



# Twin Cities Village Voice

Empowering older adults to remain active, connected,  
and independent in the place they call home

February 2021

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## FEBRUARY, THE MONTH OF LOVE

When I taught high school, teachers would cringe at the prospect of two certain days of the year, relieved when they'd fall on a weekend—and it's still true. On Halloween students arrive at school in costume, with six Twix bars already under their belts and an attention span below zero. On Valentine's Day, their hormones, *consistently* under their belts, are swirling about as a windmill in a hurricane. Keeping their attention? Like corralling thirty-five grasshoppers in a shoebox without a lid. I would schedule the poetry unit for February, and on the 14th, I'd give two prompts in the last few minutes of class for them to create valentines to match their relationship status: "Dear precious honey bear of mine," or "Dear ghastly creature from the slimy swamp." These worked wonders to temper their emotions—especially the second choice.

Yet, there *was* some learning happening. Love, I'd remind them, isn't only about "intimate" eros relationships. *Philia* is love without romantic attraction and occurs between friends or family members; *mania*, obsessive love, is not a particularly healthy form; *agape*, selfless love that includes God; *philautia*, self-love, not egomania, but in order to care for others, we must care for ourselves. As Aristotle said, "All friendly feelings for others are an extension of a man's feeling for himself."

And just now we collectively as a nation examine *patria*, love of country and what it entails, having come close to having our democracy buckle before our eyes at the hands of white nationalists. In that vein, I offer *chromatophilia*. This is love of color, not just of off-white but of many colors, metaphorically like Joseph's luminous coat; no drab, impractical beige, nor the noir-ness of black. For the love of our country, which is patriotism, all colors must be included.

And it isn't just about color; the nascent healing that's going on must include all of us. To feel excluded—the new term is *othered*—for any "ism": ageism, racism, sexism, classism, and, yes, any ism that the white supremacists have experienced, must be eviscerated from conversations, consideration, and conventions and be replaced by concern and compassion. Again, from that brilliant Greek: "The whole is bigger than the sum of its parts," and what the whole encompasses, the Velcro that keeps it together, after all, is love.

Sue Sommer

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## COVID UPDATE

The stay-at-home order has been lifted in Marin County. What does it mean for us? Well, by the time you read this it may have changed again, but here are some thoughts: just because things are open doesn't mean they're safe. Suggestions are to wear two masks because of new virus strains that are entering the scene, and social distance, of course, stay home much of the time, and check with the Marin Health and Human Services department about updates and accessibility of getting the vaccine: <https://coronavirus.marinhhs.org/>

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## WELCOME, NEW MEMBERS AND VOLUNTEERS!

**Volunteers:** Lisa Heilscher—a warm welcome, Lisa!

Thank you for giving your time and energy to our village. We look forward to seeing you at an event soon!

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## LOCAL VILLAGE EVENTS (open to all unless noted)

All the events below are offered on Zoom. In case some of you aren't sure about how to get into the gatherings, we offer this:

### HOW TO ENTER ZOOM EVENTS

You will get an email inviting you to click the link. Tap on the line that says Join Zoom Meeting. It will ask "Do you want the page to open zoom.us?"; tap "allow" and you're in. If the host isn't there yet, just wait. When you get in, check the bottom of your screen and find the little microphone icon; if it has a red line through it, you're muted. Just click on it and watch the line disappear, and you're ready to talk.

If the above doesn't help and you are not yet comfortable with Zooming, we can provide one-on-one help. Just let the office know you would like a volunteer to work with you.

[info@marinvillages.org](mailto:info@marinvillages.org) or (415) 457-4633.

## Food & Drink

### **Men's Coffee Group**

Wednesdays, February 3 & 17, 11:00am



Join the group for informal and free-ranging discussions with no agenda, including current events, respective activities, health issues, or whatever lands on the table. Men from other local villages beyond Twin Cities are invited to participate. Check with Alan Hayakawa, [alan.hayakawa@gmail.com](mailto:alan.hayakawa@gmail.com) for information, and watch for the Zoom link.

