

Tess M. Thomas—Our Human Resources Director

by Shannon Purves

Because she began her job as our Human Resources Director in June, 2020, more than three months into our pandemic “lockdown,” Tess Thomas hasn’t yet experienced the “real” TFAD. One of the reasons she was interested in working here was the opportunity it offered for relationships with older



people. So far, she’s met very few of us in person and greatly looks forward to the chance of knowing many more residents than has been possible so far. HR is, of course, all about knowing people and understanding their special strengths. Tess wants to apply those skills not only to finding the best employees for

The Forest, but also to directly serving a special clientele—us.

Born, raised and schooled in Detroit suburbs, Tess is quick to point out that she avoided employment in the automobile industry until, in 2013, she moved to Maryland to take a job at AB Volvo where she translated business strategy and objectives into Human Resource goals, plans, and tactics. Two years into that job, she accepted a new position in Greensboro, NC. By then, she had already experienced her chosen field in four arenas—a nonprofit service, a software enterprise, a medical services organization, and a global manufacturing company.

As someone who had known as early as her first year in college that she wanted to pursue this profession (she received a BA in Business Administration from Wayne State University where she majored in Human Resource Management/Labor Relations) she has, from the beginning, purposely sought experience in varied aspects of hiring the right

people. Thus, the Forest’s advertisement for someone to fill its Human Resources Directorship caught her eye right away. After several interviews by way of ZOOM, and one in-person meeting with Anita, Tess was convinced that what TFAD offered was just what she wanted to experience next.

And so, luckily for us, Tess joined the TFAD Leadership Team in June and now heads a department of four—Lauren, Melissa and Alana are her HR colleagues—from two offices across the hall from the Clinic. “I love the people and the talent I’ve been exposed to here so far—and the *learning!*” One thing she wants to emphasize is that both her career and her personal life are based on three key values: kindness,



respect, and integrity. Another is a special life lesson: that you can survive through struggle.

Tess and her family—her husband, a retired nurse practitioner, and the younger of their two kids—are still living in Greensboro and will stay there until their daughter graduates from high school this June. Tess didn’t want to uproot her in her senior year, but looks forward to moving closer to us this year and to a much shorter commute. In the meantime, she says the pleasures of her work here make the two-hour round trip more than worthwhile. ¶

The Forester

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President's Podium



by Lois Oliver

The Forest has had a busy month in February. While we continue to be safe in our limited social interactions, there was some cheerful interaction during the first COVID-19 vaccination session. It appears that almost all residents are now on the way to being fully vaccinated. The President's Day Resident's Association meeting gathered many of us in a Zoom meeting, and others were able to see the meeting on Channel 1390 the next evening. I know we can't wait to gather in the auditorium for such events.

Honoring Black History Month, residents educated themselves by way of speakers, a table of written material in the Community Center presented by the Diversity Team, and watching the excellent television productions covering the African American struggles and successes.

The RA committees continue their work on our behalf. They keep us entertained (Laughter Crafters and Film Festival, and many others), provide opportunities like the Library, and the limited but "greeting cards only" Gift Shop, and both residents and staff try to keep us moving and active in many ways. Most of us are becoming, to various degrees, familiar with Zoom-ing. Actually seeing each other's full faces may be the best thing about it.

I would like to express my appreciation for the dedication of our administration. Anita Holt and her staff have done so much to keep us safe and well. We may find meals alone from paper bags not all that great, but considering the work and staff hours that go into keeping us fed, it is a major benefit. Connecting us to OLLI classes, keeping up the varied exercise classes, working to make the Vibrant Portal better, the list goes on and on.

We all look forward to a spring that isn't far now, and hopefully a much-opened-up Forest at Duke. ☘

In Memoriam

Marion Bender

January 24, 2021

In This Issue...

In the piece on page 9 from 20 Years Ago, John Tebbel opined that March is an untrustworthy, nothing month—a prelude, like Lent, to something brighter. At The Forest, the Community Center Flower Arrangers brighten our days all year with displays in the rotunda, and in our Greenhouse and resident homes orchids provide exuberant displays of color—displays that we highlight in this March issue.

