

T H E ECHO

February 2021

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Bigfoot Sighting in the Meadow

At least it's wearing a mask.

News from the Yard Maintenance Committee

by PEGGY HILL

Marin Valley is in a high fire danger area, and we all need to find better ways to protect our homes! This includes removing dry grasses and keeping plants thinned and pruned of dried and diseased wood, thus decreasing fuel for wildfires. Because some of our neighbors are not able to clean up and fireproof their gardens/yards due to financial and/or physical constraints, three months ago PAC agreed to form a Yard Maintenance Committee to work with HOL and Matt Greenberg to access the PAC Humanitarian Fund to help our neighbors.

The Committee has worked with HOL and with Matt and Stephen

Plocher to arrange for the transfer of funds to compensate gardeners who are willing to work with the program.

The PAC Humanitarian Fund (separate from the MVMCC Rental Humanitarian Fund) began several years ago with the help of and donations from the late Marv Weissensee. At present, in addition to a donation from HOL, there is money in the fund to start up this yard maintenance program, but donations are gratefully accepted and also needed to ensure the program's continuation.

Please send checks made out to the

**PAC HUMANITARIAN FUND to
Matt Greenberg, 100 Marin Valley Drive, Novato, CA 94949.**

Correction – The cactus image in the January *Echo* should have said “A twenty-five-year-old *Rhipsalis*, commonly known as a Christmas cactus.”

Amazing Bloom

Faucaria tigrina – a succulent commonly known as tiger jaws.



PHOTOGRAPH: LORNA SASS

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Email articles with “ECHO” as the subject line to Erma Wheatley: ermawheatley@gmail.com with a copy of the article in the body of the email. Images should be as large as possible.

ECHO DEADLINE
The 8th of the month or sooner for the following month's issue

MVMCC Management Update

Recent Theft: From RV MVD/Sunrise Lane Storage Lot

On December 27 at 4:30 am, a person driving a late-1990s or early 2000s Ford Expedition with shiny chrome rims entered Marin Valley. At 4:55 am, it exited the Park with a resident-owned trailer in tow. A Novato Police report was filed with clear pictures of the thief's vehicle entering and leaving the Park. Several years back, another resident trailer was stolen as well. We feel in this instance that the thief entered the Park with the intention of stealing this trailer and is familiar with the Park or perhaps with a resident living here. If you recognize this vehicle or know the person driving it, please alert Management. If you see this vehicle, write down the date and time so we can get a better read of the license plate.

Thank you.



Matt Greenberg
Matt Greenberg

GENERAL MANAGER
gm.mvmcc@gmail.com
415-883-5911 ■ 415-883-1971 Fax

PAC Letter to Residents

Greetings from the Park Acquisition Corporation Board,

Our finances are in order. Our cash, plus medium- and long-term reserves, is more than \$6 million.

Work has begun on the '21/'22 budget, which will culminate in April/May with the oversight of the Novato City Council. Bring your suggestions of needs to Management and PAC Board members.

The recently installed security cameras are being upgraded to improve their effectiveness. Several instances of security breaches have pointed out their weaknesses.

We are working with the City Council to enhance residents' ability to defer some of their rent/lease obligations through

Hello Housing's Lot Rent Deferral Program. This should lower the bar a bit to allow more low-income residents to join the program. Management might be able to contact you if you have already applied and just missed the requirements.

The PAC Board has contacted the City Council and Staff urging MVMCC inclusion in any COVID-19 vaccine distribution for residents. **Tom Miller**, a former PAC Board member, came up with this idea – an example of how everyone can contribute to the enhancement of our community.

Our thanks to **Peggy Hill** (see p. 2) for her continued development of aid and support of PAC's ad hoc committee on yard maintenance. This program joins

with Management and HOL to aid low-income older residents to manage their lots for fire safety and appearance.

The agendas for future PAC meetings are posted 72 hours prior to the meetings and are also available to those on the mailing list. To be added to this list and for links to the meetings, contact **Anila Manning** at anilahere99@gmail.com. These meetings are usually also broadcast on Comcast Channel 26. See <https://marinvalley.net/3444-2/pac-minutes-2020/> for meeting recordings.

In service,



J Shelfer
Jay Shelfer

PAC PRESIDENT
jjshelfer@yahoo.com





Kitchen Safety

by JOHN FELD

The origin of most fires in mobile homes is the kitchen. And given that mobile homes have twice the fire-related fatalities of other dwellings, I figured this is something we should be concerned about. Also, we all want to be as independent of outside help and live in our own homes for as long as possible. Very few people look forward to in-home help or assisted living and, for many of us, the cost of such assistance is prohibitive. Thus, home safety is of paramount importance.

Mobile home fires most commonly arise from electrical issues. The second leading cause is cooking-related fires. And, this being winter, it is pertinent to know that about 40% of burns occur between December and February.

I reached out to two of the professional or formerly professional, chefs in the community, **Lorna Sass** and **Edgar Furlong**, and together we compiled a list of additional dangers lurking in the kitchen that should be addressed. So first I will discuss fire hazards in our kitchens and then move on to other dangers.

Asleep at the Switch

The cause of most cooking-related fires is from unattended cooking. If you have pans on a stove, either gas or electric, do not leave the room or sit down at the kitchen table with a good book or crossword or, even worse, listen to something with earphones or earbuds. When cooking, keep your attention on what you are doing. Now, that does not mean you should never walk away from a slow cooker that may have hours to run or from something baking in the oven. Of course, it is always wise to at least be in the house when something is cooking on the stovetop, and preferably be in the kitchen.

