

# THE ACORN

SHERWOOD OAKS NEWSLETTER

100 Norman Drive, Cranberry Twp., PA 16066

[www.sherwood-oaks.com](http://www.sherwood-oaks.com)

February 2026 “For the residents, by the residents” Vol. 45, No. 2

## WINTER MOON



Photo by Diane Horn

**Dear Reader –**

In “the bleak mid-winter,” where we now find ourselves, interactions with the natural world are limited and often unpleasant. Bracing winds, slippery sidewalks, gray landscape all serve to send us diving under a blanket with a good book or Netflix.

Lately, several residents have shared with me their absolute fascination with the bird world here on our campus. Other than spotting an occasional deer or some turkeys, birds provide most of our connection with wildlife at this time of year.

Warm in our own indoor perches, we watch them flocking near the lake, taking cover in nearby trees, and feasting hungrily at our feeders. My own feeding station includes a heated birdbath and suet feeder, and these amazing, feathered neighbors keep my cat and me entertained through these long months.

The saying goes, “When cardinals appear, angels are near”. In this issue read about the wooden cardinals two residents made to adorn the campus.

Have fun finding them, and watching the real ones, too!

~ Jan Wendt



**Remembrance Cards**

Did you know? Donation envelopes and remembrance cards are on the memorial table in the lobby. The donation envelope lists many options to choose from when contributing in memory of a resident or a loved one. Remembrance cards can be filled out and placed in Cubby #346; they will be collected and given to the spouse/ family.

**FEBRUARY CALENDAR**

Black History Month begins	Feb. 1
Change your password Day	Feb. 1
Groundhog Day	Feb. 2
Presidents Day	Feb. 16
Fat Tuesday/Mardi Gras	Feb. 17
Ash Wednesday	Feb. 18
Nat’l Caregivers Day	Feb. 20
Nat’l Margarita Day	Feb. 22

***THE ACORN***

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Submissions for the March issue must be sent to the Editor no later than **February 15, 2026.**

***IN MEMORIAM***

*Memories are precious possessions that time can never destroy. For it is in happy remembrance that the heart finds its greatest joy.*

*Charles Brown*                      *December 27, 2025*

*Joseph Rychcik*                      *January 8, 2026*

*Anne Hitchak*                      *January 22, 2026*

## JOYCE HEWLETT - #132

By Harriet Burress - # 112



Photo by Dave Capan

Sitting in Joyce's living room, I observed two beautiful watercolors, one of a lake and the other of a lighthouse with clothes hanging outside. Joyce explained that they were Canadian scenes painted by her dad near a lodge they visited when she was a child. Her dad was quite an artist, but realized he needed to expand his expertise into a more lucrative position. His career path went from book illustration to advertising art when all graphics were done by hand.

Joyce inherited her father's talent and had many opportunities to use it during her career. She spent her first 14 years in Detroit and then moved to Bloomfield Township, 30 miles north of Detroit, for high school. After graduation, she completed two years at Olivet College for liberal arts then transferred to Cranbrook Academy of Art in Bloomfield Hills, MI for the last two years and graduated with a BFA. It was, conveniently, a ten-minute drive from her home. She studied pottery under an internationally known instructor from Finland. Cranbrook limited its enrollment to 120 students, including 100 graduate students and 20 undergraduates.

When Joyce took her daughter and three grandchildren to MI for a family reunion two years ago, they toured the campus. "It's the only thing in my life that never changes. The beautiful gardens, lawns, fountains, and sculptures and the ambiance and atmosphere - they are still the same. My grandchildren were very impressed when the librarian went downstairs to the archives and brought up my thesis for them to see."

After Cranbrook, Joyce worked for the Army in Special Services (which provided R and R for noncommissioned Service men) in service clubs at Fort Hood, TX; arts and crafts at Fort Benning, GA; and arts and crafts at Fort Dix, NJ. She then entered the MFA program at Rutgers University in New Brunswick, NJ.

Her college teaching jobs were at Kutztown State College at Kutztown, PA; Community College of Philadelphia; and creating the pottery department at Rutgers University. In 1986, her husband, William, accepted a job in McAllen, TX. Before the boxes were unpacked, Joyce went to the University of TX, Pan American art department and was hired to teach pottery and art appreciation. A few years later, an opening came up at South TX Community College. She was offered a tenured track position in the art department and initiated a new pottery studio and courses there. Joyce and William moved to the Pittsburgh area when her daughter married in 2004.

Daughter Heather and three grandchildren, ages 18, 16, and almost 14 live in Mt. Lebanon. Joyce and William moved in 2010 to BelleVue Park in Cranberry Township, only a mile away from Sherwood Oaks. William died in 2023 and Joyce chose to relocate to Sherwood Oaks.

In the future we may see some of Joyce's pottery in the curios. Please welcome her to our Sherwood family and to #132, her latest move.

## JEAN WHEELER - #296

By Jan Wendt - #158



Photo by Dave Capan

For someone who moved here only three weeks ago, Jean Wheeler is “happy as a clam” and remarkably settled in her beautifully refurbished unit, along with two-year old pup, Lucy, a Maltese.

This native Pittsburgher has lived most of her life in the North Hills, most recently for eight years in Gibsonia. She taught for nearly 30 years at the elementary level in the North Hills School District. Her late husband worked as a psychologist and died eleven years ago.

Daughter Jenene, who is a vocal performer (singing everything from pop to opera, says Mom) lives in Florida with her husband and dogs Wylie and Sadie. Jenene and her husband chose furniture and made other decorating decisions, as well as physically moving Jean in. She is most grateful.

