

## Here, There, and Back Again

by Diane Strauss

### Here

In 2021, after moving into my apartment in Independent Living, I became an official TFAD resident. Things were different then. We were in the throes of the Covid epidemic, confined for the most part to our residences. Meals were delivered to us, we sported face masks when we ventured out, and group activities were cut. It wasn't all bad. I had my dog, Levi, for company as well as an array of other activities: chance encounters daily with fellow dog walkers, ZOOM, Facebook, and email. And books! As vaccinations became available, things gradually returned to normal. That "normal" lasted for me until July 2022. Meeting some friends for lunch in Chapel Hill, I slipped and fell, seriously injuring my leg. I'll spare you the gory details. Assigned to health care here, with occasional hospital stays for surgeries, I became first a temporary and then a permanent health care resident.

### There: The Bad Times

In early days, I was in pain, confined to bed and unable to move on my own. I yelled when my dressings were changed, could only move from my bed with the assistance of two CNAs and a Hoyer lift, and had panic attacks whenever physical and occupational therapists came by. In the first progress assessment required by insurance, the therapists reported I'd made no progress, and they were required to cease their visits. During that time, I watched TV, read, and slept. My muscles, never mighty, further deteriorated. I was in a bad way. Desperate, I asked for help. I was prescribed an anti-anxiety med and dabbled in meditating and affirmations, fellow residents encouraged me, and the therapists resumed their sessions.

These days, when IL residents congratulate me on my return, it's really the staff who should be praised. Without their skill, patience, persistence, and genuine kindness, I'd be there still. The most charitable thing that could be said about me during

those early days was that I was "a challenge." I remember the Friday my social worker and the HC navigator visited to tell me my status was to be changed from temporary to permanent resident. I would have to give up my dog, car, and apartment and arrange for furniture, clothing, books, and household goods to be packed and moved out. I was outraged! Not only would I be losing all the things I loved, I would also forfeit my independence. I would become "institutionalized."

Commiserations from the two further infuriated me. "Easy for you," I said. "You're about to leave for the weekend. You can forget about this, set it aside." I'll never forget their response. They replied that while they hoped to enjoy their weekend, it wasn't possible to forget resident and caretaker problems, many far more challenging than mine. I've since made well deserved apologies to both for that outburst.

### There: Things Shift

Time for some good stuff, and there's plenty! One is the love and care that spouses, family, and friends lavish on their significant others who are HC residents. I remember one wife who would visit her husband daily, wheeling him out to the Holcomb terrace where they'd sit in the sun, she holding his hand, talking and singing to him. And, after moving to the new Health Center, I became acquainted with



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## *The Forester*

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Additional articles in the June online issue of *The Forester* (<https://theforester.net>) include

- "This Spring in Duke Gardens," Ellen Baer
- "The Stand Off," Sue Staples
- "Civil Rights & Wrongs," Joan Seiffert
- "The Taste Test. Ronald, and 74%," Carole LaBar
- "Hugo Sotolongo," Sherrill Blazer

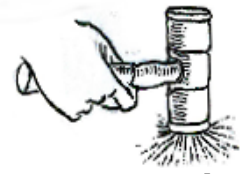


(Photo by Ellen Baer)

## **In Memoriam**

Ruth Alice Meng Yonuschot	April 29, 2025
Sharon Skolnicki	May 16, 2025
Mary Ann O'Neal	May 18, 2025
Maidi Hall	May 19, 2025

## **President's Podium**



by James Freedman

Later this year, we will be celebrating the official naming of the Health Center as The Cohen Center at the Forest at Duke, in recognition of Dr. Harvey J. Cohen. The naming of TFAD buildings is not a new custom. Three TFAD buildings have been formally named: the Community Center as well as the two previous health care centers, the Olsen Center and the Holbrook Center.

