In Flanders Fields
by John McCrae

In Flanders fields the poppies blow
Between the crosses, row on row,
That mark our place; and in the sky
The larks, still bravely singing, fly
Scarce heard amid the guns below.

We are the Dead. Short days ago
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,
Loved and were loved, and now we lie,
In Flanders fields.

Take up our quarrel with the foe:
To you from failing hands we throw
The torch; be yours to hold it high.
If ye break faith with us who die
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow
In Flanders fields.

Tim Ketchum’s Jeep here in honor of Memorial Day.
ROOM FOR THE VAROOM

One day years ago, I went to a shopping mall for some computer disks and saw my first electric car. Believe it or not, it had California plates on it. I have wondered about them on long trips, assuming that getting charging points would keep them close to home. Perhaps it belongs to someone on a demonstration trip and is being trailered most of the way. Getting cars to run on electricity is a good idea, since it will make us less dependent on foreign oil. However, they will have to work hard to get me interested.

My friends and I in high school would have never accepted the notion. In high school, I had a friend named Chuck whose pride and joy were his cars. Chuck had a Chevy with a painstakingly souped-up engine, in which he would cruise around on Friday nights hoping to find somebody with whom to drag race. Further, he had a huge Pontiac, which he customized until it sported close to one-third of the world’s known supply of chrome. Every possible part of that car was chrome-plated, except for the fuzzy dice hanging from the rearview mirror. We would cruise in it on Saturdays, hoping to attract girls. Unfortunately, he had polished the chrome to such a high sheen that it was impossible to stare directly at the car without blinding yourself, so everyone had to look the other way when we drove down the street, so no girls ever noticed us. At least that is my excuse for not “scoring.”

Still, Chuck was devoted to his Chevy and Pontiac, which he considered the pinnacle of technological achievement. When he was asked once on a census form to state his religion, he wrote “General Motors.”

The first problem Chuck would have with an electric car is styling. Many of them tend to be small, modest things that shout, “I am economical” and look more like the box the car came in. True, I understand there is an electric roadster out that can go from zero to 60 mph in 10 seconds; and there is, in fact, an outfit called the National Electric Drag Racing Association. However, there is another problem that the builders would have to take care of before Chuck would be at all interested. They would have to equip the car with sound effects.

Electric cars are QUIET; they just go humming along. The people who live near highways and are bothered by traffic noise might welcome this, but it would be totally unacceptable to Chuck. What he loved best about his cars was the loud, deep, throaty, rumbling “VARoom, VARoom” that you heard when he stepped on the accelerator. It was his calling card, his mating call, his Tarzan yell, and the louder, the better!

I still miss hearing it! --- Bryce Hollingsworth ---
AN ENCOUNTER WITH COVID-19

Arriving back in Williamsburg in late February from a cruise, I was immediately aware of two things: the heavy concentration of pollen on any surface it could reach and the increasing concern about the novel Corona Virus. As one who does serious battle with allergies every spring, my attention was focused on making it through the allergy season.

When certain symptoms began to appear such as a dry hacking cough, a very sore throat one day, a series of chills on another day, I simply attributed these things to a particularly bad allergy season. However, in the back of my mind was the corona virus, so I self-isolated and had my food delivered to my villa just in case. Also, I was experiencing unusual fatigue and found myself sleeping for hours at a time, day and night.

On Wednesday, the day that the movie, Judy, was being shown here, I attended a meeting of the Executive Board of a Colonial Dames Chapter. I awoke that day feeling perfectly fine. The symptoms appeared to have abated so I decided to attend the meeting at Ford’s Colony. I was especially looking forward to seeing Judy that evening. As I drove to the meeting, I was convinced the worst of the allergy reactions were over. Not so as it turned out, the fatigue returned in the late afternoon to such an extreme that I stumbled into bed fully clothed and did not wake until the next morning. The days after that were mostly a blur as I was always fighting the fatigue and my equilibrium was severely compromised. I did not know whether it was day or night. Becoming seriously nauseous (one night, I thought it was night!) I literally had to crawl to the bathroom and on my way there, I saw the pull cord. I stopped and said to myself “Damn, I’m sick! I am going to pull that thing!”