Jean is a nature lover and gardener and, although not a fan of winter weather,

looks longingly out her sunroom window and thinks of what she can enjoy doing come spring. An array of lush foliage in the sunroom attests to her green thumb. Attention, Landscape Committee, you will likely have a recruit.

Always a fitness devotee, she did “power yoga” for years, has explored the Fitness Center and is eager to get cycling and pumping soon.

Her reading tastes tend toward historical fiction and non-fiction. Our Book Club is on her to-do list. She also loves classical music and opera and will happily attend the opera, symphony, and ballet.

Because her daughter worked for a while performing on cruise ships, Jean and her husband grew to love that form of travel and enjoyed many cruises. She recalls that the blue water and variety of ecosystems in Fiji stand out as a favorite.

In interviewing new residents, I don’t often meet one as enthusiastic and satisfied about her choice for senior living. She shopped some other options but found the beautiful campus and friendly atmosphere here a big draw. “I haven’t meant anyone who hasn’t been anything but welcoming.” She intimated she’d like to find a way to encourage others to see what our community offers. She specifically would like to be a part of social gatherings for potential residents. Ahem, Marketing Department ...

Ever the supportive mother, Jean invites readers to check out her daughter’s talent at [www.jenene.com](http://www.jenene.com). (I did, and Jean’s pride is well justified).

Welcome, Jean! We’ll see you and Lucy out and about as the weather warms up.

## ASH WEDNESDAY SERVICES 2026

By Jean Henderson - #346 and  
Mary Mion - #114



Ash Wednesday services will be held on February 18 for both Roman Catholics and Protestants.

The Protestant service will be at 4:00 p.m. in the Auditorium and will include music, scripture, prayers, reflections, and the Imposition of Ashes. Leading the service will be pastors Alick Kennedy and Jean Henderson.

Ashes for Protestant residents and staff will also be imposed in the early afternoon in the SNU, PC, and Oak Grove for those who cannot attend the service.

Roman Catholic residents and staff may receive Imposition of Ashes in the Chapel on the lower level of the Center between 11:30 a.m. and 12:30 p.m.

Residents in the health units will receive ashes in the early afternoon.

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*"We must never forget that Black History is American History. The achievements of African Americans have contributed to our nation's greatest."*

~ Yvette Clarke

## GOSPEL SINGERS TO APPEAR

By Reed Harvey - #235

The Tuesday Gospel Singers, who were originally scheduled to perform at Sherwood Oaks in September 2025, have been rescheduled for February 26, at 7:00 p.m. in the Auditorium.

The men have been singing traditional church music, with a sprinkling of secular numbers, for almost 20 years. Members come from five different congregations in the greater North Hills, and they look forward to a hand-clappin', toe-tappin', spirit-filled evening at Sherwood Oaks.

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## SORA Joins PACRC

By Bruce Cooper - #735

In December, SORA joined the Pennsylvania Alliance of Retirement Community Residents (PARCR), an organization whose mission statement is: To educate and inform residents of continuing care retirement/life plan communities in Pennsylvania by promoting the exchange of ideas, education, and civic responsibilities of residents; and to encourage members to seek to be a part of informed decision-making in their community.

There are currently 36 continuing care retirement communities from all over Pennsylvania that are members of PARCR.

Their website is [www.parcr.org](http://www.parcr.org), where you can learn all about the organization. In their January *Post*, there's a nice write-up on Sherwood Oaks in the New Members section of the newsletter.

Our membership will surely provide value to SORA as we gather ideas and activities from our sister member.

## GARY WHORIC SAYS GOODBYE

By John Hennon - #165



Photo by John Hennon

“We do everything from changing light bulbs and batteries to fixing holes in walls” is the way Gary Whoric summarized his 20-year tenure as Sherwood Oaks’ Maintenance Supervisor and then Director of Maintenance and Grounds. In truth, though, prior to his recent retirement Gary had been involved in much more than routine tasks.

Besides overseeing the activities of the 18 maintenance department staff, Gary monitored the work of the various contractors hired for patio home renovations and other skilled jobs at Sherwood Oaks. He was also responsible for ensuring that the facility complies with a variety of state regulations, including such things as elevator safety and maintaining the dam around our lake.

From time to time, Gary had the opportunity to do hands-on work. Two of many examples are installing the spa in the swimming pool area and figuring out how to create a floating swan feeder in the lake that kept the groundhogs out. Gary also led the auditorium renovation project and designed the open kitchens that are part of newly renovated patio homes.

Following his service as an electronics specialist in the US Navy, Gary worked on dialysis machines; there he gained valuable knowledge about water quality which has since come in handy when addressing plumbing issues here. Then there were brief stints at

two local steel mills before he was named maintenance supervisor at HealthSouth in Sewickley. From there, he came to Sherwood Oaks.

A few days before his retirement, Gary reviewed some of the changes implemented by the maintenance department that positively impacted life at Sherwood Oaks. One was his leadership in the transition to LED lighting throughout the campus, resulting in cost savings of thousands of dollars per month. Another is the ongoing replacement of metal pipes with plastic pipes; water leaks have been a persistent issue that is gradually being resolved. And a recent innovation already showing gains in maintenance efficiency is the online work order system. The scope of the work done by the maintenance department is staggering; an average of 600-1,000 work orders are submitted by residents every month and anything that speeds up the process of closing out projects benefits us all.