Library Science 101

by Carol Reese

HOW WE GROW THE COLLECTION

As most of you know, we add to the Library's collection through donations and specific purchases. From August 2020 through December 2020, residents donated nearly 500 items, mostly hardcover and trade paperback novels. Once we compare the donations to our collection and determine that we don't already have it, retention is based on quality of the donated item (nothing written in it, no ruined pages, etc.), its topic (no technical books, cookbooks, textbooks, travel books, or "coffee table" books) and publication date. Based on our acquisition policy, the library added 30 newly donated books—mostly fiction—to the collection. During this same 5-month period, the library purchased about 18 books from its budget; these were mostly on non-fiction topics; others were in Large Print format.

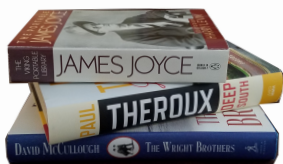
Under normal circumstances, the books we didn't keep would have gone to the Friends of the Durham County Library for their book sales in support of the county library system. However, these aren't normal times, so we had to come up with other ways to dispose of the books we didn't keep. One was to hold a book sale in December for residents and staff; this sale enabled us to get rid of about 100 items while spreading joy just before the holidays.

The other thing we are doing is taking our trade paperback books and distributing them throughout the community by placing them on the paperback racks scattered around in the hallways. We also donated about 20 trade paperbacks (mostly award winners) to the Health and Wellness residents—with the hope of giving them some new ways to occupy their time.

NEW BOOKS ADDED IN JANUARY

The table at right lists by title the new books added to the library collection in January 2021. Check them out if you haven't done so already. By the time you read this, these books should be shelved in their normal listed shelf location within the collection.

However, remember when an item is newly added to the library collection, it is first placed on the **NEW TO THE LIBRARY** book shelf for about two months. This book shelf is on the left once you enter the library. Please check this book shelf on a regular basis if you are interested in knowing what is new in the Library. 🌱



TITLE	SHELF LOCATION
BERLIN SHADOW: Living with the Ghosts of the Kindertransport	940.54 LIC
BOOK OF TWO WAYS: a Novel	FIC PIC
CRIME SCENE	MYS KEL
EAGLES OF HEART MOUNTAIN: a True Story of Football, and Incarceration	973.91 PEA
HAVE YOU SEEN LUIS VELEZ?	FIC HYD
MARAUDER: a Novel of the Oregon Files	FIC CUS
MOONFLOWER MURDERS	MYS HOR
SEA WIFE	FIC GAI
SHADOW OF THE DRAGON	FIC CLA
SONG OF SOLOMON	FIC MOR
THE MIRROR AND THE LIGHT	FIC MAN
THE THING AROUND YOUR NECK	FIC ADI
TROUBLED BLOOD	MYS GAL
YOU AND YOUR BRAIN: a Neuroscientist Explains the Brain to his 10-year-old Grandson	IHA PUR

An Irruption of Robins

by Philip G. Baer

Irruption (noun) ... **2:** (ecology) a sudden sharp increase in the relative numbers of a natural population, usually associated with favorable alteration of the environment.

During the last week of January and first week of February, as defined above, we've certainly experienced an irruption of robins. Flocks of around 100 birds in the holly bushes, in the treetops, and on the lawns. And if you've noticed them, you may be wondering: What's going on? Are they migrating?

The first thing you'll want to know is that this is a normal, annual event. Every year around this time, flocks of robins arrive and stay, usually for a few days. What is unusual about this year is the greater number and greater duration of the visit. And both are the result of the last part of the definition, a "favorable alteration of the environment." Two things are different about the environment this year. First, the holly berry crop was huge, and holly berries are among the favorite fruits that attract robins in winter. They will sit on a branch while they pick and swallow berries whole one after the other—I once watched one gulp down eight berries during a single 30-second sitting. As I write this, they've been eating steadily for about 10 days, and many bushes have been completely stripped of berries. Second, the weather has been both milder and wetter than usual, leaving the ground wet, soft, and unfrozen. The combination keeps earthworms moving in the upper layer of soil, and insects in the grass and leaf litter, where the robins can find them: worms, insects, and berries, a balanced diet for robins, and mild weather in which to enjoy it.