After doing so, several people arrived, including Betty from the clinic, who immediately called an ambulance. I somehow made the choice to go to Riverside Doctors Hospital where I was diagnosed with Covid-19, even though it took five days to get the results of the test back!

I spent six days on oxygen at the hospital here in Williamsburg and being treated for the Covid pneumonia. Fortunately, I was not placed on a ventilator. I cannot say enough good things about the care I received when in the hospital and with the home health follow ups. Of course, I was quarantined when I arrived home. After two weeks or so, testing here by Dr. Basciano proved negative for the virus and again I was tested a few days later to rule out a false negative. A recent blood test revealed the presence of the Covid antigens so I hope I can now safely say “been there, done that”! I will be donating blood on June 6 at the Norfolk Red Cross Donation Center.

I am expected to make a full recovery but I am still plagued with some fatigue and equilibrium problems. I am pointing this out so that when I am seen stumbling and listing from side to side, onlookers will know that it is Covid and not Courvoisier!!

— Idanna Bowman —

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THE TOOL GUYS OF PATRIOTS COLONY
(With no apology to Tim Allen)

No More Home Maintenance!! That seems to be one of the top reasons many of us come to a place like Patriots Colony to enjoy our retirement years. And this has been thoroughly validated in the famous Tom Berkey Retirement Community Systematic Decision Matrix – better known as the RetComSysDecTrix by those who have lived in the acronym world of the military.

There was a time when Saturdays were filled with cutting the grass and hanging precariously off a 30-foot ladder repairing roof shingles, cleaning gutters, or fixing window screens. These were actually cheerful moments after a 60+ hour week awash in papers – white papers, decision papers, position papers, reclama papers and ever popular Death by Power Point presentations – as innocuous members of some remote staff in the bowels of the Pentagon. A freshly cut lawn gave one a wonderful sense of fulfillment and accomplishment in seeing a task actually completed. But then, things changed as we no longer faced the endless days of uncompleted tasks of our former careers. Yes, Virginia, there is a life after the Pentagon. We no longer had to turn to grass cutting as one of the most satisfying events in our lives.

Here we are at Patriots Colony where a simple entry into WorxHub automated maintenance reporting system provides us a near instant response from a highly dedicated, professional and friendly team of technicians. So, let’s look at the workings of this Team of Tool Guys. The Head Tool Guy is Doug Bowling, formally known as Director, Facilities Department, who is most capably assisted by Galina Mackey, featured in a previous Patriots Press article, and nine maintenance technicians. Doug was born and raised in Williamsburg. He gained his basic engineering knowledge through a program at TNCC and honed his home maintenance skill set with lots of plain ‘ole OJT. In the early 2000s, he worked in the resort industry here in town rising to be the General Manager of a local resort. In 2003, he launched his own home improvement company and enjoyed running it until the economic crises of 2008, when he closed shop and through a networking contact, applied for and was hired as the Facilities Manager here at Patriots Colony. Interesting to note that the person who hired him was Meg Lemley during her first tenure here as Executive Director. The obvious lesson is to never cross swords with a supervisor, as things do have a way of coming around again!

Doug and his Tool Guys are responsible for maintaining a 90-acre campus with 700,000 square feet of conditioned space in 39 buildings. This includes a 45-room Convalescent Center, 46 rooms for Assisted Living residents and Springhouse, a fully-equipped 20-room memory care unit. Most of the recurring maintenance is performed in-house by his multi-talented technicians, with larger work and capital improvement projects handled by outside vendors. Each of the technicians is assigned a routine work zone to manage. They draw their work assignments from the WorxHub system, giving them more control and self-management of their “own” territory. This also allows them to see and anticipate future maintenance needs in their work zone and, most importantly, establish a close and positive rapport with the residents that they support. Galena advises that, in the past year, the Tool Guys completed 14,011 separate work orders, using about 17,000 work hours to complete.
Most importantly, nearly 80% of the work was completed within two days, with most delays being the result of waiting for repair parts and components. The techs also work with and quality check work done by many of the outside vendors. All in all, they are quite busy, have a great variety of different problems to solve each day, and are highly respected by the residents of PC.

