

Village Voices

In Our Own Words

Volume 17 Number 153

May 2023

1382 IN 3 COURSES AND 7 VERBS by Caroline Swain

What Happened in 1382?

Musicians *plucked* their lutes.
Inhabitants of Trieste *donated* their city
to the Duke of Austria.
Russians *celebrated* their defeat two years
earlier of the culture-spreading but brutal
Mongols.
English peasants *revolted* against a tax on
their moveable property.
People *ate* cabbage, oats, and brown
bread and *drank* lotsa beer and ale.
People throughout the world *wondered* if
the year would be remembered in some
village near the Delaware River 641
years later.

What Happened at 1382?

Founders *plucked* the crops from the
ground and planted Pennswood Village.
Residents *donated* themselves to each
other and the community.
Year after year, they *celebrated* their
friendships, cultural stimulation, and
health care.

They *revolted* against old ways of living,
like climbing stairs and mowing the
lawn.
Residents *ate* well and *drank*, too.
People in this village near the Delaware
River *wondered* what happened long ago
in 1382.

What Happened in 1382?

A chef *plucked* his chicken.
Residents *donated* their food dollars to
an exquisite meal.
Diners *celebrated* their quiet conversation
and dedicated servers.
Diners *revolted* when the chef said resi-
dents couldn't eat their desserts first, but
they were satisfied when he promised
the desserts would be even sweeter and
more tempting after the rest of the meal.
People of Pennswood then *ate, drank,*
and *smiled* a lot.

*They wondered how a year in history, a
village near the Delaware River, and a
place to eat fine food all came up with the
same name—*

1382.

BEETS?

by Steve Schnur

Dinner time, and I was hungry. I had just entered Seasons. But I paused. Who was already dining? Who had an empty seat at their table? I could always join a table of friends, but not so fast.

Were there any new residents? Anyone sitting alone? Anyone to inquire after? Anyone I had been avoiding or judging? Anyone needing a second chance? Did I need one? Any friendship needing repair?

Some repair was overdue. I took a chance. I'm glad I did.

Then I stepped up to the ordering kiosk. Salmon was an easy choice. But sweet potato, broccoli or red beets? Hmmm. Sweet potato and broccoli sounded good, and good for me, too. But beets??

I'd been telling myself for decades that I don't care for beets, but it had been years since I tried any. I decided to do something radical, to update my file on beets, to give beets a second chance. Not willing to risk too much, I ordered the sweet potato, the broccoli . . . *and* the beets.

The first bite of beet confirmed my prejudice. The texture was distinctive but uninteresting. The flavor was too mild to matter. The color was striking, but I'd

rather look at the beets on my neighbor's plate.

The second bite of beet was no different. But was it fair to compare beets to roasted potatoes or corn on the cob? No. Any vegetable with a centuries-long pedigree deserves to be met on its own terms. But could I set aside my bias and just appreciate the beetness of the beet?

My third bite of beet, along with my new openness, was a small revelation. The beet wasn't trying to wow me. It had its own humble mildness and subtlety. It spoke to me gently and patiently.

I ate all of my beets, finding that some effort was needed to challenge my enemy image of the beet and replace it with something more worthy of both of us.

I took a chance. I'm glad I did.

HIKING WITH LLAMAS IN SEDONA, ARIZONA

by Lynne Waymon

When I was a kid, my family did not hike—as in “Let’s go on a hike.” We did not walk—except to lead the dog around the block. So, what did we do? Well, we were good tourists. In 1952, we clocked St. Louis to Key West and back in just

three weeks. We were energetic singers. At the drop of a hat, we'd belt out most of the words to most of the songs from most Broadway shows. We were avid readers. But we were not hikers.

So, it surprises me that as an adult, when planning our vacation out West, one activity that I eagerly signed us up for was a Llama Walk in Sedona, Arizona. True, it didn't say, "Llama Hike," but I could read between the lines. The guide and her llamas promised to lead us up, up, up through the ancient red rocks, higher and higher, until at some picturesque place, we'd picnic on the lunch she'd prepared and then walk back down.

Looking back, I can see that I was in it to meet the llamas. Todd and our son, Matthew, were too. We met Judy the Llama Lady at the foot of the trail. We watched in awe as she led three large llamas from the trailer towed behind her pickup truck. Then she loaded up the animals with a couple of folding tables, colorful tablecloths, and lots of food to feed our group of 10 or 12 people.

The night before our hike (am I mentioning too much that we hiked?) we stayed at a local B&B. The hostess entertained us with stories about Sedona and its history. A cat sat on the couch nearby and a small dog curled up in his bed by the fireplace. I was shocked when our hostess said her pets never went outside unsupervised because the coyotes would

have them for dinner. I wondered out loud, "Ah, where will the coyotes be tomorrow when we're hiking?" She just laughed as if that were a silly question.