Gary is a lifelong resident of Beaver County, aside from his time in the Navy when he was stationed in Norfolk, Virginia and overseas during the Gulf War. He currently lives in Rochester with his wife, Danielle, and son Ian. Daughter Alanna and her family (including grandchildren Emersyn and Clayton) live in San Diego where Gary’s son-in-law Ty is with the Navy. Gary is pleased they will be returning to Pennsylvania later this year after Ty’s service is completed.

In his spare time, Gary enjoys handcrafting knives. One of his more impressive creations was the 18-inch Bowie knife he made for a friend. He also does some leatherwork, such as fashioning sheathes to accompany his knives. But much of Gary’s spare time in recent years has been devoted to study for the ministry. He recently received his associate degree and he has begun work toward his bachelor’s degree in ministry. Less than a week after retiring from Sherwood Oaks, Gary was asked by his pastor to deliver the sermon at their church in Center Township. He anticipates being ordained in due time and beginning a new career.

## WRITING YOUR LIFE

### Everyone has a story worth sharing

By Rita Bean - #729

Have you thought about writing your life story, perhaps as a legacy for your family or as a creative and reflective activity? Learn how to get started, how to access your memories, how to decide what to share, and how to stay motivated.

Donna, Bill, and I enjoyed leading our first group of writers – they were a terrific group and we learned a great deal from each other. So, we decided that we'd like to hold another beginner class this year – a Winter Workshop - beginning Friday, February 27, 2026, through Friday, April 24, 2026. The class will meet from 1:00-3:00 p.m. During this eight-week experience, we will provide opportunities for each participant to share their work with others, and to enjoy in-class activities. Enrollment is limited to 8 residents, so let us know as soon as possible if you are interested in joining us. If you have questions or if you want to enroll, contact one of the individuals identified below. Please provide your email address, unit number, and phone number so that we can develop a communication system for our group. We will also post a signup sheet in the mail room.

Facilitators are Rita Bean (412-780-9371); Donna Moul (412-209-8796); Bill Moul (412-956-4707).

Read what recent attendees say about their involvement in writing their life's story:

Jane Lohman – *I enjoyed interacting with my neighbors and getting to know their*

*life stories. It was eye-opening. I like to write.*

Nancy Steffey. – *I like how there were various approaches with each class.*

George Steffey – *I enjoyed the commonality of our stories and the unique differences in what we shared.*

Alick Kennedy – *The way memories of individuals bring flashes of memory back into your mind. We have bonded as a group, know each other, and care about each other. You will truly enjoy it!*

Bob Millward – *Why I took the course – it brought back memories – helped me think about what my relatives might want to know about me.*



### DAFFODILS

for the  
AMERICAN CANCER SOCIETY

By Jane Lavender - #253

At Sherwood Oaks, we always wait a bit impatiently for spring. Ordering the ACS daffodils seems to make it easier to wait because there is a real delivery date we can look forward to.

This year the sign-up sheets are in the Mailroom and on the Personal Care unit. Prices will be the same - a pot of daffodils for \$20.00 and a bunch of cut flowers for \$15.00.

Orders and money must be in by February 15th and delivery will be in the week of March 23rd. Contact Jane Lavender at 8253 or Diane Schulties at #312 for information.

## AND, OF COURSE, THERE'S BRIDGE

By Charles Cullen - #313 and  
Lavonne McCandlish - #135

(Ed. Note – *This is the last in a series about the many table games residents enjoy getting together to play regularly.*)

Groups have enjoyed playing Bridge here on campus since the beginning. It is a complicated card game, adaptable to play at many levels – from a casual foursome to international tournaments. Each hand consists of two parts: the bidding, and the play. The bidding is designed to reach the best contract and the play is the attempt to take the number of tricks agreed upon in the bidding. In duplicate bridge each hand is played at several tables and the scores compared.



Photo by Jan Wendt

Here at Sherwood Oaks, we have a **friendly** duplicate game (2 or 3 tables) every Thursday afternoon at 1:30 PM. We usually play about 20 hands which takes about two and a half hours. Following play, we have a social hour with drinks and goodies after which those who wish to can dine together. We welcome players at all skill levels.

For more information contact Charles Cullen at #8313 or Lavonne McCandlish at #8135.

## DRAMA CLUB PRODUCTIONS ON TAP

By Lorraine Commeret - #131



If you are looking for an escape from the snow, sleet, and winter blues, plan on joining the Sherwood Oaks Players for an evening or an afternoon of crime and comedy.

This February, the Drama Club will present two one - act plays designed to intrigue and surprise you, “Welcome to Acceptance” by Terry Paiste and “Unmurdered” by Edith Weiss.

In our first play, a seasoned bank robber named Sam meets his match in a clever and challenging bank teller, Mrs. Melcher. This witty duo will be followed by a cast of eleven in our second play in which an author with writer’s block, seeking remedy at an artists’ retreat, encounters murder and mayhem.

The dinner theatre (a resident-only event) takes place on February 19<sup>th</sup> at 5:00 p.m. in the Auditorium. The matinee on Saturday, February 21<sup>st</sup> at 1:00 p.m. will also be open to family and friends of cast and crew.

Tickets for the dinner theatre at a cost of \$20 can be obtained by calling Jesse at 8505 by February 6<sup>th</sup>. Tickets for the matinee (required, but free) will be available at the reception desk beginning on Monday, February 9<sup>th</sup>.

We hope to see you there!