The WorXHub system is been in use for just over a year and has proven helpful to the residents who can log in a work request from their own homes and has resulted in getting the work done more efficiently. Doug advises that the system has a module that he is investigating to help support future work forecasting and budgeting.

Two of the leading Tool Guys who were here even before Doug arrived are Terry Hall and Chris Norris. Terry was born in West Virginia but came here as a child when his dad took a job at the shipyard. A graduate of Warwick High, he honed his technical skills at Norfolk Vocational Tech and eventually has become a master HVAC certified technician. He spent seven years at Williamsburg Landing before coming to the brand new Patriots Colony. He has been on our staff for almost 25 years. Terry specializes in the HVAC work for the whole campus, but likes working in the electrical and plumbing side of the business. He is a free-lancer without a specific assigned zone. His one regret to this arrangement is that he doesn’t get to know the residents as well as he once did.

Chris Norris was born in North Carolina but grew up in Newport News. His first experience with CCRCs was as a kitchen helper when he was just 16 years old. He honed his maintenance skills over 20 years at the Chesapeake, a retirement community in Newport News, rising to become the Director of Maintenance. For a few years, he worked as a manager in the property management business. While moonlighting here working with a cabinet maker, he heard of an open position, interviewed and was hired. He likes to do outside work, but I call him Mr. Inside because he is Doug’s onsite manager for the refurbishing on all vacant units during the turnover. He coordinates the installation of new equipment and fixtures, working with the Marketing Department, our own technicians, and a variety of outside vendors. When not renovating a unit, you will see him working most anywhere on campus.

We at Patriots Colony are blessed to have a skilled, friendly and highly motivated team of maintenance technicians – they are the best Tool Guys in town!

-Lew Mabie-
Comments made in the year 1957

• "I'll tell you one thing, if things keep going the way they are, it's going to be impossible to buy a week's groceries for $20."

• "I'm afraid to send my kids to the movies any more. Ever since they let Clark Gable get by with saying 'damn' in 'Gone With The Wind,' it seems every new movie has either "hell" or "damn" in it.

• "Have you seen the new cars coming out next year? It won't be long before $5000 will only buy a used one."

• "If cigarettes keep going up in price, I'm going to quit. A quarter a pack is ridiculous."

• "Did you hear the post office is thinking about charging a dime just to mail a letter?"

• "If they raise the minimum wage to $1, nobody will be able to hire outside help at the store."

• "When I first started driving, who would have thought gas would someday cost 29 cents a gallon. Guess we'd be better off leaving the car in the garage."

• "Kids today are impossible. Those ducktail haircuts make it impossible to stay groomed. Next thing you know, boys will be wearing their hair as long as the girls."

• "If they think I'll pay 50 cents for a hair cut, forget it."

• "I read the other day where some scientist thinks it's possible to put a man on the moon by the end of the of the century. They even have some fellows they call astronauts preparing for it down in Texas."

• "Did you see where some baseball player just signed a contract for $75,000 a year just to play ball? It wouldn't surprise me if someday they'll be making more than the president."

• "I never thought I'd see the day all our kitchen appliances would be electric. They are even making electric typewriters now."

• "It's too bad things are so tough nowadays. I see where a few married women are having to work to make ends meet."

• "It won't be long before young couples are going to have to hire someone to watch their kids so they can both work."

• "Marriage doesn't mean a thing any more; those Hollywood stars seem to be getting divorced at the drop of a hat."

• "I'm just afraid the Volkswagen car is going to open the door to a whole lot of foreign business."

• "Thank goodness I won't live to see the day when the Government takes half our income in taxes. I sometimes wonder if we are electing the best people to congress."

• "The drive-in restaurant is convenient in nice weather, but I seriously doubt they will ever catch on."

• "There is no sense going to Lincoln or Omaha anymore for a weekend. It costs nearly $15 a night to stay in a hotel."

• "No one can afford to be sick any more; $35 a day in the hospital is too rich for my blood."

-- Contributed by Doris Safran --
**NEWCOMERS**

Lois Seiner 2225

Lois recently moved into PCAW from Colonial Heritage where she lived for the last seven years. She grew up in Philadelphia and met and married her husband while he was getting his Masters (and later his Doctorate) in aerospace engineering.

