

VIVA!

VINEYARD VALLEY NEWS

VOLUME 50

FEBRUARY 2026

NUMBER 2



FEBRUARY EVENTS

VVHA Sponsored:

BINGO, February 13

VVHA Board Meeting, February 18

Friday Night Social, February 27

Community Sponsored:

St. Helena Mustard Festival, February 27



A vibrant pink flyer for a Valentine's Day bingo event. At the top left, a cupid illustration has the text "Let's play" written across it. To the right, a large heart contains the word "Bingo!". Below this, the event details are listed: "Friday, February 13", "Clubhouse Doors open 6PM", and "Games begin 6:30". The entry pack price is "\$15.00 Entry Pack". A central heart with wings and an arrow through it says "Bingo". To the right, another winged heart says "Bingo" and lists the included items: "Includes 3x6 games, plus packs, dauber, and dinner". At the bottom right, a third winged heart says "Bingo" and lists the price for extra game packs: "Extra game packs \$10.00". At the bottom left, a text block states: "Those with specific food requirements, or allergies, are welcome to bring their own".

Let's play

Bingo!

Friday, February 13
Clubhouse Doors open 6PM
Games begin 6:30

\$15.00 Entry Pack

Bingo

**Includes 3x6 games,
plus packs, dauber,
and dinner**

**Those with specific food
requirements, or allergies, are
welcome to bring their own**

Bingo

**Extra game packs
\$10.00**

Bingo

January Bingo Winners!

Ann Sorenson
Sylvia Segura
Chris Killion
Audrey Duarte
Doug Schmidt
Anne Offord
Ines Chiarello
Caller: Ed Smith



february

SUN

MON

TUE

WED

THU

FRI

SAT

1	2 Groundhog Day	3	4	5	6	7
Tu, Thurs Group Exercise with Stacey 10-11:00 AM Exercise Room						
8	9	10	11	12	13 BINGO 6:00pm	14 Valentine's Day
15	16 Presidents' Day	17 Lunar New Year Shrove Tuesday	18 VVHA Board Meeting 3pm	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27 St. Helena Mustard Festival 4-7PM Friday Night Social 5:30pm	28

Red-VVHA Community

Black-Public Observance

Green-Local Event

Violet-VVHA Event

2025-2026 VVHA OFFICERS & DIRECTORS

President, Janet Schmidt
Vice President, Rick Wood
Secretary, Inger Laidley
Treasurer, Henk Brok

Directors:
Eve Breckenridge
Chris Killion
Steve Kinney
Mae VanNett



Committee/Activity Chairs

VVHA Clubhouse Coordinator:
Mae VanNett

Hospitality:
Robin McGuire, Mae VanNett

Memorials and VV Clubhouse Coordinator:
Janeen di Rienzo

Directory:
Chris Killion

Library:
Joyce Cahill, Rick Wood

Bocce Committee Chair:
Rick Wood

VVHA Website:
Michael Merriman



Non-Social Resident-formed Groups

Community Education:
Grace Kistner

If there is a death, call Janeen di Rienzo at 707-294-8307 so she can post it on the bulletin board and arrange for the \$50 donation to the organization you designate. She will explain how to schedule the clubhouse for a memorial.

February Birthdays

- 9 Denise Nelson
- 11 Jack Casserly
- 14 Chip Dingess, Miriam Hess
- 15 Andree Bryan
- 17 Ron Burns
- 22 Linda Andreotti
- 25 Suzanne James
- 26 Joyce Brok
- 28 Barbara Greenfield

*Please note the following corrections to the
Vineyard Valley Directory:*

Spelling: Noreen Alldredge; Mariam Hansen;
Ines Chiarello

Email: Noreen Alldredge, noreen408@gmail.com

Add: Amy Franklin, 26 San Lucas, area code 916

Delete: Judy Atchey

VIVA!

Mission Statement: To provide a periodic newsletter concerning current and upcoming events, VVHA news, activities, neighborly news, and other non-political and local items of interest to all Vineyard Valley residents.

