm and patience that this moment in history calls for. I found that reading this non-fiction masterpiece was extremely interesting and certainly afforded me a long view. With more than 2 million copies sold worldwide, this beautifully written, New York Times bestselling book journeys deep into the forest to uncover the fascinating—and surprisingly moving—hidden life of trees.

“[Peter] Wohlleben has de-

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Hidden Life

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lighted readers and talk-show audiences alike with the news—long known to biologists—that trees in the forest are social beings.”

—The New York Times

Are trees social beings? In *The Hidden Life of Trees* forester and author Peter Wohlleben convincingly makes the case that, yes, the forest is a social network. He draws on groundbreaking scientific discoveries to describe how trees are like human families: tree parents live together with their children, communicate with them, support them as they grow, share nutrients with those who are sick or struggling, and even warn each other of impending dangers. Wohlleben also shares his deep love of woods and forests, explaining the amazing processes of life, death, and regeneration he has observed in his woodland.

After learning about the complex life of trees, I regard them more deeply and respectfully. Much more than objects whose wood we use, or whose placement enhances or detracts from our view, they sustain each other and life on this planet. Reading this book has enhanced the joy and gratitude I feel when walking in the woods. ■



ZOOM Meeting with Yi-Ting Chiu

Shirley Timashev

YI-TING CHIU joined the Lake Barcroft Zoom Together group on June 19 for an open discussion of the village movement. Yi-Ting, who also goes by the name of Joyce, is a doctoral student in public policy at George Mason University. She has been intrigued with the self-help nature of villages, and the Lake Barcroft Village is one of her featured case studies. According to Village-to-Village Network leaders, Yi-Ting may be the only academic in the country doing an in-depth study of various models of villages for senior citizens. Yi-Ting observes that villages are adapting to the challenges of the pandemic era to continue to serve their members through such means as our Zoom meetings, our Keeping in Touch program, and errand-running services. ■

ZOOMING During the Pandemic

Beth Auerbach

STILL TELE-WORK PART-TIME as an environmental lawyer, with demands that divert my attention to problem-solving and away from the drumbeat of political developments and pandemic news. It also makes life feel more normal. The activity that keeps me most centered, though, is hitting the pool to swim my laps for an hour or so just about every day. I'm more grateful than ever to have my backyard pool and always emerge energized, with endorphins and endurance recharged. Also I've resumed twice weekly weight training with the excellent Tim Sun, whom I met when he was a presenter at the last LBV quarterly meeting.

We all may be getting Zoomed out, but for now it's been a way to meet up with friends and acts a stand-in for travel, learning, and museum-going that I miss tremendously. My high school gang gets together for 90 minutes once a week to Zoom with no pre-set agenda. We come together from both coasts, the Midwest and even England. The group has stayed

in touch via a listserv for almost fifteen years and gathers periodically to revisit Los Angeles roots; the Zoom meetups were a natural next step. I'm also part of a group of folks with whom I overlapped in college, who discuss an incredible range of current interests and past histories via email. It's also important to me to stay in

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Pandemic

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touch with friends individually by email, phone, or text in this current universe as it was in life before now.

Beginning earlier in lockdown, I found myself getting hooked on “Context Conversations,” seminars that capture the talents of sidelined tour guides and presenters, many of them quarantined in cities abroad where I’ve traveled or aim to visit in the future. My favorites among the topics so far include seminars on Venice in ecological peril; on the Holocaust in visual art; and on the roles of pandemic and climate events in the fall of Rome. Most of the seminars prod me into

reading more about the particular topic, discovering that sometimes the books I need already are on our shelves—but I’m also glad the libraries have reopened.