She started nursing school but stopped when she had her first child and returned to finish when her fourth child started school.

Lois’ husband worked at NASA as a research scientist and they lived here in Williamsburg. She worked at Mary Immaculate Hospital as an RN in the Maternal/Child Unit and retired after 28 years. All four of her children and six grandchildren live in Virginia so she is able to spend lots of time with all of them – how lucky is that!

Lois discovered PCAW through people she met in the Hospice walking group that she joined after her husband passed away. She enjoys reading and hopes to join one of our book clubs; she does lap swimming and is looking forward to our pool reopening; and she plans to participate in our strength and balance classes as well.

Lois enjoys her volunteer position at the Information Desk at Williamsburg Sentara and is also looking forward to the hospital reopening.

Moving during this time of the virus restrictions has been quite stressful and we hope PCAW will soon be back to normal and we will be better able to welcome Lois into our community!

Joan Rudders 2223

One of our most recent newcomers to join our Patriots Colony family is Joan Rudders who joins us from Cape Cod, MA. Joan and her household goods arrived one week prior to the shut-down; quite a welcome!

Joan’s early years were spent in Raleigh, NC, which is apparent in her soft southern accent. She graduated from UNC/Chapel Hill where she earned a degree in nursing and where she met and married her husband who was a medical intern.

At the completion of his internship, he was called to active duty in the Navy and was stationed for two years at Cutler Naval Air Station in Maine. He was the only physician assigned to this small facility. At the completion of his tour, he went on to complete a residency in Internal Medicine in MA and began his career with the VA Medical Center in Boston, eventually becoming Chief of Medicine.

Meanwhile, Joan was busy with the activities of raising three children. She has a daughter living in Boston, a son in Spokane, WA, and a son living at Ford’s Colony. She is also the very proud grandmother to seven grandchildren.

Because of the shut-down, Joan hasn’t had the opportunity to explore much of Patriots Colony but you may see her out and about as she likes to exercise and be outside walking. She also enjoys good conversation. As the opportunity presents itself, please welcome this outgoing lady to our family.
David and Barbara Harman

David and Barbara Harman moved into the Washington Pavilion the very first week of the Patriots Colony shutdown, so they unfortunately did not get to meet and mingle with new friends. But on a positive note, they had plenty of time to get their place organized. Since arriving from Ford’s Colony, they are settled and happy with their new home here and have been walking a lot on area trails.

Barbara is from Beckley, WV, and Dave is from Tazewell, VA. They met at Concord University in West Virginia. Professionally, Barbara was an educator and administrator in the Prince Georges County School System, retiring in 1995 after being honored as Educator of the Year for the County and also for the State of Maryland.

In Williamsburg, she has been involved in and enjoyed Christopher Wren programs, Bible Study and being a tour guide at the Jamestown Settlement.

David has had a most interesting professional life, joining the Air Force after college followed by 3 years in Germany, then with the 89th Special Air Missions (SAM) at Andrews AFB. He was the communications supervisor responsible for providing secure communications for Air Force One and congressional aircraft during the Kennedy and Johnson administrations. He then moved on to NASA in the Manned Space Flight Network at the Goddard Space Flight Center in Greenbelt, Md. He supported Skylab, Hubble, Apollo Missions and Space Station Freedom. Closing out his government career, he spent 5 years at NASA HQs as Technical Operations Officer for the Scientific and Technical Directorate. He then worked for Computer Science Corp. as the Deputy Director for the Satellite Servicing Division at Goddard.

His hobbies include golf, shooting sports clay, pistol, fitness and workout, and cars. Avid travelers, he and Barbara have been many places and had lots of fun experiences. Ask them about the cruise they showed up for one day late! They are a great addition to our community. Please make it a point to meet them as soon as the restrictions are lifted.

Snakes, little bugs and spiders don’t bother me at all, but BIG bugs terrify me, and when one would get near me, I always shrieked for Jim to rescue me.