Fires

If an item on the stove catches fire or starts to burn enough to smoke, you should NEVER try to extinguish this with water. When water is applied to a hot pan, especially one with fat in it, the water will tend to repel the oil and hot items, which are the cause of the fire, and push them out of the pan onto you, the counter, and the floor. Smothering a fire to take away the oxygen is always the best solution, using a lid, an oven mitt, or a washcloth,

for example. If you have a suitable fire extinguisher handy (and you should) with the letters ABC boldly printed on the extinguisher itself, then use that. ABC extinguishers use monoammonium phosphate, a dry chemical that can quickly put out different types of fires, including grease fires. You should also have this type of extinguisher elsewhere in the house. You might want to keep these unlovely canisters in a cupboard, typically under the sink, but make sure they are always quickly and easily accessible.

Smoke Alarms

Of course, you should have smoke alarms in your home that will warn you of impending dangers. Some people do not like them actually in the kitchen as they have an annoying tendency to go off when you even slightly burn your toast, but located somewhere close to the kitchen these devices can alert you before a fire gets out of hand.

Smoke alarms are associated with lower casualties in both manufactured and “stick-built” homes. Despite the Rotary Club and the Novato Fire District regularly handing out alarms and replacing batteries in Marin Valley, it is reported that up to half (50%) of all manufactured home fires have insufficient or no smoke alarms. Since manufactured homes are required to be sold with smoke alarms installed, this implies a disturbingly high number of smoke alarms being removed or disabled by residents.

GFCIs

All plugs in the kitchen, except those connecting your refrigerator or freezer, should be GFCI plugs. GFCI stands for “ground fault circuit interrupter.” A GFCI is required in any area with an increased risk of shock due to electrical hazards, such as water. To protect you from electrical hazards, a GFCI monitors electrical current, turning off an electrical circuit when it detects an imbalance – current flowing along an unintended path. Think of a GFCI as a small, extra-sensitive circuit breaker built right into an outlet to protect you against electrocution, even in outlets that are not grounded. Code requires us to have GFCI plugs in kitchens and bathrooms. These plugs can be bought at Home Depot, Pini, or even Amazon and typically cost between \$13 and \$24. If you need someone to install it for you, this can cost about \$120 per plug.

Extension Cords

Try your best to never use an extension cord in the kitchen, but if you must use one, make sure it is heavy duty and is grounded (has three prongs on the plug). It should also be equipped with an on/off switch and have a circuit breaker. Make sure the switch is always turned off when not in use. And, as emphasized in last month's *Echo*, never connect one extension cord into another. People tend to have the impression that extension cords can handle multiple appliances and tools, etc., without risk of overloading a circuit. Not true. Overloading an extension cord can be dangerous and can at the very least cause circuit breakers in your subpanel to "trip" or turn off.

Knives

Lorna Sass told me she is often surprised at how dull people's knives are. A dull knife is more likely to slip and cut you than a sharp knife. Keeping your knives sharpened is one of the easiest ways to keep them safe. Blunt knives are potentially dangerous as well as frustrating. If you are not a whiz with a sharpening stone or a knife sharpener, you can take your knives to get them professionally sharpened. You should do this at least once a year. A steel is not a sharpener. A steel is an abrasive rod that aligns microscopic bits of steel back into the correct place after they have become bent by cutting or hitting a hard surface like a cutting board, sink, or bone. You use a steel almost every time you use your knife.

Lorna uses a Chantry knife sharpener that she says "has been easy and great; you just run the knife through about ten times and then you can cut anything with ease." If I remember correctly, Edgar uses an electric sharpener from Chef's Choice; apparently they can often be found at thrift stores, but retail they cost about \$150 and up.

Keeping carving, boning, vegetable, and paring knives loose in a drawer or washing them in a dishwasher can easily cause them to be blunted, chipped, or made less sharp by inadvertent knocks and dings. While an unsharp knife does not cut cleanly and easily, it can be the cause of kitchen cuts.

Pot Handles

Another safety issue often seen in kitchens is the handles of pots and pans hanging over the edge of the stove, or in the way of other cooking activities. Simply turning pot handles away from edges and from yourself instantly makes your kitchen safer. Aging adults should also make sure oven mitts and potholders are easily accessible to prevent burns.

Other professional kitchen safety advice includes:

- If you have a linoleum or wood floor, use **nonslip floor mats** around the sink.
- Make sure the **electric bulbs are bright** enough for you to see clearly and to be able to read the small print on labels.
- **Wear shoes when cooking.** Dropped knives are the cause of many household accidents.
- **Clean your cutting boards with vinegar** to get rid of carried-over tastes and bacteria.
- Make sure the **refrigerator is set to 40 degrees Fahrenheit** to keep meats, dairy, and other perishables safe.
- Make sure that the **heavier items** in the kitchen are **around hip level**, to prevent them from causing pain when lifting.
- **Clean all surfaces after cooking.**
- Use **bright lights.** Dim lights can hide dangers.
- **Activate your hearing aids when cooking.** Kitchen designers assume you can hear warning sounds, which have become more common in modern kitchens.

Lastly, if you live alone, or spend many hours on your own, consider subscribing to a medical alert system. We have all seen the ads that start "Help, I've fallen and can't get up." Well, this does actually happen to many of us as we age. ■

Register for ALERT MARIN
to receive emergency alerts
from Marin County

www.alertmarin.org

415-473-6376



The EyeOn App price increase to \$9.99 will be honored by MVEST for the first 10 residents requesting reimbursement.

PLEASE NOTE

If anyone comes across evidence of a fire, camping, or smoking — DO NOT disturb it, but leave it as it is for evidence to be properly investigated. Instead, report it by notifying Matt.

Feeling Lucky Today?

by KEVIN MULVANY

From what I can gather, there is a general consensus that we have all hit the jackpot by living here. Just the same, after driving over a million miles and briefly teaching traffic violator school, I can't help but notice a fly in the soup. We all need to be a little more careful when walking and driving about the Park.



What's wrong in this picture?