Editor

Francine Freeman

Business Manager

Henk Brok

Advertising

Henk Brok

Contributors

Mariam Hansen, Steve Kinney,
Suzanne James, Robin McGuire, Mae VanNett
Janet Schmidt

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VIVA

21 Del Rio Court
St. Helena, CA 94574

email: viva.vineyardvalley@gmail.com
content deadline: 22nd of each month

The Prez Sez . . . by Janet Schmidt

Hi Neighbors,

I hope you all had a great holiday and are easing into 2026. It's going to be a good year for your social life in Vineyard Valley with our Bingo, Socials, and monthly seasonal events. I hope one of your New Year's resolutions is to participate more with your friends and neighbors at our clubhouse get togethers. The more, the merrier.

The VIVA calendar has all the dates and times, and we post flyers and sign-up sheets on the VVHA bulletin board at the mailroom.

See you around the park,

Janet

VINEYARD VALLEY HOMEOWNERS' ASSOCIATION MEETING MINUTES JANUARY 21, 2026

The meeting was called to order at 3:05 p.m. by President Janet Schmidt.

The minutes of the November 19th, 2025 meeting were approved as mailed and posted.

The Treasurer's report was approved as presented by Henk Brok, see attached. He also reported we have 2 new storage units in the supply room at a cost of \$300 and \$200 for an 8 ft. unit and a 6 ft. Unit.

Reports – Bingo: 48 people with delicious turkey soup, net \$300; the free Thanksgiving dinner was well attended – thanks to many board members and others for their preparations and cooking. The Christmas Celebration Dinner was attended by 90 people at a charge of \$60/person for residents, 2 per household and \$110 for each guest. Eve Breckenridge reported on the Craft Fair. She would love to continue doing it but wants to see more participation by both vendors and attendees. A brief discussion followed on how to get the word out more broadly.

The Directory – looks great (love the larger font size)! There were a few errors which Janet has followed up on with Francine.

Carroll Cotten used to look after the accountable for VIVA, but with his passing, Henk Brok has graciously agreed to take it over.

Nominating Committee: Steve Kinney has agreed to be the leader and has recruited the following onto the Nominating Committee – Chris Killion, Colleen Gillespie, Betty Antor, and Michael Merriman. Anyone wishing to serve on the VVHA Board is more than welcome to put their name forward to be on the slate, by calling any one on the Nominating Committee. It's a wonderful way to get involved, support and give back to your community and meet people. PLEASE give it some thought and call to get job descriptions etc.

Up-coming events - January 23rd – Social; March 7th at 2 pm Chilli Cookoff; March 17TH, St. Patrick's Day dinner with all the usual goodies; April 19th a concert by Mike Greensill and his band. Admission is \$10 but the Board is covering the \$1,000 charge for his band of 4-6 musicians.

Open Discussion – a range of topics was raised – how can we get more residents to show up for Board meetings as they are only once a month? What things do residents feel could be improved upon? Please give your Board your suggestions.

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 3:40 p.m.
Respectfully submitted, Inger C. Laidley, Secretary

PARK MANAGEMENT UPDATE

February 2026

WINTER WEATHER MAINTENANCE

Inspect Your Roof - check the condition of your roof. Worn or warped roofing can crack, allowing rainwater to enter your home. Clean Your Gutters and Downspouts - Leaves and debris can accumulate in gutters and downspouts, which reduces the efficiency of your gutters and downspouts.

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

Winter is a good time to review your emergency preparedness plans for yourself, your family and your pets and check your go bag and disaster supply kit (remember a working flashlight). Make sure it's accessible for quick evacuation and prepare for the possibility of being away from home for a while. Your 'Go Bag' should be easy to carry and access. Use backpacks to store items like essentials and personal documents. For food and water, consider a wheeled tub or chest for easier transport. Keep your bag light enough for comfortable lifting into your vehicle.

- A 3-day supply of non-perishable food & 3 gallons of water per person
- A map with at least 2 evacuation routes
- Necessary prescriptions or medications
- A change of clothes & extra eyeglasses/contact lenses
- Extra car keys, credit cards, cash, or traveler's checks
- A first aid kit and sanitation supplies
- A flashlight & battery-powered radio with extra batteries
- Copies of important documents (birth certificates, passports, etc.)
- Pet food & water

WATER CONSERVATION

The rainy season has begun; irrigation controllers have been turned off to the common areas and to resident's homes. The City bases the wastewater rate for the year on the winter average of water usage during the months of December, January, and February. In order to keep the wastewater rates low, it is critical that residents continue to conserve water.