Several years ago, I got up in the middle of the night for a quick potty break. On my way back to bed, I spotted, in the light from the streetlight filtering through the Venetian blinds, a huge black THING staring up at me. Jim was sleeping soundly, so I gathered up my courage and said, “Joan, you can do this.” I picked up Jim’s shoe (of course!) and beat that creature several times and ground it into the carpet for good measure. Back to bed.

The next morning, I proudly told Jim what I had done, and led him to the foot of the bed to see my trophy. Imagine my chagrin when we discovered that I had “killed” the tassel off of my bookmark!

I have no idea whatever happened to the bookmark, but be assured I still have that tassel!

True story – Jim always backed me up on it whenever I told it to anyone.

―Joan Steinmiller—
A LONG-AGO MEMORY

In 1953, after I returned from the Korean War and was assigned to the Army Field Forces Test board at Ft Bragg, NC, I received a telephone call from a young lady living in nearby Fayetteville. She said she was the sister of Ted Lilly, who was the first classmate (West Point 1950) killed in the Korean War. (Ted had been called off his honeymoon to active duty in July ’50, assigned to the 9th Infantry, 2d Infantry Division and immediately sent to Korea.) She informed me that she was getting married soon and would like for me to usher at her wedding. I told her I would be pleased to do so. Then she proceeded to ask if I would mind escorting her college roommate and Maid of Honor, Jill Faulkner, while she was visiting. I replied affirmatively, and invited Jill to be my dinner date the next evening.

While having dinner at the Ft Bragg Officer’s Club and enjoying the company of a lovely girl—who happened to be the youngest daughter of William Faulkner, the world-famed author— we began talking about her family in nearby Mississippi. She mentioned she lived with her mother and seldom saw her father who was “far-distant,” constantly traveling and quite uncommunicative. (I have read in the book, “Selected Letters of William Faulkner,” that Faulkner did take Jill with him to Stockholm, Sweden, in December 1950 to witness his award of the Nobel Prize for Literature.) We had a delightful evening and agreed to have dinner together again the next evening.

Soon after I returned to my room in the BOQ (Bachelor Officer’s Quarters), I received a call informing me that the Division Artillery bowling team, of which I was a member, would bowl for the Ft Bragg championship the next evening, thus requiring me to change my dinner plans with Jill. I immediately turned to a friend living in the same BOQ, Lt. Paul Summers, a member of the West Point Class of 1951—a Lt in the 82d Airborne Division and recent returnee from Korea—and asked him if he would take Jill to dinner that evening. He agreed to do so. I called Jill and told her about the need to change plans. She said she understood and was looking forward to rejoining me the following evening.

The next day, I told Paul I was ready to take Jill off his hands that evening. He replied that he and Jill had had such a delightful evening together, he had arranged to go out with her again that evening. Later that day, Paul asked me to join them at the club for dinner. I did so, and as soon as I sat at the table with them, Paul joyfully informed me that he and Jill would soon be getting married.

Paul then resigned his commission from the Army and moved to Charlottesville, VA, where he and Jill were married in August 1954. Then he earned his LLD at UVA and became the city’s first time City Attorney and later the City Mayor. In 1957-58, William Faulkner became “Writer-in-Residence” at UVA and then in 1962, he and wife Estelle moved in with Jill and Paul. It was shortly thereafter that he fell from a horse and, in June, died of a fatal heart attack at the age of 62. Jill passed away in 2006 and Paul in 2014.

— Clyde Spence —
The term "hero" has been appropriately used and abused over many years. From my perspective, it is a person who accomplishes something for others that disregards normal self-interest or preservation. This describes Ed Ramsey's actions during the WWII battle in the Philippines from 1941 to 1945.

Ramsey was a graduate of the Oklahoma Military Academy where he became a superb horseman. Commissioned a 2nd Lt. in the Cavalry Reserve in May of 1938, he later found himself in the elite 26th Cavalry Regiment (Philippine Scouts) at Fort Stotsenber, now a part of the old Clark Air Force Base. The Regiment was ordered to cover U. S. Forces retreating into the Bataan Peninsula who were outnumbered by vastly superior Japanese forces that had initially invaded in Lingayen Gulf, then later in many other locations.