## CRAFTERS AT IT AGAIN!

By Jan Wendt- #158

From the folks who brought you colorful bird-house towns, red-striped walkway columns and other decorative campus whimsy - behold their two latest projects.

With inspiration from several sources, Ann Ferguson and Donna Artz provided us with a parade of wooden Christmas light bulbs near the Westminster Garden by the Center. More recently, a number of colorful cardinal birds have popped up along our paths.



Photo by Donna Artz

As the holidays approached, Donna's housekeeper, Tracy Kohut, mentioned she had visited a craft show and had spotted colorfully painted wooden Christmas tree lights. Inspired, Donna obtained wooden remnants from her brother-in-law, who teaches Tae Kwon Do (boards get broken in that class). She created a pattern for the bulbs and headed to the Woodshop to cut them out and paint. Voila!

Ann had read about a man who visited a lady in a nursing home. She told him all she wanted was to see a cardinal. He created a wooden one and put it on a post outside her room where she could always see it. Hmmm. A mention to Donna, and the birds were cut, painted, and assembled. The creators estimate they made about 40 of each ornament.



Photo by John Hennon

We are all the recipients of these women's creativity and energy. Thank you!

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## NUTCRACKER ELVES, THANKS!

By Monika Dalrymple - #200

It was a pleasure to have so many elves: Jno Hunt, Tibor Ketzan, Denton Bond, Carole Fox, Rita Bean, and Joe Schulties to help me (temporarily Mrs. Claus) set up the nutcracker display. I am most grateful for the effort and time they spent doing such a great job to wake up the multitude of nutcrackers and place them on the display tables, then putting them all put back to sleep again till the next Xmas season comes around!

It warms my heart that this display gives so much pleasure to so many who live and work here, to make this Christmas season a little more enjoyable.

A special thanks goes to my sweet "Chief Elf" Bruce Cooper! He helped in so many ways to set up the tables and to get the village going, which always seems to have a few kinks in it, and I could not have done this without him!

Now we start the long wait for spring to arrive, when the days will be long and sweet and warm again to enjoy this very special place and community with so many wonderful people in it, with whom we share time and space.

## TRIPS AND TOURS CORNER

By Maggie Bennardo - #211

Thanks to all who joined our events in 2025. In addition to the activities, we asked you for suggestions for **specific** events. The response was good, and all your ideas were considered; some were scheduled, others were deemed not doable, and others are still on our list.

This year, we are asking you to indicate the **types** of activities/events you are most interested in. The information you provide will improve our success rate and allow us to target our energies more effectively. Expect a survey in your cubby soon. We value your input.

Our committee members have also discussed ways to improve and ensure maximum fairness for everyone. We are instituting a new policy as of February 1, 2026: signup posters will include a cutoff date – two days before the event. Cancellations made *after* the cutoff date may result in your being charged the transportation fee (shared among the riders). Folks who don't show at the departure time will also be charged the transportation fee.

Trips & Tours will continue to offer a lunch event, a dinner event, and a tour to someplace interesting monthly. Check our board in the Mailroom and Channel 950 for detailed information.



Photo by Lori Greer

## CURIO CABINETS FOR FEBRUARY

“Sports Memorabilia”

By Janet Desko - #210



A big thank you to the residents who in the past months have shared their collections with all of us. This is what makes Sherwood Oaks special.

On **February 5**, we need your **“Sports Memorabilia.”** These can include sports photographs, ticket stubs, programs, hats, t-shirts, trophies, autographs, and any other sports-related items.

Drop off your memorabilia in the Community Center at the curio cabinets between **10:30 a.m. – noon** and **4:30 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.** on **Thursday, February 5.**

GO TEAMS!!!!

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*“While it is February, one can taste the full joys of anticipation. Spring stands at the gate with her finger on the latch.”*

~ Patience Strong

## EMPLOYEE THANK YOU'S - 2025

Compiled by Jean Henderson - # 346

Over 150 notes have been gathered from recent recipients of the Employee Appreciation Fund. Here is a sampling, verbatim:

*I worked here for four years, left, and now am back because I missed you all!*

*Working at Sherwood has been a blessing for me. Thank you!*

*I am blessed to work here with and for amazing people!*

*Thank you so very much for caring about a li'l housekeeper!*

*Seeing you all each day and being able to fill your bellies with delicious food brings me joy. I am grateful for you.*

*Your kindness reminds me how special this community is. I am honored to care for you each day here.*

*I enjoy all the work I do here and love the interaction with all the residents.*

*I love working here. It's not just a job to me. It's family.*

*Thank you for making this campus special with all the lovely people who make this home for everyone.*

*The people here are my family away from home. I appreciate all you've done for me and my family.*

*Your gift helps make the holidays much more stress free.*

*You all have made my Christmas wonderful!*

*It's nice to be appreciated for all of our hard work.*

*I am really grateful to be employed at such an amazing place!!*

*Being part of this community is genuinely rewarding.*

*Your gift makes this time of year so much brighter.*

*I've worked here 17 years – it's an honor to care for wonderful people!*

*I've been at SO for 24 years. There's no place like it.*

*As a new employee it's wonderful to feel included and appreciated.*

*You never fail to make me smile!*

*Your gift will help my family more than you will ever know!*

*I'm blessed to work in a positive, happy environment. You make it beautiful!*

*You all have such big hearts and kind souls!*

*Your kindness reflects the spirit of the Sherwood Oaks community. I feel honored to share each day with such wonderful people.*

*Have a Merry Christmas, Kwanzaa, Hanukkah, Boxing Day, Saint Lucia Day, Three Kings Day, New Year, Winter Solstice, Yule, Happy Holidays!*



## COOPER'S CLIMATE CAPSULE

By Bruce Cooper - #735

While it probably is cold outside as you read this, the U.S. is experiencing a significant heat crisis, characterized by increasingly frequent and intense heat waves. This trend is largely driven by climate change, which has led to record-breaking temperatures and extreme weather conditions.

