

Village Voices

In Our Own Words

Volume 15 Number 144

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CONNECTIONS

This issue of *Village Voices* celebrates Pennswood Village's 42nd birthday, June 10.

One mark of our success must be the number of residents and staff who have encouraged their relatives to live and work here. Those connections make for some wonderful, warm-hearted stories about our ties to each other.

Special kudos to our one **THREE-GENERATION FAMILY!** Executive Liaison Linda Krause's dad, Bill Shapcott, worked as a driver in Transportation in the early to mid-90s and her mother, Flo, worked here for 20 years (1994-2004) as the Communications Supervisor managing the reception desk and mail room. Linda's son Matt is Maintenance Manager and Matt's wife Marianelle Vasco works as a CNA Med Tech in Barclay.

Many thanks to the sleuths who helped compile the list of current residents and staff. We didn't include the

names of all the ancestors of residents—there were so many. Nor did we include connections to retirees and those who have taken other jobs or moved. It's probably inevitable that we've missed someone. If so, please let us know, and we'll print the name(s) in our next issue.

The Editors

BROTHERS & SISTERS

Art Crooke & Daisy Grubbs

Dan Seeger & Betty Vosskaemper

Andrew & Sarah Womer

CREATING PENNSWOOD VILLAGE

by Regina Carlson

Last spring, not long after my husband and I moved into Pennswood, I read *Creating a Caring Community, The Story of Pennswood Village*. (Copies are available in Administration.) It was written in 1995 on the 15th anniversary of the first residents' moving in. This statement, by the then Medical Director, Dr. Steven Aiello, has stayed with me:

There is no captain, there is no star. Everyone rows, everyone bails; at times you lead, at times you follow, and occasionally, you stay out of the way. We all contribute and we all benefit. We are all dispensable, but each of us is priceless and irreplaceable in our own way. We truly are a sum that is greater than our parts

He was describing the way the health-care team worked, but in my experience of fellow residents and staff, I've seen that good leaders and good followers are abundant.

I recently re-read the 100-page book and was impressed—and amused—again by these reports of Pennswood's early years:

Pennswood began as a dream, in the early 1970s, by a group of seven Quakers, who had no money, no land, and no experience to make their dream a reality.

. . . they invited a prominent public relations specialist to provide . . . advice. Board members listened respectfully to his ideas, decided they were not especially consistent with the Quaker idea of simplicity, and concluded that the interview had been very helpful because they were confirmed in their opinion that they should do just the opposite of what was recommended.

An urgent problem of interim financing in the 1970s was solved when “. . . four members of the Pennswood Board of Directors agreed among themselves to provide nearly a quarter of a million dollars.” I've been told some founders mortgaged their own homes to provide money for the creation of Pennswood. Actions like that tell me I'm in the kind of community I want.

Initially, Pennswood Board Members constituted the admissions and marketing staff with excellent results. One particularly colorful applicant from that time was someone who wanted “a second-floor apartment on the periphery so he could sit on his terrace and shoot geese as they flew by!” Finally, the Board hired Roz Hernandez as Admissions Coordinator. They felt “She understood the importance of residents' having a respect for Quaker values, even though the majority were not Quakers themselves.”

My husband and I researched CCRCs for more than a year, visited more than a dozen, several more than once, some for overnight stays. Pennswood got our most thorough research. We've now had more than a year of active involvement in life here, but *The Story of Pennswood Village* really expanded our knowledge and appreciation. I recommend it to all residents, new and established.

MOTHERS & DAUGHTERS
Cathy Winant & Anne Peake
Barbara Tracey & Ruth Roeper

OUR ORIGINAL COMMUNITY GARDENS by David Swain

My father, Henry Swain, was the first resident—a Pioneer—to move into Pennswood Village, on June 10, 1980. He was also one of the original planners, organizers, and planters of Pennswood’s first Community Gardens. Yes, gardens. They were “reclaimed” with a large quantity of imported topsoil from the sticky, clayey muck that underlay what was then the natural drainage sloping downward toward Neshaminy Creek.

I believe I coined the term *garden politics* to describe the rather messy process of originally organizing community gardening at Pennswood. In those early days, when we occasionally visited Dad and corresponded between visits, I would inquire about the latest news in the residents’ garden politics. Dad was determined to be nonpolitical and tried hard to be facilitative—something he did well. Yet facilitating the obstreperous residents who fancied themselves lovers of gardening was not easy. Which is why Pennswood initially had *two* community gardens.

