



*Giants in Their Realms:*  
*Close Encounters of the Celebrity Kind – Vol. 5*

by

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## *Giants in Their Realms: Close Encounters of the Celebrity Kind*

### **VOLUME FIVE (CHAPTERS 16-21)**

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### *Near-Miss Encounters in the Realm of Junkies, Jailbirds, and Other Persons of Interest*

While the original inspiration for writing this memoir was to reflect on the famous celebrities with whom I had encounters during my life, the project took on a much greater scope.

Just as life is not always a bed of roses, and there are always bumps in the road, along the way I've also had a few close encounters or, more accurately stated, near misses with service professionals who in their own lives gained notoriety due to running afoul of—or having their own close encounters (that is, "close brush") with—the law.

While "orange may be the new black," those encounters fortunately left me unscathed.

The following reflects on those near miss encounters with questionable, if not infamous, characters.



*John F. Pholeric Jr. (7/26/49 – present)*



**Flight Log Memories:** In the spring of 1993, “Boeing” Byrnes was temporarily taken out of service for a double hernia surgery. In the midst of my recovery, we decided to put our townhouse in south Reston on the market and by early July moved to a five-year old patio home in north Reston. Over time, however, I was increasingly having more difficulty with what seemed to be yearlong, not just seasonal, allergies, my nasal passages blocked almost constantly and increasingly finding myself dependent on over-the-counter nasal sprays, decongestants, and antihistamines.

In the spring of 1994, I made an appointment to see **John F. Pholeric, Jr.**, an otolaryngologist – an ear, nose, and throat specialist. On examining me, Dr. Pholeric found polyps blocking my left nasal passage. An outpatient surgical procedure for removal of the polyps was scheduled, during which Pholeric found not only that the area was infected but also that the polyps had been hiding a papilloma, a condition having a 10% chance of becoming malignant. Due to the infection, Dr. Pholeric decided to only remove the polyps and, following surgery, put me on an antibiotic to clear up the infection. Then, after a month, I had another outpatient procedure with Pholeric to remove the papilloma. Then, over the ensuing years, I had follow up visits with him to check if the treated area had any reoccurrence of the papilloma or polyps.

The “good news” outcome of the above was that the papilloma was benign and, to date, there has been no reoccurrence of either polyps or a papilloma in that nostril. The “bad news” was the day I received a letter from Pholeric’s office notifying that he was no longer with that office. Not long after, on April 10, 2005, I read the following *Washington Post* article by staff writer Cheryl W. Thompson – “Medical Boards Let Physicians Practice Despite Drug Abuse”:

Over the past 20 years, John F. Pholeric Jr. struggled on and off with cocaine addition, cycled in and out of rehab and was convicted of a felony. During that time, he also practiced medicine. Pholeric, 55, an ear, nose and throat specialist in Fairfax and Loudon counties, admitted snorting cocaine “three to four times per week” in his office in 1999. He stole drugs from hospitals where he worked and wrote more than 40 fraudulent prescriptions for his own use, according to Virginia and District medical board records. Several times, the Virginia Board of Medicine took up Pholeric’s case. But it never took away his license to practice ([Source](#)).

Public [records](#) show Dr. Pholeric's own close encounters with Virginia's State Board of Medicine began in July 1984, when Pholeric's cocaine addiction was diagnosed and the Board put him on probation but allowed him to treat patients. In 1985 he was convicted in the U.S. District Court in Washington on drug charges. In 1986, the Virginia medical board revoked Pholeric's license but the same order stayed this revocation subject to certain terms and conditions. In 1989 the D.C. Board of Medicine put Pholeric on probation but subsequently reinstated his license to full status. Reportedly Pholeric stayed drug free in the 1990s and the Virginia Board took no actions against him.

However, by 1999, Pholeric was charged with stealing cocaine at the Loudon Hospital Center and the Countryside Ambulatory Surgery Center in Sterling, resulting in his privileges at these facilities being suspended in 2001. Pholeric entered into drug rehab and received a diagnosis of cocaine and marijuana dependency and alcohol abuse. By 2002 Loudon Hospital Center had reinstated Pholeric's clinical privileges, with the Virginia Board placing him on probation, but allowing him to treat patients. Within a year, however, in 2003 Pholeric tested positive for marijuana but claimed he had been exposed to second-hand smoke. While Loudon Hospital Center suspended his privileges, the Virginia Board reinstated his license to full status and he entered into drug treatment. But in 2004 the Virginia Board placed Pholeric on probation for the 2003 positive drug test.

Before Pholeric's retirement in March 2005, Pholeric said in several "lengthy e-mails to The Post" that

drug addiction is an "occupational hazard" that should not end a physician's career. "Do you throw these people away, or do you treat them, monitor them and assure public safety?" Pholeric wrote. Pholeric said he was sober for 17 years from 1983 through late 2000, but 1987 Virginia medical board records show he failed a drug screen, and 1999 records show the cocaine theft. He blamed a "long and difficult" schedule for his relapses but said he has been drug-free since September 2003. "I am no longer trying to prove a thing," he said in an e-mail. "If patients don't think I am doing a good job, they should go somewhere else." But Pholeric decided to retire March 7, in part because of the Post investigation, he said in a brief phone conversation. "Your help in getting me to retire has been excellent, thank you," he said before hanging up ([Source](#)).

Looking back, my close encounter with Dr. Pholeric for two nasal surgeries in 1994 fortunately occurred during the middle of the 1990s when he reportedly was drug free. I had no problem with Pholeric and found him to be competent and caring. But, as the saying goes, there but for the grace of God – and just a year later (1995) another patient, Kim Gardiner, was less fortunate:

Gardiner...knew nothing of Pholeric's history when she went to his Loudoun County office in 1995 on the recommendation of her HMO. She needed surgery for hearing loss in her left ear, a procedure that involved wiring a tiny hammer into her eardrum. "He had performed it before -- not once or twice, but several times," said Gardiner, now 42 and a mother of three in suburban Atlanta. But she emerged from the surgery at Reston Hospital Center with a dislocated jaw. "My face hurt, and I had an excruciating headache, like a migraine, and it kept getting worse," she recalled in an interview. She said she was unable to chew and had to sip liquids through a straw for three weeks. Gardiner sued Pholeric and the hospital, but it was the hospital that settled with her for an undisclosed amount, she said ([Source](#)).

*Donald Ferrin Enos (7/24/42 – present)*



**Condominiums in Panama City, Panama**

**Flight Log Memories:** During the late 1980s and early 1990 I traveled several times to Honduras for short-term assignments. During that period, while living in Reston (Virginia), a maid came in once a week to help my wife with cleaning the house. The maid, who was from Panama, was living with her sister in the nearby town of Herndon, in a house apparently owned by a third sister and her husband, **Donald F. Enos**. At the time, Enos was stationed in Tegucigalpa, Honduras and working as a member of the Contra Task Force. When the maid learned I was going to Tegucigalpa, she asked if I could take an envelope of mail to give to her brother-in-law at the Embassy. On agreeing and receiving the envelope, I quickly checked its contents, finding a miscellaneous assortment of first-class mail and a magazine or two.

On arriving in Tegucigalpa and checking in at the Holiday Inn, I phoned the Embassy and spoke with Enos who asked that I simply drop off the package with the Marine Guard at the Embassy gate. Later that day I dropped off the package and returned to the hotel, a little miffed that Enos had not extended the courtesy of personally receiving me, thanking me, or inviting me for coffee. But, on the positive side, I was rid of the package and turned my attention to preparing for my work assignment.

That trip to Honduras occurred in either September of 1989 or a few months later in February of 1990. In any case, not long after I was looking through the *Washington Post* (March 17, 1990) and discovered the following:

AID Official Admits Accepting Bribes; Contra-Assistance Director Paid for Steering Contracts to Consultant: Over the last five years, Donald F. Enos, 47, a deputy director of the Agency for International Development (AID), accepted \$93,000 in bribes from George Kraus of Kraus International, according to the plea Enos entered yesterday in Alexandria. Based in New York, Kraus International held several consulting contracts in Central America.

While Enos was in charge of developing and implementing health programs in El Salvador, he received \$60,000 from the Kraus company for his help in steering over \$2 million in consulting contracts to Kraus. Kraus was approached earlier this year by prosecutors and agreed to plead guilty to one count of bribery and to assist in the government's investigation of Enos, according to an affidavit in the case. Soon afterward, AID investigators videotaped meetings in which Kraus and Enos discussed bribes, some of which they agreed would be made "in the form of house payments and other debt payments," the affidavit said (*Washington Post*, A Section, March 17, 1990).

Subsequently, on May 26, 1990, the *Post* reported that Enos faced a maximum prison sentence of 30 years and fines up to \$500,000, though his lawyer (John J. Grimaldi II) sought leniency, portraying Enos as “a family man who was a diligent foreign service worker for most of his career.” Enos, Grimaldi said, took bribes only after getting into financial difficulty. The article further revealed that the probe of Enos had been initiated in October 1988 after the investigative office of USAID in Tegucigalpa received a tip alleging that Enos was giving George Kraus insider information about contracts and “that Kraus helped Enos finance the purchase of a Panama condominium.” Another *Post* article that day (May 26, 1990) – “Ex-Official at AID Sentenced to Prison for Taking Bribes” – reported that Enos was sentenced to a year in prison and fined \$5,000 for taking \$93,000 in bribes while directing an aid program for the Nicaraguan contras. Enos was released from prison on July 9, 1991.

While researching this vignette, I obtained further insight on the Enos case from a colleague who knew Enos. My colleague wrote (personal communication) that the IG criminal investigations unit informed him that they were investigating a reported case of kickbacks involving Enos and Krauss.

A PSC [Personal Services Contractor] in the Guatemalan Mission had been in El Salvador and had learned of the [kickback] process there. A fake procurement was set up for Kraus to make a payment to the PSC, with the intent of recording the transaction and then putting pressure on Kraus to cooperate in getting Enos. ... [The IG] indicated...they had recorded a phone conversation in which Enos asked Krauss if [my colleague] could be recruited to their operation. Happily, Kraus responded that I would never participate in anything like that. Everything worked well [with the fake procurement] and Kraus was arrested. The prosecutor offered a plea bargain with Kraus under which he would get a light sentence if he provided information on all of the illegal transactions and cooperated in getting Enos, who they were really after. He and his lawyer agreed, a detailed accounting was submitted, and a transaction with Enos was set up and recorded. The only problem for Krauss was that during the transaction Enos got chatty about all of their prior transactions and mentioned ones that Kraus had not included in his report to the prosecutor. So both Kraus and Enos spent time in prison, but apparently not very long. A few years later Enos came through Guatemala representing a [population] sector contracting firm seeking to do business with [a] Guatemalan NGO, which...had USAID support. I phoned the IG to ask about this and was told that since he had served his time there was nothing that should keep him from working for such a firm (Retired USAID Foreign Service Officer, personal communication).

As a postscript on my near miss close encounter with Don Enos, during the time that his sister-in-law worked with us as a maid, she invited my wife Sonia and I to a party at Enos' house in Herndon where she and her sister were living. While the house was in an average middle-class neighborhood of Herndon, we were shocked by the dilapidated condition of the house's interior—floors missing carpeting and/or pieces of linoleum, the walls dirty and greatly in need of repainting, and even some walls with holes punched through the sheet rock, as if someone had punched his fist through the wall. Later, when I learned that some of the kickback money was going to pay for “house payments and other debt payments” (including helping to finance the purchase of a condo in Panama), it became clearer why such money as Enos was earning was not going into maintaining his residence (house) in Herndon. Indeed, I'd guess that his “escape plan” was to bail out and retire to a condo in Panama.

Also, as one other postscript, the whole incident left me wondering whether that package that I delivered for Enos to the marine guard at the U.S. Embassy in Tegucigalpa may have contained more than innocent first class email; they well could have included envelopes with payments. I'll never know!