### Key Factors Contributing to the Heat Crisis

#### Climate Change Impact

- **Rising Temperatures:** The last decade has seen a dramatic increase in daily record high temperatures, with the hottest years recorded between 2014 and 2024.
- **Heat Waves:** The frequency of heat waves has tripled since the 1960s, with projections indicating that by mid-century, many areas could see an increase of 20-30 days per year with temperatures exceeding 90°F.

#### Health Risks

- **Heat-Related Illnesses:** Extreme heat is the deadliest weather-related threat in the U.S., causing more deaths annually than floods, tornadoes, and hurricanes combined. Vulnerable populations, including older adults and low-income communities, are disproportionately affected.
- **Mental Health Effects:** High temperatures can exacerbate mental health issues, leading to increased anxiety and stress. Conditions like arthritis and fibromyalgia can worsen due to heat and humidity.

### Economic and Environmental Consequences

#### Infrastructure Strain

- **Energy Demand:** Increased use of air conditioning during heat waves leads

to higher electricity demand, straining power grids and potentially causing outages.

- **Agricultural Impact:** Heat waves can disrupt agricultural productivity, leading to crop failures and economic losses.

#### Urban Heat Islands

- **Temperature Variations:** Urban areas can experience temperatures 1 to 7 degrees Fahrenheit higher than surrounding regions due to the urban heat island effect, exacerbating the impacts of heat waves.

The ongoing heat crisis in the U.S. highlights the urgent need for climate action and adaptation strategies to mitigate its effects on health, infrastructure, and the environment.

**Watch “*Inside the U.S. Heat Crisis*” on Channel 950 on Monday, February 9, at 10:00 AM. Encore presentation on Wednesday, February 9, at 3:30 PM.**



## EASTER FLOWERS

By Ann Ferguson - #269

Hard to believe it now, but we will be thinking about Easter colors and fragrances before long.

The Landscape Committee will offer a variety of Easter plants for sale towards the end of March.

Offerings include tulips, a “frost chaser” (a mixture of pansies, alyssum, verbena and snapdragons in a 10” pot), lilies, hyacinths, and pansy bowls.

Look for more information and order forms to appear in your cubbies.

## SNOW AT THE EQUATOR

By John Bridges - #112

Mention the Equator and the mind immediately imagines palm trees and tropical seas. One forgets that in encircling the earth the Equator intersects with several lofty mountains. One of these is Mt. Kenya which, reaching 17,400 feet, is capped with snow and a glacier. During the Mau-Mau movement, the terrorists used this as a cold chamber for storing food.

To digress a moment: one day, wandering around the foot of the mountain, I came across a cemetery. It contained the grave of Lord Baden Powell, founder of the Boy Scout movement after his experiences in Mafeking, South Africa.

Overlooking Mt Kenya, I lived for two years five miles south of the Equator on the edge of the Aberdares Mountains at an altitude of about 7,000 feet where a bucket of water left outside would often have two inches of ice in the morning.



[This Photo](#) by Unknown Author is licensed under [CC BY](#)

In 1954, I set out from the forest ranger's hut on the north side to climb Kilimanjaro with two companions. In two days, we reached the col (mountain pass) between Kibo and Mwenzi and were met by a blizzard. We stuck it out until the afternoon when we retreated to the treeline to light a fire and dry out. In all that week we saw no other human nor any sign that humans had ever been there. Today, 30,000 people a year make the trek with all the consequent problems of erosion and environmental concerns.

On the border between Uganda and what was the Belgian Congo lie the Ruwenzori mountains with their changeable, disagreeable weather conditions. I spent two weeks there on vacation, complete with ice axe and climbing ropes. Porters were engaged to help take supplies up to the sturdy mountain hut built by one of the climbing associations. The porters returned to base, and we were left in this world of ice and fog. A previous party of Austrian climbers had left interesting surplus food supplies which was a welcome variance from ours and we, in turn, left surplus for the next party.

We broke no records, practiced our skills, and were surprised at the many animals, including elephants, roaming as high as the tree line.

## NEWS FROM HEALTH AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

By Art Sommer - #115

When it comes to medical advice, What's true? What's too good to be true? What's anecdotal? What's backed by scientific research? Is it really Sanjay Gupta in that video recommending that supplement? Or...?

In the world of AI (Artificial Intelligence) how do we know whom or what to believe? Our Health Affairs Committee is trying to help you sort this out by subscribing to two monthly health newsletters: the Mayo Clinic and the Cleveland Clinic Arthritis Advisor. Both are available in our Medical Office. For those of you fortunate enough not to have to spend much time in the office, we hope to provide you with a summary article from them on a timely basis.

Here are three subjects covered in the December 2025 issue of the *Cleveland Clinic Arthritis Advisor*:

**Pain management** is more than just treating the patient's pain; it's important to include a psychological approach in addition to medical and physical components. Depression often accompanies chronic pain, including grieving the loss of the life the patient was expecting to have. Now some hopes and dreams must be modified or altered because of the pain.