Norm and I badly miss live sports and live music. With international soccer restarted, I’ve watched my share of ghost games. Like countless others, Norm and I give several hours a week of lockdown time to catching up with the wealth of TV series out there. Since we’ve not yet gotten into true bingeing, it’s impossible to imagine running out of choices. Perry Mason reboot, anyone? And we’re supporting the indie Cinema Arts Theatre by streaming films via its website and buying gift cards for the—fingers crossed—movie-going future. ■

cannily appropriate conversations in English with our talker, Casey. Lest you are considering a Grey—or any parrot—as a pet, though, we don’t advise it unless you’re willing to devote a lot of time and attention to them. These, like most other especially larger birds, are not happy in cages. Ours are caged rarely, usually only during bad storms.

Other activities: I am working on synopsising approximately 400 letters from my father to my mother from WWII into a book for my siblings. This project was initiated thanks to Shirley Timashev and the Memoirs group which meets every other week. My father was an officer in the Quartermaster Corps, and saw action in England, France, Belgium and Germany from 1943 to 1945. Since he died young, at 57, we are now learning a lot about him, his service, and his relationship with our mother in the early stages of their courtship and marriage. They appeared to write every day, and we can now see how he - in my mother’s words - was a “completely different man” when he returned from Europe.

Parrots, Piano, Gardening and Exercise

Marcia Grabowski

of Casey and Dazzle, our two African Grey companion parrots, both rescues. Greys, native to equatorial Africa, are most certainly flock animals, and although they have their own room in the house, they love nothing more than to be out with us when we’re home which is most of the time. These highly social, intelligent and sensitive animals require lots of social enrichment and attention in order to avoid being distressed. Since they are prey animals instead of birds of prey, they can also be nervous and high strung. Excellent talkers, they are known to have what’s called “communicative competence,” meaning they appear to use human language correctly. We can vouch for this by the number of times we’ve had un-

DESPITE THE PANDEMIC, we are both pretty happily ensconced at home. Rick reads a lot, takes care of the garden—including the bird and squirrel feeders and several bird baths - and walks with me in the evenings. I help coordinate the gardening, cook a lot, take several Zoom PT classes per week, and am trying to teach myself improv piano.

While Rick reads, he has the company several hours a day

Photo by Marcia Grabowski



Photo by Rick Kerz

While I have played classical piano on and off most of my life,

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Parrots, Piano, etc.

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I always wanted to be able to just sit down and play beautiful music. Late last year, I took a few lessons with Burnett Thompson, a versatile pianist, composer and educator (pianojazz.com). In trying to reconstruct my notes from those lessons (which are barely legible), I contacted him about starting lessons again, and am currently trying to set up the computer requirements per his instructions to do this efficiently via Zoom. In the meantime, I experiment, with mixed results but much enjoyment.

As for gardening, we have tried for years to grow gigantic (10–12') sunflowers. If anyone

has had luck with these, I'd appreciate knowing the secret! So far, all we've accomplished is providing more food for our chippies, squirrels and birds, which we really don't mind. And in mid-July, we gave up and bought 6' sunflower plants, a few feet shorter than what we'd like, but which are thankfully thriving.

Finally, we've had or attended some outside, socially distanced, mostly masked patio gatherings with neighbors ... that's pretty much been the extent of our social life. That said, we're happy enough in our partial confinement during this pandemic and will continue doing these and other like activities for the duration. ■

Courses and have taken armchair travels to State Parks and a Grand Tour of England, Scotland and Wales. Music has kept me busy with lectures on Clara and Robert Schumann and Tchaikovsky. I have started a series on Learning to Play Piano.

Miniatures have been my on-going hobby and granddaughters have enjoyed miniature fairies. They made a fairy house and fairy garden in my patio fern garden. They glued sticks together to make a ladder, used shells for beds, boats and walkways for the fairies. (See page 8 for a close up of the fairy house.)

Fortunately, landscapers have been able to work so I have had two trees planted and other work done. I am thankful to live in beautiful Lake Barcroft and enjoying the gorgeous spring floral display and enchanting fauna. Being at home has allowed me to appreciate the Red Fox that trots by occasionally, the mother doe with two little spotted fawns, the chipmunks, squirrels and numerous and varied birds at my water fountain.