So, you may still be asking, are they migrating? Well, yes and no. On the "no" side of the answer, if you think of migration as meaning long, sustained flights to specific, narrowly defined destinations, then the robins are definitely not migrating. On the "yes" side, the population does shift dramatically southward in the winter. In addition to the continental United States, the summer breeding range for robins includes Alaska and every province and territory in Canada. As winter approaches, the northernmost populations form flocks and begin drifting south, but availability of

food, rather than warmth, is what they seek. They shift their diets from invertebrates and insects to fruits and berries, and as we've seen here, when they find an abundant source, they interrupt their travels and take up residence for as long as the food lasts. But not all robins head south when the temperatures drop. Some stay throughout the winter even in southern Canada and across the northern United States. They add a layer of warm, downy feathers to their plumage, enabling them to survive extreme cold, as long as the food supplies hold out.

So, we can add our irruption of robins to the long list of other things that we will always remember about this year. And, for me, it was one of the few that I will actually be happy to remember. ‡

(Phil Baer also contributed the poem on Page 12.)

TWENTY YEARS AGO IN THE FORESTER

Senior Moment

For about a week a Towhee pecked and flung himself onto my kitchen window. His headache must have been severe as he fought his reflection. The sound was like someone knocking on the door all day.

A female Towhee sat in a nearby tree enjoying the ritual.

I had to act. "What am I to do? I need a scarecrow," I said.

An 8x10 portrait of myself was placed on the windowsill.

The male Towhee appeared at once, took one look, and like the Raven before him, said, "NEVERMORE, that's the worst thing I ever saw," as he departed forever.

Silence is golden around here now.

—Elizabeth P. Dube

(Volume 7, Issue 6, March 2001)

Our Greenhouse

by Jo Mooney

The Forest at Duke's greenhouse shelters hundreds of plants of many varieties, from tiny seedlings to small trees, including many, many



orchids. If you are walking on our new sidewalk on Forest at Duke Drive near Cottage 80, the greenhouse is just a few steps away on the path leading up to the main building. Visitors are welcome —“Pull the door tight behind you as you enter and leave!”

As you enter is a table with a space marked off by a red line. This is where you place plants that you would like to put in the greenhouse. Before doing that call one of the Greenhouse Committee (**Doug Whitfield**, Chair; **Mary Denson**, **Ann Inderbitzin**, **Nancy Miller**, **Nathalie Goodrich**, and **Gene Yonuschot**) for permission and the latest instructions. This year, plants will be accepted until May 15, and then again in November.



A committee member will spray the plant to guard against undesirable invaders. If your plant is accepted, the committee member will explain your responsibilities for the plant and show you where to place it, generally in alphabetical order by your name

on one of the tables stretching the length of the greenhouse on either side and down the center. Some plants will be hanging overhead, others tucked below.

The greenhouse accepts primarily orchids and other exotic plants but will also house large planters from your porch or patio during the winter, as well as other plants when you are away from home for several weeks. 🌿



Seeking Exotic Beauty . . .

Doug Whitfield

by George Williams

Doug Whitfield and his wife, **Fran**, moved into The Forest in July 2013. He was already an accomplished gardener and a cultivator of exotic plants. When he arrived, he brought with him his six orchid plants. From that original six orchids, he has developed a collection of 100+.

Doug soon became a supporter of the Greenhouse, and he has been chairman of the Greenhouse Committee for the past four or five years. In addition to that he has been involved with the Community Center Flower Arrangers for the past five years, sharing that responsibility with **Kathleen Allen**. They encourage residents to submit flowers from their gardens or from their favorite florist to that display. He himself contributed the dramatic display in January/February of the six different plants pictured at right.