**Education on Pain and Prescriptions:** While narcotics certainly have a place in pain relief, prolonged usage can cause more pain. This is called "opioid-induced hyperalgesia" which can make chronic pain worse.

**Benefits of Magnesium:** Deficiencies in magnesium are associated with osteoarthritis and rheumatoid

arthritis. Studies suggest magnesium has an anti-inflammatory effect, may strengthen bone, protect cartilage, and reduce muscle pain. While readily available in healthy foods like fruits, vegetables, nuts and seeds, magnesium deficiencies are fairly common and widespread, but difficult to diagnose. Supplements are available and inexpensive, but always check with your medical provider before rushing out to buy some.

And, from the *Mayo Clinic Newsletter*, some tips on avoiding health disinformation:

### **Beware of fear tactics**

Look for phrases such as "Your doctor won't tell you this." Reliable sources use language that helps you understand rather than panic.

### **Miracle cures**

Be skeptical of anything that promises quick fixes or instant results from a single food, supplement, or action.

### **Sales driven content**

If the article pushes a product with testimonials or discount offers, it may be more about profit than your health.

### **Lack of credible sources.**

Reliable articles cite research, medical organizations, or universities. Often look for website addresses ending in .EDU or .ORG.

### **Distrust of experts**

Beware of media that claim the medical community is lying. Trusted health information is based on scientific evidence from licensed professionals and respected institutions.

## MY BRIEF LIFE IN SKIING

By Julie Eden - #290



As we enjoy the Winter Olympic Games in Italy, I am reminded of my brief encounters with winter sports; I prefer swimming and track and field.

Living in Eugene, Oregon in the Willamette Valley, if we wanted snow, we went to it. In town, it sometimes snowed enough for sledding, but that was about it — except for the January 1969 storm; more on that later.

While I was in high school, the local newspaper sponsored skiing lessons at Willamette Pass. My sister and I were interested enough to have our mom sign us up. Then we were off to visit Berg's, the local ski shop. There I got a very thick sweater and my sister bought a jacket. Those, and winter pants, were enough to get us started on the rented skis. Off we went on the bus.

The first thing we learned was how to fall correctly. And that is about as far as I got. My sister was an instant pro who skied for many years and then snowboarded. Not me.

After getting home from that first lesson, I asked my mom how much it would cost to buy her out of the remainder of the classes. I kept the sweater and technically joined the Ski Club (so my yearbook claims), but I can promise you I never skied again. The inside areas of ski resorts, watching all others on the slopes, was my territory.

A few years later, I took a university friend to our vacation home in Bend near Mount Bachelor in Central Oregon for a weekend. She had a great couple of days on the slopes. I loved the hot chocolate. My parents were not skiers either, and they had situated the house on the lot to view the Three Sisters mountains. They could have cared less that snow was nearby. My sister used the cabin all through high school and skied her heart out.

In January 1969, almost 40 inches of snow blanketed Eugene and the surrounding area in a three-day period. It caught residents by surprise as the forecast had been for a chance of snow.

The university closed for the first time in history, stores and businesses shuttered. A call went out for folks to shovel the flat high school roof, livestock were fed by drops of hay, etc. from planes and anyone with a Jeep was asked to come forward to deliver food to those living in the hills around town.

It actually might have been a great opportunity for cross-country skiing. Instead, my husband and a friend cleared their cars in the driveway of the small apartment building where we live. With nowhere to go, we played a lot of cards for a few days and enjoyed our neighbors' company. The piles of snow were taller than my 2 ½ year old daughter. She wasn't sure what to make of it all.

This year, from February 6<sup>th</sup> to the 22<sup>nd</sup>, I'll be attached to the television to watch ski jumpers, skaters, and downhill skiers in Northern Italy as they perform in ways I never could or would. I'll settle in with some cocoa and let them do their thing. When those mogul runs are made, my knees will hurt, as they always do.

## WORTH A LOOK Books New to Our Library

By Barbara Christy - #237

*The Wilderness* by Angela Flournoy. Fiction. This book is a glimpse into the lives of four twenty-first century black women. It covers two decades right into 2026. Initially, each woman has a problem/situation to deal with (an unplanned pregnancy, settling on a career choice, starting a business) but the story is about their friendships, victories, and heartbreaks in this emotional and uplifting saga. It's a well done coming-of-age saga. F FLO

*Atmosphere* by Taylor Jenkins Reid. Fiction. Joan Godwin is an astronomer and astrophysicist who dreams of being an astronaut. But NASA is male dominated; space is no place for women. But in 1979 the agency accepted six women for its space program – one of them was Joan. Smart and hardworking, she progresses through the training and becomes part of the team slated for the next Navigator (space shuttle program) flight. During training as a mission specialist, she develops close personal ties with her teammates and learns all the roles that they are assigned on their mission. When the launch happens, her assignment is at NASA launch center as the only person who can communicate directly with the crew. Everyone is enjoying the thrill of a job well done when disaster strikes. This book is captivating for both the accuracy of the astronaut program details and the intensity of the relationships that evolve. F REI