If you go to the archives on the RA website, you can find "The Forest at Duke: A History 1992-2007," compiled by Mary Ruth Miller. This history notes that The Forest at Duke began as a dream by a group of neighbors in the Duke Forest neighborhood, headed by Dr. and Mrs. Crapo, starting around 1980. Ten years of effort and planning resulted in the community groundbreaking in August 1990. The building that is the centerpiece of our community was officially opened August 25, 1992 and was dedicated as the James D. and Kathleen D. Crapo Community Center. A bronze plaque was presented to the couple to recognize their contributions as founders of the retirement community by the TFAD Board of Directors and was mounted at the main entrance of the Community Center. Unfortunately, when the main entrance was renovated in the 2016 reconstruction, the plaque was removed. Extensive efforts by the current administration have been unsuccessful in finding it, but efforts are currently underway to recreate the plaque and have it remounted in the reception area.

To promote good health among residents, along with the treatment of illnesses, the initial Wellness Center opened in October 1992, under a contract with Duke University Medical Center. First came the Olsen Center for skilled nursing, followed by the Holbrook Center for assisted living in 1993. Dedication of the two centers occurred on November 20, 1992 and were named in honor of the mothers of Kathy and James Crapo: Melba Olsen

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## President's Podium

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Crapo and Helen Holbrook Dahlquist. Bronze plaques were mounted in the units to acknowledge the dedication. These two centers no longer exist. As Dean McCumber pointed out to me “they were subsumed into an enlarged and reconfigured Health Center in 2001. The Olsen and Holbrook names were familiar to, and used by, early residents at the Forest, but they became less useful with the 2001 reconfiguration.”

The whole complex was demolished at the completion in 2023 of the new Health Center to allow the construction of the Terraces, an expansion of independent living units. The plaques were removed when demolition started and are currently in storage. Your RA Board is working with administration to have the plaques hung in an appropriate location to preserve our community history as well as to continue to honor the early contributors. Reconstruction, new construction, and expansion open the opportunity to recognize new leaders and contributors but do not mean we should forget past recognition.

It is interesting to note that representatives on the Board of Directors that recognized all three designations include our still very active and involved resident Margaret Keller, as well as Harvey Cohen, MD, who remained active on the board until this past year and was a key contributor to the success of TFAD over its thirty plus years of existence. It is unfortunate that the archive history chronicle of TFAD has not been extended past the 1992-2007 text. The Forest has evolved through the efforts of many dedicated people in the interim, and the story exists in past issues of *The Forester* and various committee meeting minutes. Anybody interested in updating The Forest history? The challenge is waiting! 🌱



## Diane Strauss

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the husband of the woman who lived across the hall from me. He also was a frequent visitor, wheeling her to activities and sharing meals with her. His wife rewarded him and others with beautiful, radiant smiles, far more telling than mere words. On his own, he became an expert in his wife's malady, frequently attending or presenting at relevant professional conferences. If caretakers felt their people weren't getting adequate attention or care, they talked with HC staff, seeking resolution.

### There: A New Way of Living

When the New Health Center opened in February 2023, residents were introduced to the Small House Model, which replaced our former hospital mode. It consists of small “households,” each containing no more than ten residents and including communal living and dining room, kitchen, and den. Whenever possible, nurses, CNAs and housekeepers were assigned to specific households so that residents and staff could get to know—and appreciate—each other. Most liked the arrangement. However, it was a major change and some found issues relating to resident autonomy and advocacy difficult to accept.



Kaidy Lewis

As I gradually became more mobile and adventurous, I participated in programs offered, including concerts, films, exercise classes, social hours, and my favorite: art led by Kaidy, our Artist in Residence. Despite her warm welcome to the Art Room, I was apprehensive. I love art, but I didn't do art. I saw there both accomplished artists and amateurs who were bold, uninhibited, and enjoying themselves. I didn't belong in either of those

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camps, but Kaidy set me down with a sketch pad and some watercolor pens, and I was OK, good to go.

As it did for many others, Art Room experiences brought me joy. One day Kaidy selected some dance music and an IL volunteer, an award-



Deborah Tippet and Prem Sharma at the Health Center  
(photo by Sharron Parker)

winning amateur dancer, turned to one of the men, asking him if he knew how to shag (a beach music swing dance). The man, who had dementia and was often uncommunicative, allowed that he did. They took to the floor, and he transformed into a man in charge, fully present, leading and twirling his partner. Pure bliss! That led to the volunteer and Kaidy inviting the volunteer's professional dance instructor to visit so that a variety of dances could be demonstrated to a rapt audience, many of us in wheelchairs or walkers. Unforgettable! These days the dance sessions are offered biweekly.