Life is change and we certainly can say that about the year of 2020 with new phrases such as "masks required" and "social distancing." Time to go to another ZOOM meeting! ■

Passing the Time from March 19, 2020 to Present

Linda Woodrow

WHEN I HEARD there was an international pandemic due to the Covid-19 virus, I started a "Things To do While Hibernating" list. After listening to the worldwide reports that this was a vicious virus my motto became, "You're not stuck at home, you are safe at home. One word can change your attitude." It was been difficult to have two planned trips cancelled and postponed until 2021, no non-essential travel and no face-to-face meetings, church or other gatherings. Since I am a "senior," I have gone to the grocery at 6 a.m. for senior hours and relied on relatives and friends to do grocery shopping for me.

About this time I started a daily journal which I maintained from March 19 until June 21. Upon rereading the entries and the

notations of the number of cases and deaths in Virginia due to Covid-19 there was a steady upward trend. Terrible news which underscored the urgency to be careful. I decided to keep busy and not dwell on the news.

Some of the items I have checked off my "hibernating" list have been knitting (I made a pillow and am working on a scarf); cleaned out closets (made charitable donations); cleaned out office (took papers to be shredded); sorted out books in bookcases; cooked new recipes; baked every week; cleaned outdoor furniture and eventually made an outdoor patio staycation spot.

I ordered several DVDs from the Great



Photo by Linda Woodrow



Book Review: *A Long Petal of the Sea*

Bethami Auerbach

ISABEL ALLENDE's immersive new novel, *A Long Petal of the Sea*, set largely in Chile, was a natural for me. The Village's Spanish Conversation Group is led by Chilean-born Pedro Turina, who has shared with us his homeland's culture, including a dive into the odes of Pablo Neruda, Nobel Prize-winning poet, diplomat and politician. Neruda plays a small but catalytic role in Allende's novel.

The novel begins in 1938, well into the Spanish Civil War. Victor Dalmau, an ascetic, deft young medic works tirelessly to treat a stream of casualties in Catalonia. His story centers the novel, together with that of Roser Bruguera, a talented music student who lodges with the Dalmau family in Barcelona. By 1939, after Franco's Nationalists gain the upper hand and quickly signal that they will show no mercy to their defeated countrymen, thousands of refugees from the Republican side embark on "the Retreat"—an arduous trek over the Pyrenees—only to find themselves detained in miserable and dangerous French concentration camps. Among them are Victor and Roser, who separately survive the rigors and brutality of the Retreat and the camps. After each has escaped from detention, Victor locates Roser in Perpignan. By then she has given birth to a son, the child of Victor's brother, Guillem, dead in the war.

As the many refugees cast about for homes, Neruda extends a lifeline. An ardent supporter of the now-vanquished Republic, he

persuades the President of Chile to send him to France as special consul. There, in 1939 he arranges passage for two thousand Spanish refugees to emigrate to Chile via a repurposed cargo ship, the SS Winnipeg. To bolster their chances of being chosen, Victor realizes that he and Roser must enter a marriage of convenience, although one with affection and stalwart purpose on both sides. Actions by the fictional Neruda mirror his real-life actions in organizing the Spanish war refugees' emigration to Chile.

Chile is a faraway mystery to these stateless Europeans, a skinny slice of the unknown—what Neruda described as "the long petal of sea and wine and snow." Society is more austere, conventional, and structured, but the refugees adapt. Roser's musical talents quickly are in demand in Santiago, and Victor works in a bar to finance his medical studies and in time begins to make his mark as a cardiologist. Between them, they create a home for Roser's son, who by default, happily, is now also Victor's. They become attached to their adopted country and its democracy, while

keeping "Spain in [their] hearts," as the real-world Neruda would say.

The novel also follows the aristocratic, wealthy and connected del Solar family, through whom Allende depicts how money, position, tradition and expectation, and the power of the Church have shaped this sector of Chilean society. The very different lives of the Dalmaus and the Del Solars intersect briefly but consequentially.

