



Friends House Letter

Friends House
Seniors Association

September 2026

Times of Our Lives... Residents talk about life past, present and future.



Gillespie Girls on the steps of the new building.
Scotsman Photo – 1973 – (Diane Copley)

Memories

by Diane Copley

I think it must be a given, the older we become the more we think of our past. For me, at least, it is so true. Perhaps, over recent years the loss of a partner, old friends, relatives causes the mind to dwell on all the things we did, experiences...good and not so good...we shared.

A dear friend I'd known since we were 5 years old recently died. We were Gillespie Girls together. We met at our wonderful school in Edinburgh, James Gillespie's High School for Girls, a very academically focused school for girls from ages 5 to 18, which produced authors, doctors, pharmacists, teachers and nurses. I was a third generation Gillespie Girl, following an aunt and a great aunt before me. My Aunt Nan was a compatriot of the author Muriel Spark, who wrote numerous books.

One, *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*, was based on one of the unusual teachers of the time and became a movie starring Maggie Smith.

I was living in Canada when the movie came out. I remember watching the film and suddenly recognizing what looked to me like parts of my old school as well as other familiar landmarks around Edinburgh. I wrote to my aunt in Edinburgh to ask her if she knew anything about the film and she wrote back verifying that, yes, indeed, it was about a teacher they'd had, a Miss Christina Kay, a fascinating if somewhat eccentric teacher, now immortalized as Jean Brodie by Muriel Spark!

In the late '70s, our beloved school became co-ed, due, no doubt, to the changing financial climate. Just not the same with **boys**. Horrors! However, Muriel Spark was honored by an area on the school grounds called Muriel Spark Way and also Muriel Spark Arts Complex.

I owe so much to this beloved school and still remember the day I sat the entrance exam at 5 years old. Having successfully passed, I proudly donned the school uniform and started my lifetime journey of learning, adventures and memories.

An Impactful Person

by Marilyn Briggs

The person who had the greatest impact on my life was Stephen Ailes. I was 21 when I went to work at the law firm of Steptoe & Johnson, where he was a senior partner. I was quick to realize that working for a senior partner gave one not only more responsibility but also more prestige with the firm.

Mr. Ailes always treated me like a member of the family. I was both a personal and a legal secretary. I paid his bills, balanced his checkbook, took his boys to special events when he or his wife were unavailable. I also worked on the many legal aspects of the job. He was one of the few lawyers who invited their secretary and spouse to dinner. Mr. Ailes gave nicknames to the people he cared about. Hence, I was always Marilino to him.

He and his wife owned a 350-acre farm in Martinsburg, West Virginia. It was named Waterfall Farm due to the natural waterfall which you could stand under and cool off in the summertime. They were always kind enough to allow me to take my children up to the farm on the weekends when they weren't using it. They also owned Flash, a lovely white horse that I was allowed to ride while I was there.

I worked for this gentleman off and on for over 25 years. When I needed to leave due to pregnancy or divorce, the job was always there when I needed to return. While I worked for him, he was the Secretary of the Army under Lyndon Johnson. This placed me at the Pentagon during the Vietnam War. Later, he was President of the Railroad Association. Working for him led to many interesting experiences. He took me with him when he argued before the Supreme Court, presented the Army's budget before Congress, and visited

the troops in Puerto Rico and Panama. Little did I expect when I took that job that it would have such an impact on my life.

Finding My Career

by Ann Worley

I didn't know what I wanted to be when I grew up until I was 30! My first aspiration was to be an airline stewardess, then a French teacher and, finally, an interpreter. In college, I had a change of heart, deciding I wanted a career in the helping field. As a result, I became a social worker.

By 30, I realized — after eight years of processing public welfare applications — that a desk job was no longer meaningful to me. I wanted a career that would impact people directly in more personal ways, so I pursued an associate degree in nursing. The nursing profession demands so much of you: time management, analytical thinking, and emotional sensitivity (and now, more high-tech skills). Nursing requires your mind and your hands as well as your heart!