NIGHT AND EARLY MORNING DELIVERIES

Residents reported delivery persons around their homes with flashlights in the very early morning hours in darkness. A visit was made to the SHPD who confirmed that delivery services are now permitted to deliver after 4:000 a.m. If you become aware of a person on or around your home and are concerned, please call the police department.

Attention VVHA Members:

The Nominating Committee for the Vineyard Valley Homeowners' Association Board of Directors for 2026-27

Bette Antor, Colleen Gillaspy, Chris Killion,
Steve Kinney, Michael Merriman

VVHA Board Elections are coming up on March 18th. If you would like a chance to be a Board member, please reach out to one of the Nominating Committee members before the February 18th board meeting.

St. Helena Mustard Celebration

When February 27, 2026
11:00 a.m - 4:00 p.m.

Where St. Helena Welcome Center
1154 Main Street

FOR MORE INFO:
(707) 963-4456

<https://www.sthelenahomeowners.com/event/st-helena-mustard-celebration/>

Art & Artisanal Pop-Up

Event Details

Join St. Helena for a vibrant celebration of the season! We're bringing together local favorites for a day of Mustard Season inspired art and flavors.

Immerse yourself in the golden hues of the valley through a pop-up exhibit by photographer **Rob Watermeyer**, alongside exclusive, mustard-season-themed offerings from **Roman Holiday Gelato** and **Sam's General Store**.

Stop by the St. Helena Welcome Center Friday, February 27th, from 11am - 4pm to discover how our local partners are putting their own unique twist on Napa Valley's favorite season!

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Beginnings of the Napa Valley Wine Industry

by W. J. Ketteringham, 1961

Reported by Mariam Hansen, St. Helena Historian

Just three wine districts were recognized: Napa, St. Helena and Calistoga. In 1881 there were 433 vineyards: 72 (1,123 acres) in Calistoga, 245 (6,594 acres) in St. Helena and 125 (3,324 acres) in Napa, totaling 11,041 acres. The tremendous increase in acreage continued. By 1891 619 farmers were growing wine grapes on 18,229 acres. From 17,003 bearing acres 54,361 tons were harvested. By 1890 the previous dominance of grain became a minor commodity and wine grapes became dominant.

These grapes were grown almost exclusively to make wine. In 1887 only 109 acres were table and raisin grapes. Suitability for wine making was the controlling factor in expansion of vineyards and varieties planted.

During the early stages of wine in Napa County only wines for local consumption were made by primitive Mexican methods. As new concepts of sanitation and more efficient production developed, methods began to change. The first producer by the new methods was Charles Krug in 1858 by use of an apple cider press.

The success of grape growing without irrigation and new wine processing methods expanded wine making.

The growth of vineyards paralleled the expansion of wineries. The largest percentage of wineries were located where the largest percentage of vineyards were found. By 1885 there were 104 wineries in the county, of which the largest number were in St. Helena and south of town (40). This growth resulted in more vineyards planted, more wineries, better quality and increased immigration. While in 1860 8,520 gallons of wine were made, by 1890 \$4.2 million gallons were made. The development of wineries was



Jacob Schram, Schramsberg



Charles Krug, St. Supery



Charles Krug cider press

caused by a change in the tastes of the public. Vintners had difficulty selling of young wines and were forced to build cellars to age them. The making of wine and storage became more costly so many growers stopped making wine and sold their grapes to larger wineries. By 1890 only 100 of 500 growers made wine and only 50 had stone wine cellars.

The first wine cellar was built in 1859. 1860s saw 50 vintners become prominent in the valley, such as Jacob Schram, Charles Krug, Dr. George Crane, Hamilton W. Crabb and John Lewelling. The 1870s saw the greatest expansion of wineries and many that we know of today started in that decade, i.e., the Beringer brothers.