### **Sip and Chat—Cozy Cocktail Hour**

Tuesday, February 9, 4:30 – 5:30pm

As you can see by the photo below, we were a festive group to start the year off. Lots of discussion, some games, and toasting to the New Year and its possibilities. Mix your favorite cocktail and join us for the February festivities.



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## MARIN VILLAGES EVENTS

**Many "Things to Do"** appear as part of your Marin Villages main newsletter. You will find suggestions for films, books, concerts, events, and activities that are available. As events and openings become more plentiful, you will find some new ideas.

**Also, check out other local websites:**

**Library** ([marinlibrary.org](http://marinlibrary.org))

**Buck Center** informational lectures and events ([buckinstitute.org/events](http://buckinstitute.org/events)),

**Age Friendly Corte Madera** ([agefriendlycortemadera.com](http://agefriendlycortemadera.com)), and the

**Parks and Recreation** departments of our sister cities.

There is truly so much available to participate in, and now that you have the time, jump in; virtually, of course!

We'll let you know what's available to members as things change.

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## TWIN CITIES VILLAGE ANNOUNCEMENTS

### MEET YOUR STEERING COMMITTEE

#### **Larry Meredith, Steering Committee Chair**

I've lived in southern Marin for five decades, where my wife, Nikki, and I raised two kids, a cat, and assorted dogs. We currently live in Larkspur, specifically Madrone Canyon, where our goldendoodle Alice oversees the household and where all three of us are constantly delighted by the abundant wildlife and the majesty of the redwoods.

My career has primarily been in public health. After receiving a PhD on the east coast, I moved to the Bay Area where I first worked as an epidemiologist and subsequently signed on as an administrator with the San Francisco Department of Public Health. More recently, I served as the director of Marin's Department of Health and Human Services for 14 years.

Athletics, ice hockey in particular, play a major role in my life...or did before COVID. I grew up in Canada and learned to skate as soon as I could walk. Many decades later, the habit has stayed with me and continues to enhance my life.

Marin is a unique community, and though we have much work to do (affordable housing, racial and social justice, to name a few) we also have much to be proud of. We have a passion for the natural environment and a strong commitment to its preservation. We may not be racially diverse, but we have a rich mix of ages, ethnicities, sexual orientations, and cultures. Marin has always attracted young families but, increasingly, communities are turning their attention to

the needs of older residents. Currently, ten out of Marin's eleven towns (plus the county) have been designated "Age Friendly" by the World Health Organization and AARP. And it's worth noting that Marin not only has a greater percentage of people over 65 than any California county, it is also the healthiest county in the state.

Marin Villages (with its six local villages) is at the forefront of the healthy aging movement; I'm thrilled to be a part of this campaign to reimagine aging. Our commitment is to provide the support that permits people to continue to live safely in their own homes while staying engaged with their community.

Four years ago, with the goal of serving older residents in the Larkspur, Corte Madera and Greenbrae areas, a few of us started Twin Cities Village—an offshoot of Ross Valley Village. Over the years, we have attracted an increasing number of members and volunteers. While COVID and shelter-in-place have disrupted our in-person activities (coffee klatches, bocce ball, happy hours, hikes, transportation), we Zoom on with spirited discussions, humor, companionship calls, and the *Twin Cities Village Voice*. It is beyond satisfying for me to be involved with this engaged and caring community.