Apparently the schism that separated the two groups was deep, including different residents using different gardening methods located far enough away from each other so as to deter at least major invasions of cross-pollination. In essence, the difference was that one was a vegetable garden and the other a flower garden. I believe my father used his facilitative approach sufficiently to convince the two groups to talk to each other just enough to agree on and then negotiate with Administration to approve a plan for two separate but equal gardens.

Those two gardens remained Pennswood’s “Community Garden” until paving the P-1 Parking Lot buried the site of those gardens, and they were moved to their current location—as a single, mixed-use garden. I don’t know the details of this change, which occurred after my father died in 2000 and before Caroline and I moved in during 2009.

My father was a vegetable gardener and did considerable work to lay out and prepare raised beds that would support healthy vegetables—to be eaten. He loved his own fresh vegetables and also shared much of his produce with other residents. He also shared his crops with Pennswood Dining Services—a practice that has continued. Dad also grew flowers, but they were in the patio area behind his apartment I-111. He even experiment-

ed with growing moss on flat stones that were part of that garden. To my knowledge, he did not grow flowers in the flower garden near the vegetable garden to which he devoted so much time and effort. Whether that was for “political” reasons or not, I don't know.

TWINS

Mary & Margi Alderfer

THE HAIRCUT
by Alice Crozier

It is December 24, 1985. I have been sitting in my mother's room in Woolman for the last two hours writing Christmas cards to her friends, while she lies in bed, telling me what to say to each one. I have her address book with me, and I have been reading out the names. By the time 5 o'clock comes around, I have been there at least two hours; we have reached the end of the alphabet and are winding up. It is dark outside, but not snowy, luckily, since I have to drive back to New Jersey.

As I approach her bed, she observes in a strong voice, “Alice, I need a haircut.” Help! It's 5 o'clock on Christmas Eve! “Reason not the need,” I remind myself. I will need a pair of scissors, I tell her, and she says there is a beauty shop upstairs; the nurses out in the hall will have the number. Yes, they have it, and they

call for me. To my surprise, someone answers. Within minutes, a young woman appears carrying the scissors. “I will give your mother a haircut.” We get Mother out of bed, seat her in a chair, and drape a towel around her shoulders. The haircut is performed. Mother is extremely pleased.

My mother died three weeks later, looking good. I couldn't get over the kindness of the young woman from the beauty shop, who must have been locking up when the phone rang and on her way home to her family and their Christmas preparations. Not many people would have delayed their own plans at that moment to give an old lady a haircut. Only at Pennswood, I used to say to myself.

This episode has always stood out in my memory of my mother's five years at Pennswood as an example of a rare and wonderful kindness, a gift out of the blue. When I myself was first here in the summer of 2017, I found myself in the beauty shop, now the salon and in a new location, and I was telling this story to Ann as she was cutting my hair. When I had finished the story, a voice from somewhere behind me cried out, “That was meeee!” And there was Patti Fedirko, smiling and saying she remembered Mother well—what a nice woman she was.

SISTERS

Anne Baber & Lynne Waymon
Susan & Madelyn Baker

**LONGEST-WORKING
STAFF—PATTI FEDIRKO**
as told to Glenna Follmer

I've been with Pennswood Village for forty-two years. I started out in June 1980 as a private companion to a sweet woman, Martha Gray. My friend Nancy Seipp started in housekeeping around the same time.

That fall, I started full-time in the beauty shop, a small room offering only minimum services. Over time, Pennswood encouraged me to bring in new services, such as pedicures, facials, and various massage techniques, to our enlarged space.

My commute is twenty minutes along Woodbourne Road through Core Creek Park, which gives me a glorious start to my day. The landscape changes through all the seasons, and I enjoy the wildlife that jumps in front of my car.

In the beginning, the thing that attracted me the most was seeing how the staff and residents worked together. The Founders brought together many different cultures to

make a world-class community. I've come to appreciate the Quakers' stress on equality.

The birth of my granddaughter eight years ago has brought me much joy. I love gardening and time spent in the kitchen trying various recipes.

I really enjoy my work. I've learned more about holistic health, and I pass this knowledge on to my students at the School of Body Therapies in Langhorne.

My life has been enhanced by working here. I thank you all; I feel blessed.