- In the absence of sidewalks, always try to walk **FACING** traffic (your **LEFT**-hand side of the street) so you can quickly spot approaching vehicles.
- Whenever stopping to chat with neighbors, keep a sharp eye out for traffic in either direction, especially for electric cars, which are difficult to hear approaching.
- As some drivers exceed the 15 MPH speed limit and/or roll through stop

signs, be especially cautious when approaching or standing about blind corners or intersections.

- Bright, reflective clothing and a good flashlight can make it possible for drivers to spot you at night or during poor visibility conditions such as fog, the headlights of approaching cars, or rain.
- Finally, let's not forget our neighbors at the Hamilton Woods

apartments when leaving the Park. Slow down for people parking their cars and for pedestrians and darting small children.

Speeding, rolling stop signs, inattention, poor visibility or eyesight, medications, fatigue, alcohol, road conditions, and weather can all affect any driver's ability to react and stop in time. Let's stay on our toes to stay out of the news. ■

Message from Mar Val

Dear Friends,

Mar Val wishes to add our congratulations to those being given to **Janie Crocker** on her outstanding record of achievements as President of HOL. Further, we wish every success to **John Feld** as he succeeds Janie in this role. John has for many years been a willing and much

valued volunteer at various Mar Val functions, and we are grateful for his commitment to our community.

2021 marks the 51st year of Mar Val's sponsorship of the social activities within MVMCC. We appreciate all those who have contacted us during the past months expressing regret at the suspension of our weekly and

monthly gatherings; however, we are convinced the future is hopeful and that this year will be extraordinary.

With warmest regards,



Kathleen Dargie

Kathleen Dargie
MAR VAL PRESIDENT
kfdargie@aol.com

Home Owners League Message

Greetings from HOL.

During the pandemic, HOL has kept busy attempting to make life easier and more bearable for Marin Valley residents.

Thank you, Ray It is with sadness that we see the winding down of Ray Schneider's wonderful service to HOL. Over the years he has been a dedicated and enthusiastic supporter of life in Marin Valley. His most recent task has been administering the Just One Hour program, which has done so much to aid residents over the years. This awesome task is now in the very capable hands of **Marlene Montalvo** (marlene24@comcast.net). See below.

Rollin' Root Coins We continue to offer occasional discount tokens for Rollin' Root. The next subsidy will be on Valentine's week in February. HOL will be giving the first 40 resident shoppers tokens worth \$5 at the Rollin' Root.

Haul Away Days We had a very successful trash hauling event recently. HOL Board member Ed Collins drove

a rented trailer to the dump to haul away several residents' discarded items. He will once again be doing this on Friday, February 12th and, if there is demand, on Saturday the 13th, unless it rains on those days, in which case it will await dryer days. To help Ed with this undertaking, please call him to volunteer.

Contractor's Database Soon the Handyman's Binder (renamed the Contractors Database) will be online for the use of residents only. We encourage everyone with good, bad, or indifferent experiences with contractors to please share those experiences with everyone. Nancy Bingham has spent hours going through past reports and has whittled these down to just the last five years. These will be the basis of the recommendations going forward. Reports can be made on paper, using forms to be available in the breezeway, as well as online. We encourage everyone recently working with contractors to complete the short form.

Medicine Recycling If, like myself, you have medicines that you no longer take, please do not throw them in the trash where they can pollute our water supply, but get them to one of several recycling places for old drugs. This can be done at several places in Novato: **CVS**—2035 Novato Blvd. & 1707 Grant Ave., **Kaiser Permanente**—97 San Marin Dr., and **Novato Police Dept.**—909 Machin Ave. These locations take only prescription drugs and will not take used "sharps," such as needles or scalpels, etc. Sharps can be disposed of at **Novato Community Hospital Outpatient Lab**—165 Rowland Ave., **Novato HHW Facility**—7576 Redwood Blvd., and **Pharmaca Pharmacy**—7514 Redwood Blvd. These and other drug drop-off locations in Marin are listed at <https://tinyurl.com/used-drugs> in the section **Residential drop-off kiosk locations**.

Best wishes,
HOL



John Feld
HOL PRESIDENT
johnmfeld@gmail.com
510-495-4138 cell

HOL COMMUNITY PRESENTATIONS

Just One Hour

Hello, everyone. My name is **Marlene Montalvo**, and I am the new chairperson of the Just One Hour committee. I'd like to give you an idea of what the committee does and what some of our plans are for 2021.

Just One Hour is made up of residents who have volunteered to help their neighbors for an hour at a time with various services, such as

light gardening/weeding, rides, phone calls, plant care, handyman tasks, light meals, reading, and shopping. We are planning to add some new services later this year, as things open up. Some of these are library book pickups, cookie and flower deliveries, and birthday card distribution. If you have any other suggestions, please let me know and we'll see if they can be added.

We have quite a few volunteers, but if you'd like to join us, just let me

know. And we can always use more people willing to give rides and to perform handyman chores.

If you are in need of some help, please get in touch with me and I'll do my best to connect you with someone. Also, if you know of someone who might need help and not be aware of this committee, please encourage them to contact me. You can reach me at marlene24@comcast.net or 415-883-8786. All requests are confidential.

Happy new year! Marlene ■



Biography Night

JANUARY

Wednesday, January 27 • 6:30 pm

with **John Feld Part 3**



FEBRUARY

Tuesday, February 9 • 6:30 pm

with **Janet Bogardus Part 2**



Tuesday, February 23 • 6:30 pm

with **Lorna Sass Part 3**

Contact **Kim Holscher** at kimholscher51@gmail.com for the link and to be notified of future Biography Nights. You can also check our website just before most Park events to get the links at www.marinvalley.net ■



Rollin' Root Coins

HOL will be giving out \$5 in Rollin' Root Farmers Market coins to the first 40 residents who come to the market during Valentine's Day week on Thursday, February 12 (11 am – noon) and Friday, February 13 (1–1:30 pm) while they last. ■



Home Funerals, Green Burials, and Vigils

After-Death Care Talk on Zoom

with

Aneesha Dillon

Conscious Dying Educator and Doula



Wednesday, February 24

6:30 – 8 pm

An information talk, with videos and slides

For more information and to sign up, contact Aneesha at aneesha@oshopulsation.com or 415-827-7137 to receive the Zoom link on the day before the talk.