Orchid varieties shown are Dendrobium, Oncidium, Cymbidium, and Cattleya. Below, another of Doug's Cymbidiums. 🌸



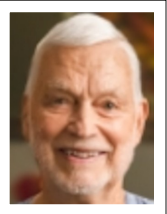
Bennett Galef

In search of subjects to brighten our pages at the tail end of winter, Forester photographer Bennett Galef focused his lens on some of the exotic plants grown by residents. The photos on these pages show the results.



Craig Daniels

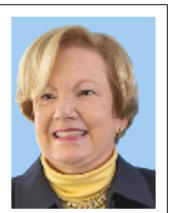
Among his many plants, Craig Daniels takes special pride in the Anthurium Chocolate. The species is rather rare though not hard to grow, Craig says. This plant has been part of his collection for ten years.



Alex and Mary Denson

Of the Cattleya labiata on the opposite page, Alex Denson said, "We have many Cattleyas,

but we think this is one of the most beautiful. Some have had as many as seven flowers blooming at once! But more often they have two to four blooms at one time. The ones that are white with yellow throats are also beautiful!"



. . . with Bennett Galef

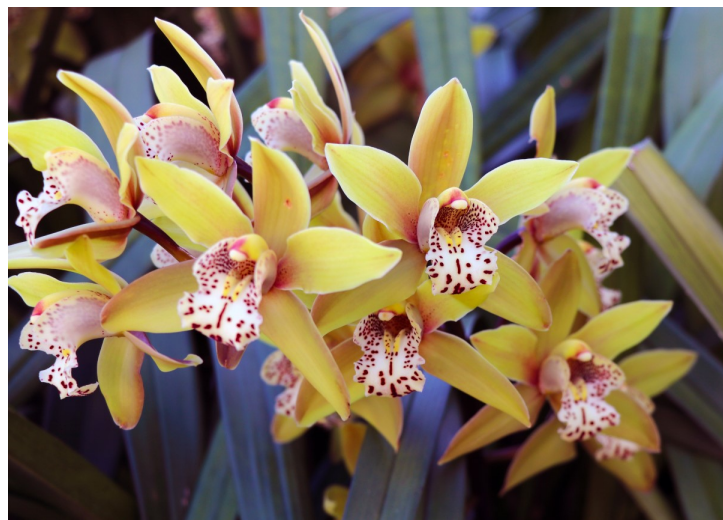
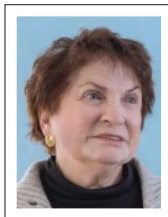
Katherine Shelburne

Katherine Shelburne houses her huge collection of carnivorous plants in the house, in the garage, and in the Forest Greenhouse, depending on temperature needs. Shown here are pitcher plants, *Sarracenia*, at right, and below, the Venus flytraps, *Dionaea muscipula*. Insects are only a tiny part of their diet.



Margaret Pless

Growing orchids has long been a serious pursuit for Margaret Pless. She has taken tender loving care of the *Cymbidium* below, Green Queen, for 30 years! It now has several babies, looking for a good home. "First come, first served!"



I Believe

by Carol Oettinger

One of the many advantages of being older is the amount of unstructured time available for us to use as we choose. Part of my time has been used to think about what I believe—my spiritual journey. However, I know that it will change, as it has continued to change through the years. So, this is today's.

The liberal Congregational church, in which I grew up, was an important part of my life. My fundamentalist mother preached sin and guilt, but at church I heard things that made more sense to me as a child and teenager. Other Protestant churches, to which I belonged through the years, taught things I was not able to accept. I felt that I was being forced to lie about too many things within the place they called God's house.

The Unitarian church and yoga came into my life at about the same time—over thirty years ago. What I learned in both was that the things I was thinking, feeling, needing, were all right, were good. Yoga taught that mind, body, and spirit are intertwined, that competing with others was self defeating, that striving to meet each challenge to the best of one's ability brings real feelings of achievement; that joy can be found in being attentive to each moment. The Unitarian church agreed with this and has continued to add new insight using the wisdom of all religions.

