

Helping Alexandria's seniors who prefer to remain—independently—in their own homes

Writing Your Story

by Kay Cowan

Our stories belong to each of us. They are unique in that they represent our observations, our reactions and our feelings. They are our legacy, our memories.

When my 96-year-old mother passed away, she left behind her memoirs, a view into her inner thoughts. I knew about the move from South Carolina to Connecticut as part of family lore. But I had no sense of her feelings of isolation intertwined with her excitement about new beginnings in Connecticut, until I read her memoirs.

Ruth Tucker, a headmistress of a struggling school in Massachusetts, shared her written ruminations about her dislike of rote learning, pointless educational jargon and intrusive oversight by trustees. Her stories stand in counterpoint to the school's history. They testify to her soul, humor and fortitude. They reside in the school's archives, providing a legacy of indefatigable leadership.

These cameos represent two stories about the value of personal memories. What stories might you share? I invite you to join me for an introductory session on memoir writing, and, should you wish to continue, a subsequent five session workshop where you will capture turning points in your life and moments that are yours alone to share.

As a teacher and Head of School, I have coached students and teachers to express themselves in writing. Writing as a process profits from feedback, offered and accepted with good will. We are all students learning together. At the introductory session, I will offer a one-page memoir for small group critique so that participants may experience the structured feedback proposed for future sessions.

The first session will meet on Tuesday, September 24, 2:00-3:30 PM, at Abyssinia Market and Coffee House, 720 Jefferson Street, Alexandria, VA 22314. Please RSVP at athomeinalexandria.org.



Estabrooke bids us farewell

by Cele Garrett

Many of you know Monica Estabrooke, who has been part of AHA's operations team (most recently as operations supervisor) for many years. She has chosen to leave her post at AHA after 7+ years. What you may not know about Monica is that she was a member of AHA's first board of directors. This was a real coup for AHA, because we have benefited from her skills obtained from decades of corporate work with IBM, AARP and the United Way International. She continues to be a consultant for the United Way, advising nonprofits on strategic planning and fundraising. In fact, she has helped to kickstart a new village in her own neighborhood in Fairfax and currently serves as a board member of that organization.

She joined the staff in 2012. This is a real change for me personally, as Monica and I have worked together since I began working for AHA in 2013. I have looked to her for advice and she has always been the person to remind me of the importance of focusing on the "big picture" (as any executive director must do) and to not get overly mired in the details. She surely will be missed.



Monica will be in and out of the office over the coming days to ensure a smooth "hand-off" to our able office team. We will bid farewell to her properly. Look for further details shortly.

Off We Go

by Maggie Stauffer

Blazing Saddles, AHA's cycling group, is gearing up for summer rides and we would like you to join us. If your bike is gathering dust, no problem. We will come over and help with a minor tune up to ensure a safe ride. Worried about keeping up or going too far? Our fun, "Casual Rides" go at a leisurely pace for about an hour with a stop for coffee or a snack before turning back. We primarily stay on bike paths.

In addition, if there is interest, we would like to add some "Level 2" rides that may go for about 20 miles at a faster pace and may begin at other locations around Alexandria. Please let us know if you might be interested in joining us on some of these rides and we will organize them. Contact Maggie or Barry Stauffer at 703-629-5476 or Maggie.stauffer@comcast.net.



Blazing Saddles leaders Barry and Maggie Stauffer prepare for a ride, with newcomer Paul Horne.



Although it was one of our **hot** July days, Ruth Arnold enjoyed a walk along the Potomac.

Conversation on Gerrymandering Or "How Politicians Choose the Voters Rather Than The Other Way Around" by Jane Guyton

On June 28th, the day after the Supreme Court declined to set limits on gerrymandering, a group of members met to discuss this very topic. Our guest was Amanda Hazelwood, from the organization **OneVirginia2021**, a nonpartisan group whose stated goal is: "To amend the (Virginia) State Constitution to take the redistricting process out of the hands of the legislature."

We learned a great deal from this very well-informed, enthusiastic - and young - activist. We learned how districts are drawn and how very much this varies from state to state. We learned such terms as "packing", where racial minorities are packed together in one area, versus "cracking" when minorities are spread out over several districts thus, diluting their voting potential in a different way. We learned that this same process can be used by either party in order to create uncontested seats. It is understood that those in power, regardless of party, want to remain in power so if the process in place is easy and legal, it will continue to be used.

In 2020, the Virginia Legislature will meet to consider passing the exact same bill that was passed in 2019, as part of a three-step process. Should this bill not pass, Virginia redistricting cannot be revisited for 12 years, thus creating the conditions for future gerrymandering.