Haul-Away Days

The second **HOL Dump Run** will be held midday on Friday, Feb. 12 and the morning of Saturday, Feb. 13. If you want to have your precious junk removed,

contact **Ed Collins** by email at mretc@hotmail.com or by text at 415-377-7696. Please, **NO PHONE CALLS UNLESS YOU DO NOT HAVE THE ABILITY TO TEXT OR EMAIL.**

Your name will be put on a list, and as many residents as possible will be helped. Let us know if you have a large item. Volunteers are appreciated. ■



Pool and Spa Use

In order to keep the spa open and the pool area safe for everyone during the COVID pandemic, please abide by the rules. Many of these rules are stipulated by the Marin County Health Department/Marin Recovers. There is an envelope attached to the pool gate containing Spa and Pool Rules as well as the mandatory waiver forms. All pool/spa users should read the rules carefully and submit a completed, one-time waiver before signing up to use the pool or spa. The pool/spa area is open 10 am–10 pm seven days a week for your enjoyment.

Following are the most important rules of use:

1. Registered residents only: No guests or visiting family members are allowed in the pool or the spa.
2. No more than ONE person in the pool or spa at a time. A maximum of TWO people is allowed ONLY if they are from the same household.
3. Neither individuals nor members of the same household can reserve two consecutive spa or pool time slots.
4. Since no toilet or shower facilities are currently available in the pool area, residents must shower at home IMMEDIATELY before pool or spa use. No exceptions.
5. Use of the spa, pool, and pool area is PROHIBITED if you have had diarrhea or have been sick. You must be fully recovered for two (2) weeks prior to using the spa or pool.
6. No spitting or clearing of your nose in the spa or pool or on the deck is allowed.
7. The daily signup sheets allow residents to reserve a 25-minute spa or pool slot with a 5-minute transition period to the next user. Please exit promptly after your time period.
8. Residents may sign up for two (2) spa or pool sessions per week in advance; thereafter, when free spots are available, one time slot on the same day of use may be reserved.
9. Except for members of the same household, users of the pool area shall remain at least six feet apart at all times.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact HOL board member Kamala Allen: dr.allen108@gmail.com

We very much appreciate everyone for following the rules and wish you and your family a safe, happy, and healthy 2021. ■

Serena Fisher (Spa/Pool Committee member)



Remains by Janet Bogardus

Tents and Towers

Recent Works by Resident Artist Janet Bogardus

Manna Gallery is pleased to present its first show for 2021: *Tents and Towers*, recent works by Marin artist Janet Bogardus.

January 23 – March 6

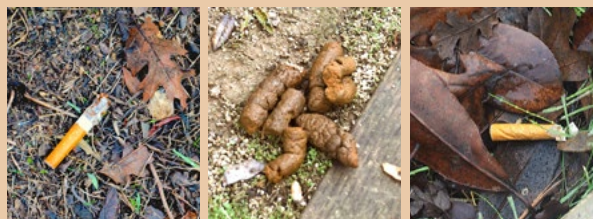
Reception:
Saturday, January 30,
2 – 4 pm,

manna
473 25th St.
Oakland, CA 94612
510-536-7559
mannagallery.com
info@mannagallery.com

Hours—
Saturdays 12–5 pm
and by appt.

Really? What Were They Thinking?

Please Leave the Paths Clean for Your Neighbors



These are examples of items regularly found on paths between Panorama and Fallen Leaf, and Panorama and Marin Valley Dr. Please think again! Your actions affect your neighbors.

Janet Bogardus

Growing Up in the Bronx

by Henry Frummer

I grew up in a very pleasant neighborhood in the northwest Bronx called Kingsbridge Heights. Aptly named, it is situated on the high ground overlooking the once-strategic King's Bridge that connected Manhattan to the mainland. I did not grow up in just any Bronx; I grew up in THE Bronx. Oddly enough, two historical figures would influence my experience of growing up by creating a unique Bronx geography.



First Park

New York City is a city of immigrants. My neighborhood was made up of mostly Jewish, Italian, and Irish of the second generation. But it seemed to me like the world was inhabited mostly by Jews. The people in my building, my intimate community, were mostly all Jews. When I went to public school, it felt that we were not a minority group at all. The teachers were Jewish and perhaps one kid per class of 32 was not. Parochial school got all of the Catholic kids. Heck, our schools were even closed on the Jewish holidays. Despite the fact that it was a happy neighborhood, there was an uneasiness hanging over it. We lived in the shadow of the Holocaust. It was a recent memory for our parents, especially our fathers, who all fought in the war. We lived side by side with camp survivors. One of my neighbors living on our floor had blue numbers on her arm. I noticed it while we were watching her TV and asked my mother about it. From an early age, I had to come to grips with the events that took place six years before my birth. That neighbor had an early TV with a tiny screen perhaps a couple of inches tall. In front of it was a large magnifying glass; even King Kong looked tiny on it.