As Guide Judy lined up the llamas, she told us that these pack animals are part of the *camelid* family. "They want to go in a certain order," she said. "Lucky goes first, Alfred is always second. And Lulu insists on being third. Llamas are hierarchical animals. If you get them out of order, the dominant one is likely to spit green stuff at the one lower in the pecking order."

Judy told us that before each hike she gives them a bath. "That's something they enjoy, but what they absolutely love is being blow-dried with my hair dryer," Judy said with a big smile. Lucky and Alfred and Lulu seemed eager to get going. "They are very graceful and nimble in all kinds of terrain," Judy reassured us. "We'll stop along the way for a bathroom break." "For us?" I asked. "No. For them. They only want to do their business at one place along the trail. Like cats that are trained to use a litter box."

As the hike got underway, Judy pointed out interesting plants like the agave and many types of cacti. She stopped while we photographed some of the most striking rock formations and trees—sycamores, ponderosa pines, and cottonwoods. She casually said, "The llamas and I will go first to scare away any

snakes that might be sunbathing on the rocks near the trail.” Matthew, with an 8-year-old’s developing sense of sarcasm, said to me under his breath, “Oh, that’s so reassuring,” and then began to walk between Todd and me, rather than scampering here and there on his own.

The trail gradually took us up a gentle slope, as it twisted around the red rocks. We were hiking! Nothing new for my Eagle Scout husband, who had enjoyed a childhood full of sleeping out in tents in Delaware and camping in New Mexico at Philmont Scout Ranch.

About an hour later, Judy declared that we’d reached our destination. After she safely “parked” the llamas, a few of us helped her unload the packs. Judy quickly spread out the tablecloths on the portable tables. She invited us to serve ourselves. For years afterwards, we raved about her tasty soup. Well into the delicious lunch, I couldn’t resist asking her, “How did you ever get into this business?” “Easy,” she said with a big smile. “I was trained as a CPA, but it dawned on me very soon that working inside and poring over other people’s accounts was NOT the life for me. So, I asked myself, ‘What do I like to do?’ I said, ‘I like to cook. I like to be outdoors. And I like animals.’ So obviously—don’t you see? Here I am! It’s me. The Llama Lady! What else?”

What a beautiful sight—small groups of people perched on the flat red rocks munching on homemade bread, crunching delicious salads, and sipping iced tea. For a while, it seemed like we and our fellow travelers were mesmerized by the views. A sense of peace and quiet settled in. Matthew whispered in my ear, “Can I play my recorder now?” He’d been taking lessons for a couple of years and liked to entertain. “Sure!” I said. He pulled his recorder out of his backpack and settled himself on a rock a bit away from everyone. The soulful sound of his songs made me smile. I thought to myself, “So this is why people go hiking.”



WALKING ON HOT COALS AND OTHER ADVENTURES

by Kay Silberfeld

Once upon a time, I dated a man, Joe, who was involved with “New Age” culture. One summer night in the suburbs of Washington, DC, I went with him to a “Fire Walk.” The theory was that if you can walk, barefoot, on a bed of burning coals and not be burned, you have proved to yourself that you can achieve anything you want and that your life will be greatly improved.

For nearly an hour, a group of about twenty of us sat and listened to the leader telling us how transformational

this activity would be. He was so convincing, that by the time we were told that the coals were “ready,” I believed I could walk safely on them.

Outside we went, removed our shoes, circled around the long bed of burning coals while holding hands and singing. One by one, each person would walk—quickly!—down the hot coal bed. Afterwards they ended up sitting, cradling their feet. Clearly they were burned—a nightmare. I was unable to persuade Joe not to participate—he was so sure he would come out unscathed.

Later, the scene back inside the house was weird, with the walkers seated apart and not looking at one another, trying to hide their pain.

Eventually, Joe and I left to find a drug store. We spent the rest of the night applying ointment to his feet while he speculated on what had gone wrong: “All evening, something felt wrong . . . the feeling was not right . . . there was something, or someone, who was a negative influence on the group,” and so on.

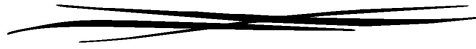
Some time after this unhappy evening, I heard the probable explanation: burning coals have an outer layer that is much cooler than their inner core. But because it was windy that night, the outer layer was being blown away, and the walkers’ feet were coming down directly on the inner hot core.

I dated Joe for several years, and a few times we went to hear someone relate, with great emotionalism, how their lives had improved due to some miraculous cure. One evening, a woman became hysterical and was hurriedly carried out of the room. I didn’t go again.