By 1872 the Krug winery, capacity 250,000, gallons, was the largest winery in the valley. It retained this

honor until 1889 with the construction of Greystone Winery (now the CIA). An important change was construction of above ground rather than in tunnels or underground. The growth of wineries was equaled by that of distilleries—35 facilities in the valley in 1890.

The realization that wine quality was important led to several important changes. More European varieties were planted (i.e., Riesling) and winemaking techniques improved. Attention to publicity and market forces increased.

The first variety grown was the Mission grape, which made harsh tasting wine. Growers learned that Napa Valley could produce the best European grape varieties. As early as the 1850s Dr George Crane planted them at his St. Helena property (today Salvestrin Vineyards, the Crane home). Mission grapes were still preferred for bandy making due to their high sugar content. Zinfandel, Riesling and Golden Chasselas became favorites of Napa Valley vintners, although numerous other varieties were also grown.

St. Helena Viticultural Society was founded in 1875 by Krug, Schram, Lewelling and others. The group strived to improve the varieties grown and educated members on grape growing and wine making. Improvements in cultivation, planting and the introduction of machinery into cellars resulted. Wine quality became the greatest concern since early California wines were not drinkable.

“Nor has the club been at all backwards about enforcing their resolutions. These were to keep out adulterated product and make an everlasting reputation for the purity and honesty of Napa Valley wines and brandies.” (*Charles Krug, 1881*)

A major concern was to make the Napa Valley name the symbol of high quality. This spirit was reflected as early as 1866.

“...the wine growers in this vicinity believe they are going to eclipse Sonoma. They doubtless will produce a richer, fuller bodied article. Since Sonoma makes a finely flavored wine, with body enough for table use, that valley need not fear the rivalry of Napa.” (*Daily Alta California 3-5-1866*)

St. Helena Viticultural Society emphasized the unity of the Napa Valley product. In 1872 Napa Wine Company was founded to introduce Napa Valley wines to the eastern United States. Quality control became real and our wines became an entity.



RIANDA HOUSE SENIOR ACTIVITY CENTER

Fundamentals of Fiction Writing Workshop with Richard Abramson

Tuesdays, February 3 - March 10, 1:00-2:30pm | Rianda House

Always wanted to try your hand at writing fiction? This workshop will survey fiction-writing fundamentals, introduce you to the elements of a good story and, through short story reading assignments and an entertaining series of writing exercises, help you build your confidence and develop your craft. **RSVP - MAX 12 participants**

WomenHeart Support Group with Tomi Holt **NEW**

Thursday, February 5, 6:30-7:30PM | Zoom

This support group is open to women with all types of heart conditions interested in meeting with others coping with the challenges of living with a heart condition. Join other women finding strength and hopefulness. Womenheart.org mission is dedicated to support, educate and advocate for women with cardiovascular disease. **RSVP**

Death Café with Ann Seagraves **NEW**

Wednesday, February 11, 4:00-5:30PM | Rianda House

The objective of the Death Café, according to its founders, is: "To increase awareness of death with a view to helping people make the most of their (finite) lives." If you're curious about the topic of death and would like to join us for an open-ended conversation, this is the perfect group setting for you! Our monthly gathering provides a safe, supportive environment for your thoughts, ideas, and questions. Refreshments will be provided. **RSVP**

Music Appreciation: Mozart's Amazing Wind Concertos with Laura Prichard

Wednesday, February 25, 5:15-6:15PM | Rianda House

One classical composer, known best for his operas and symphonies, provides us with a window into the fascinating concert culture of Revolutionary Europe. Mozart's incredible series of youthful concertos preserve the best of the Baroque and explore the state-of-the-art in woodwind design. Join SF Symphony's Laura Stanfield Prichard for a close-listening tour of Mozart's finely crafted, uplifting music. Written for himself, his students, and his virtuoso friends, these innovative concertos showcase new sounds (horn, combos, and clarinet) documenting the best playing of the day. **RSVP**

Pilates: Get Energized! with Denise Henquet Sprengers

Monday, February 23, 2:15-3:15PM | Rianda House

In this 1 hour class you will go through many of the classical Pilates exercises and make sure to address the key Pilates principles, to stabilize and strengthen the core, plus experience the wonderful addition of more contemporary flow and mobility work. This mat Pilates class with a balance of stretch and strength is for all levels and will leave you feeling energized! Upbeat, known for her energy, her focus on alignment and full body workouts. Denise Henquet Sprengers has been teaching for over 20 years and is a Pilates, barre and mobility coach.