Other art programs featured sessions when Kaidy brought in an unfinished canvas of hers, working on it, explaining what she was doing, and encouraging residents to share their reactions and suggestions. Another favorite was a weekly group originally formed to discuss artificial intelligence. One meeting featured a curator and her assistant from the Nasher Museum of Art who came to talk about the museum's AI-curated art exhibit...the first such exhibit in the world. After several weeks, AI topics exhausted, discussions focused on more personal issues. We shared happy memories, challenges faced, and thoughts about what the future

might bring. Kaidy engaged everyone, genuinely interested in what each of us had to say.

Not all our time was spent in the Art Room. Activities staff worked hard to offer a series of programs. My favorites were the alternating biweekly performances by two talented young musicians. The first played guitar and piano and reached out to each resident, making eye contact and calling us by name. We enjoyed all of it, especially the day he came in his Elvis costume. The other musician played several instruments, belonged to bands that performed internationally as well as locally, and sang all types of music. Although he never came as Elvis, he did treat us to his Oktoberfest outfit, including lederhosen and suspenders.

Other activities also deserve praise. Our exercise sessions were shorter but otherwise like those offered in IL. Same wonderful instructors, too. And the weekly Thursday and Friday social hours—the artists in the prep kitchen supplied an array of hors d'oeuvres, fresh fruits, and desserts, almost too pretty to eat. Finally, thanks to all of you in IL, who came as volunteers or friends to be with us, listen to us, and make us feel seen and heard.

### **There: The Caucus Committee and Resident Council**

There was tougher stuff. Both federal and state law require health and wellness centers to hold monthly meetings of a Resident Council, chaired and attended by its residents. In response to a survey soliciting a volunteer to become its leader, I indicated that while I felt unsuited to serve in that capacity, I'd be glad to help in any other way. I was then asked to serve as the leader of the HC's first caucus group. Our purpose: to become better informed about HC issues, both good and bad, to communicate with administrative staff, share suggestions for improvement, keep abreast of IL caucus committee activities, and to move toward resident participation and engagement in making the Small House model work for all. Our caucus was small but articulate and committed. We faced challenges not common in IL's caucuses. Someone's health status could change overnight, many of us were unable to or disinterested in

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speaking up, and few of us had access to computers and printers or the ability to use them. Much help came from HC administrative and activities staff as well as IL volunteers in communicating with HC residents. The lack of accessible computers and limited technical abilities led to the substitution of notebooks in each household, containing print versions of agendas, minutes, and other relevant items. Thanks to administrative staff who did much of the typing and photocopying and helped activities staff with filing and to IL volunteers who prepared and typed additional documents.

As mentioned earlier, the law requires the establishment of a Residents' Council that meets monthly for residents to discuss issues relating to their health and well-being and to communicate them to staff. Since no resident volunteered to lead the council, activities staff served as facilitators, calling the meetings to order, soliciting resident participation, and sharing the response of administrative staff to issues raised. At one of the meetings, it was noted that staff had asked residents' family members to leave before the meeting began. When asked why, we were told that the law indicated that only residents could attend the meetings. Given the number of HC residents who were unwilling or unable to speak for themselves, it was baffling to us that designated caretakers—family members, friends, or anyone serving in that capacity—should be excluded from attending and participating. Upon further research, we discovered that councils had the option of voting to include them and at a subsequent meeting, we did just that. Now all such individuals have a blanket invitation to attend our meetings.

### Back Home Again

I returned to Independent Living in November, and I'm glad to be back. I enjoy all that it offers—greater freedom and independence, more space and privacy, and living among my own things. It's been a delight to see old friends and those I made during trips here from the Health Center. But it's been bittersweet. I miss the HC people I was lucky enough to know. I don't want to let them go. Seeing them visit here and exchanging hugs or high fives brings tears as well as

smiles. Witnessing the bravery, strength and resilience of HC residents is an enduring inspiration. This is partially a love letter to all of them and to the staff who genuinely care about them. Another reason I write, though, is to stress that living in the Health Center is not to be feared. For me, it was a lesson in learning to appreciate the things that bring joy, laughter, and delight, and to recognize and accept the things that can't be changed. It also meant learning to take risks, better described as "challenges." Not sky-diving or alligator wrestling, but participating in new ventures in which one might fail. Learning to trust. Setting aside comparisons to others' socioeconomic status, professional accomplishments, creativity, political and religious affiliations, and family situations.