Perhaps that was one of the beauties of New York. Each minority would self-segregate until the area felt like home. Little Italy in the Bronx (portrayed in *Green Book*) felt like another world, with hams unaccountably hanging from the ceilings of the shops and Italian spoken on the street. This kind of unique ethnic character was duplicated all over the city. It was a melting pot where the flavors remained distinct. When I was older, I explored these places as if traveling the world, with its sights and sounds and food, especially the street food on pushcarts. It was a world filled with clichés. Walking along my local shopping street, there was an Italian pizza place, an Irish bar, a Chinese laundry, a kosher deli and a kosher butcher, and a Chinese restaurant (yes, where we ate Christmas dinner), all of which were manned by their respective ethnic group. There were also the ubiquitous diners with their oddly large and

varied menus, for some reason always run by Greeks. We knew the owners' names, and they knew ours or at least knew us by sight. I realize as I write this that they watched us grow up and steadily be replaced by new faces.

The center of our shopping universe was the candy store, which sold a bit of

everything. This is where we got our, well, candy, but also pretzels, ice cream, magazines, and baseball cards. It had a lunch counter and a soda fountain where you could get hamburgers and milk shakes. It was not glitzy like an ice cream parlor or sterile like today's 7-Eleven. It was more like home with lots of wooden fixtures and inviting smells. I can't imagine people getting all misty-eyed thinking about their local convenience store, but people feel that way about their local candy store.

It was a lower-middle-class area, with few luxuries but even fewer wants. We all wore hand-me-downs, and the purchase of a new car was a rare event. But the food was plentiful and the escape to summer camp or bungalow colony in the summer was common. There were those breezeless sultry summer nights when it never cooled down and you slept only on bottom sheets while the sounds of the street wandered through the open windows. There was little "keeping up with the Joneses," perhaps because you would have to look far and wide to actually find one.

Even though it was New York City, my area was not a concrete jungle — no dreary and uniform block after block of apartment buildings that is so common in New York. My apartment building had a park right next to it, and there was a series of parks one block from each other. Once we could cross the street alone, the possibilities were seemingly endless, as each park had a distinct character. First Park (its actual name) was next to where I lived and had a playground with swings and monkey bars. Second Park was where we sledded and held snowball fights. One of my fondest memories was a mass snowball fight there with at least 20 kids per side, an early form of paintball, if you will. Third Park held the challenging rocks to climb, for a six-year-old, that is. Fourth Park had a plaque mentioning the old Fort Number Four. There were other parks, but these were ones we played in. I have George Washington to thank for all of it. He built a series of forts, including nearby Fort Independence, to try to stop the British after he evacuated Manhattan. Several delaying actions were fought in the Bronx before Washington had to retreat from there as well, leaving behind some nice parks for me to play in.



The Armory

But the person who transformed the geography of my neighborhood most dramatically was Winston Churchill's grandfather. He built a racetrack in 1866 that was located directly across the street from where my apartment building was to stand. It was quite successful and brought many innovations to the racing world, and when it eventually closed the city decided to build a reservoir on half of the site, and on the other half they built three large high schools, one public school, one college, and a massive Armory.

From an early age I was surrounded by kids my age. Being in the middle of the Baby Boom, about eight of us of the same age in my building grew up together. We were pushed side by side in our strollers and ended up going to college together. Moving away was rare, and I lived in this building for the first 22 years of my life. I was molded by this kind of stability, and so in later life, during my 41 years in California, I have had only two addresses.

When in school we wore shoes that we periodically brought to the shoemaker for heels and soles, but in the playground we all wore black Converse High Tops. We played cowboys and Indians like the rest of 1950s America. Coonskin caps were the rage; thank you, Davy Crockett. We did the fad of the day whether it was spinning tops or playing with yo-yos, each trying to be the best. There was stickball, played with a broom handle and pink Spalden ball. There were so many parks and schoolyards around that I never played in the streets like many kids did. We played "Scully" with bottle caps or marbles, trying to "get all the marbles," and the always popular indoor sport, baseball card flipping. The game I loved the best was tackle football in the snow. My low center of gravity really came in handy. Often we were off on long walks; from an early age we were told to go and play outside and not to come up until 6 pm, when dinner would be on the table. We had a great deal of freedom at an early age.

New Yorkers are big walkers. We were rarely driven anywhere except for family outings. The subway was a third of a mile away. The main shopping area, Fordham Road, was three-quarters of a mile away. Our favorite walk was the two miles to Van Cortland Park at the north edge of the Bronx, if for no other reason than to eat at the White Castle nearby. It is only now that I am puzzled by the fact that we did not go to the Bronx Zoo, which was the same distance. By 12 years old I

was riding the subways alone. This opened all of Manhattan to me, including going to Central Park, where the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Museum of Natural History were located. The subways were cheap, and the museums were free. When I was in high school Saturdays were often spent exploring the city. I loved to visit the museum called the Cloisters in the very northern end of Manhattan, where I spent time in my brooding teenage years looking at Medieval art and listening to piped-in Gregorian chants. It was filled with cloisters from Europe that Rockefeller brought back brick by brick, situated on a high bluff with views of the Hudson River. It was a two-plus mile walk from my house, but the tough part was going from Kingsbridge Heights down to the East River and up to the even higher Washington Heights. The famous Bronx stairs in *Joker* will give you an idea of those long stairways down to the river. My friends were not nearly as museum crazy as I was, and I preferred going alone anyway.



Loew's Paradise Theatre

The intersection of Fordham Road and Grand Concourse was one of the great shopping centers of the Bronx. It was anchored by the, huge for its day, department store, Alexander's. The area contained all sorts of stores, from fancy ice cream parlors to upscale shoe stores. It was also where several movie theaters were located. Built in the '30s when going to the movies was a fancy experience, they were grand theaters, and the grandest of them all was Loew's Paradise, which resembled a European opera house more than a place where movies were shown. Its furnishings were dazzling. Even during a movie, I would gaze at the starry ceiling and the ornate gold carvings that entirely covered the inside. It was a time of double features. What I find puzzling now is that we did not try and catch the beginning of the movies but showed up whenever we wanted. Then at a certain point we would say, "This is where we came in," and leave. I would never think of doing that now.