ANNOUNCEMENT: Paint-by-Number Contest – Join the fun! Go to Google and enter paint by number for available sites (numberartist.com, etc.) to select a painting of your choice. Purchase the painting kit and inform Rianda House you would like to enter your name for participation. Complete the painting and submit by July 15th. Your painting will hang for two months. Four paintings will be selected for prizes. Contact Pam at pam@riandahouse.org with questions. **Have fun painting!**

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Come Cruise with Me!

by Robin McGuire

A new adventure is on the horizon along the Danube, traveling through historic cities and charming riverside towns shaped by centuries of culture and tradition. River cruising offers a relaxed and enriching way to explore Europe, with new destinations unfolding each day. After extensive research, I hand-selected this Autumn Danube River cruise with Avalon Waterways, and wanted to introduce it first to our Vineyard Valley neighbors.

October is one of the most comfortable and rewarding times to explore this region. The summer crowds have thinned, the weather is ideal for walking, and vineyards along the river take on their fall colors. Cities and villages feel more relaxed—perfect for lingering in cafés, strolling historic streets, and enjoying the scenery at an easy pace.

This **October 2-13, 2026** journey follows one of Europe's most scenic and historic rivers through **Hungary, Austria, and Germany**, with optional extensions (Prague) for those who wish to add extra time before or after the cruise. One of the great pleasures of river cruising is unpacking just once while waking up each morning in a new destination.

I chose Avalon very intentionally. Their ships are designed so you can truly enjoy the river from your room, with floor-to-ceiling panoramic windows and beds that face the scenery. Daily excursions are included—often with several choices—ranging from guided city walks and cultural visits to gentle active options like biking or hiking. Avalon's reputation is strongly supported by its guests. In 2025, **Avalon earned top honors based on passenger votes**, including **Best River Cruise Line, Best Cabins, and Best for Active Cruisers**—recognition that reflects real traveler experiences.

Over the past three and a half years, I've led five group trips for Rianda House—soon to be six—and I'll be traveling as the **Group Leader** on this journey. I'm opening this opportunity first to our neighbors because I'd love to travel with familiar faces—friends and friends-of-friends who enjoy discovering new places in good company. River cruise cabins are limited, and before I promote this more widely, I wanted the community to have first look. There are 6 cabins still available—see my ad for contact information.

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Chris Colzani

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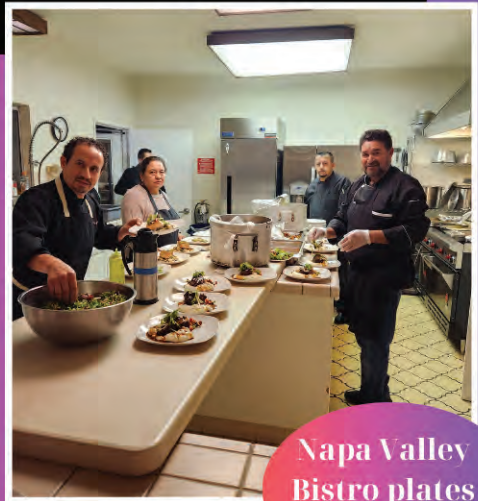
HOLIDAY cheer!

We celebrated Thanksgiving and Christmas with special meals this year. Thanksgiving rolled out the Turkey and fixings with a free meal for all that signed up. VVHA served an early supper, with Roasted Turkey, Stuffing, Mashed Potatoes, Cranberry Sauce, Green Beans, Gravy, and Pie. About 50 residents enjoyed dinner with a lot of mingling and chatting amongst friends and new arrivals. Special thanks to all the volunteers that helped serve this. Friederike Heidger, Mary West, Colleen Gillaspy, John Urias, Doug Schmidt, Michael Merriman and always your Board members, Janet Schmidt, Rick Wood, Henk Brok, Mae VanNett and Steve Kinney.