Unsurprisingly, as in Spain, democracy in Chile proves unstable. The 1970 election of socialist President Salvador Allende is cut short by the 1973 Pinochet coup and an ensuing military government. Victor Dalmau's stature as a heart specialist cannot protect him from persecution in that turbulent time. The Dalmaus are displaced temporarily from their beloved adopted homeland. The impacts of this new upheaval resonate through the remainder of the novel, which also explores how Victor and Roser's relationship has grown and their reactions when they finally revisit post-Franco Spain—not quite closing the circle. ■



Photo by Linda Woodrow

Here is the fairy house created by Linda Woodrow's granddaughters. Read the full article on page 7.

Athletic Experience

Shirley Timashev

No one has ever accused me of being athletic. When I was young I signed up for beginner tennis lessons where I was told to keep my eye on the ball. I did. I watched the ball pass my racquet every time.

In high school I signed up to be in the Girls Athletic Association. There was a possibility of earning an award of some sort after accumulating enough points. I'm vague as to what the award was to be, because in fact I was the only girl who earned negative points. The problem was that I signed up for bowling after school, and I had a schedule conflict. Points were deducted every time I didn't show up.

As a young adult I had hopes of becoming a snow skier. I liked the ambiance of ski resorts and thought going downhill was something I could do. People sometimes fall going downhill on skis. I fell going uphill.

Beginner skiers start with rope tows, instead of chair lifts. Beginners are told not to clamp down too hard on the continuously moving rope tow when starting out. Once again I didn't follow directions very well. Clamping hard on the rope tow sent me heels over head, resulting in dislocation of my right knee. Although I have a tendency not to learn from experience, I did find myself on ski slopes in later years.

As a tour guide in Washington, D.C., I found something that I was good at doing. Walking. That may not sound terribly athletic to some, yet it has given me great enjoyment. The most challenging assignments for me have been in the hills of Arlington National Cemetery.

The Changing of the Guard ceremony happens on the top of the highest hill. I know from experience how long it takes

to get from the visitor center to the location of the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. Usually I have had 30–40 eighth graders in tow, and not all of them are fast walkers. I've had to motivate them.

While we are on the motor coach in the parking lot at Arlington National Cemetery I use the microphone to give them a little speech. I describe the several stops we'll make on the way to the Changing of the Guard ceremony and tell them it is important for us to stay together. Yadda-yadda-yadda. Then I scan the group, looking them each in the eye and say, "I realize that some of you may not be in as good shape as I..."

Their eyes get big. They realize that I'm older than their grandmothers. Pause. I repeat, "I realize that some of you may not be in as good shape as I..." Then I continue, "... but I want you to try to keep up with me."

They do. ■

My Bear

Waltraut Nelson



I had a wonderful childhood in Germany during the 1930s. I was the only child in my family and had a lot of toys and dolls. But I had no bear and I got one.

The bear was called Teddy bear. At the time I did not know that he was named after President Roosevelt. I wanted a different name, a special name. That took some time until 1941. Why? Now starts my story.

We lived in Berlin, my hometown, and I went to school there

too. Soon after the beginning of the war in 1939 we experienced air raids and spent a lot of time in air raid shelters. This was a great disruption for all people, especially the young ones who had to go to school daily. I loved my English class. We read the book Winnie the Pooh. I came home after school and translated the book to my mother. I liked the name Winnie and named my Bear Winnie. He was happy with it. At that time he was not so pretty any more since all his hair around his mouth had disappeared. I had kissed him so much. When the schools were closed the

children of Berlin went to camps or relatives outside the city. I packed my bag with Winnie and dolls, but my mother said that we could not take so much luggage and I had to leave my bag behind. My dolls and Winnie would be protecting us from the bombs.

My father was in the military, and my mother and I went to Neisse, Silesia, to my grandfather. My father came to Neisse on furlough. We went on nice long walks through the forests in the surroundings and came to a fort built by Fredrick the Great during the seven years' war

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against Maria Theresa. There was a very high fence with no visible doors and I saw people in the distance running around. I looked through the fence when one, two men, three men came and stared at me. “Hello” one man said and I answered “Good Morning.”