*The CIA Book Club* by Charlie English. Non-fiction. "Real men don't sell books." Thus spoke a contingent of the CIA's clandestine Directorate of Operations

who opposed the underground publishing world created by the CIA to introduce forbidden literature and news into countries in the Eastern European Soviet bloc. But books can set you free. This book is about the power of the printed word, its importance for creating political resistance in countries with totalitarian governments, and the dedication of people for whom freedom of the press is worth dying. Describing the oppression, imprisonment and torture experienced by brave, determined patriots, this book also reveals some of the "tradecraft" secrets used by resistance writers and publishers to import, reproduce and redistribute subversive documents (including George Orwell's *Animal Farm*) to a news-starved populace. Floating huge helium-filled balloons with a payload of paper over the heavily guarded border into the airspace over Prague, using procedures called "the French connection" and the "bypass bridge" to elude Secret Police agents, hiding ditto machines in rural outhouses -these are only a few of the techniques used by a determined cadre of people whose secret mission was to win the cold war without firing a gun. 028.7094 ENG

*Buckeye* by Patrick Ryan. Fiction. This multi-generational, multi-family saga based in Bonhomie, Ohio covers the years from WWII thru Vietnam. Cal Jenkins, with a significant leg length discrepancy, is not eligible for the draft at the beginning of WWII. Despite being told in the fifth grade that he is destined for great things, his life is forever affected negatively by his handicap. Becky, his wife, has the special gift of connecting with the dead but she doesn't connect with her husband. Margaret is an orphan moved from foster homes to the orphanage,

## PAPERBACK PONDERINGS

By Jean Henderson - #346

abandon her. Lydia, a widow, becomes the manager of orphanage and a special protector of Margaret. Cal and Margaret connect on V-E Day, then begin an affair while Margaret's husband, Felix, is serving in the Pacific. A last fling happens the day before Felix comes home, resulting in a baby that could be Cal's ... or Felix's. As the years pass Cal's son and Margaret's become friends and the family lives are inevitably intertwined. But when the secret comes out, both couples separate. Years pass: the polio vaccine is approved, Disneyland opens, segregation is declared illegal. While the boys grow, Kennedy is elected and later assassinated. Vietnam claims time on television news, escalates to a nation-wide draft that vacuums up a generation of young men including Cal's son. There are no heroes or villains in this novel, only very real human beings. F RYA

*American Sirens: The Incredible Story of the Black Men Who Became America's First Paramedics* by Kevin Hazzard (once an EMT) is one of my favorite 2025 reads! Here in Pittsburgh, until the 1970s, if you had a medical emergency, a 911 call might bring the police or the funeral hearse. But a group of black men in Pittsburgh's Hill District started the FREEDOM HOUSE EMS and became America's first paramedics, setting the gold standard for emergency medicine around the world.

In 1967, 44 black men began a class at Presbyterian Hospital to be trained as 'paramedics' – a new word. Over half of them wouldn't make it, but those who did founded FREEDOM HOUSE EMS.

Meet John Moon, who began in that class and later rose to be Head Supervisor of PGH EMS.

Meet Dr. Peter Safar, the father of CPR, who joined the Presby staff and was nominated 3 times for Nobel prizes, who worked to create and save FREEDOM HOUSE EMS.

Meet Dr. Nancy Caroline, a young white woman who was the medical director at FREEDOM HOUSE. She was crucial in the formative days and helped save it during dark days.

Meet several PGH mayors, some of whom helped the EMS effort and some who didn't.

It's a great read about something I've taken for granted and knew nothing about – EMS and its Pittsburgh roots. You will find *American Sirens* in the Paperback Room of our Library.



Photo by Art Sommer

Some of us do become forgetful as we age. But really, leaving your grandchild in our coat room Lost and Found???

## CONTINUED LEARNING

By Jno L. Hunt - #308

We are finalizing plans for our presentations this spring. The series will be on seven Mondays starting on March 9 and running through April at 1:30 p.m. in the Auditorium.

Our first speaker will be Dr. Vitale, Superintendent of the Seneca Valley School District, talking with us about the current activities and challenges there. As many of you know, most of our servers in the evening are students at Seneca Valley High School.

Until then, enjoy our presentations on Channel 950. Initial airings on Tuesdays are at 10:00 a.m., 3:30 p.m., and 7:00 p.m. Encore presentations are usually on Thursdays at 10:00 a.m. and 3:30 p.m.

### FEBRUARY:

Tues., Feb. 3: **How to Look at and Understand Great Art, Lessons 21 & 22.** Encore on Thurs., Feb. 5

Tues., Feb. 10: **New Scientific Discoveries About Plants.** Encore on Thurs., Feb. 12

Tues., Feb. 17: **The Most Amazing Places in England.** Encore on Thurs., Feb. 19

Tues., Feb. 2: **The Holy Land Revealed—Lectures 19 & 20.** Encore on Thurs., Feb. 26

## CHAPEL NOTES

By Gary Brandenberger - #602  
For the Chapel Committee

### Services at 2:00 p.m. in the Card Room

Everyone is welcome. Bring a friend.

#### Sunday, February 1

Rev. Moni McIntyre  
St. Stephen's Episcopal  
McKeesport, PA

#### Sunday, February 8

Rev. Ron Brown  
Hope Lutheran  
Cranberry Township, PA

#### Sunday, February 15

Rev. Nathan Snode  
Lifeway Baptist  
Cranberry Township, PA

#### Ash Wednesday, February 18 – 4 P.M. **In the Auditorium**

Rev. Jean Henderson, S.O. Retired  
Rev. Alick Kennedy, S.O. Retired

#### Sunday, February 22

Rev. Donna Giver-Johnston  
Pgh. Theological Seminary

*"The Lord is my refuge and my strength, a very present help in times of trouble."*