Our mothers did not work outside the home, so a home-cooked meal was standard and became a time for the family to get together. We never watched TV while eating. We kept multiple conversations going at once, each of us jumping in whenever we wanted. This kept accelerating until my mother in exasperation told us that we had to limit the number of simultaneous conversations to the number of people at the table. There is a scene in

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The Shot that Keeps Giving

Giving and Receiving the COVID-19 Vaccine

by MEG JORDAN, PhD, RN, NBC-HWC

As an active, licensed RN and member of the Marin Medical Reserve Corps, I've undergone specialized training to offer COVID-19 vaccine injections for the Department of Health and Human Services. This is a story of that experience, starting on Dec. 23, 2020, when I was teamed with three other RNs, one paramedic, and public health officials to provide some of the first injections to the health care staff at a nearby skilled nursing facility (SNF).

All summer I had served as a COVID case investigator and contact tracer and then, following more hours of training, started testing people for COVID, performing all three types of swabs—nasopharyngeal, mid-turbinate, and anterior nares. To do this specialized work, you have to be test-fitted with an N95 mask and be sprayed in the face with a noxious-smelling gas to see if you can taste it on your tongue, which would indicate a leak in the mask. If that happens, you try another mask. You also have to learn the updated protocol for wearing personal protective equipment (PPE), including gowns that wrap around you, fit-tested masks, face shields, hair covers, booties, and double gloving.

I'm grateful to the County public health directors who made sure that vaccinators and testers were as protected as possible. Our team met a few days before Christmas at the SNF only to find that the staff had no idea we were coming and were unprepared for us. County public health departments are notoriously underfunded, and with all the last-minute, urgent activity of this pandemic, it's no wonder that a few phone calls and notifications are missed. But the SNF director scrambled, and we pulled the clinic together.

Because the facility was a hot zone with an active COVID outbreak, we had to give the injections in an outdoor courtyard, on a briskly cold day for five to six hours. We took no breaks because we didn't want to don and doff our PPE (with an airborne virus, that alone is a risk), so that meant no lunch, no drinks, no bathroom. We borrowed folding tables and quickly went about sterile-wiping everything down, including a dozen chairs, while we set up four stations: one for registration and counseling, two vaccination tables, and

one recovery area, where people were observed for 15–25 minutes for possible adverse reactions or anaphylaxis. I noted how smoothly my RN colleagues, all former or current ICU or ER nurses like myself, moved into action together, even though we had never met till that morning. It was a familiar, no-nonsense rhythm of providing what was critically needed, and a welcomed break from the social and political worries and obsessions I experience most days of this lockdown.



A few words about this SNF: At first glance, it was dingy, bare bones and rundown and no doubt housed very elderly people who felt discarded or forgotten. This was no Redwoods or Villa Marin, where more affluent residents are expected to hand over life savings and enjoy a highly trained and entertaining staff. Instead, there were folks at this SNF who had no place else to go, but the new director of nursing was determined to create a safer, more pleasant ending to their lives. She had arrived at a poorly managed site and was cleaning it up, firing and hiring, and creating order out of chaos. Her methods reminded me of Florence Nightingale's two field treatments of basic hygiene and caring communication, and she told me she had actually fallen in love with the residents and staff and that the experience injected new life

into her long career. Well, all but one resident, who was a mentally unstable homeless woman who had found an empty room and taken up squatting rights ever since, spewing racist vitriol and ransacking a few rooms. They were at a loss on how to move her out. No agency would take her, and she observed our day-long clinic from her window.

You might wonder if we were there to vaccinate the frail elderly residents. No, just the staff. California follows the CDC recommendations to first vaccinate the most at risk, which are not the nonambulatory 90-year-olds but rather the health care workers – the nursing aids, orderlies, cooks, cleaners, and janitors of nursing homes and SNFs. These folks are often new immigrants and/or people of color with higher rates of chronic disease, who work for low wages due to minimal education or lack of documentation. They work hard holding on to the only job they can get without specialized credentials, and they do their best in the poorest of conditions. They are most at risk from an epidemiological viewpoint, taking public transit back

and forth to crowded living conditions, frequenting stores, or working extra shifts at essential-service jobs, in contact with hundreds of people each week, and also going room to room at the SNF, sometimes in more than one facility.

However, it wasn't always easy to convince staff to receive a voluntary injection. While a few gladly rolled up a sleeve for the intramuscular deltoid injection, several were influenced by false information about the "lack of testing" or that "it gives you the disease." One worker told me he heard about the deplorable, unethical Tuskegee experiments on Black men that monitored their untreated syphilis. I spent a lot of time listening to his fears, acknowledging the deceitful practices that marginalized people have undergone, and slowly earned his trust. It helped him to see the entire rest of the staff finally line up, and by the end of the day, he came in to get his own injection, but warned us that *if I die, I'm gonna sue y'all*. The deal was made.

When the public health official arrived with the refrigerated case of Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine, we gathered around to open the first box. I can't emphasize enough how emotional this moment was for all of us. We beheld the rows of tiny purple-capped vials, and a wave of emotion swept over the entire team. Maybe because these were among the first vaccines to arrive in Marin County, maybe because it was the day before Christmas Eve, and we were huddled together on a bone-chilling cold day in an SNF courtyard strung with paper Christmas decorations and a few cheery lights, but there was no denying that we felt like something precious and rare and long sought after was in our hands. It was viewed as a very privileged and sacred moment, a chance to end this epidemic of sickness, death, and loneliness. I gingerly picked up one vial with a double gloved hand and joked, *Look at us, we look like we're gazing at baby Jesus, as if a Christmas miracle had arrived!* And true to form, we bust out laughing, a typical response of emergency personnel to break the tension and get back to work.