Through the years I have developed a series of words upon which I reflect each morning during my meditation-prayer.

Peace is the first word I mention. I have found that without peace within my spirit, I am not able to work for peace in my family, community, or the world. Two years in the Peace Corps showed me clearly that even when I came to a country and a people in the name of peace, it was difficult to deal with some of the people and events in a peaceful way. I pray daily for peace within.

My second word is *love*. I have four children with spouses, ten grandchildren, some with spouses, twenty-five great-grandchildren, and many friends whom I can love and respect all the time and like and agree with sometimes. I know that they return my love and respect when they can. I want to continue to give and receive love.

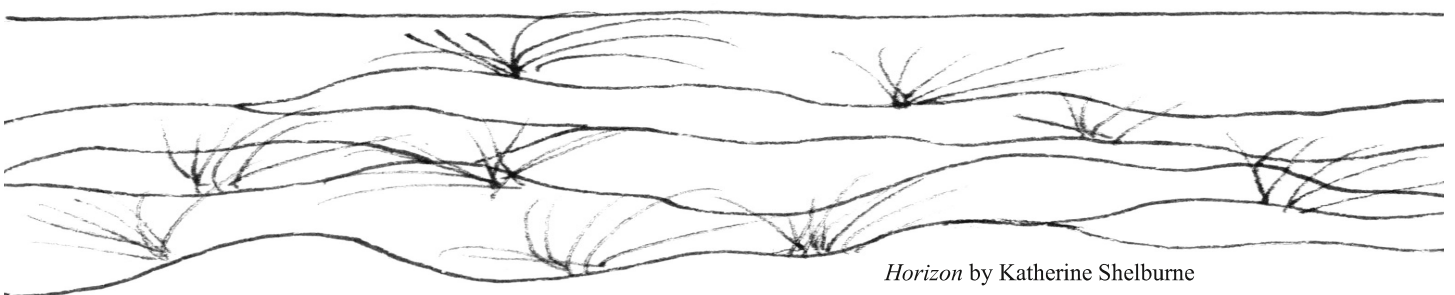
Joy is the third word. There are so many things to be joyful about and grateful for each day—starting with good health. Many things that give me joy are in nature—sunrises, clouds, flowers, trees, birds, rocks, the ocean, stars—all bring joy and thanks to my spirit. And there are people with ideas, smiles, and hugs to share. Books, music, and art are all available to me. What riches. If I don't find joy, I've stopped looking.

Kindness is something that I had to learn to value. When I was young, I thought that quick wit, clever repartee, and superior intelligence were the most important attributes to be found in people. Through the years I've learned that wit and a facile tongue are often used at the expense of the feelings of others. They often wound. I began to work to curb my tongue. It is a continuing struggle, but each day I pray to be kind. Practicing helps.

Power is the next word I consider. The two women in my life whom I saw as powerful were my mother and my mother-in-law. Both often seemed to be cruel and destructive. I did not want power as I perceived it used by them. As I have lived and observed, I have found that power can be used for good. Now the sense that power is available for me to use constructively is exhilarating. I like being a powerful woman.

Forgiveness comes next. It took me a long time to realize that forgiveness is more for me than anyone I'm working to forgive. I have found that it clears out

(Continued on Page 9)



Horizon by Katherine Shelburne

I Believe...

(Continued from Page 8)

anger and bitterness from my spirit. It frees me for the thoughts and feelings I enjoy and want to live with. It helps me be forgiven.

I pray for each member of my family and for anyone I know of who needs healing, loving thoughts sent out to them. I give thanks for all the people in my life. Occasionally my prayers are for someone I don't like or agree with or who doesn't like me. There seems to be some sort of magic about continuing to mention this person's name that brings accord and sometimes creates a friendship.