*Dale E. Bellovich (either 9/12/41 or May 1946 - present)*



**Flight Log Memories:** From time to time after my wife Sonia and I purchased our townhouse in south Reston, I checked if the market was favorable to refinance our mortgage. In the early 1990s, we had one refinance for which **Dale Bellovich** handled the closing. Things went quite well in the handling of this until, a month or so later when I was on assignment in some Central American country and received a phone call from Sonia who was quite distressed that the mortgage company had called to advise they were foreclosing on our home because we hadn't been making our mortgage payments. As there was little I could do about this from my hotel room in a distant developing country, I told Sonia to call my father (Francis Byrnes – see vignette) and ask him to look into the matter. A few days later, Sonia phoned me to tell me that the problem had been solved and not to worry; it had been a mistake.

When I got home, I talked with my father to find out what happened. A couple of things had happened. First, the payoff on the old loan was sent in an envelope with several other payoff checks but apparently our payoff check accidentally was not pulled from the envelope, thus resulting in the monthly payment on our home going unpaid and the old loan not being paid off. On discovery of this error, a new check was issued and sent to pay off the loan. But this time the check that was sent was mistakenly directed to pay off the new loan, again resulting not only that loan not being paid off but in monthly payments on that loan not being paid for two or more months in a row, thus why the mortgage lender phoned to threaten foreclosure on our home. When I with Bellovich to discuss these mistakes, he was most apologetic. In the end, no harm, no foul other than gastric distress!

While I was, of course, happy that we would not be losing our house, I was left wondering how these two mistakes could have occurred, not to mention a lingering feeling that they happened because somebody was distracted and not keeping his eye on the ball (i.e., not making sure legal matters got duly processed). Some support for this latter possibility emerged when I later learned that Bellovich was no longer in the loan closing business because he had been disbarred. Indeed, on March 28, 1995, he had his day in court, in the District of Columbia Court of Appeals. A member of the District of Columbia bar since 1975, Bellovich [consented](#) to disbarment. While the court order stated that “the affidavit shall not be publicly disclosed or otherwise made available except upon order of the Court or upon written consent of the respondent”, a reliable source familiar with the case explained to me that Bellovich had been caught engaging in illegal practices in processing loans, specifically, doing “silent seconds” on FHA mortgages. A “silent second mortgage” is:

A secondary mortgage placed on an asset that is not disclosed to the lender of the original loan. Silent second mortgages are used when a purchaser can't afford the down payment required by the initial mortgage. The mortgage is silent because the original lender is unaware of its presence. In many circumstances, a silent second mortgage is a type of fraud ([Source](#)).

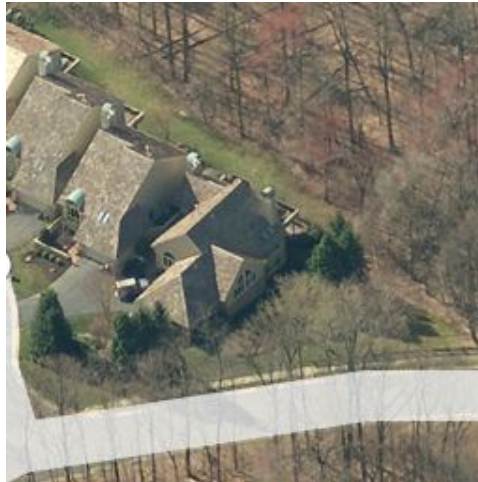
In other words, when the original mortgage lender provides funds, the arrangement requires the borrower to provide a down payment. The fraud occurs when a second mortgage is used to fulfill the obligation of the down payment. Investopedia.com provides this example:

let's say that you wish to purchase a house for \$250,000. You have secured a mortgage for \$200,000, which requires a down payment of \$50,000. However, you can't acquire the necessary funds for the down payment, so you decide to take a silent second mortgage of \$40,000. The original lender believes your down payment to be \$50,000 when it is actually only \$10,000 ( $\$50,000 - \$40,000$ ). This increases the original lender's risk because a 4% decrease in the home's value ( $\$10,000 / \$250,000$ ) will wipe out your equity, but the original lender believes you are covered up to a 20% decline in prices ( $\$50,000 / \$250,000$ ) ([Source](#)).

After disbarment, Bellovich moved on to work in closely related fields, including as a real estate agent and a contracts director for a defense and space contractor.



*John Robert Hiner (1/15/52 – present)*



**Home of Robert and Connie Hiner (first house on right)**

**Robert Hiner** is a graduate of the University of Virginia and holds an M.B.A. from Capital University. Prior to 1986, he worked with Kaiser Aluminum and Chemical Corporation for five years, and served five years as an officer in the U.S. Marine Corps. From 1986-90, he served as President of Cardinal Apartment Management Group, Inc., where he was responsible for the management of 55,000 apartment units. Then, from 1991-93, he took a job as Senior Vice President, National Housing Partnership (NHP) Management Company, and in 1993 was appointed Executive Vice President. At NHP Hiner met and married Connie (Constance M. Hagen).

**Flight Log Memories:** At first blush, one might chalk up Robert's career as on the road to a successful life when he and his wife Connie moved into their new home in Reston's Woodstock Cluster, except for what [happened](#) in that home on January 2, 1996. Less than a year before, during 1995, I met Robert and Connie Hiner at the annual meeting of the Woodstock Cluster Association but subsequently didn't have any further contact with them other than waving to one or another of them as I drove into and out of our cluster. They had purchased the first home on the right as one enters the cluster, a house formerly owned by a couple who sold it to the Hiner's and moved to Florida. As you may recall, from late 1995 and into early 1996, specifically, from December 15, 1995 to January 6, 1996, thousands of federal employees, myself included, were on "do not come to work" status during a federal government shutdown that turned into an extended three-week paid "vacation" that then, when a blizzard struck the Washington, DC area the day after we returned to work, turned into snow leave for federal workers the rest of the week.



However, for the sixteen families living in the Woodstock Cluster, what was memorable was not the lengthy government shutdown that was extended by the blizzard but rather the date of January 2. On that day, while on “do not come to work” status, I went out of my house to put a letter in the mailbox and saw the Hiner property, at the entrance to our cluster, surrounded by yellow police tape, with over a half dozen police cars in proximity to the house or around the corner on the side street, and a number of Woodstock Cluster residents watching the unfolding scene, one that would later replay on the local evening news that showed a shrouded gurney being loaded into an ambulance, the gurney carrying Fairfax County’s first murder victim of 1996.



But long before the evening news we learned earlier that morning that the shrouded gurney was carrying Connie Hiner who had been murdered early that morning. Robert, Connie’s husband, discovered her body just after he arrived home for lunch, finding his wife of three years lying face down in a pool of blood in one of the bedrooms. According to Robert, Connie was still at home when he had left for work about 7:10 that morning. She was to have left that morning on a business trip to Columbus, Ohio. The taxi that was to take her to the airport arrived at 8 a.m. but she never came out of the house. The police investigating the crime found no signs that anyone had broken into the house and nothing had been taken. Depending on the source with whom you talked, one could make a case either way whether Connie knew the killer.

Later that day there was a knock on the door and, on opening it, I saw WUSA TV crime reporter Bruce Leshan who interviewed me to find out what I might know about the Hiner’s, the crime, or if there were any recent break-ins in the neighborhood. I pointed out (see video capture below) that I’d recently noticed but not made anything of it that the thumb latch on our right front door was broken, perhaps a sign of an attempted forced entry.



**WUSA Channel 9 Crime Report Bruce Leshan**



A couple of years later, Tamara Jones of the *Washington Post* visited our home to interview my wife and me about the unsolved murder of Connie Hiner, a case, like those investigated on the CBS TV series *Cold Case*, remains open and unsolved to this day. Jones would later win the Pulitzer Prize for reporting on the Virginia Tech massacre. On July 26, 1998, the *Washington Post* magazine published the article which Jones authored based on her investigation of the murder of Connie Hiner, titled: “A Death in the Family”. During the time that we talked with Jones, we learned from her some interesting background about Robert and Connie, including that the Hiner marriage had been the third for Robert and fourth for Connie. Jones reported that not long after Connie’s only child, Brittany, had been born, her second marriage ended, “leaving her with little money, a high school degree and a secretarial job. Moonlighting sometimes as a barmaid, Connie got a real estate license, then put herself through school to earn an accounting degree and later an MBA.”



**Tamara Jones (Pulitzer Prize Winner)**

Eventually Connie landed a job at the National Housing Partnership (NHP) where Robert Hiner later became a NHP vice president who occupied:

a seat of power parallel to Connie’s. John Robert Hiner was a former artillery officer in the Marine Corps who had an MBA and a degree in civil engineering. Married to his second wife, and the father of a young son, Bob Hiner ran NHP’s field offices in 40 states, spending a good deal of time on the road. ... Like Connie, he was deeply private. Connie fell into the habit of eating lunch with Bob Hiner and another colleague, and she clearly admired Bob’s ambition and sense of quiet authority. Things at home weren’t going so well anymore. After nearly nine years together, she and [her then husband] Dick still seemed happily married on the surface, but Connie, true to form, was keeping her troubles to herself. Dick had lost his job when the bottom fell out of the commercial real estate market, and after five months he hadn’t shown much motivation to find anything new. ... Exactly when Connie and Bob began having an affair isn’t clear; it was so discreet that even the third person at the lunch table didn’t realize it until both had left their spouses and gone public. ... Hearing the news on a visit from Kentucky, Connie’s mother teased her at the movies one afternoon, “Have you got another husband lined up?” Yes, Connie replied, as a matter of fact, she did (Tamara Jones, *Washington Post*, July 26, 1988).

Obviously, in matters of love or at least marriage, by her fourth marriage Connie was well practiced in striking out. However, from talking with the police, one of the investigating detectives, and Jones, it became clear that the available

evidence was simply not sufficient to nail down a suspect who would pass the test of having the means, opportunity, and motive to commit the murder within the time frame that Robert allegedly was away from the house on his way to work and where he spent the morning before returning home for lunch. Supposedly Robert had an alibi in terms of the amount of time it would have taken to drive from his home to his office and, after arriving, had witnesses that he was at the office the rest of the morning. Even if he had the opportunity and the means, investigators apparently couldn't establish the motive. Further, in 1996, forensic science was not sufficiently precise to nail down the exact time of Connie's death, thus leaving up in the air whether it could only have happened after Robert had supposedly left home to drive to his office.

If Connie didn't come out of the house at 8 a.m., or answer the taxi driver's phone call, was this because she was already dead. That would narrow the time of the murder to the hour or less between when Robert reportedly left home at 7:10 a.m. and the taxi arriving at 8 a.m., though she possibly could have yet been alive when the taxi arrived but unable to answer the phone or come to the door. Or was Connie already dead when Robert left for work? Reportedly she died from blunt force trauma and stabbing, possibly the result of being bludgeoned to death by an object such as a hammer. While a lot of blood reportedly was splattered in the room where she was found, there was apparently no sign of a struggle – which points to her having been surprised by her attacker, whether or not she knew the murderer.

One hypothesis as to motive was that Robert was not happy about Connie's "business trip" to Columbus (Ohio) since it was reported that she was going to work there during the week on a permanent basis and would commute back and forth at the start and end of the week. Perhaps Robert just wanted her to live in Reston or was jealous of the success that Connie was having. As Jones reported:

Connie had taken a sabbatical for much of the previous year, doing some consulting work now and then, but mostly spending her time decorating the new house, reading books, and trying to figure out just who she was, and more importantly, who she wanted to become. She had just celebrated her 48th birthday. At least part of her future was happily resolved: On this otherwise dreary Tuesday, Connie was supposed to start work as chief operating officer of a real estate trust in Ohio. She would have to fly back and forth each week, but the commute was well worth it – this was her dream job, she would have a chance to run a company for the first time, and the contract would make her a millionaire. Her suitcases were already packed. Bob left for work, as usual, around 7:10 that morning. Connie, he would recall, wanted to sleep just a little longer.