Kate Hitchings & Ann Inderbitzen

It is our shared humanity that binds us, and I think this is especially true in the Health Center. We are born, we live our lives as best we can, and then we die. There's no ducking that. It may be one reason why many fear the HC, or why its activities don't always get the publicity they deserve. It may be why tours for prospective CCRC residents exclude visits to their health care facilities. But we can improve this. With greater resident participation and continued help from administration and Residents' Association committees, even more can be accomplished. Stay tuned: the Health Center deserves no less. ¶



## Welcome New Residents

### Jack Gartner

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We welcome Jack Gartner to The Forest. Jack was born in the Bronx and grew up in Queens. He attended Queens College, majoring in history and playing on the varsity baseball team for three years. When he graduated in 1961, he was named the Queens College Athlete-Scholar. Jack is a past President of the Queens College Alumni Association.



Upon his graduation, Jack joined The Port Authority of NY and NJ for a career of thirty years in airport management. This included a variety of assignments, including working at both La Guardia and Newark airports, but most of Jack's airport experience was at JFK airport where he was the Air-side Operations Manager for twelve years. Jack's final assignment was as Assistant Director of Operations and Maintenance for all three of the major area airports. In 1996 Jack received The Port Authority's highest recognition, the Distinguished Service Medal.

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### Ellen F. Davis

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A warm welcome to Ellen Davis who comes to us from Durham where she continues a long-time teaching career at Duke Divinity School. She is a scholar in the field of Biblical Studies. Ellen was born and raised in Marin County CA. Her BA degree in Comparative Literature is from UC-Berkeley, with some of her undergraduate studies being completed at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. She also worked in Israel for a while before returning to the US to work at Brandeis University, cataloging in the Hebraica and Judaica collection.



During the 1970s Ellen worked in the peace movement in Berkeley, followed by working for several years in the field of religious communications at the Protestant Radio Center in Atlanta. At this point in her life, she made the decision to obtain a theological education. She studied theology at the Church Divinity School of the Pacific at Berkeley and went on to Oxford University to continue working on a graduate degree. The decision to pursue a career teaching the Tanakh/Old Testament took

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## Jack Gartner

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While working in the industry, Jack was a member of several professional organizations, including the American Association of Airport Executives, the International Air Transport Association Aircraft Recovery Working Group, and the Planning Committee, AAAE, Large Hub Winter Operations Conference. During his career Jack published a number of articles in aviation magazines including topics on “Recovering Disabled Aircraft,” “Winter Operations,” and “Flying the Concorde.”

After he retired in 1997, Jack continued his work in the aviation industry as a consultant. In 1999, he and his late wife, Rita, moved to Durham where he continued his consulting work. In addition, Jack discovered OLLI at Duke, and for twenty years he taught an OLLI class on “How Airports Work” and “The History of Aviation.” Jack also became active on the OLLI Board, becoming Board President in 2008. He is a Bill Wright Awardee for his work at OLLI, given to a member each year for distinguished service.

Jack and Rita were both avid classical music lovers and were season subscribers of the N.C. Symphony after their move to Durham, a membership he continues. Jack has also participated in fund raising for the classical music station WCPE and was a founder and member of the WCPE Radio Station’s Education Fund Committee for fifteen years.

Jack has two children, Gary Gartner and Karen Condon, as well as two grandsons, all of whom live in NC. 🌿

## Ellen F. Davis

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her to Yale University, where she obtained a PhD in Bible in 1987. She has taught ever since, starting at Union Theological Seminary in New York City.

In 1992, while on the faculty at Yale, she married Dwayne Huebner, also a faculty member; they were married until his death in March 2023. For some years, the couple lived in Alexandria VA, where Ellen taught at the Virginia Theological Seminary. They moved to Durham in 2001 so that Ellen could take the teaching position at Duke. By this time Dwayne was retired.