I have recently realized that my list of goals—for want of a better name—is growing. At the beginning of this journey. I found myself asking “Is this what you really want? All the time?” The answer turned out to be YES. What a surprise.

Most recently I have added several words. They come from Navajo prayers that ask to walk each day in beauty and harmony and to stay in balance with one's life. And from Navajo weavers, to weave and live aware of the beauty within and without.

My meditation ends by asking God to help me come a little closer to what I was created to be and to be mindful daily of the directions that takes me. I haven't mentioned God before, but I feel deeply that the source of beauty, power, and creativity is always available to me. Without God, I wouldn't know whom to thank for early sunshine on tree tops, the scarlet flash of a cardinal soaring by, a new day to live. It seems to me now that everything I've said is part of my ongoing conversation with God. ☩

This was originally written in 1996 and over the years more words have been added. “Asking for courage and wisdom are now part of my daily prayers. I am grateful and happy to have been given so many years to live in this wonderful world.”

Carol Oettinger has been a resident of The Forest since 2007. She regularly contributes “Carol's Corner,” a piece in The Forester about Team Members.

TWENTY YEARS AGO IN THE FORESTER

March

Come on, people, let's face it: March is a nothing month. For one thing, it has no holidays and consequently, no excuse for celebration or reading about other people's celebrations.

Comes in like a lion and goes out like a lamb, they told us when we were innocent children. It took a blizzard on March 31st to disillusion some of us after having enjoyed a premature wave of low-grade heat on March 1.

An untrustworthy month, too. Watch your back. “Beware the Ides of March,” they warned Caesar, but apparently he didn't know an Ide from a toga and consequently got stabbed in the Forum. At least it led to the best funeral oration ever recorded.

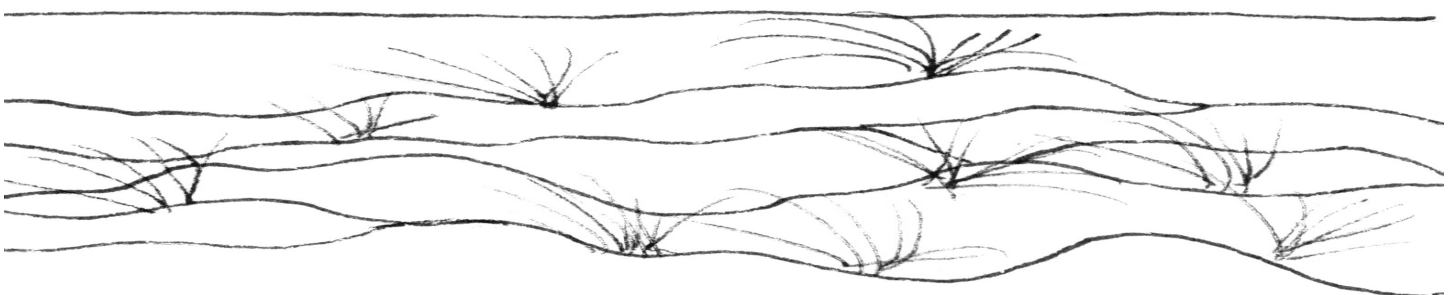
The trouble with March is that it can't make up its mind. It's like people who can't decide between going out for pizza or Chinese and wind up at MacDonald's. Cold one day, warm the next. Raining then snowing, with a little indecisive sleet and freezing rain mixed in.

Truly, a nothing month. Few, if any, great historic events to be observed. Politicians and generals seem to have been out to lunch for the entire month. Well, okay, all right, there's March Madness for basketball fans, and spring training for baseball addicts, but all this doesn't take the curse off March.

There's really only one way to deal with it—ignore it. After all, pretty little April is waiting in the wings—and you know April!

—John Tebbel

(Volume 7, Issue 6, March 2001)



C. B. S. PLANNING 'RED MILL' ON TV

**Operetta Will Be Presented
in Color April 19—Strike
Threatens 2 Networks**

By VAL ADAMS

Victor Herbert's operetta "The Red Mill" will be televised in color on April 19 from 7:30 to 9 P. M. over the Columbia Broadcasting System network. It will be a feature of the "Du Pont Show of the Month" series.