So who killed Connie Hiner? Was it a jealous ex-husband or ex-wife? Was it Robert or someone that he or a prior spouse hired? Who benefitted by her death? The last that we heard, as of mid-2013, was that the murder of Connie Hiner, which took place on January 2, 1996, remains unsolved, with Robert, while not a suspect, considered by the police as "person of interest" in what continues as a *Cold Case*.

***Graham Basil Spanier (7/18/48 – present)***



*The most fundamental problem facing colleges and universities throughout America today is the challenge of developing character, conscience, citizenship, tolerance and social responsibility in a society that sometimes gives the impression that such virtues are optional.*

**Graham Spanier** was born in 1948 in South Africa, the country to which his father fled to escape the Holocaust in Germany. Soon thereafter, apartheid in South Africa came to remind Spanier's father of Nazism and the family moved to the United States, settling in the South Side of Chicago, where Spanier's father earned a living unloading trucks. Growing up poor, the young Spanier advanced himself, working multiple jobs and earning 27 college credits while still in high school. As an undergrad student at Iowa State University, Spanier earned a B.S. in sociology in 1969 and then continued at ISU to earn a M.S. in sociology in 1971, after which he earned a doctoral degree in sociology from Northwestern University in 1973.

While a researcher, he contributed to the publication of ten books and over 100 scholarly journal articles. As a family sociologist, demographer, and marriage and family therapist, he was the founding editor of the *Journal of Family Issues* and an author of a study concerning the practice of mate swapping (or "swinging"), published in the *Archives of Sexual Behavior*.

As a young researcher, [Spanier] used his academic skills to investigate two of the emerging sociological issues of the era: the sexual revolution and the changing American family. [He] showed considerable curiosity about sex, writing papers on several varieties of it, premarital, extramarital and -- this one has attracted the attention of conservative bloggers -- swinging or, as he and his co-author called it in the early 1970s, mate swapping. His primary focus, though, was on what broke marriages apart, what kept them together and how people adjusted to divorce and remarriage ([Source](#)).

Spanier came to Penn State in 1973 as an assistant professor of human development and sociology, later becoming an associate dean before leaving for the State University of New York at Stony Brook, where he was vice provost for undergraduate studies. Just four years later, Spanier moved to Oregon State University where he became provost and vice president for academic affairs. He remained there until the University of Nebraska-Lincoln appointed him as the Chancellor, a position he held for five years before being named President of Penn State in 1995, which position he served in for 17 years, leading that university's growth and earning national recognition -- until the fall of 2011 when he became caught up in the investigation surrounding the arrest of former Penn State football defensive coordinator Jerry Sandusky on child sexual assault charges.

Spanier was criticized for his initial reaction to the sex abuse case. On November 5, 2011, Sandusky was charged with 40 counts related to alleged sexual abuse of minors. Penn State athletic director Timothy Curley and university Senior Vice President Gary Schultz also were indicted for perjuring themselves and not reporting a 2001 incident in which Mike McQueary, then graduate assistant and later assistant coach, reported that he had witnessed Sandusky abusing a child on Penn State property. On the day that the 2011 charges came to light, Spanier issued a statement in which he

said Curley and Schultz had his “complete confidence” and that they “operate at the highest levels of honesty.” Subsequently Spanier was criticized for expressing support for Curley and Schultz, and failing to express any concern for Sandusky's alleged victims.

After this, Spanier largely dropped from public view, reportedly because the Board of Trustees had ordered him to keep silent. However, Spanier cancelled head football coach Joe Paterno’s weekly press conference due to legal concerns, given that Paterno was a key witness in the grand jury probe. On the night of November 9, 2011, the Penn State Board of Trustees announced that, effective immediately, Spanier had resigned and Joe Paterno had been fired. On July 30, 2013, Spanier was ordered by Judge William Wenner to stand trial on charges of a cover-up.

**Flight Log Memories:** In early September 1969, I returned to the United States from Cali, Colombia, where I had just married Sonia Gomez on August 30. This time my destination was Iowa State University (ISU in Ames, Iowa) where I had accepted a research assistantship to study for a Ph.D. in sociology. Later that fall Sonia left Cali to join me, first living for a few weeks with my grandmother (Gertrude Byrnes), after which Sonia and I moved into an efficiency apartment. We lived there until the summer of 1970, when I dropped out of school, having declared myself a Conscientious Objector, after which Sonia and I joined VISTA, with our assignment being to work in a poor community (Edison Little River) in Miami, Florida. We served in VISTA just over a year-and-a-half, at which point we returned to Ames so that I could resume my graduate degree program in early 1972.

It was during that short period of time between September 1969 and the Summer 1970 that I met Graham Spanier while he was studying for his M.S. degree at ISU. I recall him as being quite bright and outgoing; what is not clear in my memory is whether he was a teaching assistant (the offices for whom were based in East Hall which housed the faculty of the Department of Sociology and Anthropology) or a research assistants (the offices of which were in a makeshift two-story building on the other side of the campus). In any case, at the time, I recall some discussion among the graduate students that Spanier had definitely hit on an interesting topic – “swinging” – as the focus of his thesis research. Now, as of this writing (August 1, 2013), two days after July 30, when Spanier was ordered by the court to stand trial charges of a cover-up, his future and his legacy “swing” in the balance of the scales of justice and the outcome of his trial.

**Flight Log Epilogue:** If one is left feeling a bit uneasy after our virtual stopover for some near miss close encounters in the ***Realm of Junkies, Jailbirds, and Persons of Interest***, just chalk this up as having experienced a quick detour into *The Twilight Zone*, where but for the grace of God one might have gone had not life been more fortunate. Nevertheless, my hope is that those persons featured in our near miss encounters in this realm have been able to go on to make more positive contributions to the communities in which they now live. For Connie Hiner, no longer living, may she have found peace in her eternal rest. For Robert Hiner and Graham Spanier, only time will tell whether the mantle of “person of interest” eventually lifts from them as to their guilt or innocence.

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For our next virtual stopover, we steer clear of any further near miss encounters or "close brushes" with junkies, jailbirds, and persons of interest. Our flight is now charted toward a virtual stopover in a realm where one places his or her own life in the hands of another in whom you need to have the highest level of confidence and trust.

This time our flight’s virtual stopover will afford some ***Maintenance Encounters in the Realm of Hip Surgeons and Heart Savers***. There you’ll meet some of Northern Virginia’s renowned practitioners of joint replacement, cardiology, and heart surgery.

## Chapter 17

### *Maintenance Encounters in the Realm of Hip Surgeons and Heart Savers*

From time to time an aging “Boeing 007” Byrnes had to be pulled out of service to address various health maintenance issues, the most serious of which were major surgeries in 2011 and 2013. The following share those experiences with some vignettes on my *Maintenance Encounters in the Realm of Hip Surgeons and Heart Savers*.

#### Encounter the Realm of a Hip Surgeon

*Mark Patrick Madden (2/24/57 - present)*



Voted a "Top Doctor" by Super Doctors® 2011; Washingtonian Magazine

*The procedure [anterior hip replacement] is more technically demanding than the traditional lateral or posterior version, and there are only a handful of orthopaedic surgeons in the Washington area who perform it routinely.*

**Mark Madden's** lifelong interest in sports culminated with his membership on the 1977 National Championship Notre Dame Football Team. Earning the University's varsity athletic insignia as a monogram winner, he received a BS from the University of Notre Dame before going on to complete his medical degree at Georgetown University in Washington, DC. Combining his love for sports with his ability to put things back together, Madden was drawn to orthopaedics and completed his training in orthopaedic surgery at Georgetown University Medical Center where he served as chief resident.

Dr. Madden was in private practice for five years before helping establish Commonwealth Orthopaedics in 1993, where he continues to work. His interests include minimal incision joint replacement of the hip and knee; ACL, cruciate ligament and arthroscopic ligament reconstruction; sports medicine; trauma surgery; and minimally invasive surgery. He was the former chair of the Reston Hospital Department of Orthopaedics and currently member of the Operating Room Committee, chairman of the Reston Hospital Credentials Committee, member of the Reston Hospital Executive Committee, and instructor of residents for the Georgetown University Department of Orthopaedics.

He also participates on the Notre Dame Alumni Board and is involved in the community as a member of the Vienna Youth Lacrosse Board and team physician for Herndon High School and Paul VI Catholic High School.

**Flight Log Memories:** For a long time I had been having pain in my left hip caused by degenerative arthritis. On one occasion, my regular physician on this issue (George Aguiar at Commonwealth Orthopaedics) was not available, so I scheduled an appointment with Mark Madden. I knew of Madden because he had provided care some years before during or after my son's left knee ACL reconstruction.

During my appointment with Madden, I saw on the wall his diploma from the University of Notre Dame. I asked if he had known “Rudy” ([Daniel Eugene “Rudy” Ruettiger](#)), a Notre Dame student who aspired to play on the school’s football team as portrayed by actor Sean Astin in the 1993 Hollywood film *Rudy*. Dr. Madden answered that had known “Rudy” because at the time Madden was the trainer on the Notre Dame football team, adding that when he tired of wrapping ankles, he started practicing kicking field goals. On another occasion when I was visiting Commonwealth Orthopaedics to see another doctor, I saw Madden down the hallway and chanted “Rudy, Rudy, Rudy”—as the Notre Dame students had chanted during the film *Rudy*—and Madden and his colleagues laughed! But I digress.

For a period of time I tried to deal with the hip pain via medication, physical therapy, and a series of two cortisone injections. Eventually the injections were not relieving the pain for any great length of time. At that point, in the fall of 2010, I met with Madden and reached an agreement that he would prescribe one more hip injection to help get me through several upcoming work-related trips but that I would undergo a full anterior hip replacement of the left hip on April 11, 2011.

On that date I had the surgery. After the surgery, there was a period of physical therapy as well as follow up appointments with Madden to evaluate how physical therapy was helping with my recovery. Going into the first follow up, I was anxious about how Dr. Madden would evaluate my recovery progress. On examining me, Madden nearly made me faint when he said: “I hate to say this [this, of course, was the trigger to almost fainting], but you are doing better than expected!” which was a great relief to hear.

On the second of these visits, Dr. Madden’s assistant met with me before she went to get him, telling me before she left the room to unbuckle my belt and loosen my pants. Soon she came back with Madden who, on entering the room, came over the chair in which I was sitting, shook my hand, and asked how I was doing.

He then asked me to stand up without using my hands, arms, or the chair’s arm rests. Try as I might, I felt that I didn’t have the strength to stand up – but also realized that if I did my pants would fall down. So I first fastened my pants and then made a heroic effort to stand up.

When I couldn’t, Madden told me to put my feet a little further back under the chair and lean forward and use my lower body strength to push myself up to a standing position. Not using hands or arms to push off the chair’s arm rests, I did as he said and used all of my lower body (feet, knees, and legs) to stand up.

The effort almost made me faint, as Madden and his assistant rushed to my side to stabilize me. Once I caught my breath, I said to Madden that he should have first asked if I could stand up without using my hands or arms – and without my pants falling down!

Then I added “How many patients have tried to stand up without first securing their pants?” which prompted both Madden and his assistant to laugh.

On another occasion I was going to my physical therapy session when, I ran into Dr. Madden leaving the Reston Hospital as I was entering. He recognized me, said hello, and asked how I was coming along with my recovery. When I answered fine, he replied: “Great, there’s an opening on the Redskins; I’ll phone Coach Shanahan to let him know you’re ready to go back in the lineup.”

Truly Dr. Madden, in more ways than one, is not only a “top doctor” but also a “hip doctor” (pun intended)!