Shortly before graduation in 1984, I was inspired by an experienced pediatric nurse at Montgomery General (now MedStar) to go into pediatrics, which I practiced for 40 years. In pediatrics, you care for the entire family. Often, parents need more support and reassurance than their children do. Pediatric patients can be funny and will often surprise you.

Nothing is more fulfilling than seeing former patients return with gratitude — excited about the next step in their lives — as did one young man on his way to graduation and another teen dressed for her prom. Although I retired from Children's National Medical Center in D.C. in 2018, I'm often reminded of Children's motto, "Only in pediatrics can you save a lifetime."



Two years into retirement, the COVID pandemic arrived. As a Community Health Specialist at Howard County General, I began immunizing the hospital staff as soon as the RNA vaccines arrived. Today, I teach courses in infant care and child safety, and take expectant parents on virtual tours of the hospital's maternity department. I feel truly blessed to still have this opportunity to continue the profession I love.

Poetry

by Kendall Anthony

My mother had a tin ear and couldn't carry a tune. So no lullabies for me. But my mother loved poetry. She had a box of poems that she had copied from a variety of places. She had memorized some of them. So she rocked me and recited poems—Little Boy Blue, Winken Blinken and Nod, The Little Stars of Duna.

In my middle years, my experience with poems waned, though I did occasionally return to read some loved poems from the past.

And, as a middle school teacher, I frequently taught a poetry unit to my class. They read some and wrote their own.

In my later years, I have returned to poetry. I have a collection of books by many authors—Mary Oliver, Billy Collins, Martin Espada, Natasha Trethewey, prose poems by David Shumate, an anthology of the best-loved classical poems and Garrison Keillor's *Good Poems for Hard Times*, to name a few. And I have my mother's box. Each evening, I read poems; reading them aloud, I enjoy the sound and rhythm. I include one of them here.

The First Green of Spring

David Budbill

Out walking in the swamp picking
cowslip, marsh marigold,

this sweet first green of spring. Now
sauteed in a pan melting

to a deeper green than ever they were
alive, this green, this life,

harbinger of things to come. Now we
sit at the table munching

on this message from the dawn
which says we and the world

are alive again today, and this is the
world's birthday. And

even though we know we are
growing old, we are dying, we

will never be young again, we also
know we're still right here

now, today, and, my oh my! don't
these greens taste good.

Trash

by Jim Hersey

“What are you putting in the bag ... mushrooms?”

“No, trash.”

As a sop to my prior work-life drive to accomplish stuff, I carry a worn cloth bag to pick up plastic waste and Coke cans thrown out in the woods behind Friends House. This gets me out where I can bask beneath the sun-dappled tulip popular trees, bathe in the babbling wood thrush tones, or find a box turtle male (note the red iris) lapping water from a drying stream.



I must have cleaned up a score of trash heaps in the woods since I've lived here. The biggest was an old farm dump below the trail. I strained to pull out half buried tires and wedge them into a garden cart to dispose of. As I puffed along, two Friends School students ran up behind me and pushed the cart up the hill and around to the dumpsters.

A woman called out, “What are you doing?” The boys replied, “The old man said it was ok.” And when I rounded the corner following behind, we laughed to realize that I was “the old man.”

I once could tote a trash bag in each hand. Now, I walk with sticks and one worn bag is all I hold. And after each rain storm, I find I need to pick up glass shards that wash up again. Still, I hope my bit may make it easier for those who follow to clean things up again. Perhaps a turtle will be pleased.



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Trying to Make the World a Better Place

by Victor Thuronyi

Ever since I was in college, I have tried most of the time to advocate one reform or another. Eventually, I settled on a career at the International Monetary Fund where I drafted numerous laws, mostly tax laws, all around the world.