"The Red Mill," which was last revived on Broadway in 1945, will be produced by Fred Coe. Mr. Coe, formerly with the National Broadcasting Company, recently signed an exclusive contract with C. B. S. The cast for "The Red Mill" has not been selected.

N. B. C. is withholding the distribution of studio tickets to any programs this week-end because of a possible strike by the National Association of Broadcast Employees and Technicians. Union contracts with N. B. C. and the American Broadcasting Company expire at midnight Friday.

Representatives of the two networks and the union have been negotiating new contracts since early this month. The discussions are being held in Boston.

Details about the progress of the discussions have not been announced, but last week the union accused the two networks of "stalling." The union says it represents 1,600 engineers, traffic, production and clerical employees of N. B. C. and 800 in similar categories with A. B. C.

Moonlighting and Mayhem at The Red Mill

by John Howell

When I read about the recent sale of CBS Television City in Los Angeles, I was immediately reminded of the time I spent at the glass-walled modernist building where so many hit shows had been produced over the last seventy years. But I especially thought of *The Red Mill*, the ninety-minute musical I worked on in April 1958.

Variety marked the historical significance of *The Red Mill* as "the first major production of its kind taped-in-advance of its broadcast."

What *Variety* didn't say was that *The Red Mill* marked the end of "live" television as the dominant medium in broadcasting—or that *The Red Mill* marked the end of my brief career in broadcasting.

Virtually all major productions were "live" until Ampex introduced its videotape in 1958. Videotape meant that the performers could record any time, broadcast any time. The broadcast technicians were afraid the radical change might cost them jobs—so they asked for jurisdiction over videotaping. When CBS rejected their request, they called a strike on April 7, 1958.

CBS responded to the strike by turning to those of us in administration and offering us bonuses to moonlight as camera operators and supporting technicians. The results were not pretty.

I was then an administrative assistant in the Scenic and Graphic Arts Department, but hoping to become a television director. When I volunteered to moonlight, a senior administrator asked me to work as a "dolly grip" on *The Jack Benny Show*. When I got to the Benny soundstage, however, I discovered that I wasn't actually needed, so I just took a seat in the row behind Mr. Benny and watched the proceedings. I was fond of Mr. Benny. He had sent me a card the previous Christmas and always smiled in the hall. But he wasn't smiling now. Instead, he was shaking his head as the show's director, Guy Della-Cioppa, tried and failed to organize the moonlighting camera operators. With his elegant Italian suits and his Lamborghini with the flying doors, Della-Cioppa was the envy of all the younger employees. But now he was beside himself with frustration.

And so, abruptly, was Mr. Benny. Rising from his seat, he yelled, "You think you're so damn smart. Put on a damn movie." And with that he left the studio. So I went down the hall and got another assignment: dolly grip on *The Red Mill*. Fred Coe was to produce, Delbert Mann, direct.

The plot of *The Red Mill* was fairly simple-minded. Shirley Jones and Elaine Stritch played sisters who owned the Red Mill, whose "arms" won't turn until love returns to the Dutch village of Kattwykam-zee. Mike Nichols and Elaine May played self-absorbed Hollywood movie stars. Donald O'Connor played their go-fer. In the end, they all discovered love, and the Red Mill turned its arms.

But though the plot was simple, the show had a complex

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Moonlighting...

(Continued from Page 10)

sequence of comedy, singing, and dancing. So Mann, forced to work with moonlighting administrators instead of experienced technicians, decided to videotape the sequence rather than do it live. This meant that the show couldn't be broadcast in color, since Ampex didn't introduce their color videotape until six months later.

Mann had won an academy award for *Marty* and directed over a hundred successful TV dramas and movies. He didn't need the work. But he took the risk. And unlike Della-Cioppa with the Benny show, he was the picture of calm, politely suggesting that the "executives," as he called them, should just shoot "wide shots," and that the dolly grips (like me) should "just help the executives move the cameras and keep the electronic cables straight."