On Saturday, December 13, our Christmas / Holiday Dinner was celebrated. The crew from Napa Valley Bistro was brought in to prepare and serve an excellent meal. Starting in the pool room, hors d'oeuvres and wine were passed while everyone gathered and showed off their sartorial finery. As always, there was some very creative attire. 90+ of us then descended upon the Club Room for an excellent three-course dinner of Salad and Salmon or Braised Short Ribs or Ravioli. A delicious dessert assortment finished up our meals. Alpha Omega donated a case of their rosé, so every table had a bottle in addition to all the great wines individuals brought. A special thank you to Bernardo Ayala and his staff from Napa Valley Bistro for making this a very fun and easy dinner.



by Steve Kinney



Napa Valley
Bistro plates
salads

prepping
Thanksgiving
Dinner





*Photographs provided by Friederike Heidger,
Mae VanNett, and Robin McGuire*



Alpha Omega Winery

After several donations to various events by Carl Hielsscher who works at Alpha Omega, we decided a tasting would be fun. Alpha Omega Winery is in Rutherford, just off Highway 29. It stands out with its water fountains in their reflecting pond that fronts the property. It was started in 2005 by Robin and Michelle Baggett. Robin was a wine grower in San Luis Obispo founding the Talossa Vineyard. He bought the then closed Quail Ridge winery and began making wine and developing the brand with Michelle, who oversaw the creative direction of the winery. She was an interior designer previously. Interestingly, Robin was also a corporate lawyer and served as an in-house lawyer for the Golden State Warriors for 8 years. Arguably the center piece of Alpha Omega is their beautiful reflecting pool with its five fountains. There are plenty of umbrellas to shelter the outdoor space. We chose to sit inside as it was still a bit nippy. The large windows still afforded us a great view.

Winemaking is overseen by Melissa Paris who works with wine consultant Michel Roland. Their focus is on Cabernet using all five of the Bordeaux varietals. All the reds are barrel fermented, which is quite labor intensive. It also results in softer tannins and more integrated flavors. After fermentation in the barrel the wine goes through an extended maceration (leaving the skins in contact) to add color and further soften mouth feel. They have very limited vineyards, but buy grapes from many vineyards, including Beckstoffer George III, Dr. Crane, and To Kalon as well as other exclusive properties.



Tasting started off with their 2023 Rosé. It's a Cabernet Sauvignon, unusual for a rosé. Nice strawberry fruit flavors with a hint of tobacco and some complexity. The 2023 Napa Valley Chardonnay followed. This had about 30% Malolactic fermentation, which added some rich vanilla creaminess. Rich apple-pear fruit added to the flavors and appeal.

Reds followed, starting with the 2022 Proprietary Red. This is a blend of all five Bordeaux varietals: Malbec, Merlot, Petit Verdot, Cabernet Franc, and Cabernet Sauvignon. Lighter in style, but with bright cherry fruit reminiscent of Merlot. Here, our tasting guide, Mo, diverged a little from the menu and brought out the 2022 Cabernet and 2019 Cabernet to taste alongside each other. Both were similar with the 2019 showing more depth. Again, these were softer than many cabs but with nice bright fruit and overall strong character. We finished with 2022 Malbec. This had more assertive tannins and showed a bit sharper acid in the mouth. Good dark fruit flavors and leather finished out the tastes.

Our tasting was for four wines, but several others were brought out, providing a good overall look at the wines of Alpha Omega. This tasting came in at \$75 per person. They list several other experiences, the Curated Selection at \$100 and the Single Vineyard Tasting at \$125. Each has its own focus on different aspects of their wine program. Some walk-in tastings are available as the property

is quite large. On a warm day, the patio and reflecting pond with fountains would be a lovely place to taste, while the indoor room has great vistas and comfort. There is covered parking and on busy days some valet parking is available. A nice alternative just into Rutherford, check out Alpha Omega and its Cabernet-focused wines.



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Know Thy Neighbor



by Suzanne James

Our neighbor in the headlights this month has had quite a life journey with many ups and downs, pitfalls, and victories. She demonstrated unusual resilience and courage as she walked through it all and now feels at peace with herself and her lifestyle.