HUH?

Sara Pollock's sister
is married to
Sue Ellen Miller's brother

MIRACLE WORKER
by Elaine Ferrara

Pennswood Pioneer Russell Bowers was remarkable. After two surgeries on his eyes as a child, he was totally blind by the time he was eight. He took his disability as a challenge.

Not only was he a skilled piano player and tuner, but he was a tour guide for historical places in Center City Philadelphia: Independence Hall, City

Hall, Betsy Ross's House, Union Hall, George Washington's residence, Benjamin Franklin's office.

He was a miracle worker in many other ways as well. No matter what the topic of discussion at our weekly philosophical group meetings, where we first got acquainted, his opening statement, carefully selected from Braille notes, blended perfectly. True Wisdom.

After he moved to Pennswood, he enjoyed giving me driving directions there from Chester County and from Pennswood to Styers Market for some jarred Pennsylvania Dutch hot bacon dressing and to the garden shop to pick up supplies.

In 1986, during my first visit to Pennswood, I learned that he had moved there in 1980, the day it opened. He raved about the food, prompting an invitation to join him for lunch. He led the way, after giving me instructions to follow him because the walkways were narrow in some places.

I noticed that several people greeted Russell on our way to the café. Informing me that these friends were independent residents who were his "caretakers," he told me about their "jobs": making sure he made it to breakfast, lunch, and dinner safely and on time, and calling him if he was ever delayed. He quickly added that

he never needed their assistance, but the camaraderie made everyone feel good.

One time, after asking him how he was able to accomplish these directional feats, he said decisively, "I can count!" You see, he had a measured step, and as long as he could remember how many steps it was from here to there, he was always reliable for his "tourist" friends.

Once he gave me the gift of a *papier-mâché* box in the shape of a bunny that he bought at the Pennswood flea market. I still treasure it deeply.

Russell was not a relative, but he surely filled the role of brother for me. And that delicious meal in the café enticed me to Pennswood as my retirement home.

MOTHERS & SONS

Pat & Dan Murray

Ruth & Tim Peterson

Linda & Matt Krause

Lisa & Jack Kuliczkowski

Mariann & Tom Keogh

BOBBY THE BAKER
as told to Glenna Follmer

Robert Paylor, known as Bobby the Baker, has worked at Pennswood for 38 years. "Over half my life," he says "I've worked for seven CEOs and six bosses in the Dining Services

Department.” Initially, Pennswood used a contracted food service with fixed portions. Nothing was made from scratch.

“My legacy is the baking program,” he says. With a co-worker, he experimented with recipes, some from Betty Crocker. He still has his mother’s original cookbook. Expanding from one cake to 20 at a time was a challenge.

FAVORITE RECIPES: His cheese cake and chocolate bundt cake from Hershey’s cookbook. He also likes to make his mom’s old-fashioned jelly-roll, but it’s not as popular nowadays. He might rename it “roulade” to appeal to our newer residents.

Pennswood recognized his talents and dedication with financial support, so Bobby could earn his associates degree at Johnson & Wales. It took three years of simultaneous work and study. He’d drive to Rhode Island on Friday nights after work. Saturday was science classes all day where he learned to HATE preservatives after learning they stayed in the body. Sunday was 12 hours of “lab,” baking under great teaching chefs from Italy, Germany, and France. Then, the long drive back.

During his career, there have been four kitchen renovations. The hardest

was in the 80s when Pennswood did a complete kitchen remodeling. Imagine the commotion!

The Main Dining Room was strictly formal: women wore gowns, and men always wore suit coats. There were two seatings nightly. The Coffee Shop (Café) was started when many requested a less formal situation.

FAVORITE MEMORIES: Big blizzard of 1996, three feet of snow. The problem was how to feed everyone until the town’s plows got through. The kitchen always had three days of food in storage. Bobby opened his home located across 413 to other Pennswood staff. Soon he had his full house of “guests” dicing carrots for the regular cyclic menu, and they were able to avoid switching to peanut butter and jelly sandwiches!

Bobby loved Pennswood’s family atmosphere from the beginning. Three times in the 90s, Pennswood had joint picnic days for staff, their families, and residents. Everyone made a covered dish to share. He remembers a rented bouncy tent for kids, a horseshoe pitch for adults, and haywagon rides provided by the owner of Stone Farm.