While leading a 27-man platoon as advance guard of the 1st Philippine Army Division, he was ordered by General Wainwright to eliminate the problem of the Japanese in the Morong Village who were interfering with setting up a defensive line. He did, with the U. S. Cavalry's last charge into a battalion of Japanese troops, totally confused by these crazy Americans yelling and shooting at a fast gallop into their lines. For this feat, Lt. Ramsey was awarded the Silver Star.

With the surrender of American Forces in the Philippines, Lt. Ramsey and his friend, Capt. Barker, decided they were not going to surrender, but were going to escape. Both were in very bad physical health; Ramsey from a wound and dysentery, and Barker from exhaustion and dysentery. Nevertheless, they would try to escape the Philippines, never thinking that, instead, they would end up as guerilla commanders. There would be a long walk, under difficult conditions even in normal times, through Japanese lines from Mt. Marivles in Bataan to Timbo, just south of Ft. Stotenberg where there was a known guerilla group – but they did it.

The men’s conversion to guerillas started after talking with Cpl. John Boone of the 36th Infantry who knew the location of Colonel Claude Thorpe, who had been sent out by General MacArthur
with instructions to establish a resistance movement. Both Ramsey and Barker knew medical assistance was available at that location and that Colonel Thorpe might be able to help them escape the Philippines. Unfortunately, that did not occur. Though the East Central Luzon Guerilla Area Force was established on May 15, 1942, Colonel Thorpe, and later Capt. Barker, were captured, tortured, and executed by the Japanese. Thus, the eventual 40,000 Philippine fighters came under the command of Lt. Ramsey.

Initially, tactics and organization were based on trial and error, and later through contacts with the communist Huks. A copy of Mao’s book on guerilla warfare was read and discussed continuously. The key lesson was "we have to turn our weaknesses into strengths," the basis of any guerilla action. Dysentery, malaria, malnutrition, fear, and an enormous amount of responsibility took its toll. A radio was smuggled in from Mindanao, and continuous contact with General MacArthur and his staff provided much valuable intelligence that saved countless American lives when the Philippines were retaken in 1944.

By that time, Major Ramsey was so emaciated that he wore his pistol in a shoulder holster around his neck. He had no hips to support the weapon, and he only weighed 90 pounds. He had amoebic dysentery, anemia, acute malnutrition, malaria, and a general nervous collapse, all of which required two years' recuperation before he was almost normal.

Lt. Col. Ramsay is a long-term MOAA member. He invited me and some old friends to a book-signing event for his book, Lieutenant Ramsey’s War. (Available on Amazon.) Lt. Col. Ramsey told how he underwent an appendectomy without anesthesia at his guerilla camp. The appendix actually burst in the surgeon’s hand. Ramsey learned later that his Philippine guards advised the guerilla camp doctor that “if Major Ramsey dies, so do you.” But the surgeon was an old German doctor, not easily intimidated. He kept the appendix in a bottle until the Japanese finally found the guerilla headquarters and it had to be abandoned quickly.

The book-signing that day was a significant event for all of us, a privilege to meet a living legend. Note: a soft cover book reprint is due out soon.

– Submitted by Col. John Harms, USMC (ret.) –
Ah, Those Early Days...

Before Patriots Colony was ready to be occupied, but long after it was just a gleam in the eyes of some retired military officers, new residents began arriving in Williamsburg and surrounding areas. They had signed up, sold their houses, and here they were – ready and waiting to move in. Most were unaware of the others. But there was a group at Steeplechase Apartments who began a bond of friendship that presaged the atmosphere they would eventually find in Patriots Colony at Williamsburg.

We’re talking now of the Steeplechase when Monticello Marketplace was simply a large meadow, no houses around the two little ponds across the street, and no Monticello Avenue extended. To these little 750-square-foot apartments came twelve future residents of Patriots Colony. They began what was to become an institution here, the before-dinner cocktail get-together. Our apartments were far too small to do any other entertaining.

Rumors abounded as to when Patriots Colony would open. We all visited the site over and over again, watched the giant topsoil pile grow and then diminish as it was sold, talked to someone who "knew." It was all grist to our rumor mill.