We were invited to sign the petition at <https://www.onevirginia2021.org/action/> which urges representatives to approve the bill, imperfect though it may be. The petition advocates for supporting legislation that would add specificity and good government criteria to the redistricting process of 2021.

The single topic discussion group is taking a summer break. The next meeting will be September 27.

What's on Your Bucket List?

More than 30 years ago, **Penny Roberts** looked across beautiful Lake Ohrid at a country where Americans were barred from visiting. As part of her recent trip along the Adriatic in July, she was finally able to check that country, Albania, off her bucket list.

Southern Summer Travel

Sandy Heistad needed to improve her knowledge of Southern history and culture, so she decided to vacation with a friend from Ohio to The Isle of Palms, Charleston, and Savannah. The beach was wonderful with beautiful clouds over the water.



Informative tours and great restaurants in the cities were delightful. They devoured shrimp & grits everywhere but had special meals at The Boat House & Long Island Café on the Isle of Palm; SNOB in Charleston; and Savannah's Collins Quarter, The Pink House and The Grey were truly spectacular. The Savannah College of Art and Design (SCAD) museum and buildings were amazing and, of course, they fell in love with the live oaks, gardens and southern hospitality. A June debate night treat was the visit of a political science professor from the College of Charleston specializing in political campaigns. The helpful analysis and commentary were appreciated.

Tuesday Tech Talk

by Jen Heinz

The August Tuesday Tech Talk on August 13 from 10:30-11:30am at the AHA office will be a little different from other monthly programs as we welcome Shannah Koss to present a demonstration of the Livpact Care Engagement Platform.

This online platform provides a simple way to facilitate coordination, communication, monitoring and services for caregivers and their loved ones directly from phone, tablet or computer. One monthly fee allows family members, medical service providers and others to share information about the person under care to ensure everyone is kept up to date. Shannah will demonstrate the platform and answer any questions during the session. Space is limited to 8 participants.

Lobbying for the Good

If you always knew it's who you know to get a project done, then Alan Dunsmore surely confirmed that in his *Conversation With* talk on June 23. Alan not only explained the history of lobbying but also his part in it as Associate Director of Advocacy for the American Foundation for the Blind. In this role he learned the importance of building coalitions with other advocacy groups as well as with Congressional sponsors to make things happen. A momentous achievement during his tenure and for the many organizations involved was the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act in 1990.

Lunch, Dinner, and Happy Hour are about the Company, the Food and the Beverages



Men's Night Out at Ramparts with (L to R) Michael Curry, Bob Eiffert, James Enright, Don Layman, Bob Coates (photo by B. Clayton)



Lunch-Around at Chadwick's with Jean Antone, Ernie Lehman, Linda Langley, Jane Cohen, Kathie Fricke, Howard Weiss, and Lydia Enright. (photo by M. Bier)



Ladies' Night Out at Charlies on the Avenue: Linda Langley, Mary Jayne Swanson, Virginia Kress, Ann Stat, Julie Gentry, Kit Leider, Pam Nelson and Shelly Schwab. (photo by M. Bier)



Tempo server, Achilles



Dine-Around at Tempo with Jessi MacLeod & Terry Wight (photos by M. Bier)

What's Up With AHA Members, Associates and Volunteers

Congratulations are due to **Pete Crouch**, who was recently named Top Realtor for 2019, by Washingtonian Magazine. On top of the national award for Outstanding Service last year, Pete is definitely doing something right!

AHA celebrated its monthly Thank God It's Thursday at a one-time new venue June 27 -- At Silverado to visit with **Dick Schwab**. Ten people attended, enjoying goodies provided by the staff of Silverado as well as friends of Dick Schwab.



Ann Liddle, Pete Crouch, Dick Schwab, Shelly Schwab, Cele Garrett, Mary Ann Bier, L Liddle, Linda Langley, and Steve Nelson
(Photo by P. Nelson)

Sharyn Hennessy reported the following: A very distressed passenger arrived at my Travelers Aid desk at Reagan National Airport (DCA). He couldn't find Emirates airline for his flight to Dubai.

I had to explain to him that he was at the wrong airport. He needed to be at Dulles (IAD). He rushed out to catch a taxi, and I hope he made it. Every day, passengers arrive at the wrong airport. These days, a lot of people book their own flights online and most of the drop-down boxes that say Washington have to be looked at carefully for (DCA), (IAD), or (BWI). The confusion and panic happen every day.