Bobby still feels no one’s a “customer.” He cherishes his friendships with many residents.

**GRANDPARENTS
& GRANDDAUGHTER**

Pat & Dick Cautilli
& Danielle DiDomenico

TWO GENERATIONS

by Cathy Winant

My mother, Anne Peake, has lived at Pennswood Village since 2011. I had been visiting her since she moved in. I liked what I saw at Pennswood, so when I turned 65, I applied to live here so I could spend more time with her.

Early in the day, my mother and I pursue our own interests. I go to the gym and walk the dog. She takes care of her patio garden and house plants. We go through her mail and may make a list of things she wants from the grocery store. My husband, Eppy, and I dine with her every evening. I like living at Pennswood, and I am grateful that I can see my mother every day.

AUNT & NIECE/NEPHEW

Tracy Russell & Ashley Tyler
Tracy & Keith Russell

AUNT PEG

by Jim Richardson

Margaret Richardson, or “Aunt Peg” as I knew her, grew up in Bucks County in a strict Quaker household. After high school, she went to Abing-

ton Memorial School of Nursing to become a registered nurse. Her favorite outing was to Friendly’s, where she always had a tuna sandwich and a chocolate milkshake. To the end of her life, when asked where she’d like to go for lunch, she would say, “To Friendly’s,” and she would order that exact same meal.

She married John Eastburn Richardson, “Jack,” who lived on North Lincoln Avenue in Newtown. They eventually bought the carriage house that was originally part of his boyhood home. She worked in private duty nursing, often helping people through their final days.

While I was growing up, Jack and Peg were always part of any family holiday or celebration.

When Jack died, Peg was left with a house too big for one person and with a giant gap in her life that her husband once filled. However, Jack, always forward-looking, had left suggestions. He recommended Pennswood as a good location for her to live. I took her for a visit, and she approved, though she worried about fitting in. She picked out paint for her one-bedroom in Audland and had bookcases and a fireplace installed on one wall. Her design concept was a “Keeping Room” in the colonial sense.

Until her move, I was getting multiple calls a week from her with all sorts of questions: when to use the silver, whether to accept a neighbor's invitation for dinner, when to get the rug cleaned. Two weeks after she moved, a whole week went by without a call. I called her. She said she couldn't talk because she was hosting the bridge club. Another time, it was her friend Betty Porter who had invited her to lunch, or she had been invited to a "4:45," as the cocktail hour was then called. In spite of her early concerns about fitting in, she found she knew many people from her days of nursing and made new friends through them.

We visited during her early years, and she visited us in Connecticut. Eventually, she was no longer interested in traveling away from Pennswood and her friends. Once her nephew Tom and his wife, Barbara, moved in, she often accepted their invitations to dine in their apartment or to go out for a meal. Of course, whenever they asked where she wanted to go for lunch, it was always Friendly's.

Peg spent many years studying her family genealogy and that of her husband, Jack. She left us with copies of the information she discovered. She finished a quilt made of scraps from her aunt's and her mother's dresses and quilted at Wrightstown Meeting-house with a group of ladies. She made countless pieces of needlework:

a glasses case with a tiger emblem (Jack went to Princeton), a case for sewing scissors that my wife still uses, and a sampler that hangs on our apartment wall at Pennswood.

Peg Richardson lived a life sheltered by her strict Quaker upbringing and her doting husband. She left a legacy of family history and happy memories to this nephew.

COUSINS

Karen Pantalone & Claire Arnold
Barbara & Jim Richardson
Roe Szymendera & Anne Salvatore

FROM STAFF TO RESIDENT as told to Glenna Follmer

Before she retired and later became a resident, Kay DeWitt worked at Pennswood. Soon after Pennswood opened in 1980, Kay served as a nurse in Woolman, Barclay, and Resident Health.

In 2008, she moved to Gurney 112 as a resident. During her residential years, Kay continued to serve—as a volunteer receptionist in the Village Salon.

What Kay celebrates especially about Pennswood, from her dual staff/resident perspectives, is its "caring family atmosphere; value on respecting life and enabling you to live it to the fullest down to the last minute." She

concludes, “I’m so grateful to the Good Lord for Pennswood and such good care here right close to where I lived and brought up my family.”