## Encounters the Realm of Heart Savers

It was great, after the hip replacement on April 11, 2011, to get back to a largely pain-free life, although a new problem (arthritic pain in the coccyx) developed for which a cortisone injection was administered every four-six months. I got back to an active life at work, including extensive travel in 2012-2013 to many countries of Latin America.

However, during early 2013, I began to notice that I was not feeling as well as I had been feeling, increasingly finding that I was tired at the end of the work day and not up to doing much in the evening other than laying around and watching television.

Further, a worrying symptom was the sense that I was not able to walk as fast during my daily commute as I was accustomed to when I made the short hike from the computer bus to the train platform during my commute. I used to be the first off the bus, up the escalator, down to the train platform, and to my favorite spot so that I could quickly board the train and get a good seat.

But I was now observing others passing me and beating me to my preferred waiting spot on the train platform. The more telling and worrisome sign was feeling shortness of breath when I climbed up the escalator at the West Falls Church Metro Station, and soon I wasn't walking up the escalator, just standing still and riding up it.

This sensation became a particular concern during early April 2013, when I was experiencing dizziness and even vertigo. I initially chalked this up to seasonal allergies but became concerned that something more than seasonal allergies was causing the dizziness when a course of Meclizine did not quickly clear up the problem as it had in previous years.

While I have tagged this the "Paul Massimiano - Surgeon" vignette, before I ever got to the man (Dr. Massimiano) who would become my heart surgeon, I first saw a number of other health practitioners who, in turn, referred me to the next specialist. This, then, is the story of the journey that resulted in my heart surgery and the follow up recovery thereafter. It all began with "Dr. T" (not "Mr. T")!



**Dr. Sandra Tandeciarz (Vienna Family Medicine)**

So I scheduled an appointment with Dr. Sandra Tandeciarz, my primary care physician, who had seen me the previous year (2012) for a general physical examination, to sort out what was causing the dizziness and the shortness of breath.

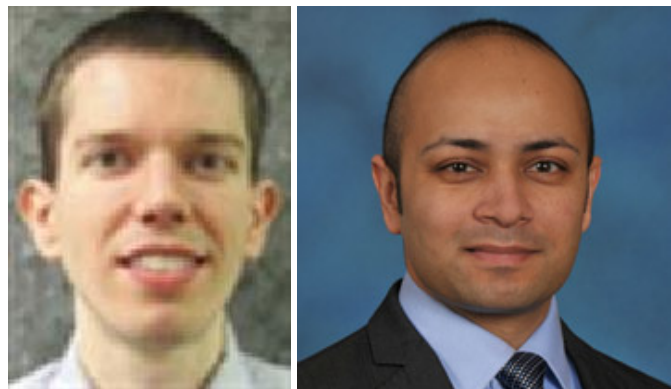
On the day (Friday, May 3) of the appointment, Dr. T (as she is affectionately known) checked my blood pressure, listened to my heart, and put me on oxygen—and then repeated the same tests, including doing them while I was lying on my back, then immediately after I sat up, and then immediately after I stood up.



She left the examination room and I sat there waiting. After a while Dr. T returned and said that she was going to put me in an ambulance and send me to the hospital. I argued with her that I could drive home, pick up my wife Sonia, and go to the hospital. She replied that I would not be able to drive and also be on oxygen, that she didn't want me to have an "event" on the way, and that going in the ambulance would get me into the hospital faster than if I were a walk-in.

The ambulance EMTs arrived, put me on the gurney, wheeled me to the ambulance, got an IV into my arm, and whisked me from Dr. T's office in Vienna (VA) to Reston Hospital where I was admitted through the Emergency Room.

### **Getting to the Heart of the Matter**



**Dr. Todd S. Larson (L) and Dr. Dhaval Ramesh Patel (Virginia Heart) (R)**

The emergency room physician on duty that day was **Dr. Todd S. Larson**, the son of my former but longtime primary care physician, Dr. Steven Larson of Fox Mill Family Practice. Again, various tests were done, including taking my blood pressure, monitoring my blood oxygen level, and doing a CAT scan. I was then moved from the emergency room to a room in the "short stay" area near the emergency area.

After a while, **Dr. Dhaval Ramesh Patel**, a cardiologist, came to my room to discuss the results of the exams. In the process of discussing my conditions, he said the tests results pointed to a deteriorated condition of the heart but that the dizziness was due to an inner ear problem unrelated to my heart condition. He wanted me to have one more test, a MRI, but by that point the MRI unit was closed. Patel recommended that I stay overnight so that my heart could be monitored and the MRI done in the morning. The next morning, after the MRI, Dr. Patel told me that he would discharge me from the hospital later that day but wanted me to come to a Virginia Heart office on Monday for an echocardiogram, adding that none of the tests done at the hospital indicated any evidence that I had suffered an "event" (stroke or heart attack) in the preceding two weeks.

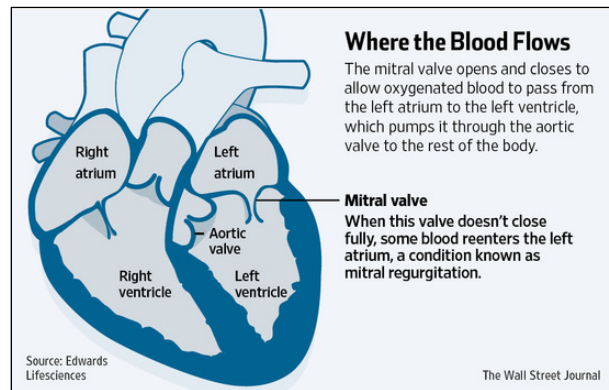


**Dr. Subash Bansi Bazaz (Virginia Heart)**



On Monday morning (May 6), I called Virginia Heart and was instructed to come to their Loudon County office for a late morning echocardiogram appointment, after which **Dr. Subash B. Bazaz** met with Sonia and me to report that the test showed that the mitral valve was not closing completely and that blood was regurgitating back through the valve.

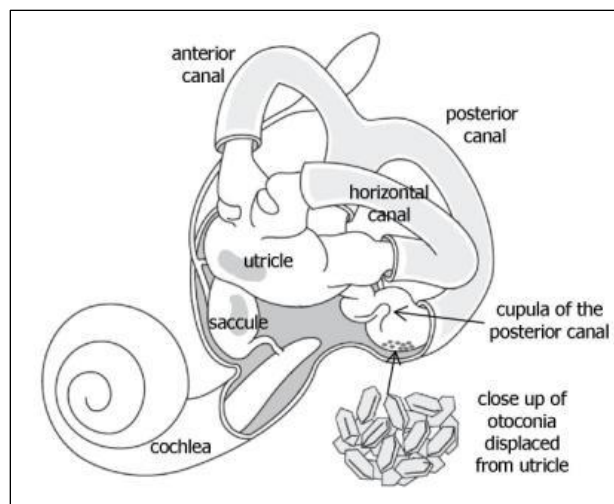
The mitral valve is between the heart's two left chambers, helping to transport oxygenated blood coming from the lungs through the left atrium into the left ventricle, from where it is then pumped to the rest of the body through the aortic valve. When the flaps of the mitral valve don't close properly, the blood flows backward, or regurgitates, into the left atrium and eventually into the lungs ([Source](#)).



But the test could not, because of the position of the mitral valve, give enough data to accurately measure the extent of the valve's damage. Therefore, Dr. Bazaz told us that I needed to have a Transesophageal Echocardiogram (TEE) which he would arrange to be conducted as soon as possible.

**Dealing with the Dizziness** - In the meantime, I had scheduled an appointment at Reston Ear, Nose & Throat for that Wednesday (May 8) to deal with my dizziness. Nurse practitioner **Crystal Hawkins** was able to trigger the dizziness and diagnosed it as benign paroxysmal positional vertigo (BPPV).

BPPV occurs as a result of otoconia, tiny crystals of calcium carbonate that are a normal part of the inner ear's anatomy, detaching from the otolithic membrane in the utricle and collecting in one of the semicircular canals. When the head is still, gravity causes the otoconia to clump and settle (Figure 1). When the head moves, the otoconia shift. This stimulates the cupula to send false signals to the brain, producing vertigo and triggering nystagmus (involuntary eye movements) ([Source](#)).

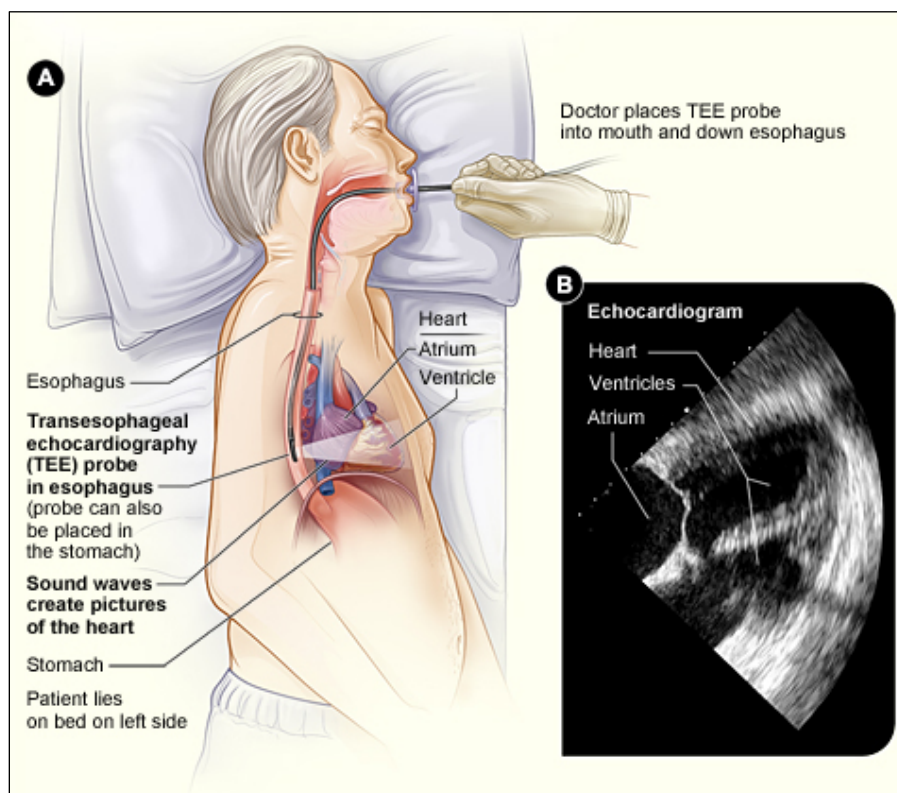


To treat the dizziness, Crystal applied the Epley Maneuver which effectively eliminated the dizziness, but she told me that for the treatment to be effective I needed to keep my head upright as much as possible the next two days. Other than the discomfort of trying to sleep at night with my head as upright as I could maintain it, it was a big relief to be rid of the dizziness. Getting rid of the shortness of breath, however, was not going to be an easy or quick fix.



**Crystal Hawkins (A.N.P.-B.C., Nurse Practitioner, Reston Ear, Nose and Throat)**

**Dealing with the Shortness of Breath** – With Crystal having cast out the dizziness demon, I felt much better but was now more acutely aware and worried about my shortness of breath as being caused by the deterioration of the mitral valve—and anxious to have the TEE done as soon as possible. We were able to schedule this procedure for Tuesday, May 14. On that morning, Dr. Patel conducted the TEE procedure in Reston Hospital’s “short stay” area, in fact, in the room just next to the one where I had spent the night of Friday, May 3. After preparing me, including sedation sufficient to leave me unconscious, Dr. Patel and his associates completed the TEE in about ten minutes, after which I woke up.