She was born in a Salvation Army hospital in Kentucky. “We were very poor and our family of five lived in an 18-foot Silverstream trailer. We had an outhouse and cold running water. My crib was a crate nailed to the wall. My father eventually bought a piece of property on which he built us a cinder block house. He was Station Master for Lake Central Airlines. He was in an airplane crash and emerged with a severe traumatic brain injury and back injuries.

“After the crash I just remember that he got worse and worse, in and out of hospitals for physical and mental health problems during the first years of my childhood.” Following their Catholic priest’s advice, the family grew with the birth of five more children “to populate God’s Kingdom.”

When the airline eventually let him go, the family moved to Alpine Township outside of Grand Rapids, Michigan, where all their relatives lived—a small hard-working Germanic community that was stoic by nature, offering little in the way of emotional connection and support. Her father was employed by Lear Siegler, an airport parts company, for seven years.

“Those were good years! My father built a house on an acre of land. I remember cow pastures and wheat fields and our two-room schoolhouse. Older kids were expected to take care of younger kids. Mom took a job working at night. Dad had a breakdown during that time and never fully recovered. He was the kindest man I ever knew and died at age 51.

“I flew to Washington and lived in a boarding house for young women. Ford’s offices were in the Capitol Building and I loved walking through the rotunda on the way to work each day.”

“We were all in survival mode, shut down emotionally. I was parentified very early,” taking responsibility for her parents as well as younger siblings. “We looked good from the outside as mom was a seamstress and made all our clothes, so we were appropriately dressed.”

In high school she made the honor roll but described herself as socially withdrawn and depressed. “I worried all the time about my family. There was no emotional support from relatives,” nor mentoring from teachers. She felt shunned by her relatives who seemed to prefer an older sister. Although she was at the top of her class academically, none of her family attended her graduation.

During high school she worked in a pizza place. Her boss recommended she go to Davenport College of Business in Grand Rapids. She loved it and thrived because

she finally had something of her own. As a top graduate she was recruited by her congressman, Gerald R. Ford, in Washington, D.C. “I flew to Washington and lived in a boarding house for young women. Ford’s offices were in the Capitol Building and I loved walking through the rotunda on the way to work each day. But I worried about my family every day. And felt guilty for leaving them.

“After moving to Washington I met and fell in love. Pretty soon he wanted to move to California, and I agreed to go with him.” They drove cross country to San Francisco. She was 22. He became abusive and abandoned her at the Buena Vista café their first day in San Francisco. So, she rented a room and worked temp jobs in the Financial District.

In 1980 she was she was hired by Royal Viking (Cruise) Line at \$800 per month, booking reservations for three ships that cruised everywhere in the world. “I loved it! I thrived on it!” Then she found a studio apartment in an old Victorian in Sausalito at \$325 a month and took the ferry boat to work. “For the first time in my life I was living the life I truly wanted!” She went on many cruises while working at Viking. “I got promoted to Air/Sea Coordinator. I flew Mom down to Florida for a 14-day Panama Canal cruise and six months later I cruised to Alaska.” She flew the Air France Concorde from Paris to New York while escorting a group.

After four years she was hired by Pearl Cruises of Scandinavia and was sent on a cruise from Japan to Korea, a train to Beijing to see the Great Wall, and then to Hong Kong.

When the cruise lines moved to Florida, she accepted a position as Litigation Legal Secretary with the law offices of Morrison & Foerster. She never lost her love of travel. After 25 years she accepted an early retirement buy-out. To celebrate, she went to Europe and returned on the Queen Mary II from London to New York.

After living in Marin County for 45 years and commuting to the City, she wanted to live in the wine country. She purchased a home in Vineyard Valley in 2013. She has found peace of mind, contentment, and connection in the Park.

She is a volunteer at the Cameo Cinema and Methodist church. She describes her passions as nature, spirituality, travel, and animals.

Our neighbor this month is **Bette Antor** who lives with her Himalayan cat, Georgee, at 3 Del Rio.



Volunteers, referrals, and suggestions for this column are encouraged and welcomed!



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