IN-LAWS

Philip Greven & Lisa Taylor
Sally & Inez Marrington
Anne Baber & Todd Waymon

SAME APARTMENT
by **Barbara Tracey**

Both my husband, John, and I have been fortunate to have parents who have lived at Pennswood. My mom, Ruth Roeper, is presently living down the hall from us in Newman.

We have been so lucky through our lives to have a loving family that cares about and for each member. As we age, we become more dependent on younger members of the family for help and advice. We are grateful that this transition has gone so smoothly for us!

When my parents were deciding which apartment to live in at Pennswood 18 years ago, I helped them make the decision and now my husband and I are living in the same apartment. We are glad to be here to be able to keep my mom as independent as possible for as long as we are able. It is wonderful having Mom so close-by.

TRIO

Barbara Stokes, Ginny Schmunk,
& Ann Whelan

BARBARA RICHARDSON’S
GODFATHER
as told to **Kathy Hoff**

“Come visit us. Come see how we live,” said the Newmans.

Bill and Cathy Newman came early to Pennswood—not 1980 Pioneers, but first decade. They moved into Ingram 104, still a conventional single apartment, in 1987 and immediately began urging their godson, Tom Richardson, and Tom’s wife, Barbara, to visit them at Pennswood. Bill had been Tom’s father’s (another Bill) roommate at Princeton, a friendship that lasted after college. Bill Newman served as best man at Bill Richardson’s wedding, then next as faithful godfather to his roommate’s son Tom. In time, Tom grew up and married Barbara (Bill Newman served as a witness). When the Newmans moved to Pennswood, their invitations for the younger Richardsons to “come visit us” began.

On trips from their home in Newport, Rhode Island, to visit children in Virginia, Tom and Barbara Richardson would stop over in Newtown, ancestral home of Tom’s mother’s family

(she was a Hicks), to visit the Newmans. As time passed and visits went on, the invitation shifted from “Come see how we live” to “Move in before we’re gone.”

As the Richardsons approached retirement age, they took that new directive seriously. In 1997 after many visits and while the Newmans were still living, they were convinced that Pennswood was the retirement place for them. They put down a deposit and joined the waiting list.

By then, the Newmans had moved to adjacent rooms in Barclay. Ever accommodating to resident needs, management opened a doorway between the two rooms, creating what the Newmans furnished as a living room and bedroom suite. A carpenter son created a mini-kitchen in the living room from which Bill mixed Manhattans to accompany cheese and crackers for 4:40s, as residents called cocktail hour in those years before wine was permitted in the Dining Room.

The Richardsons enjoyed these cocktail hours during visits, but did not move in before the Newmans were gone. Bill Newman died in 1998; Cathy in 2004. In 2009, the Richardsons moved from Newport, R.I. to Jordan 213, the same apartment Barbara still occupies.

Over the years of visiting and living at Pennswood, Barbara has witnessed many changes. When she first began visiting in the 1980s, the entrance to campus was through what is now the Green Valley Road. She remembers the driveway leading through two rows of corn to a perimeter road circling the entire campus. The perimeter road lasted until Mott and Newman were built in 2003. In addition to Mott and Newman, she saw Passmore added, the Meadow created, the community gardens moved from the Mott-Newman plot to the Meadow, and a new driveway entry developed, with a welcome traffic light at Route 413 to improve exiting safety. After she and Tom moved in, she saw the interior hallways renovated from cinderblock to painted, lighted, carpeted, pedestaled elegance. Moreover, hall temperatures were moderated so that winter coats were no longer needed for indoor journeys to the Community Building, reducing crowding in the coatroom substantially.

After 35 years of acquaintance with Pennswood, first as visitor, then as resident, Barbara is urging her daughter to add her name to the waiting list. She hopes that they may become yet another of the multi-generation families happy with the security and warm community at Pennswood Village.

COUPLES

Matt Krause & Marianella Vasco
Bob & Beth Salvati
Bruce & Lynn Cahan

COMING SOON

In July, our first-ever humor issue! Write something funny—or even just mildly amusing—fiction, poetry, or non-fiction. It must be your own work. Send it to us by June 28.

In September, our first-ever, all-fiction issue. Submit your piece by August 15. Historical fiction, science fiction, fantasy, mystery, children’s stories, etc., etc., etc.—all are requested. Again, only original work, please.

The Editors

SECOND GENERATION

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Chick Hastings
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David Swain
Barbara Tracey
John Tracey
Alice Warshaw
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