We managed to warm the vials to room temperature, tracked the lot numbers, reconstituted it with 1.8 mL of 0.9% preservative-free saline, and drew up the .3 mL amounts in separate syringes. We then vaccinated the entire staff present, and even a few who had the day off but spent hours on buses to come back for their jab. At the end of the shift once everyone received the vaccine, we called the public health officers to say we had enough left over in the vials (Pfizer actually provides six to seven doses, more than the stated five), and got permission to inoculate each other. Another moment of deep gratitude. I was surprised that this injection left no heavy-arm feeling, nor did I have any flu-like symptoms the next day.

I've since been scheduled to do more vaccinator shifts this month, as my teaching schedule allows, and I'm urging the Marin County Public Health Officer, Matt Willis, MD, MPH, to consider the over-55 mobile home parks, such as Marin Valley and Los Robles, to be eventual vaccination sites. While most people I talk with are thrilled to know that the vaccine is slowly making its way to everyone, there are still those who are fearful of its safety, and in those cases, I offer this moment of mindful reframing. Consider transmuting that fear with the current fact-based reality, that the world is participating in a massive, coordinated effort to bring a remarkable mRNA breakthrough vaccine to everyone who needs it. It's the brilliant culmination of the work of thousands of people — scientists, virologists, clinical investigators of randomized controlled trials (RCTs), immunologists, epidemiologists, refrigerant engineers, delivery and dissemination experts, independent medical advisory boards, government and private-enterprise partners, dedicated public servants, and extraordinary public health leaders — and it is amazing that it winds up in the hands of volunteers like me willing to reach out and ask you to roll up your sleeve for a healthier, safer, happier world than what we've known this past year. ■

Contraindications and Precautions

Severe allergic reaction (e.g., anaphylaxis) to any vaccine component

Pfizer's has no egg or thimerosal (a mercury-containing organic compound preservative). If you have allergies, fever, bleeding disorder, or are on a blood thinner; are immunocompromised or are on a medicine that affects your immune system; are pregnant or about to become pregnant; are breastfeeding, or have received another COVID-19 vaccine, tell the vaccination provider and talk to your health care provider first before receiving the vaccine.

After receiving the vaccine, social distancing and masking are still required for safety to self and others.

The Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccine is an injection into the muscle, given in a two-dose series, about three weeks apart. Side effects that have been reported include injection site pain, tiredness, headache, muscle pain, chills, joint pain, fever, injection site swelling, redness, nausea, feeling unwell, and swollen lymph nodes (lymphadenopathy). Many of these normal side effects are evidence of the desired immune response. If you experience a severe allergic reaction, call 9-1-1 or go to the nearest hospital.

Woody Allen's *Annie Hall* that captured the spirit of our dinner table. There was no smoking among the parents and very little drinking; consequently my friends and I did not smoke or indulge in teenage drinking.

We all went to Hebrew School at the Orthodox synagogue, which was always referred to as the Shul (meaning school), after public school to prepare for our bar mitzvahs at age 13. We learned Hebrew and Jewish history. None of us kids went to the Shul for services. It was not the center of our community like a church would be. The families were culturally Jewish but few were observant Jews. No one kept kosher, but Jewish food (a variation on Polish cooking) was constantly on offer. Passover was the big holiday of the year, commemorating the flight out of Egypt. It is a long ritual meal that our family only occasionally did. But it was a time for relations to get together and have a big feast. Hanukkah was a minor holiday that no one made a big deal over. One of my friends had a Hanukkah bush, which was a small tabletop version of a Christmas tree. We all laughed at him for it. On the High Holy Days, some of the parents went to temple, but mostly people just dressed up and hung out in front of the building. I was always asked where my father was but had no real response, as he was always sitting home in his shorts watching a Yankees game. I just pleaded ignorance.

Apartment life had its advantages for us kids. When it was raining or snowing, all we had to do was get on the elevator and visit our friends. We were often in each other's houses, and everyone's parents seemed to tolerate whatever ruckus we made. I think we all knew each other for so long that we all got along well. I can't remember any serious problems among us. We never had fights, and I would joke that we would argue until one of us went home crying. Perhaps our values were just too similar. I was very bonded with them, so when we started half-day kindergarten and I was in the morning session and they the afternoon, it was a difficult time for me waiting until 3 pm, when I would hear them playing in the park under my window. Rushing out to join them, I was happy again. The apartment basement was filled with mysteries and dark, spooky corners. It was poorly lit, filled with noisy machinery. I had to walk the length of it to get to the basement elevator, avoiding the dark corridors leading off in other directions. It was a long time before I totally lost my nervousness about that walk. So you can imagine that we never played there, but it was the entranceway to the narrow alleys that ran along the buildings like a maze, a maze we knew very well. They were our own secret passages; at least in our minds they were secret.

Because of the unusual geography, it was as if I lived on a lake with parks around it. I walked to my public school, my junior high school (other side of the reservoir), my high school, and, yes, even my college while living at home. Most of my friends accompanied me through all of these schools. We liked school. We all knew somehow that we were going to college eventually, and grammar school was just one step toward that goal. Our parents didn't talk to us about college, much like they did not talk about the sun rising the next day. It was all understood. I look at the early class pictures and see the future doctors and

lawyers of America. I, the underachiever, became merely a chemist. My father wanted me to become an accountant like him. I guess this idea of a son going into the father's profession was still around in the '50s. Because everyone had a good idea of why they were in school, we were well behaved in class despite the fact we could not resist giving a substitute teacher a bit of a hard time. I went through school without anybody being bullied. I used to joke that the jocks in my high school were on the math team. There was no crime either. I have always been confused about the portrayal of city high schools in movies. One reason my experience was different is that I went to one of the specialized high schools that required an exam to get in. One would guess that the massive DeWitt Clinton HS that we could see from our school window had a different atmosphere. It was in high school that I finally met kids from all over the city. It was quite ethnically diverse. I was stunned to hear about what it was like to go to parochial school. They didn't seem to enjoy the experience.