In retirement, I continue to pursue reform, but in different ways, in contrast to my career, which was super focused. Among the reforms I have been advocating recently are proportional representation for the U.S. House of Representatives, with a special emphasis on single-member-district proportional representation. For Maryland, reforming the individual income tax by radically simplifying it so that most people would calculate their tax as a flat percentage of their federal tax. And in Federal tax policy, a progressive personal expenditure tax which not only could raise substantial revenue to help balance the budget but also go a long way to cutting back the role of big money in politics. I have also been working on political organizing. I write the occasional letter to the editor, which is a tough thing to do because only a small fraction get published.

This somewhat scattered approach is more difficult than what I did in my career. For one thing, when I was working I got people's attention because of the position I was in. Now, I have to work on getting politicians or their staff to respond, and actually convincing them is an uphill exercise.

Looking at the Future — 2226

by Hugh Corbin

Now nearing the end of my Fourth Quartile at 93, I see things quite differently from those around me. I am on the other side of the mountain and the view is spectacular. I do not expect others to believe what I see because it is

totally unbelievable. Just looking at three areas — time/space, life/death, organic/inorganic matter — this is what I see.

I do not expect that there will be a 2226 because, if humans survive, they will have stopped counting years and day and night, leaving aside those parameters of our solar system. Our sun will be but one room in our galactic mansion and will no longer be used to measure life and what we do. Travel from sun to sun will be like our present movement from continent to continent. Without days, years will cease. One “continuousity.”

Human life will be controlled, such that there will be no birth and death — just manipulation of atoms to design and at will. All the physical aspects of a human body will have been understood and reconceived. Population will be stable with little or no individuation.

I cannot see what will happen to the “person” but doing the things that people now do will be gone, totally irrelevant and unnecessary. We and me will be the same. A continuous oneness of organic matter. Communication between parts of the organism will also be irrelevant and automatic. Even the concept of “doing” will be archaic. Things will exist in a natural state of being without purpose or meaning.

And finally, we humans will have found the link between inorganic and organic matter. That which can change atomic structures at will. That which allowed inorganic matter to become organic and created humans, human consciousness, and human personas.

So. What about the survival of the planet and human life? Will the oil industry destroy us? What about an asteroid collision? Can there be life after us? Ask birds about the dinosaurs. Here's to 1984 ... oops, maybe 2027. And you are worried about November?

Friends House Shuffleboard – Past, Present and Future

by Joe Rockey

In the early 1990s, a passion for shuffleboard inspired resident Roger B. Farquhar (father of current resident Judy Farquhar) to promote construction of an outdoor cement court at Friends House. Scoring lines were painted, cues and biscuits (shuffleboard discs) obtained, and residents were soon enjoying healthy outdoor exercise coupled with engaging community fun. But as the years — and those early enthusiasts — passed, popularity waned. By 2020 the cracked court was unplayable, and the old equipment was gathering dust in a closet.

When the threat of COVID lifted, our FHSA Games Committee (inspired by Ollie Moles and Joe Rockey) teamed with Administration to bring shuffleboard back. The old cement was broken up and replaced, and our FH Maintenance crew (guided by Kim Glazier) installed a state-of-the-art professional plastic playing surface and an adjacent storage shed. Shuffleboard was ready to return!



The new court opened in 2025, and the Games Committee organized a group of enthusiastic beginners who spent the season enjoying the game and honing their skills. With encouragement from Barbara Brubeck, many decided to enter the 2026 Maryland Senior Olympics Shuffleboard Competition.

On August 9, the Friends House bus carried eight hopeful shuffleboarders — Barbara Brubeck, Karoline Dunne, Gloria Escobar, Raul Escobar, Susan Griffin, Janet Hudson, Jane Rockey, and Joe Rockey — to Rockville, where they joined some 60 competitors from around the state. Each player competed in three 10-frame Singles games.

The happy hours spent on our new court paid off in Gold. Our team brought home Gold, Silver, Bronze, and fourth-place medals, and Friends House is now home to several Maryland state champions — with some eligible for the 2027 National Senior Games.