Ellen has received the honor of being named the 2010 Scholar/Teacher of the Year at Duke University. She also holds six honorary degrees. Ellen has published twelve books, about various aspects of biblical studies and/or preaching. She has recently translated the Psalms for the forthcoming Duke Chapel Hymnal (2026).

Ellen has two stepdaughters. Gillian Huebner is a child rights and protection specialist at Georgetown University in Washington DC. Morley van Yperen lives in Deep River CT where she is a teacher, homemaker, and theologian. They have given her the incomparable gifts of deep friendship and of eight grandchildren. When she is not working, Ellen enjoys spending time with friends and family, hiking, teaching, and talking theology. In addition, she is a dedicated walker, enjoying her walk to work each day. 🌿

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Watch Dennis Blair’s ForestSpeaks presentation on international issues [here](#).





## Welcome New Resident

**Ellen P. Miller**

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"I love being at The Forest!" was the first exclamation from Ellen, whom we welcomed as a recent newcomer in April. A native of Augusta GA and raised in Jacksonville FL, Ellen has spent most of her life in the South, moving to Chapel Hill ten years ago after over two decades in Atlanta.



COVID, a challenging time. She has coordinated several ongoing activities (monthly singles lunches and dinners, a weekly fast-walkers' group, and a bi-monthly volunteer group) as well as various special activities, including a tour of historic Hillsborough and a CPR certification class.

Ellen is delighted by the friendliness and warmth she has experienced since moving to The Forest and looks forward to getting to know new friends and explore the many activities and opportunities available to residents. She enjoys reading (mostly thrillers) and tries to maintain healthy habits, and she would enjoy finding others for brisk walks around The Forest and nearby neighborhoods. 🌿

Ellen graduated from the University of Florida and received a Masters in Business Administration degree from Rollins College. Her field of expertise has been in project management: "making order out of chaos!" as she says. Her two-decades-long career at SunTrust Bank concluded as Group Vice President of Operations, after which she spent six years in management at a large law firm in Atlanta.

Retiring to Chapel Hill to be near her son and his wife and their four children, currently aged ten to sixteen, has given Ellen the opportunity to exchange an intense work life for one of exploration and self-discovery. She joined the Newcomers Club of Greater Chapel Hill shortly after arriving there and has enjoyed many social activities and opportunities to explore historic and cultural sites in the area. She served on the Newcomers Board shortly after joining and again as President during





## Springtime is Garden Time

By Ellen Baer

The Duke Gardens has attracted visitors steadily since it first opened at Duke University in 1934, and, as it has grown and expanded over the years, increasing numbers of visitors have continued to arrive. TFAD residents have been among those visitors, some of them even serving as garden volunteers. But today it's a challenge to get there because a new expansion and renovation project has closed the main parking area and the Visitors' Center with its popular gift shop.

Major construction takes a long time, as we TFAD residents know, and the expected completion of the new "Garden Gateway" will not be until 2026. Fortunately, Community Life

offered a trip to the gardens on a Monday afternoon in April, dropping off a small group of us not far from a "back-door" entrance. That drop-off allowed us to walk around for more than an hour, enjoying the special scenery of spring in the garden setting before the van returned for us.



When you're there, you will notice that the mile-marker post in the Discovery Garden shows distances to faraway places like Durham's sister cities in China, Russia, Mexico, Greece, and the U.K. Some closer destinations are included too, with the mileage to the Duke Marine Lab, the Duke Lemur Center, and the Duke basketball stadium—but not to The Forest at Duke. However, Google Maps says it's 2.9 miles from our home here to there. 🌱

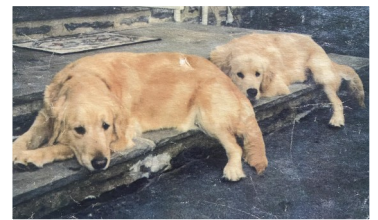


## The Stand Off

By Sue Staples

After my children were no longer under my roof, I was alone when my husband traveled for business. But I was never too lonely with my two loving golden retrievers—not guard dogs, to be sure, but always company. With county leash laws, the dogs could no longer roam, so we had an invisible fence installed around our one-acre property. Still plenty of space for two active dogs to play. What a blessing! Open the door, and out they went in the morning while I lingered over coffee; and after dark they could go out while I stayed by the cozy fire.