Psalm 146:1

**THE COLETTA MCKENRY LIBRARY ACCESSIONS**  
**FICTION, INCLUDING LARGE TYPE AND DVD's**

<i>The Christmas Stranger</i>	Evans, Richard Paul	c2025.	F EVA
<i>Exit Strategy</i>	Child, Lee	c2025.	F CHI
<i>A Ferry Merry Christmas</i>	Macomber, Debbie	c2025.	F MAC
<i>Gone Before Goodbye</i>	Witherspoon, Reese	c2025.	F WIT
<i>The Intruder</i>	McFadden, Freida	c2025.	F MCF
<i>The Last Death of the Year</i>	Hannah, Sophie	c2025.	F HAN
<i>The Picasso Heist</i>	Patterson, James	c2025.	F PAT
<i>Remain: A Supernatural Love Story</i>	Sparks, Nicholas	c2025.	F SPA
<i>Return of the Spider</i>	Patterson, James	c2025.	F PAT
<i>Robert B. Parker's Showdown</i>	Lupica, Mike	c2025.	F LUP

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**GOOD HOURS**

By Robert Frost

I had for my winter evening walk –  
No one at all with whom to talk,  
But I had the cottages in a row  
Up to their shining eyes in snow.

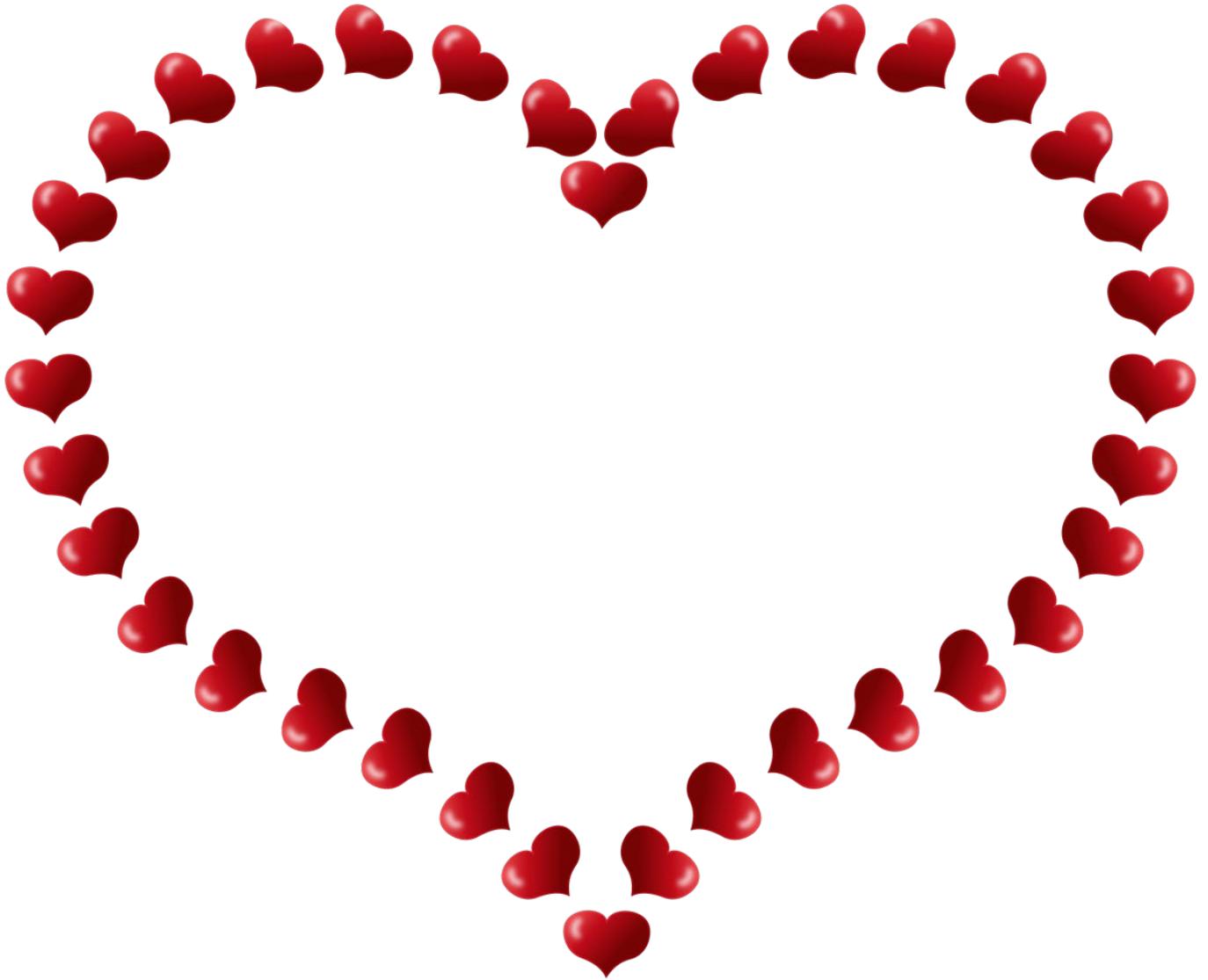
And I thought I had the folk within:  
I had the sound of a violin;  
I had a glimpse through curtain laces  
Of youthful forms and youthful faces.

I had such company outward bound.  
I went till there were no cottages found.  
I turned and repented, but coming back  
I saw no window but that was black.

Over the snow my creaking feet  
Disturbed the slumbering village street  
Like profanation, by your leave,  
At ten o'clock of a winter's eve.



*ALL YOU NEED . . .*



*. . . IS LOVE*

**~ THE BEATLES**