From the shuffleboard dreams of the 1990s to Senior Olympics Gold in 2026, it's been quite a journey — and a portent that the future of shuffleboard at Friends House will be every bit as much fun as its past.



Movies to the Rescue!

by Marly Davidson

From early on, movies and books were my comfort food. Dad was often off at sea in the Navy. Mom created a new household every three years, coping mostly. We bounced between the DMV, Florida, and Pacific Island military bases. As two young kids, we needed to be quiet and amuse ourselves, especially when Dad wasn't home. Movies were where the feelings lived, out in the open. In later years, Mom and I gushed over favorite movies, not much else.

As a teenager, I skipped school to watch "The Petrified Forest" on TV. Anthony Perkins discovers Audrey Hepburn living deep in the forest with her grandfather. The natives think she's bewitched! Having read the story in *Reader's Digest* when I was 9, I was entranced.

Movies were always there: TV reruns and outdoor theater runs on Guam and the Philippines; a film society in Australia in the '60s; Ibsen's "A Doll's House" at college in the '70s. Back home in D.C. in the early '80s, there was the Biograph, and a double feature at the Circle Theatre for \$2.00. Two buses and the Metro transported me. Movie stars had feelings, had fights, made eye contact, and hugged and stuff. This was life to a lonely kid.

At 17, I discovered what family was supposed to feel like when I spent my junior year in Mildura, Australia as a Rotary exchange student. The contrast was startling. I was loved, right out in the open, unconditional. It saved my life. Three years later, I returned to Mildura and my five host families and was an LPN during college in Adelaide. After seven years, I had to come home.

Movies are for romance, for drama, for stuff that's true, or mindless, or a way to decompress. When I need to cry (or laugh), I'm drawn to films where I can be sad, joyful, slap-happy, or cheer for a good cause. I get to share my love of movies with my Friends House friends — real live people who appreciate movies too, or are learning to!



The Friends House DVD Collection

We have a wealth of movies available to anyone who would like to borrow one!

Housed in the new C wing lounge, there is a sign out sheet and return box. These can be played on your home DVD player or a computer that has a DVD drive.

In addition, the TV in the lounge has a DVD player. You're welcome to select a movie and watch it right there. Just be sure to return it to the Returns box!



The Song of the Foresters

by Steve Zinke

Submitted by Ron Beard. This poem was written in camp after long hours in the forests of Malheur National Forest in central Oregon, where fighting fires and surveying for new logging roads was the summer jobs of young men and students. Steve Zinke and I were both stationed at the Bear Valley Ranger Station, in the John Day District, in the summer of 1959.

This is the song of the Foresters, as they work in the woods alone,
On bright clear days, when there's no haze on the mountains tall and strong.
This is the song of the Foresters, as they work in the woods alone.
Close to God, 'tween sky and sod, in a heaven all their own.

This is the song of the Foresters, as the day begins to tire.
When the Devil's hand came on the land and scorched it with his fire.
Now fire at night is an awful sight, for the eyes of man to see.
You hear him shout, "Let's put it out, before it reaches me!"

This is the song of the Foresters, as they work in the woods at night.
Although they tire, they fight the fire, in the monster's evil light.
For a forest burned is a forest spurned, when it comes down to a head.
Not a living thing has love to bring, to a world that's black and dead.

This is the song of the Foresters, as they stamp the fire out.
A blaze so bad, they went half mad, but gave a mighty shout.
The job's been done the battles won, it's time to go about;
And put it back, this land so black, to a forest tall and stout.

This is the song of the Foresters, as they plant the trees agin.
Let's do it right, with all our might; let's do it with a grin,
So future years will bring no tears, and we'll have thanks to hand
To a God so good, He gave the wood, so good to the creatures of this land.

This is the song of the Foresters, as they work in the woods so bright,
On cold clear days, when the snow it lays on the mountains clean and white.
This is the song of the Foresters, as they work in the woods alone,
To bring to you, and you and you, a heaven all your own.