On this particular night, Chelsea and Boomer, her spoiled son, scampered out into the dark yard. Soon they both were barking wildly. I ventured out to see what was up and unfortunately discovered they had an opossum cornered and were harassing it, daring each other to get closer. Why didn't that dumb 'possum go up the nearby tree to escape?



Then I realized: "Playing 'Possum" meant staying your ground, not giving in, and that 'possum wasn't going to move even as the two dogs, were challenging each other and showing off their bravery. I yelled and begged them to come in in my sternest voice—no response. Frustrated, I went inside and fetched some favorite treats, then came back out and called in a loud voice: "Do you want a treat?"

I yelled that more than once, trying to lure them in. They were showing off, getting ever closer to danger, inching forward. That mean, scared 'possum would strike out at any minute with sharp teeth and nails. Finally I remembered what they liked best. I pulled the station wagon out of the garage and down the driveway, opened the back hatch and called "do you want to go for a ride?" That did it! They immediately ran toward me and happily jumped into the car, 'possum forgotten. Whew! Relieved, I quickly drove off around the block, scolding them all the way but so happy to have them safe!

The next morning my neighbor walked over to me and asked, "What were you doing out so late last night in the dark, yelling 'Do you want a treat?'" 🌱

## Civil Rights and Wrongs

*By Joan Seiffert*

When Dad appeared at six o'clock one morning saying that he would drive me to work that day, I was suspicious. For the past month I had put on my robin's egg blue waitress uniform and walked the five minutes to the residential hotel where I worked, so what was going on? I was having a great summer, spending my time off swimming at the lakeside College Club, hanging out with other waitresses, and flirting with the kitchen crew of good-looking young men.

In the fall I was going off to college, not because I wanted to but because that's what my parents wanted me to do. They really wanted me to go to Mount Holyoke, but I had refused. All those Ivy League schools were loaded with prep school



*Joan Seiffert at 18*

girls with money. So I decided to go to Western College for Women in Oxford OH. Now it seemed that Herrick Young, then president of Western, had asked my dad about my being the roommate of the first African American student at the college.

That's what Dad told me just before I opened the passenger door to go to work. Just because my father was a bishop and was all about loving-thy-neighbor such that we had a girl from a large family in the congregation living with us in the rectory, and not so long ago we had Hungarian refugees living in the attic, and a gay priest occupying the garage apartment. Just this past week I had opened the bathroom door one morning to see a large Black man sitting on the toilet—turned out he was the

Bishop of Liberia.

I kicked myself around the restaurant dining room while serving breakfast and lunch. This was my first year away from home, too. Why me? But by dinner time, I knew that I would do it.

1955. Western College for Women, founded in 1853, was a daughter school of Mount Holyoke. Our room was on the third floor of Mary Lyon dorm. I had arrived first and had stationed myself at the windows overlooking the driveway, waiting for Mary Ellen Thomas. Soon I saw, and mostly heard, an old green station wagon with luggage tied on top and many black faces in the car pull up and park. It was to be later that we both stood at the windows for another reason.

Mary Ellen Thomas, "Tommie," was from White Plains NY. We helped each other figure out how to be first-year college students, putting up with the dorm curfew of 7:00 PM and learning that black coffee worked for staying up late writing papers and college was really different from high school. She was black and I was white, but we were both green as to the amount of academic work expected.

I remember lying in bed at night and talking with Tommie about boys, boyfriends we had back home, and being at a women's college. We did giggle some about our preferences in male lips and rears. Nearby Miami University was co-ed, and their campus just a walk away, but neither Tommie nor I were sophisticated or confident enough to go with some of our classmates who went "uptown" every Friday night for sandwiches and beer at Tuffy's to meet boys.

This was fall, and student government elected offices were being held. The silent politics of Western soon became clear: I was nominated for every office and lost every election by the same number of votes. Tommie, who couldn't carry a tune, was elected Song Leader. Then the politics got louder: our room was broken into. Overturned chairs. Piles of clothes from both closets. Socks, sweaters, and jackets were missing. Shoes on top of ripped-open notebooks and torn-up class papers. And signs tacked to our walls. I don't remember the exact

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## The Taste Test, Ronald, and 74%

By Carole Lebar

It's me again, with a few more stories: two pretty funny, one not so much, and all of them true.