Dr. Patel confirmed that the results showed that I would need to consult with a heart surgeon but should first meet later that week with one of his cardiologist colleagues to review and discuss the TEE results and next steps, since Dr. Patel would not be available in the coming week as he was getting married in a few days and would be going on his honeymoon.



**Dr. Jeffrey Steven Luy (Virginia Heart)**

Sonia called to schedule the first available appointment that was with **Dr. Jeffrey Luy** on Friday, May 17. When we met with Dr. Luy, he reviewed the TEE results and confirmed the valve needed to be repaired. However, before seeing the surgeon, I would need one additional diagnostic, a cardiac catheterization. Dr. Luy's office scheduled this for the morning of Tuesday, May 21 at Reston Hospital. In the meantime, Sonia had contacted the surgeon's office to schedule an appointment for Wednesday, June 5 to consult with **Dr. Paul S. Massimiano**, the name of the surgeon who Dr. Bazaz recommended as a specialist in minimally invasive heart valve repair.



**Dr. Dean Michael Pollock (Virginia Heart & CVTSA)**

On Tuesday, May 21, I was at Reston Hospital at 7:30 a.m. to get ready for the cardiac catheterization procedure. For some reason, the nurse was having difficulty getting the IV needle into my arm. Shortly before the procedure's scheduled 8:30 a.m. start time, the doctor who would do the procedure, **Dr. Dean Pollock**, met with me to discuss the procedure. He was so calm and told me I didn't need to worry about anything, thereby reducing my apprehension and anxiety. As things turned out, I actually walked to the procedure room dressed only in my hospital gown and athletic socks, making a quick pit stop in the rest room. I then walked to the procedure room and got on the operating table. The nurse assisting during the procedure put the IV needle into the back of my left hand without any problem. I was then prepped for the procedure and was fully awake, talking with Dr. Pollock during the procedure, after which I was moved from the operating table to a gurney and rolled back to my room in the short stay area.

After a while, Dr. Pollock arrived and indicated that the valve did need repair, adding that I had a 50% blockage in one artery and an 80% blockage in another. Otherwise, he said that my heart muscle was strong and that he could make a case for dealing with the blockages but that he also could make a case for not dealing with them. In the end, he indicated, it would be the heart surgeon who would advise the best course of action. On being discharged, I rested during the balance of the day. To continue resting up, I decided to take off two days (Thursday and Friday) as annual leave before the Memorial Day weekend.

On Thursday, May 23, Sonia drove me to the office of **Dr. Paul S. Massimiano** at the Cardiac Vascular & Thoracic Surgery Associates (CVTSA) office in Falls Church (VA) to drop off the CD-Rs (containing the TEE and heart catheterization results) and the paperwork that CVTSA asked me to complete. Sonia had wanted me to get a second opinion but, in the process of trying to identify another heart surgeon to meet with for a second opinion, one of Sonia's doctors reassured her that Dr. Massimiano is the best in this area in doing minimally invasive heart surgery. So who is Dr. Massimiano?



**Love Your Heart Expo with Dr. Paul Massimiano**

***Paul Stephen Massimiano (11/29/52 - present)***



*The most important trend in heart surgery over the past decade is the transition to a minimally invasive (MI) platform.... Anything we traditionally did through the front can now be performed less invasively.*

**Paul Massimiano** was born in Pittsfield, Massachusetts. His interest in becoming a medical doctor and surgeon was influenced by his father having been a medical doctor and surgeon. Massimiano is a graduate of Duke University (B.A., 1974) and the Georgetown University School of Medicine (M.D., 1978). He did his internships at the National Navy Medical Center, Bethesda, Maryland (July 1978 – June 1979); and the Navy Regional Medical Center, Republic of the Philippines (July 1979 – November 1980), after doing residencies at the National Navy Medical Center – General Surgery (December 1980 – November 1982); General Surgery and Chief Resident (December 1982 – November 1983); and Vascular Surgery and Chief Resident in Vascular Surgery (December 1983 – November 1984). From 1984-1989, Massimiano held consecutively higher responsibility positions with the National Navy Medical Center (Bethesda, Maryland), initially as Head, Department of Vascular Surgery (1984-85); Assistant Head, Department of Cardiothoracic Surgery (1987-1988); and Head, Department of Cardiothoracic Surgery (1988-89).

Massimiano has held appointments with the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences, Bethesda (MD) as Teaching Fellow in Surgery (1981-83), Instructor in Surgery (1983-87), and Assistant Professor of Surgery (1990-present). From 1986-87, he was an Instructor in Surgery at Yale University School of Medicine (New Haven, Connecticut). Between 1985 and 1990, he held two Fellowships, the first in Cardiothoracic Surgery at Yale-New Haven Hospital (New Haven, Connecticut) and Yale University School of Medicine (July 1985 – June 1987) and the second in Cardiac Surgery at the St. Vincent Heart Institute (Portland, Oregon) (July 1989 – June 1990).

He is President and Chief Executive Officer, Cardiac, Vascular & Thoracic Surgery Associates (CVTSA) in Falls Church, Virginia; and also holds positions as Medical Director of Cardiac Surgery at Washington Adventist Hospital, and Director, Minimally Invasive Cardiac Surgery, Inova Heart and Vascular Institute, Fairfax Hospital, Falls Church (VA). He is Associate Staff, Department of Surgery, Sections of Cardiac, Thoracic, and Peripheral Vascular Surgery, Inova Alexandria Hospital, Alexandria (VA); Associate Staff, Virginia Hospital Center-Arlington, Arlington (VA); Active Staff, Cardiothoracic Surgery Service, National Naval Medical Center, Bethesda (MD); and Clinical Assistant Professor of Surgery, Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences, Bethesda (MD).

He holds Board Certifications with the National Board of Medical Examiners (1979), the American Board of Surgery (1986), and American Board of Thoracic Surgery (1989, 1999, 2009, 2019) as well as State Licenses in Oregon (1989), Maryland (1984), and Virginia (1990). Massimiano is the author or co-author of numerous book chapters, journal articles and abstracts as well as posters and papers presented at scientific meetings. He is a member of eight professional societies, including Association for Academic Surgery, Association of Military Surgeons, Chesapeake Vascular Society, American Medical Associations, Society of Thoracic Surgeons, International Society for Endovascular Surgery, International Society for Minimally Invasive Cardiothoracic Surgery, and American College of Healthcare Executives.



In short, before I met with Dr. Massimiano, I knew that this heart surgeon had absolutely no shortage of credentials. But how would he deal with me and could I trust putting my heart in his hands?



**Paul Massimiano, M.D. (Program Director for Cardiac Surgery, Washington Adventist Hospital)**

*If you wait for symptoms or for chamber enlargement, you've probably waited too long.*



### **Understanding Heart Surgery with Dr. Paul Massimiano**

**Flight Log Memories:** Sonia and I met on June 5 with Dr. Massimiano. He came into the examination room, we exchanged the usual pleasantries, and he sat down to talk with us, fairly quickly saying: “This is an interesting case.” Then and there I knew I wasn’t going to get off with a light reprimand or worse a parking ticket.

He reviewed with us that my partial blockages were in two arteries—the left coronary artery and the left anterior descending (LAD) artery. Further the percentage blockage was higher than previously reported, Massimiano indicated that he could not do a minimally invasive valve repair (“mini”) on the mitral valve without further tests being done, specifically, a stress test and possibly a test where a dye is injected to more fully plot the extent of the arterial blockages. He also told me that doing a “mini” while one has blocked arteries would increase the risk of a heart attack from 1% to 3%, in effect, tripling the chances of a heart attack. Obviously I didn’t want to delay correcting the mitral valve problem by having to wait for more tests to be done; nor did I want to risk a heart attack in the midst of a “mini”—and certainly I didn’t want a case of the doctor telling Sonia: “I successfully repaired the valve but the patient died of a heart attack.”

A second option would be to implant stents to open the blocked arteries, this basically entailing a repeat of the heart catheterization procedure I already went through for diagnostic purposes but, this time, with stents being inserted and placed. But there would be downsides to this approach: (1) it wouldn’t address the perhaps more serious problem of the deteriorating mitral valve; (2) it was not clear how much better I’d feel after the arteries had been unblocked with the stents but the mitral valve still functioning poorly; (3) the stents would be only a temporary (not permanent) solution; and (4) I would need to go on a blood thinner for a period of time and then off the blood thinner before being eligible to have the mitral valve repaired. In short, going this route, would still require having to go back to the hospital at some future point to deal with the mitral valve problem.

The third option would be a “frontal” attack on the two problems. I asked the doctor if this would mean “cracking me open” to which phrase he cringed – apparently not the image he wanted me to have in my mind! But a frontal attack on the problem would allow the surgeon to directly see what he is doing to repair or replace the mitral valve (rather than indirectly seeing what he is doing assisted by a camera) and also allow for the two blocked arteries to be repaired via a bypass on each as part of the overall procedure.

Without the problem of the blocked arteries, repair of the mitral valve using the “mini” would have me out of commission four to six weeks before I would be back to normal, whereas a “frontal” approach to address both the failing mitral valve and the partially blocked arteries would have me out for six to eight weeks before I would feel normal again. Thus, the latter approach would add only an additional two weeks or so to the recovery—and potentially I could go back to work, even if only half-time or from home via telework, after eight weeks or so. With a two-hour commute total each day, it would make more sense to initially go back to work via teleworking for a portion of day once I started “back to work.”

The doctor then asked me some questions to see how I would respond – and said that my response would have been the correct answer on a university medical exam. Perhaps this was his way of checking to see if I fully understood the options and their tradeoffs. I then asked him two questions: First, given that he is a specialist in doing minimally invasive mitral valve repairs, does he also do “frontal” (open heart) surgery for both the mitral valve repair (or replacement) and heart bypasses, to which he answered affirmatively. Second, if he were in my situation, which option would he choose to which he answered the “frontal” approach, in effect, take care of both problems with one surgery.

I then looked at Sonia to check if she had any objection to going this route, and saw how devastated she was—and then looked back the doctor to tell him I wanted to get both problems taken care of and as soon as possible. He said “OK” and asked if I had any limitations as to when the surgery could be scheduled, to which I replied, “No, just the sooner the better!” – and that we’d prefer to have the surgery done at Inova Fairfax Hospital. He said “OK” and to just wait there and his assistant would put in motion the process of getting the surgery scheduled.

After a while, the assistant (Annette Vernail) took us to another room where she went over a folder of information about what would be the process, one additional diagnostic that needed to be done (an echocardiogram of my carotid arteries), and described a medication I would take beginning immediately as well as another I would start taking five days before the surgery. The first available slot for surgery at Fairfax Hospital by Dr. Massimiano was Monday, July 1. He had indicated that the procedure would last about 4 hours. At that point, we didn’t know if my surgery would be the first of the day (in which case I would need to be at the hospital at 5 a.m.) or the second (at the hospital by 9:30 a.m.). With July 1 as the scheduled date for the surgery, this left (counting from June 6) just 24 days to put my personal affairs in order, just in case, before the date of the surgery.

Asking about how long I would be in the hospital, the assistant explained that, after the surgery, I would be moved to intensive care, where I would stay overnight. If all is going well, sometime the next day I would be moved to the so-called “stepdown” room for the next two to three days before being discharged. At some point on the day after surgery, the “program” will have me up and walking around, and on that second day the various tubes – the catheter and drainage tubes – will be pulled out of me. After discharge on the third day or so after surgery, during the first week a nurse would come to our home twice to see how I’m doing. That evening Sonia talked with her brother Libardo (who had just visited us recently for ten days) and he said that he and his wife Nena would come back from Cali to help out during that first week or two that I’m back home. My brother Kevin’s wife Joan also indicated that she could come up for several days to help out.