They saw a little German girl who spoke some English. “I am learning English in school. I am reading a book of Winnie the Pooh.” Now I was thinking of that little bear who liked honey, who loved his friends and was helpful, did not talk too much but was always there when needed. He was an example of being a good creature and I wanted to be like him. Winnie found Eeyore’s tail and made him happy, and I was his Christopher Robin, his master who could do no wrong. The men looked at me and I saw tears in their eyes. {The men were English prisoners of war.}

My father said at once: “We must go now!” We were not allowed to speak to foreigners.

I waved goodbye and they waved back.

“They are nice men!” I said to my father. “Yes, it is war, my dear! We all suffer!”

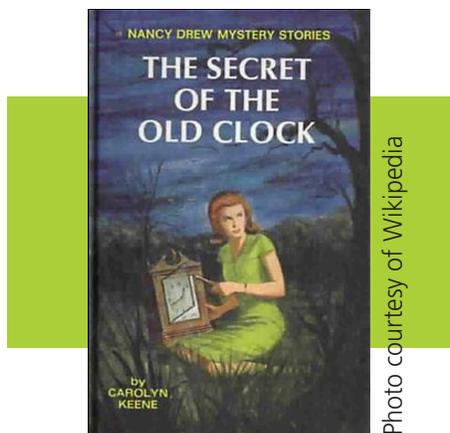
Sadly, we went home to my mother and grandfather.

I missed Winnie. He stayed back in Berlin. One year later a bomb hit our apartment building and killed 39 people, my friends. I lost my dolls and Winnie; my

childhood was gone. Now I have only memories. ■



illustration by E. H. Shepard



HOW OLD WAS I when I read the Nancy Drew mysteries? That I don’t remember. What I do remember is the impression that this fictional character had on me.

In every story Nancy Drew was resourceful, rational in her thinking, showed great intelligence and was self-confident. She had friends who helped her—and she had a blue roadster. The car was of lesser importance to me than other aspects of her life, but it seemed to be important to the writers of Nancy Drew mysteries.

There were 56 volumes in the Nancy Drew series, and I aged out of them before all were written. They were set to appeal to girls first starting chapter books in third grade, and rising to eighth grade reading level.

The Nancy Drew mysteries, I learned later, were written by a succession of ghost writers under the pen name of Carolyn Keene. The stories were, for obvious reasons, formulaic. Nancy would be going about her life in a pleasant way, then a mystery would be presented to her. Clues would be doled out slowly, and I would work on the solution along with Nancy. I was Nancy.

I’ve learned that Nancy Drew was a formative influence on a number of prominent women. Their ranks include Supreme Court justices Sandra Day O’Connor and Sonia Sotomayor, former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, and former First Lady Laura Bush. Did they see Nancy as I did? One commentator* described Nancy as a paradox, “which may be why feminists can laud her as a formative ‘girl power’ icon and conservatives can love her well-scrubbed middle-class values.”

Maybe Nancy was not as I imagined. Maybe other girls imagined her in different ways, and I simply projected on to her what I wanted to be. At this stage of my life I recognize that heroes wouldn’t have appealed to me; only heroines would have back then. And what if I had not seen “someone who looked like me?” How is it for young people if they can’t identify with even a fictional hero or heroine?

“When color only appears at the edges, marginalized groups remain marginalized,” says Andrea Ruggirello, a contemporary author who notes that updated versions of the Nancy Drew series gives the heroine some minority friends. But sidekicks don’t have the power roles of heroes and heroines. I now see why a diverse band of heroes and heroines are needed in today’s world.

As for me, I’m glad that Nancy Drew was around when I needed her. ■

* O’Rourke, Meghan. “Nancy Drew’s Father,” *The New Yorker*, Nov. 8, 2004.