Finally, the word went out! Patriots Colony would officially open on December 7, 1996. Well, at least the villas were ready as was the Assisted Living. Residents who were waiting for the apartment building to be finished were offered the option of moving into Assisted Living or, in one or two cases, of moving into a villa temporarily. Most of us gratefully accepted whatever we were offered.

So, we began moving in. It was a carefully orchestrated procedure because too many vans arriving at one time could spell disaster. As the vans arrived, so did emissaries of Patriots Colony Administration bearing large trays of beautiful salads and sandwiches as a welcoming gift.

Each night, our dining room experience was a delight. Our numbers were so small that we ate only in the round dining room. Eagerly, we’d look around to see who the newcomers of the day might be. Twenty-five, thirty, forty – all laughing and chatting together, enjoying the new experience.

Our first chef was a delightful young man. His dinner plates were works of art, everything placed "just so." He baked his own breads and each night we had a different, exotic piece to enjoy. After everyone was served, he’d wander the dining room asking if we’d enjoyed the meal and if we had any suggestions. We soon learned, however, that this young man had an Achilles heel – he couldn’t spell. Since it was also his role to prepare the menus, we usually found ourselves convulsed with laughter over his mistakes. As one resident quipped, "It isn’t the angle food cake I object to, it’s the chocolate mouse.” Someone in the Administration provided him with a chef’s dictionary, but that didn’t seem to help very much. In addition to his gastronomic delights, he added romance to our lives by proposing to and marrying a young lady who worked in Marketing. And we collected a fairly respectable amount of money, considering our numbers, as a gift for the young couple.

Most of us know two members of our dining room staff who have been here from the very beginning, but in fact, at first, there was also a nice young man who served both as dining room manager and maitre’d. Unfortunately, he seemed to be rather overwhelmed by the whole experience because he always looked as if he’d been doing the cooking over the hot stove rather than the chef – red faced, perspiring, collar wilting, you get the picture.

Meanwhile, the Five-Story continued its upward climb, floor by floor. As each floor was completed, residents could move into their apartments on that floor. The fifth floor was finally completed in mid-
February of 1997 – hallelujah! For several months thereafter, those residents who camped out here in the very early days, thinking themselves rather special, got together for a breakfast meeting. We’d exchange "misties" about our moves, our apartments, our daily lives. It really was quite special; but as time went by, that quality was lost as many other new experiences interposed.

In these early days, the Administration introduced into the mix a group of resident activities. Among, but not nearly all, the early starters were Bridge, Colony Chorus, Library, Worship/Chapel, and Poker. Many residents were somewhat amused when the Administration put out the word that in writing about the activities program, residents should avoid the use of the term "poker," lest readers believe that gambling was going on right here in River City.

During these early months, the Colony Crier was born, named by one resident, and produced by another on her private computer at home. She’d meet with the Administrator, get the news he wished to disseminate, and return home to type it all up. It was illustrated by those little clip art drawings that were found in all the computers of the mid-nineties.

At about the same time that residents’ activities began, we were offered an opportunity to serve on any of six standing committees – Activities, Communications, Food Service, Hospitality (which continued the work of the sponsor program begun when we were still living off campus), Facilities, and Health/Wellness, four of which remain active and relevant today. Leadership for both the activities and standing committees emerged rather than being designated.

The history of the formation of the Residents Council, its first Council members, and the creation of our Constitution and By Laws is to be found in another article in this issue.

There are some other happy memories of those early days. The chef gave us a lesson in brownie making in the Library! As part of the activities program, a group of ladies began meeting to work on their crafts and to give demonstrations of what they were doing, such as making beautiful objects from shells or producing boxes from wallpaper samples. Yet another group hired an instructor to teach them both oil and watercolor painting. Their first art show features these works and others they had done. The subsequent two shows opened up to include all types of crafts produced not only by residents, but those who worked here at the time.

And no one here in those early days will forget the Spotlight series of lectures put on by the residents themselves. Each resident "spotlighted," or talked of, his or her prior life – what was like to be captain of a submarine or an aircraft carrier, or to be incarcerated in a Stalag prison by the Germans, or pretending to be blind so that you and your young husband could bring your German shepherd dog across country for free on a bus. This Spotlight series was memorable and was just one more thing that served to bring our disparate community together.