Over the next few weeks, the days passed by, going to and from work, wrapping up loose ends at the office, passing the reins of this or that action to colleagues to cover for me while I would be on medical leave for a couple of

months. At some point during the week of June 17, just as I was getting home for the day and driving in our garage, Sonia opened the door and extended the phone toward me. I got out of the car, took the phone, and found that I was talking with Theresa of Dr. Massimiano's office who informed me that the surgery date had to be changed from July 1 (Monday) to July 5 (Friday) and that I would be Dr. Massimiano's second operation of the day, in which case I would need to check into the hospital by 9:30 a.m. that day. This was a double disappointment in that (1) the surgery would be delayed by four days; and (2) my brother-in-law and his wife had already purchased their tickets to arrive around Friday, June 28 and were scheduled to fly back to Cali about the same day I now would be discharged to go home on or about Monday, July 8. Fortunately, and with my offer to pay any penalty for rebooking their tickets, they were able to rebook and would now arrive on Wednesday, July 3, allowing them to be here several days after my return home on July 8, if all went well.

In the meantime, on Thursday, June 20, I had another pre-surgical exam, to measure blood flow in the carotid arteries. This exam, conducted at the Virginia Heart office in Lansdowne (Virginia) is done with a device called a carotid Doppler machine that measures blood flow velocities within the cervical carotid arteries by means of non-invasive ultrasonic scanning in which the Doppler effect is utilized. This allows estimating the level of compromise in blood flow caused by reduction in arterial lumen diameter. The result in my case was the pronouncement that, while there was a moderate level of plaque in my carotid arteries, it was not sufficiently significant to delay proceeding with my heart surgery.

On Monday, June 24, I tracked down Inova Presurgical Services that turned out to be in the same building as Fairfax Northern Virginia Hematology Oncology, P.C. (FNVHO), now Virginia Cancer Specialists, where I used to visit Dr. Richard Binder for a quarterly phlebotomy and monitoring of my ferritin levels, the required treatment for hemochromatosis, a hereditary disease in which iron is not eliminated from the body but rather accumulates in the body's vital organs. I inherited this affliction from my father and, in turn he from his ancestors. So no big deal to return to the same building, this time only to have some vials of blood drawn rather than a whole pint via a phlebotomy.

After a short wait, a nurse interviewed me (putting the data into a computer), after which I waited in the lobby until called to provide a urine sample, have an echocardiogram, have multiple vials of blood drawn, and have a chest X-ray. Before leaving, as parting gifts, I was provided a CD-R of my chest X-ray (to be taken with me to the hospital the day of the surgery) and two bottles of Scrub Care Exidine antiseptic to use when showering before going to bed on the eve of the surgery and in the morning of the surgery, plus a tube of Mupirocin 2% Ointment to swab in my nose the night before the surgery and just before surgery.

### **The Surgery and Hospital Stay**

**Surgery** – On July 5 (Friday) at Fairfax Hospital, I was prepped for the surgery, which included rinsing my mouth with some foul-tasting liquid, designed to be gargled, not swallowed, to disinfect my mouth. After getting wired up with an IV and having my chest and legs shaved, I met briefly with the surgeon (Dr. Massimiano) and the anesthesiologist, shortly after which I was wheeled on the gurney into the operating room. I already had fallen asleep before getting to the OR. The surgery lasted approximately 4.5 hours, after which I was moved to the intensive care unit, where I later woke up.

**Intensive Care Unit (ICU)** – In the ICU, I would drift in and out of sleep—and do not recall at all seeing Sonia after surgery that day. In the morning (Saturday, July 6), I was more alert and the nurse (Luis) started readying me to be moved later that day to a room in the Step-down Unit. It was late morning or early afternoon when Sonia and my son Shannon visited me for the first time. As the day wore on, I personally didn't feel I was ready to be moved to the



Step-down Unit but the hospital had its schedule and procedures and late that afternoon Luis and an aide helped me shift from my bed to a wheelchair and then the aide rolled me to my room in the Step-down Unit.

**Step-down Unit** – In the Step-down Unit, I transferred from the wheel chair to a recliner chair as I felt it would be easier for me to get in and out of that chair than in and out of the bed. A good move on my part as I later discovered on Monday (July 8) when I had to lay in the bed for an echocardiogram and realized how uncomfortable the bed was compared to the bed I had been in the ICU or even the recliner chair.



**Kerry in Step-down Unit Two Days After Surgery (July 7, 2013)=**

While in the Step-down Unit, I never really felt up to eating except popsicles and a fruit plate. Over the next two days, over several shifts, all the nurses (Molly, Jennifer, and Victoria) were excellent except for the nurse on duty my last day in the Step-down unit. I quickly concluded that this must have been a close relative to the infamous “Nurse Ratched” in the film *One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest* (1975).



**Nurse Ratched (Louise Fletcher) in *One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest* (1975)**

*If Mr. McMurphy [the patient played by Jack Nicholson] doesn't want to take his medication orally, I'm sure we can arrange that he can have it some other way. But I don't think that he would like it.*

My “Nurse Ratched” came on duty on Monday but didn’t deliver the friendly support that the other three nurses had provided. Despite my pleas for assistance with this or that, she was hell bent on subjecting me to a “tough love” (and that is being generous) regime that I should be able to do everything myself, totally insensitive to how I was feeling with little to no energy as a result of not having eaten much while in the Step-down Unit and feeling considerable wooziness when I was walking, the result of being on a diuretic. No matter what help I asked for, Nurse Ratched’s reply was simply: “You should do that yourself!” This left me with the thought: “Well, that’s easy enough for you to say!”

On Monday, July 8, I was not feeling ready to be discharged; however, given the way Nurse Ratched had been treating me, I felt that she and the hospital were putting a break on my recovery—and that I couldn’t tolerate putting up with

her any longer. I quickly drew the logical conclusion—to get the hell out of Dodge (the hospital) as fast as possible. The almost last straw was enduring an echocardiogram in the hospital bed after Nurse Ratched had given me a diuretic. Suddenly, during the echocardiogram, I had to ask the technician to stop and pass the urinal bottle to me—and this happened five times during the hour-long procedure! I felt sorry for the technician having to interrupt her work to take on nursing functions of retrieving and emptying the bottle, definitely not part of her job description.

In the midst of all this, Nurse Ratched came in the room and started scolding me about something – and I could see by the look on the technician’s face that she couldn’t believe how Nurse Ratched was treating me, especially after Ratched walked out without emptying two urinal bottles. Later that afternoon, when Sonia came and offered to help me with getting dressed, Ratched told Sonia that I could and should do it myself, at which point Sonia blasted back in Spanish (Nurse Ratched was of Latino descent), telling her she had no right to speak to Sonia that way and that Sonia was going to help me.

The last straw was a confrontation between Ratched and me to the effect that she would not process my discharge papers until I walked around the floor three times. I told her that I just didn’t have the energy to do that and already had taken a walk a half hour or so before with a staff member down the hallway to practice how to walk up and down stairs – and reiterated that I wanted to go home! Finally, Nurse Ratched relented and, after a long wait, showed up to review the discharge papers with Sonia and me. I then had to wait a bit longer for one of the volunteers to show up with the wheel chair to take me down to where Sonia was waiting with the car.

In effect, the road to recovery really began when I finally escaped from Nurse Ratched and got into my wife’s car to go home. Fortunately, for Fairfax Hospital’s Nurse Ratched, unlike her namesake in *One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest*, she was spared from receiving a well-deserved comeuppance.

### **Follow Up Support during Recovery**

The recovery process entailed an evolving home-based schedule of visiting health-care professionals plus intermittent follow up visits back to the surgeon’s office to see the nurse practitioner, going for chest X-Rays, and follow up visits with my cardiologist. As explained in greater detail in the next section (*Bumps on the Road to Recovery*), my recovery would also include two visits back to the hospital for outpatient procedures. During the recovery, I had a busy schedule with nurses (three different nurses – Joy, Kumba, and Michelle), a physical therapist (Kim), and an occupational therapist (Suze). Interestingly, the latter provided counsel not only on setting goals for me to work toward doing more on my own (e.g., being able to shower and dress on my own without the assistance I initially had) but also on being realistic that I not push myself too hard and risk overdoing it and setting back my recovery. So, for example, if I had a very active day (e.g., the first day I walked 30 minutes on my own), then I should take it easier the next day to rest and recover.

Sonia also hired an Argentinian women (Bertha) as a personal care assistant to be with me most of the day during the first few weeks, which was particularly helpful to me in learning how to get out of bed when I felt very weak and assisting while I was taking a shower and getting dressed. Also, when I first walked around the house, she walked with me to keep an eye out to make sure I didn’t faint or fall down. One day my four-year old grandson Braden was visiting. As I headed to the bathroom to take my shower, with Bertha following and shutting the door, Braden asked Aba (Sonia) why Bertha also went into the bathroom. Sonia replied that the nurse was going to help Abu (Kerry) take his shower and wash Kerry’s “wee wee”. On hearing this, Braden’s eyes opened wide. Sonia then jokingly asked Braden if he wanted the nurse to help wash his “wee wee.” Braden quickly responded, shaking his head back and forth, “No, nobody touches my ‘wee wee!’”

I kept a frequency count of the number of times I saw the various health care professional either in my home or at their offices. That count follows, not including Bertha who came to the house most weekdays during the initial two or three weeks of my recovery:

- 2 - **Surgeon** (Massimiano - plus just before the surgery)
- 2 - **Outpatient Procedures** (more on these below)
- 3 - **General Practitioner** (Tandeciarz)
- 3 - **Chest X-Ray**
- 4 - **Nurse Practitioner** (follow up in surgeon's office – Deborah and Annette)
- 5 - **Cardiologist** (Pollock)
- 8 - **Visiting Nurse** (Joy, Kumba, and Michelle)
- 9 - **Physical Therapist** (Kim)
- 10 - **Occupational Therapist** (Suze)

Based on the above frequency distribution, I drew the conclusion that successful cardiac surgery begins with the surgical operation performed by the surgeon but heavily depends on, if not ends, with the support and guidance of the occupational therapist. On Tuesday, August 6, Suze (the occupational therapist) and I reviewed my recovery progress and reached agreement that I was ready to be discharged from the home care program—and that my further recovery would depend on continuing both my physical and breathing exercises at home as well as the progress made once Dr. Pollock put me into the cardiotherapy program.

### **Bumps on the Road to Recovery**

*"Baseball is ninety percent mental and the other half is physical.." (Yogi Berra)*

*"Successful cardiac surgery is 50% surgery and the other 90% recovery." (Kerry Byrnes)*

While schedule-disrupting and exhausting to go for the various required diagnostic tests preparatory to meeting with the heart surgeon, by comparison the actual surgery was a breeze, in my case lasting a bit over 4.5 hours. But the hardest part was yet to come with the recovery and I can attest from what my health care providers have told me, and as related below, I didn't have a "normal" recovery from open heart surgery. If half of cardiac surgery being successful is the actual surgical procedure itself, clearly the other 90% depends not only on having enough energy for the physical and breathing exercises but also having and maintaining a positive mental outlook and not lapsing into depression. Just as Yogi Berra said that ninety percent of baseball is mental, that also would be the case with recovering from cardiac (open heart) surgery.

Very quickly after my heart surgery I began to realize the various ways and extent to which that surgery can mess up the body's normal functioning, including knocking out of whack the body's food processing, gyroscope, and infection fighting systems, and others as now recounted.

**The Food Processing Machine Out of Whack – Symptom: Lack of Appetite and Taste Buds Shot** – I left the hospital heavily overweight (222.5 pounds) but poorly nourished. The excess weight showed in my body being puffy due to accumulated water – and would have been worse had I not been on a diuretic. But, as I would soon learn, the diuretic itself was causing another problem – see "wooziness" below.