So I finally learned that NYC was not a Jewish city but mostly a Catholic one. I came to realize why Saint Patrick's Day and Columbus Day were so huge. Going to Little Italy in Manhattan for a feast day was a scene straight out of *The Godfather*. It is sad for me that this iconic neighborhood is disappearing, being absorbed into Chinatown.

In an age when technological innovations were rare, two inventions changed our lives. The first was the ballpoint pen. Unused inkwells still garnished our school desks even after the advent of cartridge fountain pens. For the less handy of us, the latter could create quite a mess. When the BIC pen became available in 1958, we all switched, as they were so much easier to use. Nevertheless, because the early ones tended to leak, one could count on a favorite shirt eventually being ruined. The other invention that changed our lives was the portable transistor radio. It was the internet of our time. Music was marketed directly to us. We could listen to our music outside whenever we wanted to. Playing our 45s indoors might sometimes be a problem, but in the park we could always listen to our radios.

Then there were the Yankees. From our birth, their legends were told. Babe Ruth, Lou Gehrig, and Murderers' Row were our mythic heroes. Stand aside, Zeus and Athena; the Yankees were in town, just a short subway ride away. Not only did we have the heroes of the past, we also had our own, in the form of Mickey Mantle, Roger Maris, Yogi Berra, and many others. We had hundreds of sacred images of these men, that we solemnly traded. The pantheon was led by the inscrutable but wise Casey Stengel. The World Series was our holy week. We did not keep Kosher, but we kept Yankees.

My story is a very Jewish version of the North Bronx. I have seen other stories that tell Italian and Irish versions. These wax just as poetic as mine but with more Jesus and less matzo ball soup. By all the accounts on Facebook at least, the Bronx was a wonderful place to live in the '50s and '60s. On my visits back recently, it seems to be that again. Probably various aspects of my experience growing up would be familiar to many in my generation, no matter where you lived in America. ■

Pine Siskin and Friends

Article and Photography by **DAVID GRAY**



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Pine siskin female hanging

Pine siskin male hanging



Pine siskin and lesser goldfinch female



Lesser goldfinch

Pine siskin launching

The pine siskins (*Carduelis minus*) have been literally hanging around our Park this winter with their fellow travelers, the lesser goldfinches, both eating from the sweetgum tree seedpods. The pine siskins are nomadic, so we cannot count on them to show up, but both their and the lesser goldfinch's year-round range includes our part of Northern California.






















Both the pine siskin and the lesser goldfinch are members of the finch family, and it makes sense that flocks of both seed eaters would show up on the same sweetgum trees whose seedpods are ripe. There were 10 to 20 of these birds in whichever tree seemed to be most favored; they did seem to have particular trees that they liked in any given copse of sweetgums. Luckily for me, they gravitated toward the sunniest one on the edge of a line of trees, allowing me to get more unobstructed photographs.

The pine siskin is a small bird, smaller than a sparrow, and weighing about half an ounce. It is overall a brown bird with mottled streaks of darker brown over a light-brown to cream-colored background. Both the male and female have yellow edging on their wings, with additional and broader yellow edging on the male that also includes its tail. The tail is notched, its bill is dark, and its eyes are dark brown.

Like many finches, pine siskins don't really concern themselves with staying upright. They are motivated to get into the entire sweetgum seedpod, and like the lesser goldfinches, hang from the seedpods as they feed or grasp them in a foot and pull them upwards to the twig where they are sitting.

The pine siskins eat seeds from other trees as well, including alders, birches, and pines. They get their name for their affinity for pine seeds.

I am grateful to the people who have planted so many of the sweetgum trees in our Park; not only do they provide food for our feathered friends, they also turn a stunning red in the fall. Keep your eyes peeled for bunches of these little brown-striped birds eating from the sweetgum seedpods! ■

SUNDAY JANUARY 31	MONDAY 1	TUESDAY 2	WEDNESDAY 3	THURSDAY 4	FRIDAY 5	SATURDAY 6	
	6 AM Trash Pickup 5-6 PM MVEST Meeting  Zoom / Contact John Hansen for link	6 PM PAC Board Meeting Zoom / Contact Anila Manning for link	 11 AM-12:30 PM End of Life Fulfillment, Care, & Planning with Aneesha Dillon Zoom / Contact Aneesha Dillon for link 6 PM HOL Board Meeting Zoom / Contact John Feld for link	11 AM-12 PM The Rollin' Root Clubhouse Parking Lot 	1-1:30 PM The Rollin' Root Clubhouse Parking Lot 		
7	8 6 AM Trash Pickup 5 PM MVEST Meeting  ECHO DEADLINE	9 6:30 PM Biography Night Janet Bogardus Pt. 2  Zoom / Contact Kim Holscher for link	10  11 AM End of Life Fulfillment, Care, & Planning	11 11 AM The Rollin' Root 	12 1 PM The Rollin' Root  Midday Haul-Away Day Text or email Ed Collins 	13 Morning Haul-Away Day Text or email Ed Collins 	
14	15 6 AM Trash Pickup 5 PM MVEST Meeting  PRESIDENTS' DAY	16	17  11 AM End of Life Fulfillment, Care, & Planning	18 11 AM The Rollin' Root 	19 1 PM The Rollin' Root 	20	
VALENTINE'S DAY	21	22 6 AM Trash Pickup 5 PM MVEST Meeting 	23 6:30 PM Biography Night Lorna Sasss Pt. 3  Zoom / Contact Kim Holscher for link	24  Home Funerals, Green Burials, and Vigils with Aneesha Dillon 6:30-8 PM · Zoom Contact Aneesha Dillon for link	25 11 AM The Rollin' Root 	26 1 PM The Rollin' Root 	27  FULL MOON 6:42 PM
28							

FEBRUARY 2021