### **Marty Schwarz**

After I retired from teaching in the Larkspur Corte Madera School District, I joined my husband, Craig, in spending much of the year at our cabin in the Bristol Bay area of Alaska. Our life there was very much off-the-grid; we traveled by boat in the summer and snow machine in winter. We grew deep friendships and shared in the life of the small but diverse and vital community there. After Craig's death I knew I would now be spending most of the year in Larkspur, and began looking for volunteer opportunities. Sue Johnson, a long-standing Marin Villages member, asked me to help with telephoning some members of the Ross Valley Village about the forming of the Twin Cities Village. Before I knew it, I was on the steering committee of the newly formed TWCV. Throughout my life, I have provided care and support for aging family and friends; while not always easy, these experiences added richness to my life. I find working with the members of the Marin Villages rewarding and fulfilling, and my involvement has renewed my connection to the Larkspur and Corte Madera communities. Volunteering has rekindled old friendships and brought me new ones; the people I've met have shared interesting life stories and unfamiliar journeys. I have found joy in sharing what I can, as a volunteer, and as a senior. My involvement with the steering committee gives me the opportunity to part of a team. As I age, I find that asking for help is difficult, and my goal as a volunteer is to create an environment of interdependence.

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## INVITE TO WRITE

For February, why not try a *loop poem*, a form in which the last word of a line is used to begin the second line—and the last word of the poem is the same as the first word. Prize for the winner!

Here's one take on the challenge of writing a story or poem that includes a sand dune, a tube, a red ball gown, the phrase "I said that would happen," and a torn \$20 bill.

### ***Champagne, Poppers, and a Little Mischief***

Letty looked out over the sand dune to the lights on the water. She wondered: would Erik follow her outside, or would he take the opportunity to find Melinda for an early New Year's Eve kiss? Had he really broken up with her, as he said? It seemed so, but Erik was difficult to pin down, his mind wandering all over the place. She smoothed her hands over her satin gown, pulled her shoulders back, and took a deep breath.

Swirls of dance music emanated from the ballroom, as a breeze carried the sounds into the night. She pulled her glittering shawl around her shoulders and turned to gaze past the pavilion and into the grandiose gathering. Champagne fountains anchored each corner, while the prime-rib carving cart and half-empty platters of shrimp and spicy empanadas were being replaced by elaborate dessert tables, with ornamental trays holding popper tubes of confetti on each end. Letty knew it was close to midnight.

"Want an arm around those beautiful shoulders?" Erik oozed, coming up behind her and sideswiping the shawl to the ground.

His voice dropped from Casanova to greenhorn, his bright grey eyes wide with horror. "Omigod, I'm so sorry! What a klutz I am," he lamented, floundering to grab up the wrap, stepping on it in the process. Letty smiled. He *was* a klutz, but so funny in the role that she adored it.

"I thought you might be out here," he said, fumbling to replace the now-sandy shawl with one hand; with the other he offered her a half-empty glass of champagne. "Here. For you. I spilled some of it as I tripped on the threshold," he said sheepishly.

"Thank you. I needed some air. Have you...been talking to anyone we know?" she fished.

"Mostly people from work."

"Like Melinda?" Letty blurted out, wishing she hadn't.

"Yeah, well, I ran into her while I was looking for you."

"Oh? How was it?" *If only I hadn't wandered away from him.*

"Unh, it didn't go so well." Letty rejoiced inwardly. "I mean, I was congratulating her about her new project, and she got really upset. I tried to calm her down, but she went on and on about how the project had been taken away from her and given to Denton's son instead. I said I didn't think that was fair, but she said she *knew* that and only got more upset. By then she was waving

her hands around, sloshing her drink to make her point. That's when I blocked her arm mid-air and watched the plate go flying. I was bringing food for us, if I ever found you."

"What happened then?" Letty was chuckling.

"A waiter came to clean up—both her and the floor. The shrimp sauce didn't show on that red ball gown, but the hummus sure did; it streaked all the way down to her shoes. Boy, was she mad!"

By now Letty was in full laughter; "Well, it wasn't really your fault, Erik. She's probably sort of drunk..."

"Sort of! She's many sheets to the wind and really peeved at me! Oh, God, speaking of angry, here she comes."