One effect of the trauma of surgery and the lingering effect of the anesthesia is that one loses one's appetite, in part, because food just doesn't taste good. While in the hospital for over three days, I ate hardly anything except one fruit plate and lots of popsicles – and I only ate half of the last popsicle because it was making me nauseous. Looking at food was not at all appealing and just about anything I tried to eat once I got home didn't taste like it should, except for a few items such as Chobani Almond Coco Loco yogurt and Edy's creamy coconut fruit bars. (I love coconut!)

While the hospital's discharge papers included a sheet of healthy foods to eat as well as foods to avoid, I got a reprieve on the first home visit of the nurse (Tuesday, July 9) when she said to ignore that list, and for the first few weeks or so, eat whatever I wanted, a message later validated on July 18 when I had my first post-surgery visit with the doctor I had chosen to be my cardiologist (Dr. Pollock). This is the same doctor who earlier performed the cardiac catheterization on me. During his examination of me, he asked if I was on a special diet. I told him what the visiting nurse had said – and that I subsequently had asked to have some fast food such as a Wendy's Hamburger, a Chick-fil-A Sandwich, and a Taco Bell Steak Salsa Bowl. Pollack said that he asked me a trick question because he wanted to make sure I understood that I didn't need to immediately start a heart-healthy diet.

As the days and weeks progressed, with my taste buds returning and my throat pain (from having had the breathing tube in my throat for 4+ hours of the surgery) subsiding, I began to eat healthier food. Further, with a blood test done in my first post-surgery visit to my general practitioner (Dr. Tandeciarz) showing that I was slightly anemic, this prompted Sonia to head to Costco to buy a large tenderloin, slicing it up, and storing the slices in small packages in the freezer. Then, for a number of days, she prepared steak for lunch and/or dinner, this proving successful in getting my iron level back up and eliminating the anemia. To reduce the cooking burden on Sonia, over the coming weeks we supplemented home cooking visiting favorite restaurants, including EuroBistro in Herndon (Weiner schnitzel), Romano's Macaroni Grille, California Pizza Kitchen, Big Bowl, Outback Steak House, and Nordstrom Café.

**The Gyroscope Out of Whack – Symptom: Postural Hypotension** – Even as I started to eat more, I was plagued by physical weakness and a sense of wooziness or lightheadedness. The physical therapist's July 9 visit pinpointed that I was dehydrated because I wasn't drinking enough water and other liquids. I never have been a fan of drinking water and now found myself having to drink a bottle or more of water each day plus fruit juices. Occasionally with meals, I would drink a small glass of caffeine-free diet Coke but Sonia also started serving me guava juice which has a high iron content, with 3% of the recommended daily requirement. Ironically, having inherited hemochromatosis (an inability of the body to eliminate iron which subsequently accumulates in vital organs), I now found myself being anemic (not having sufficient iron).

A second contributing factor to my weakness and wooziness was being on the diuretic – and the surgeon's nurse practitioner lowered the dosage from 40 mg to 20 mg. However, after taking only one of those pills, my cardiologist advised that I should stop taking it and also the potassium tablets because, as he put it, the diuretic was “working against my recovery.” While I started feeling better once I no longer was on the diuretic, a third contributing factor, lightheadedness, began to surface which was present from the time I left the hospital and arrived home.

I had returning home from the hospital in the late afternoon of July 8. Early the next morning (July 9), about 3 a.m., I woke up from a bad dream, perhaps bordering on being delirious, in which I was in an endless loop of playing Candy Crush, swiping away at the candies to line up the colors and make them go away but with the game never ending—until I woke up! When I couldn't get back to sleep, I decided to get out of bed and walk to the family room to watch TV. After watching one show and turning off the TV, I headed back to bed. However, as I walked through the hallway, I fainted, falling to the floor with a loud crash and knocking over some items in the hallway, with the noise waking up Sonia. While I incurred no damage to my chest, the next day showed bruising on my arms and having severely scraped my left knee just below the kneecap, a wound that had not fully healed even two months after

surgery. One immediate outcome of the spill was a recommendation by the visiting nurse and physical therapist to stop taking the Tramadol as a pain killer, and simply rely, as needed, on Tylenol Extra Strength.

However, on Sunday, August 4, just short of a month after the surgery, the family went to the swimming pool, leaving me home alone to watch TV and take a nap. Just before turning off the TV to nap, I popped out of bed and headed too quickly to the bathroom. Suddenly I felt woozy (lightheaded) and tried to hold on to the door frame to steady myself, after which I fainted. Some moments later, I opened my eyes and found myself lying on my back with the lower half of my body in the bathroom and the upper half on the rug just outside the bathroom, with little memory (realization) of what had happened, asking myself why I was lying on the floor. This incident increased my awareness and understanding of the need for me as I shifted positions, from lying in bed to sitting up or standing up, or from sitting on a sofa to standing up, to wait a few seconds and take a few deep breaths, before starting to walk, just to make sure that lightheaded feeling is not coming on, a signal of an increased risk of fainting. On discussing this with my physical therapist, occupational therapist, and cardiologist, I learned I was experiencing “postural hypotension”:

**Orthostatic hypotension**, also known as **postural hypotension orthostasis** and colloquially as **head rush** or **dizzy spell**, is a form of hypotension in which a person’s blood pressure suddenly falls when standing up or stretching. In medical terms, it is defined as a fall in systolic blood pressure of at least 20 mm Hg or diastolic blood pressure of at least 10 mm Hg when a person assumes a standing position. . . . Orthostatic hypotension may cause accidental falls ([Source](#)).

Nevertheless, a third fainting episode happened one night when I got out of bed to go to the bathroom. Suddenly, while standing in the bathroom, I started to feel dizzy and tried to steady myself by holding on to the bathroom door but just fell (crashed) to my knees so hard that I didn’t faint. Fortunately, despite the noise, I avoided waking up Sonia who slept through this incident. As the saying goes, three strikes and you’re out, or three times a charm—after this third episode, I really took to heart (no pun intended) the advice that I should, on shifting from a supine position in my bed to sitting up, or from sitting to standing up, take a few seconds to take deep breaths. Even before getting up, I should open and close my fists and move my feet up and down to get the blood circulating, and be alert (cognizant) as I start to walk as to whether I’m feeling any lightheadedness. If so, I take a deep breath and, if needed, quickly sit down for a few seconds until the sensation subsides.

**The Infection Fighting System Out of Whack – Symptom: Infected Incision** – Five days after I got home from the hospital, it became apparent, on Saturday, July 13, that the lower incision on my left leg (the bottom end from where the vein was removed to provide material for the double bypass during the surgery) was infected. Sonia called the visiting nurse to see if she could come to the house that day but the nurse indicated she wouldn’t be able to stop by until late afternoon. Fortunately, the occupational therapist was scheduled to visit in the early afternoon. When she arrived and saw the infected area, she used her cell phone to take a photo of the infected area and emailed the photo to the nurse who called back to advise that I had three options: (1) go to the surgeon’s office on Monday; (2) go immediately to the emergency room at a local hospital; or (3) go to a local non-hospital emergency care facility. Electing the last option, Sonia took me to Patient First in Herndon. No other patients were in the waiting room and the doctor was able to see me almost immediately. He put me on Amoxicillin to fight the infection and recommended putting an antibiotic ointment on the wound, the same antibiotic (Bactroban Ointment – Mupirocin) that I had been instructed to swab in my nostrils the night before and the morning of my surgery.

**The Hydraulic System Out of Whack – Symptom: Liquid on the Lung** – On Monday, July 15, Sonia and I went to the surgeon’s office for the first post-surgery follow up. As it turns out, one does not see the surgeon (Massimiano) during the follow up and subsequent visits but rather one of his nurse practitioners, either Annette Vernail or Deborah Celentano. On this day, we met with Deborah. After discussing how my recovery was progressing, including

the infection and experiencing the fall early in the morning on July 8, Deborah recommended switching the antibiotic to a 10-day course of Doxycycline – which cleared up the infection and reduced the swelling. She also recommended that, when sitting or lying down, I keep my left leg elevated higher than my heart in order to reduce the swelling by draining more fluid (blood and water) from my lower leg.

Earlier that day, at the request of the surgeon's office, I had a chest X-Ray taken, which X-Ray I brought to the appointment. On reviewing the X-Ray, Deborah saw some liquid surrounding my lower left lung. While this liquid normally would be reabsorbed over time by the body, the nurse decided to keep me on the diuretic, though at the reduced level of 20 mg rather than 40 mg, in order to lessen the diuretic making me feel woozy. She gave me an order to have another chest X-Ray taken prior to a follow up appointment with her on Friday, July 26. However, just three days after my July 15 appointment with Deborah, I had my first appointment with Dr. Pollock on July 18 as earlier described in the “food processing” section. On hearing the litany of problems (notably, feeling woozy) I was experiencing during my recovery, Pollock advised me to stop taking the diuretic and potassium pills—and this helped to reduce the severity of the wooziness.

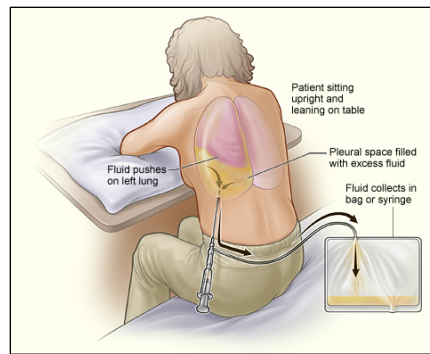
Just a week later, on Thursday, July 25, I had a follow up chest X-Ray taken. The reason for having the X-Ray taken the day before my July 26 follow up appointment with the surgeon's office was that I had found it very tiring back on July 15, when I was still very weak, to make two trips out of the house on the same day, one trip to go for the X-Ray and the other to go to the surgeon's office, especially given how hot and humid it was during July, which made going outside especially miserable for me.

The next day, Friday, July 26, we took the X-Ray to the surgeon's office so that Deborah could review it, after which she asked me to leave the examining room to view the X-Ray in another room. As I looked at the X-Ray, she pointed out the shaded area over much of the lower half to two-thirds of my left lung (see X-Ray image below). She said that the shading reflected that liquid was accumulating between my left rib cage and left lung. She told me that I needed to go to Fairfax Hospital (where my heart surgery had been performed) to have the liquid drained—and to have this done that afternoon or on Monday. As the liquid needed to be drained and I didn't want to worry about that all weekend long, I asked her to check with the hospital to see if the procedure could be done that afternoon. After a short wait, Deborah returned to the examining room and told me that the hospital could do the procedure that afternoon. So off Sonia and I went to the hospital.



**Liquid on Kerry's Left Lung (7/25/13)**

After a short wait to get registered, a nurse took Sonia and me to the area where the procedure would be performed. The procedure to drain fluid from around the lung is known as Thoracentesis or a pleural tap (see [video](#) of this procedure). Howard R. Nieman, physician assistant, performed the procedure as I sat on the edge of the bed and leaned on a pillow over a table (as shown above).



**Diagram of Thoracentesis Procedure**

After Nieman injected me with a local anesthetic (Lidocaine), a cannula, hollow needle, was introduced into the thorax, between a couple of ribs, care being taken not to puncture the lung. A catheter was then attached to a one-liter bottle, with the bottle's vacuum pulling the liquid from outside the lung through the tube to the bottle. As the first bottle neared being filled, Nieman switched the tube to a second bottle. When this second bottle was nearing being filled, he asked for a third bottle to be ready. However, while a small amount of liquid yet remained in the space being drained, Nieman stopped the procedure after the two one-liter bottles had been filled, as shown in the photo below.