My assigned "executive" was the CBS Marketing Manager. Though he clearly outranked me in the administrative hierarchy, he deferred to me when he learned that I had taken a few courses in video production, so we got on well, though his camera work was inept. Years later, Mann told an interviewer that the performers were "wonderful," but that the show was, as far as he could tell, "a complete bomb." In fact, the performers knew that things weren't going well. They had all previously starred in major hits: dancer Donald O'Connor (*Singing in the Rain*), singer Shirley Jones (*Oklahoma* and *Carousel*), actor Elaine Stritch (*Bus Stop* and other plays), while the comedians Nichols and May were at the height of their popularity. But only Shirley Jones openly expressed her concerns to me. She was then, she said, five months pregnant with her first child, and apparently felt more vulnerable than the rest. But fate was kind: She is now, after a long and successful career in television, perhaps the only surviving member of the cast.

As for my own survival, the chaotic production of *The Red Mill* answered a question that had plagued me for some time. Did I really want to be a television director? Even one as successful as Delbert Mann? The answer, I discovered in the mayhem, was "no," and I left CBS shortly after. ☘

John Howell was a professor of American Literature and chair of the English Department at Southern Illinois University. This is an excerpt from a memoir in progress.

TWENTY YEARS AGO IN THE FORESTER

Growing Pains

Garden Plots: Frank Melpolder has planned an early March meeting for TFAD plot holders [in the Community Gardens] and interested residents. There are seven garden plots that have not been spoken for. Any resident (especially new residents) may wish to think about using one of the available plots. Frank will discuss the problem of fungal growth on tomato plants.

Greenhouse: Noel Freeman, our Greenhouse chairman, has been laid up with a bum knee—the Greenhouse misses him. If you have plants there, please check that the dead leaves are removed and that the plants have your name on them. There are some plants not worth saving, so please pitch them before our clean-up day.

Landscaping: Bess Bowditch is looking for some volunteers to arrange our blooms from the rose garden for the Count-me-in table and reception desk. If you would be willing to help, please call her at 490-0511. She is also making a schedule (May through October) for dining room foyer arrangements. Each person is assigned one or two weeks. We all enjoy the variety she plans.

—Betty Niles Gray

(Volume 7, Issue 6, March 2001)



Rotunda Flowers Photo by Bennett

Just Go with the Flow

by Philip G. Baer

A moss-banked, north-bound stream runs from the meadow,
joining a larger stream that joins one even larger further on.
It washes through its bottomland, exposing roots of stream-side trees.

Straight runs are rare.

Halfway between the meadow and the next larger stream,
rocky hairpin turns and deep-carved switchbacks wrench the flow
from north to east to west and back to east.

They make the water struggle, boil and foam,
bounce off rocks and walls, upset, discordant, confused and roiled.

Then, below those churning turns, the streambed straightens.

The flow, gentled, resumes its northward course.

But, through it all, the twists and turns, the unexpected changes of direction,
the confusion, the not knowing what will come next, there is one constant.

The flow is always downhill.

I go and stand by the hairpin turns on days when my life
is going in ways I didn't expect, when change is not just constant, but
a high-speed, dizzying, out-of-control, frightening roller-coaster ride,
and I can't make it slow or find a way to get off.

And the stream reminds me that, beyond today's turbulence and twisting turns,
a straighter course will follow.

And, like the stream, my life will continue to run as it always has,
always downhill, through whatever it must pass to reach its larger stream.

Philip Baer was reared in West Virginia, attended college in Memphis, earned a PhD in physiology from the University of Mississippi, and did post-doctoral work in Montreal and Milan. After teaching at the University of Tennessee, he worked at Glaxo (now Glaxo Smith Kline) in Research Triangle Park. At The Forest he gardens, cooks, and studies philosophy. He and his wife, Ellen, are frequent contributors to The Forester.