"Are you talking about me, you damn dimwit? I see your little girlfriend laughing," she yelled as she stormed toward them.

"Let's get outta here!" Letty set the glass on the ledge, grasped Erik's hand and pulled him through the pavilion and into the ballroom, nabbing two poppers and two massive, gooey chocolate chip cookies on the way, dropping them into her evening bag. From the beverage waiter near the door, Erik snagged two filled flutes. They dashed to the parking lot just as the crowd began the countdown from ten. They got to his car and joined in.

"Seven...six..." They winked at each other, clinking the glasses.

"Five...four..." Letty took the poppers from her bag and handed one to Erik.

Melinda, now barefoot and racing around in a fury, spotted them and lunged forward, the hem of her splattered dress getting filthy. Letty nudged Erik to follow her lead; each held a popper straight out in front of them as Melinda approached.

"Three...two..."

"One...Happy New Year!" they yelled, snapping the strings from the ear-piercing noisemakers, as confetti and paper snow covered Melinda, clinging to the sticky shrimp sauce residue. She backed away, doubling over and brushing the detritus from her eyes and hair. Erik unlocked the car, and the couple jumped in, screeching out of the lot and onto a side street blocks away. They parked and toasted each other, kissing for the first real time that evening.

"Where to?" he asked after a few moments.

"My house," she said, snuggling close to him. "But let's hurry. My roommates will be back pretty soon."

"Okay. Oh, but..."

"But what? What's wrong?"

"Nothing," Erik said. "But first we have to get some gas. I'm just about out."

Letty sighed. "Weren't you on empty yesterday? I think I told you that would happen."

"Well, I know. I was gonna get some on the way to pick you up, but I was late, and then I realized I forgot my wallet. And my phone. I'm sorry; I'm such a beanbrain."

"So, you don't have any credit cards? Money?"

"Well, there's some change in the glove compartment."

She rolled her eyes. "Boy, it's a good thing you're so adorable," she said, opening her evening bag and tugging at a twenty-dollar bill, tearing a corner that had stuck to a melting chocolate chip. "Otherwise, I'd make you go back and apologize to Melinda."

"I don't know how you put up with me. You're so...so sensible, and...controlled. You never do anything out of the ordinary. But I'll get more organized. I promise," he said. "New Year's resolution and all that."

"Don't. I like you this way. I never know what's next. I'm sort of...dull, and you bring...surprise," she said. "I did think of Melinda's ambush, though. That was pretty spontaneous, no?" Erik agreed.

She sat, gazing at the money in her hand and suddenly stuck out her tongue and licked the chocolate from the bill.

"Want some?" she challenged.

"Ugh, no! That's gross, Letty. I can't believe you licked that dirty bill. I'll take a cookie, though."

With that, they finished the chocolate chip cookies and champagne, and they were off.

Letty smiled as they drove away. Maybe Erik wasn't the only one who could be quirky.

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## BITS AND PIECES



Having trouble getting the filter into your mask? Here's a solution: grab the filter with your kitchen tongs, hold the end of the mask, and stuff away!

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## HELP US HELP OTHERS

For more than two decades the belief that it takes a village to raise a child has become embedded in our culture. Not as embedded but equally important is the village it takes to provide a comfortable, nurturing, and safe environment for people as they age. You can help.

We need more caring volunteers to be part of this thriving nationwide movement, a movement that's dedicated to strengthening bonds between generations and building strong, vibrant communities that provide continuity to all ages.

Marin Villages is looking for volunteers to provide a variety of support to older adults. Our goal is to match skills from volunteers with the needs of members. Volunteers sign up for visits that fit their life and lifestyle, but we ask for a commitment of two assignments a month.

If you know someone who is interested in volunteering, could use our services, or would like to donate to an organization serving older adults in Marin, please have them call the office at (415) 457-4633, or visit our website ([www.marinvillages.org](http://www.marinvillages.org)) for application forms and online donations.

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