Nancy Kincaid is an attentive caregiver for her cat. She gives visitors a look at the modern successor to the litter box. It is a white globe-shaped contraption that looks like the Moon Lander, complete with three little steps up to the "entrance" and a mechanism that clears the contents to a holding tank.

The **Monday Book Club** discussed the July selection, "Cod: A Biography of the Fish that Changed the World" by Mark Kuransky; from left to right Mary Ann Bier, Jane Cohen, Kathie Fricke, Linda Langley and Kit Leider. The next meeting is on September 16.



5G, Cable Service and Small Cells

City of Alexandria staff specialists Vanetta Pledger and Richard Lawrence provided an informative and cogent report on the City's plans for upgrading the current network that connects City offices. Two separate fiber optic cables capable of supporting 5G technology are being installed that will specifically improve digital services for municipal offices as well as wireless devices, like your phone, tablet, laptop, watch, autonomous vehicles, and whatever else is to come.

The first cable, or pipeline, will interconnect City offices to include planning, zoning, tax collection, police, fire, 911, libraries, schools, etc. The second, private cable will offer space (bandwidth), for a fee, to wireless carriers such as Verizon, AT&T or Sprint that need to connect to a fiberoptic cable in order to provide high-speed internet services to local businesses and homes. Connectivity will also be available to "small communities" such as condos that want their own direct access to the internet.

The infrastructure changes we will see on the street level are the eight-foot towers standing about a block apart that will be the local substitute for the far-spaced tall towers currently in use. Carriers will attach their 'small cells' to these towers, which can then convey wireless transmission to smart devices. Carriers may rent space for the small cells on short towers, usually light or utility poles. Any new towers required should be aesthetically compatible with neighborhoods.

The City hopes to complete its new network in two years' time, which should bring some Alexandrians alternatives to Comcast by the end of 2021. The speed at which alternative service becomes available will depend on carriers' speed in establishing their small-tower networks and small-communities making use of the City's private cable for connectivity.

The speakers also provided a mini-telecommunications course on the evolution from plain old telephone service (POTS) to 5G. They also provided information about the extensive planning the City has done to prepare for 5G, including protecting our city aesthetically and assuring that our regulations on 5G implementation comply with sometimes conflicting federal and state regulation. For those who would like a review of or a first look at the presentations along with other relevant information, go to www.alexandriava.gov/109058.



Formulate Your 2019 Charitable Giving Plan Now

The following advice from Morningstar, which she has summarized here, recently caught the eye of **Brenda Bloch-Young**.

Many people don't get serious about charitable giving until late in the year. Under the new tax law, you have to be a pretty large charitable giver--or have high deductible expenses elsewhere--to exceed the 2019 standard deduction amounts of \$12,200 for singles and \$24,400 for married couples filing jointly. If you are over 70 1/2, you can direct up to \$100,000 of your RMD to the charities of your choice. The RMD (Required Minimum Distribution) is not taxed as income if donated directly to a qualified charity. Reducing taxable income may be a viable strategy for you this year.

It's always wise to speak with your financial advisor or tax specialist to develop a plan specific for your situation.

A Special Thank You

What fantastic meals my family and I have had from the Meal Train. From June 6 through July 9, my wonderful At Home in Alexandria friends made our lives a dream with daily gourmet meals. Chicken, salmon, ribs, beef, pork -- you name it we had it. Delicious food delivered by good friends. You should see my freezer: I am still eating from the largess of all of you. The Meal Train was a spectacular idea and helped me, and my family when they were with me, get through a difficult time. I am happy to tell you that I am recovering nicely, no longer need to wear a brace, walking without a walker or cane, able to go out to lunch and dinner -- all because of the daily support I received from all of you.

Thank you is not adequate; I was truly touched by all your concern and help. - Nancy Kincaid

(Meal Train is an online app for setting up meals where needed. Thanks to Julie Gentry for setting this up for Nancy Kincaid. - Editor)

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Wisdom and Chuckles

- Today a man knocked on my door and asked for a small donation toward the local swimming pool, so I gave him a glass of water.
- If I had a dollar for every girl that found me unattractive, they'd eventually find me attractive.
- I find it ironic that the colors red, white, and blue stand for freedom, until they're flashing behind you.
- I changed my password to "incorrect" so whenever I forget it the computer will say, "Your password is incorrect."
- Artificial intelligence is no match for natural stupidity.
- I'm great at multi-tasking--I can waste time, be unproductive, and procrastinate all at once.
- If you can smile when things go wrong, you have someone in mind to blame.

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