The first story occurred in the early years of our marriage and set the scene for many others like it. Our daughter #3, Kristin, was a pre-teen at the time, testing the authority of this new stepfather in her life. She had seen an ad on TV for peppermint smokeless chewing tobacco and told John she wanted some. He told her that it was nasty stuff, tasted terrible, and she would hate it. That was all she needed to insist on it. "No," she argued, "It's good, it's peppermint!" John loves challenges, and so it was decided they would do THE TASTE TEST.

He bought some, brought it home, and we gathered to watch what would happen when she took her first big chew. She gagged mightily and spit it all over the rest of us who were howling with laughter! All of us have been subjected somewhere along the way to THE TASTE TEST. Sometimes we even beg for it, thinking we can beat the odds. Usually NOT. But it is always fun.

Another story involves the question many of you have asked: How could the two of you been able to stay married for over fifty years when I am a "Yellow Dog Democrat" and John is a conservative's conservative? We have a life-sized, smartly-dressed, wooden Ronald Reagan sitting by the sliding glass door; several of his fingers are missing or broken from all the playing we have done with them. Daughter #2 sent him to us a long time ago from Florida. I unzip his fly and put his hand inside; John takes it out when he notices and puts it elsewhere. Most of our family and friends know this and



*Photo by John Lebar*

check it out when they visit.

There was much discussion when we were packing to move here—whether we would bring Ronald or a second giant copper frog. Everyone had an opinion. After much negotiation, it was agreed that we would bring only one frog and Ronald. Daughter #4, Reid, got the other, a wine-drinking frog. My sacrifice for having a husband!

My last tale of the day shows our serious side. Our life is not all fun and games. We all love animals of all kinds, especially homeless animals. I have volunteered for over thirty years at three different animal shelters, two for domestic animals, one for wild animals. Although walking dogs and playing with cats gave me great pleasure, I would inevitably get into fights with the powers-that-be over animals to be euthanized due to lack of space. At one point, over 74% of the animals were euthanized, and it made me crazy.

This is how our home came to have so many dogs and cats. I would adopt them and bring them home and then have fights with my husband! We never bought another dog; all our animals have been mutts. All the shelters were in the same boat—each of them struggling for money. Money for food, medical supplies, and most of all, more space. John and I both worked the fund raisers; he rode a cart to pick up trash and sometimes came with me to walk dogs at the shelters. My friends began to duck when they saw me approaching, knowing I either wanted money or had a special dog I was hoping they would adopt. 🌿

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### Darth Vader Visits, May 2



*(Photo by Sanford Berg)*

## Hugo Sotolongo

By Sherrill Blazer

*"Live so that when you are gone it will have mattered." Betty Feezor*

Dr. Hugo Sotolongo lives at TFAD's Health Center, and his legacy continues. In order for this article to be accurate and complete, three of his five children joined him on the day of this interview and the other two children submitted additions. As you read about his life, you can decide how you would characterize it.

Hugo was born in 1923 and grew to adulthood in Cuba. He attended Havana University as an undergraduate and matriculated to its Medical School with a focus in Internal Medicine. He received his education during Batista's regime, long before the revolution and Fidel Castro.



99<sup>th</sup> Birthday June 11, 2022 / 1 Year to 100

Hugo left Cuba in 1947 seeking a better economic opportunity for service in the United States. Rather than immigrating to New York or Miami as most Cubans did, he decided to practice in small rural towns. He began his work in Youngstown OH,

subsequently moving to Rome GA, then Daytona Beach FL, and completed his career in Live Oak FL. In 1950 he married his childhood friend and sweetheart, Priscilla. That was the beginning of his career and family life with five children. The family did return to Cuba once just as Castro ascended to power, but Hugo was forced to leave the country at night for his return to the US since Castro was unwilling to allow professionals to emigrate.

Leaving Cuba originally in 1947 was not easy, since the country preferred to keep its young professionals at home. Hugo had already begun his path into the medical profession, so when applying for his "green card" in the states, the immigration officer suggested that it might be just as easy to apply for citizenship. So, he did.