But I did go with Joe to hear a salesman promoting the drinking of Blue-Green Manna. This miraculous cure was made of an algae gathered from a mountain top in Oregon . . . at midnight. (Joe kept several bottles in his refrigerator and gave them out as presents.) At the meeting we attended, people described their ailments and how their doctors had not helped them. But the curative powers of the manna . . . ! I couldn’t believe that I was hearing an actual “snake-oil salesman.” This was particularly upsetting to me because so many in the audience seemed truly sick and anxious for help.

One final memory: Joe’s New Age group put on a Heart-to-Heart Festival. One year I went with him and even enjoyed one of the exercises. We formed two circles, one inside the other, walking in opposite directions. Those on the inside circle faced out and those in the outer circle faced in. When the music stopped, we were told to look directly into the eyes of the person standing before us. It was very intense and revealed how rare it is to truly see one another.

Eventually and inevitably, Joe couldn't put up with my lack of sympathy for his beliefs, including his going and sitting at the feet of the latest guru. We lived in different worlds . . . not a formula for a successful, close relationship.



INVISIBLE BANK ACCOUNT

by **George Kurz**

From my hotel in Tokyo, the first stop on a trip around the world in 1972, I telephoned my cardiologist friend Dr. Takeo (Ted) Tsunekawa. I had come to know Ted a decade previously during his time of study in the United States. I told him I had booked a sightseeing tour the next day and should be back at the hotel by 4 p.m. "Why don't you come to my office around 5:30?" he suggested. "The best way to get there at that time of day is by subway. Go out the entrance of your hotel and turn right. Walk three blocks west, and you'll see a subway entrance. Get a ticket for Ginza."

"On the train, they will announce the stations," he explained. "When you hear the word 'Ginza,' that's the stop where you get off. Come out of the subway and walk in the same direction a block and a half, and you will see the Ginza Core Building. That's my building. I'm on the eighth floor."

"Thanks, Ted." I replied. "If you're sure it's safe, I'll give it a try."

"Quite safe, and you can't miss it."

The sightseeing tour of Tokyo was delightful. By the end of the tour, I had doubled my Japanese vocabulary—from two to four words.

Later that afternoon, I set out by myself from the hotel on foot. Before I reached the subway entrance, I heard a noisy crowd marching in a side street coming in my direction. *Sounds like protestors!* I thought. I didn't stick around to find out what they might be protesting, but quickened my pace and went down the subway steps without ever encountering the group.

Below ground, I looked for a ticket window, but all I could see was a couple of machines about the size of soda-vending machines. People were coming up to the machines, putting in coins, and getting their subway tickets. I was the only Caucasian in a sea of Japanese faces. I could barely identify the Japanese coins and certainly couldn't read the instructions on the machines.

The situation appeared hopeless. I thought I'd better forget what Ted had told me and go back up to the street and look for a taxi. Then a young Japanese man saw my difficulty. "Where do you want to go?" he asked me in English.

“To the Ginza,” I replied.

“I will help you,” he said. I held out some Japanese money. He selected the appropriate coins, put them into the machine, and out came a ticket for the Ginza. He told me the number of stops for the train to reach the Ginza and said, “Good luck!” I felt fortunate indeed!

I joined the standing-room-only crowd on the next train. Although I couldn’t understand the loudspeaker announcements in Japanese, I was no longer worried about finding my destination. I counted the stops and actually recognized the word *Ginza*. Up on the busy sidewalks of the Ginza shopping district, I followed Ted’s directions and felt a great sense of accomplishment when I actually entered his office on the eighth floor. I followed the protocol of removing my shoes in a little vestibule before stepping into the office proper. Ted had just completed his schedule of patients. We greeted each other warmly and chatted for a while. “We have a little time before dinner,” he said. “Is there any shopping you would like to do here in the Ginza beforehand?”

“As a matter of fact, there is,” I replied. “I’ve been thinking of getting a new single-lens reflex camera.”

“Oh, this is the right place! I’ll help you get the best price,” Ted offered.

The competition in the photography field was intense. It seemed like every block in the Ginza had three or four camera shops. We picked a shop with which Ted seemed familiar. I explained the features I wanted in a new camera, and Ted relayed my wishes to the salesman. I looked at a few cameras and selected one that I especially liked. Ted got the price. I thought that was it, but Ted had another plan. He led me to a second store and went through the same process. Evidently the price was not as good as in the first store. In still a third store, he found an identical camera as in the first, but at a lower price. I thought for sure that we had come to the end of the process.

However, Ted asked the salesman for permission to use his phone. Right in store number three, he called store number one, told the salesman that he had found the identical camera at a better price in another store, and began negotiating. At the end of the conversation, Ted led me back to the first store where, at last, I purchased my new camera. I had seen the art of bargain hunting carried to a new height, one with which I was anything but comfortable.