These little reminiscences indicate the feeling of caring and concern between and for residents that has been cultivated and enhanced here at Patriots Colony since the very beginning. Thus, when we and our fellow residents have been away and return, we know what is meant when someone says, "WELCOME HOME!"
LOOKING BACK ON VIETNAM MEMORIES DURING ANOTHER CRUEL APRIL

April is the cruellest month…

The Waste Land, by T. S. Eliot

Enforced social distancing and the consequent abundance of time for reflection can give rise to some unusual mental connections. For me, it was a letter from a previously unknown Foreign Service Officer colleague and memories of another cruel April 45 years ago, when Saigon and the Republic of Vietnam fell to the communist North Vietnamese. This connection, which was brought to mind by Eliot’s poem, evoked not only sad recollections but also some cautious long-term optimism.

Peter Tomsen, the previously unknown FSO colleague, saw an excerpt from my oral history that was published by the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training to mark Valentine’s Day. It was about the experience of my then-fiancée, Tuy-Cam, and me when we were caught behind the North Vietnamese lines in Hué during the Tet Offensive that began on January 30, 1968. We were eventually liberated by U.S. Marines and reunited on Valentine’s Day, February 14.

This prompted Peter, who is working on his oral history, to send me a letter about his experience in the final days of April 1975, just before Saigon fell to the North Vietnamese on April 30. He was one of a group of FSOs at the Saigon embassy who were contacting and helping evacuate Vietnamese who were closely associated with Americans and hence at high risk of imprisonment or worse under North Vietnamese rule. I was then working on the State Department Vietnam task force that was set up in the wake of the massive North Vietnamese invasion of the South that began in January. I had sent a message to the embassy requesting that some of Tuy-Cam’s family members be included in the evacuation.

Peter saw my message and went to the house of Tuy-Cam’s uncle, near Tan Son Nhut airport, on April 22, to prepare him and his family with the proper papers to join an evacuation group being set up for the following day. When he returned to the embassy, Peter was assigned to other duties, so he never knew what happened to this family. He wrote me to find out.

Peter remembered the man he had met that day only as “a lawyer,” so I explained that he was Thanh-trong Thuan, a judge and former high-ranking government official, and was thus at extremely high risk. After the death of Tuy-Cam’s father, uncle Thuan became her guardian, and it was from him as well as her mother that we had to seek permission to marry. I had gotten to know him when Tuy-Cam and I were both working at the U.S. embassy (and courting), so his blessing was forthcoming.

I told Peter that Thuan, his wife, four children, and the older son’s fiancée were picked up by an American vehicle the day after his visit, as he had arranged, and they were successfully evacuated. After three weeks in the refugee processing system, through Guam and Fort Chafee,
they were resettled in Quebec. Thuan and his wife are now deceased, but the children are thriving: Three remain in Canada, and one married a Vietnamese refugee doctor in Indiana.

For Tuy-Cam and me, recalling those dark days of April 1975 added more sadness to the grim pandemic news we see every day. She lost her native country, the Republic of Vietnam, a country I had worked hard throughout the previous decade to preserve. We had lost many friends and family members in the war; now we were to lose others who were thrust into the cruel gulags the communists called “re-education camps.”

But the story also had some ultimately optimistic outcomes: The Than-trong family lives on, now in America and Canada as well as in Vietnam; and Vietnam, freed in the late 1980s from the worst economic and police-state policies of the communist regime, is now thriving under a free market system and welcomes American trade, tourists, and even U.S. Navy ship visits.

Bringing closure to this story by connecting Peter and Thuan’s children has helped Tuy-Cam and me cope with the cruel April of 2020 and sustains our hope for better Aprils to come.

Jim and Tuy-Cam Bullington served in eight countries, all in Southeast Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa, in his 34-year foreign service career that began in Vietnam, 1965-68. He was Ambassador to Burundi and Dean of the State Department’s highest-level training program. In retirement, he has published three books, including *Global Adventures on Less-Traveled Roads: A Foreign Service Memoir*. They have lived in Patriots Colony since 2014.

– Jim Bullington –
Editorial Policy

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