In the beginning years of his career (1947-1954), he worked in many hospital emergency rooms, receiving "on the job" training. This path would serve him well as he founded a practice which required the skills of many medical and surgical specialties. He and Priscilla lived in Live Oak FL until they moved to The Forest when he was 91 years old. Priscilla passed away in 2021, so many readers of this article probably knew her. Jokingly, he once told her that if she died first, he was going to grab her ankles so that he could get to heaven with her. They were married for 70 years!

I asked him what it was like to become a naturalized citizen in the states during that period when our country's tensions with Cuba were escalating. During his first years in the USA, American ideas of Cuban culture were heavily influenced by Desi Arnaz and Lucille Ball of the "I Love Lucy" TV series. We adored "little Ricky," had a crush on Desi, and laughed with Lucy. So, that connection certainly helped Hugo and family to be initially accepted in Live Oak. The family eventually earned their own acceptance.

Live Oak residents grew in their respect and love for Hugo and family throughout those many years during which he was the "family doctor" from their births through their deaths. He de-

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## Hugo Sotolongo

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livered approximately 5,000 babies, then became their pediatrician, treating all of their ills and healing their wounds (surgical and orthopedic) well into their later lives. He was not only a local physician, but a civic-minded individual involved in many aspects of small-town life. He became the physician for the local football team (the Suwannee County Bulldogs), providing free services treating injuries and providing medical advice to the players, their parents, and their coaches.

He was active in the local Catholic Church and he and Priscilla visited the prison on a regular basis—Priscilla providing the Eucharist (communion) and Hugo speaking Spanish and joking with the Latino population. He also coached his children's Little League baseball teams. He believed the young boys needed the best coach possible. To accomplish his goals for the team required much effort and money, given a lack of equipment, so Hugo went to the local store and bought bats, helmets, and baseballs, bringing them to practice before the games officially began.

Hugo believes there are always "at risk" kids among us, and he noted a void in some young boys' lives. The Florida Sheriff's Association stepped up to the plate forming a Boys' Ranch in 1957, an institution which now has five other Florida locations. Hugo offered free medical services to this group. He "dabbled" in business and became a founder of the First Federal Savings and Loan Bank in Live Oak, initially with one million dollars in assets. This grew to one hundred million quickly and now is worth four hundred million dollars.

Sometime during our interview, Hugo interrupted me by asking his family if they had offered me something to drink: he seemed more interested in offering hospitality than speaking about himself. In between subjects relating to our time together, he dozed off. Perhaps he was catching up on the sleep that he lost during his younger years. He and his family, all committed Christians, remind me of the saying of Jesus in the Christian Bible in Matthew 25:34: "When you do it for those who were being overlooked or ignored, you did it to me" (*The Message* translation). We could use more people like Hugo in the world. ¶

## Joan Seiffert

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words on the signs—something about how our room smelled, how filthy it was, and what we did when the lights were out. I do recall feeling stunned and angry at the mess. And, yes, a little scared.

Later I saw Toni from South Africa wearing my missing pink oxford cloth shirt. I knew it was mine because there was an ink stain on the pocket. "Toni, that's my shirt," I said. "Prove it," she smirked while walking away.

The *Brown v. Board of Education* decision had been in 1954; my parents had celebrated. But I knew that earlier someone from the John Birch Society had knocked down my mother and her cart in the grocery store parking lot and that my dad had once been publicly criticized for riding into town with candidate Harry Truman during his campaign, but I had not tied this together with someone being so upset about Tommie and me being roommates. I do remember our mutual dismay and how quietly we cleaned up.

But there was a bright spot at Western. Seems that Mary Lyon was the closest dorm to the Miami campus. One night, after dark, we heard a "HMMP HMMP HMMP" rhythmic guttural sound of low voices and stomping feet and looked out our windows to see a crowd of boys, sounding like men, standing in the Mary Lyon driveway. *Panty Raid!* They shouted for panties and bras to be thrown out the windows, and they got them. Women's underwear apparently doesn't have any race. The rumor went around that Dean Hoyt herself had called the police. I am smiling to myself even as I write about this memory. ¶

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Ertz Quartet



Totum Quartet

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**Steve Hilton, Harpsichord,  
May 13**



**Richard Dowling, Piano, May 10**



**Parsha Bose, Sitar, May 13**