Nevertheless, I figured this must be the accepted routine in Tokyo and thanked my host profusely.

Next we walked several blocks to the restaurant Ted had selected for dinner. "I think you will like this," he said.

I was eagerly anticipating an authentic Japanese dining experience. As we entered the restaurant, I looked around expecting low tables with customers seated on mats on the floor in the traditional Japanese manner. As far as I could see, however, there were nothing but ordinary American-style tables and chairs. "Ted, where are the low tables?" I asked.

"Oh," he replied, "I picked a place where they serve you like in the United States. I hope it will make you feel at home."

"Yes, that'll be fine," I said, trying to hide my disappointment. The meal itself, nevertheless, was delightful. I shall never forget one part of our conversation. Ted described part of his workweek thus: "Every Saturday, I drive out into the country—quite far from Tokyo. There the people are rather poor. They have no cardiologist. I go to a clinic, and I treat these people. Most of them can't pay a thing. For me this is very important work," he continued. "You see, I have an invisible bank account."

I didn't ask Ted to explain what he meant, for I was aware that he knew his Bible. It seemed he was referring to the words of Jesus: "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where

moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal; but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal." Ted's invisible bank account was his treasure in heaven.

I was happy that I had chosen Japan as my first stop in the Far East. My experiences in the Tokyo subway, especially the courtesy of the young man who helped me with the ticket vending machine, and the Ginza camera shops were unforgettable. Ted Tsunekawa's inspiring description of his work with the rural poor and his invisible bank account moved me deeply.



A MORNING IN MAY by Glenna Follmer

Cicadas thrum in the hazy heat,
there's a sultry smell of boxwoods.
Two older guys, cigars alight,
have dug a new grave I walk around.

How often have I stepped around that
space
and seen its teddy bears and dying heart
balloons?

Three plots away I drop my bag of
mulch,
my trowel, and red begonia plants.

I've come to plant around our family
stone—
this year I'm late to clear away our
wreath.
A car pulls up, it breaks my morning's
calm.
A well-groomed couple, young, steps
out;
She takes a plastic sleeve of mums
—and only then I understand
just what might happen—way too near.

The diggers head to their old pickup
truck
when a hearse pulls up. Two men lift
out a box,
glaringly white and shockingly small.

Again a car curves into sight.
The driver's in black, his Bible also.
It's now too late for me to leave.
I must bear witness to their service.

Embarrassed here in my torn shorts,
I stop my work and crouch down low.

But I can hear them clearly, “. . . your rod
and staff
they comfort me . . .” familiar, remem-
bered words.
echoing my own mourning—on a morn-
ing
in January when we laid our own son to
rest—
the sunlight blinding off new-fallen
snow.

It's sudden, but my eyes fill up, and over-
flow.
Those three hear me and look around.

Somehow we're yoked by both our griefs.
What I could share kept roaming
through my mind:

*I know it's not the life you planned;
Your joyous times will be blurred by loss;
Your view of God may change—ours
did.”*

At last, I see the pastor bless them and
shake
their hands. First he, then they, drive off.

The sun is higher now and quiet comes.
I finish my work, still thinking. Perhaps
we'll meet here again.

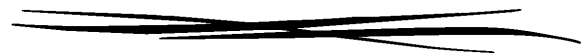
I trace Mark's epitaph before I leave:
“He brought us joy. We loved him well.”



QUERY

by Deidre Crumbley

“Just a passing phase?
Or, is this me forever?”
Caterpillar angst!



A CHANGE OF FACE by Henry Baird

Did you notice a difference in our April issue? We've altered our typeface, from Times to Caslon. For example:

This is printed in the Times typeface.

This is printed in the Caslon typeface.

Both faces are highly legible when printed at a type size of 14 point, as we do.

Times may feel more familiar to you: it's now ubiquitous on the Web, having been designed in 1931 for *The Times of London* to make newsprint more compact.

Caslon, designed in 1730, was the earliest English typeface and has always been strongly associated with literature.

Within our "masthead"—the box of credits (see at right) that ends each issue—we use a sans-serif font family, which we're also switching—from Ariel to Calibri:

This is printed in the Ariel typeface.

This is printed in the Calibri typeface.

Calibri was designed in 2004 as a "warm and soft" alternative to Ariel for Microsoft Office products.

So, *Village Voices* comes to you with a fresh face.

Publication of
**Pennswood Village
Residents Association**
Founder and Editor Emerita:
Paulina Brownie Wilker
Editor: Anne Baber
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Howard Arons, Glenna Follmer,
and Kathy Hoff
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