**The Two Liters of Fluid Drawn from Kerry (7/26/13)**

Aside from the sting of the Lidocaine to numb up the area where the needle was to be injected and the discomfort I experienced as Nieman gently moved (or repositioned) the catheter, perhaps the hardest part of the procedure came when, after a lot of the fluid had been drained, the left lung began to expand, at which point Nieman advised that I would soon feel the urge to cough and to go ahead and do so as this is normal. The one problem was that the successive coughing was not appreciated by my sensitive sternum that, just three weeks before, had been put back together with stainless steel wiring and, in my words, “industrial strength super glue” to seal the incision. For a few minutes, I was having repeated coughing spasms as I clutched the pillow to my chest. The nurse also provided comforting support by holding my arms on the pillow to reduce the possibility of me moving around. Finally, after the two bottles had been filled, the catheter was pulled out of me, the area cleaned of blood, and a band aid put over the wound.

It was great to be able to lie back down in the bed after having sat on the edge of the bed to endure the procedure. Further, after some discussion, and not having eaten in about six hours since lunch, a tray of food was brought to me, though I only ate the chicken salad, apple betty, and some juice. Best of all, I could tell that it was now a lot easier to breath, with two liters of fluid no longer pressing on my lung. Clearly, once off the diuretic, the accumulating fluid over the preceding days had to a degree been a contributing factor to the shortness of breath that I had otherwise written off as the result of not having been religious about doing my breathing exercises on the Spirometer (see below).



### Incentive Spirometer

The pleural tap procedure had been literally as well as figuratively a “draining experience” that got a “lot off my chest,” making it a lot easier to breathe and helping to reduce my shortness of breath. However, as a result of the liquid having pressed on my left lung, the lung’s strength (capacity) was seriously reduced, reinforcing the need for me to step up hourly breathing (sucking air) exercises (10 repetitions per hour) on the Incentive Spirometer, which exercise (shame on me) I had not been doing faithfully on the hour. Once I got serious about these exercises, initially only being able to suck in 1000 ml or less, I was eventually able to draw over 3000 ml or slightly higher, at which point the cardiologist told me I no longer needed to do these breathing exercises, recommending that the best exercise is walking – and that when I could walk 30 minutes at a stretch I would be ready to go into the cardiotherapy program. However, I was not out of the woods.

***The Heart Keeps Ticking But*** – During the first post-surgery follow up visit (July 18) with Dr. Pollock, he told me that he was hearing a slight “murmur” he wanted to monitor during my recovery. While I was not scheduled to next see him until a later date, the July 26 draining of liquid from my lung had prompted Sonia to seek scheduling an appointment with Pollock early the next week, sooner than my next regularly scheduled visit. While Sonia was not successful in getting the scheduler to find an appointment, when the visiting nurse (Michelle) came to the house the next day, she realized the importance of getting me back to see Pollock so he could reassess my condition. On hearing that Sonia had not been successful the day before in scheduling an appointment with Pollock, Michelle immediately called his Virginia Heart office and succeeded in getting an appointment for me the next day. On listening to the murmur, Pollock indicated that he wanted me to have an echocardiogram in his office on Wednesday, August 7.

On August 7, I had the echocardiogram in the afternoon, after which Pollock came into the examining room. He was very calm but shared his assessment that the echocardiogram indicated that the mitral valve might not be functioning properly which, if that was the case, could require another round of surgery to re-repair or replace it. This was crushing news for me to hear, my immediate reaction being that I couldn’t go through this all over again. Pollock indicated that if the valve was not adequately repaired, this could be a contributing factor to if not the cause of the problems I was experiencing during recovery. He then left the room for a consultation with the colleague who had assisted him in reading the echocardiogram; on returning, he indicated that the problem with the mitral valve might only be of moderate severity and, if so, potentially could be controlled by medication.



To get a better read on the problem, Pollock arranged for me to go to Reston Hospital the next Monday (August 12) to have another TEE (internal echocardiogram) procedure done. The TEE was performed by Dr. Patel who earlier performed this procedure during the pre-surgery diagnostic tests I had in the run up to my surgery. Following the procedure, Dr. Patel reported to Sonia and me the very good news that the valve was adequately repaired and that I wouldn't need to have another open heart surgery to replace the valve. A week later, on Tuesday, August 20, I met with Dr. Pollock to discuss the TEE results and it was reassuring to hear him reiterate what Patel told me right after the TEE. Pollock explained that the process of repairing the mitral valve, which is close to the aortic valve, had pulled on the wall between the mitral valve and aortic artery, resulting in a minor degree of regurgitation between the blood flowing out of the mitral valve and the blood flowing into the aortic valve. Pollock indicated that this condition, if it were to worsen, can be controlled by medication (e.g., increasing my dosage of Metoprolol); however, he advised, what I now needed to refocus on was my recovery, in particular, walking.

I reminded him that when I had met with him on August 7, I had reported that I had been able to get up to walking 30 minutes or more. Pollock agreed that I was ready to start the cardiac rehabilitation program offered in the same building. However, he first wanted me to have a stress test. The earliest that I could get an appointment for this test at the Reston Hospital was Monday, August 26. After our meeting with Pollock, Sonia and I went upstairs to the Cardiac Rehabilitation facility to register for the program and to schedule starting my "cardiac rehab" on Tuesday, September 3, going three times a week at 7 a.m., thus making it possible for me to get back to the rest of my day, in particular, going home to telework or going into Washington, DC to work in my office at USAID.

***Depressing News is...Depressing*** – The news that I didn't need to go back into surgery not only lifted a big uncertainty from my shoulders but also my spirits, in effect, motivating me to speed up my recovery by making sure I was walking 30 minutes daily. However, my spirits had plummeted for nearly a week between the day that Dr. Pollock told me that I might need to have heart surgery again to have my mitral valve repaired and the day that Dr. Patel told me the results of the TEE. In effect, during that week, I was feeling sorry for myself, indeed, depressed. While initially recovering in the hospital, a member of "The Mended Hearts" (former heart surgery patients who provide support to new heart surgery patients) alerted me that one of the dangers one can experience during recovery is lapsing into depression. If I ever felt depressed, that definitely came to the fore after Pollock had told me the echocardiogram results indicated I might need to have open heart surgery again to re-repair or replace the mitral valve. This news had really put me into a quasi-depressed state.

Two days after my appointment for the echocardiogram and having heard Pollock's report, I had a follow up appointment on Friday, August 9 with my general practitioner (Dr. Tandeciarz) who was monitoring my blood counts. We discussed the news that Pollock had given me and how that news only worsened my feeling of being depressed. She prescribed a long-term (non-addictive) anti-depressant (Citalopram 10 MG – a generic of CELEXA 10 MG) to take once daily. I took the first pill that evening and also one on Saturday evening. By Saturday, however, I was feeling nauseous and also on Sunday morning. As I was to have the second TEE procedure the next morning (Monday), I decided to not to take another of these pills against the possibility that it was the culprit of making me nauseous.

Even on Monday morning I still felt a bit nauseous and told the anesthesiologist (Dr. Charles Dougherty) I had stopped taking the anti-depressant after two days. He told me not to worry because he would include an anti-nausea medicine with the anesthesia. Having stopped the anti-depressant, the nausea subsided. Further, with the good news reported initially to me by Patel and then by Pollock as a result of the TEE, my spirits soared. I later learned from the occupational therapist (Suze) that the antidepressant I had been taking normally causes nausea for a few days after which the nausea goes away. However, knowing I did not need to go back into surgery to have my mitral valve re-repaired or replaced, that news chased away my depression, resulting in no need for me to be on an antidepressant.

***The Thermostat Out of Whack – Symptom: Poorly Functioning Thermoregulation*** – On Wednesday, August 21, the day after we had met with Dr. Pollock, Sonia and I met with Dr. Massimiano, the surgeon who had performed the mitral valve repair and double bypass. The day Pollock gave us the prescription for the TEE, Sonia had the foresight, recognizing the possibility that I may need to go back to the hospital for heart surgery, to go ahead and schedule post-TEE follow ups with both Pollock and Massimiano. She was successful in getting the appointment with Massimiano the day after the appointment with Pollock.

When Massimiano walked into the room, he asked: “Am I in the doghouse?” I immediately replied: “No, I know you tried to do your best to repair the mitral valve.” However, Sonia answered in the affirmative, not about to let him off so lightly. While Sonia and I had forgotten to bring the CD with the TEE images, the nurse practitioner (this day it was Annette who met with us) contacted Reston Hospital to arrange for the hospital to fax Patel’s written report to Massimiano’s office. As Massimiano listened to me describe how my recovery was coming along and how I was feeling, the nurse brought Patel’s report, first one page and then a few minutes later the second page. Each time I paused as Massimiano read the report.

Massimiano then proceeded to reiterate what Patel and Pollock had explained to us—and he apologized that he had not taken the time to contact me directly by phone to tell me not to worry. But he went further to tell us that this condition sometimes happens after mitral valve repair but tends to correct as a patient’s body recovers and becomes stronger. Further he noted that in his experience some patients experienced more post-operative mitral regurgitation than presented in my case but that this problem had subsided with time. Finally, he said that during his years of doing mitral valve repairs, he had only one patient that ultimately had to go back through open heart surgery to address the problem – and that he was confident I would not be his second such patient, as the available evidence pointed to the problem resolving itself as I recovered from surgery or being controllable by adjusting my beta-blocker (Metoprolol 25 mg).

On another front, I asked Dr. Massimiano why in the weeks after surgery I was feeling overly sensitive to cool (indoor) and hot (outdoor) temperatures. We normally set the house thermostat to 73° Fahrenheit but I was finding that temperature too cold. On the other hand, in the midst of July and August, with terribly hot and humid days, on stepping outdoors I felt miserable as if my all my energy was being drained out of me. Massimiano explained that this is typical after heart surgery because the surgery’s trauma to the body temporarily messes up the body’s thermoregulation system. He reassured me that this problem would go away over time (and it did). In the meantime, as much as possible, I restricted my walks outside to the cooler parts of the day and/or walking around our home’s first floor. Fiddling with the thermostat was not a sustainable approach as Sonia quickly felt the temperature at 74° or 75° was too hot and reset the thermostat back to 73°. For someone who grew up in the tropics (Cali, Colombia), I haven’t yet figured out why she was finding 74° or 75° too hot—unless she had now acclimated to a temperate climate.

Dr. Massimiano asked if we could get the TEE images CD back to him either that day or the next, so he could review the images before leaving on a scheduled trip on Friday. Regardless of what he found on reviewing those images, he said that he would give me a phone call to provide a follow up report. Before taking our leave, I asked Massimiano if Sonia could take a photo of him with me. He kindly agreed and that photo is shared below.

We got the CD back to Massimiano’s office later that day and, two days later on Friday afternoon, Massimiano phoned to tell me that he had reviewed the images and that this visual evidence reconfirmed Dr. Patel’s written report and what Massimiano had told me, and that I shouldn’t worry and now should focus on my recovery, but that if I had any concerns to feel free to call him.



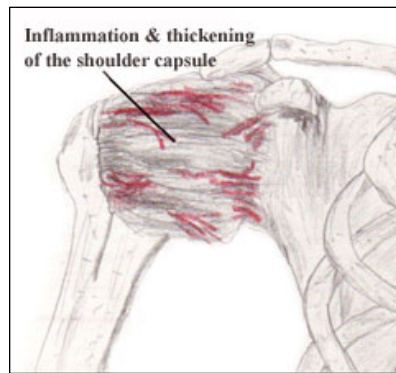
**Dr. Kerry J. Byrnes and Dr. Paul S. Massimiano**

***The Joint System Out of Whack – Symptom: Frozen Shoulder*** – One final symptom or side effect of my heart surgery that came to the fore post-surgery was that my right shoulder had a noticeably reduced range of motion. For example, when showering in the morning and placing the soap in my right hand, my hand could not reach all the way across my chest to wash my left armpit. I finally made an appointment to see Dr. George Aguiar at Commonwealth Orthopaedics. In 2004, almost ten years before, Aguiar helped me recover from pain in the same shoulder, at the time the treatment being possibly a cortisone injection plus doing some arm exercises to stretch my shoulder muscles.



**Dr. George Aguiar**

On reviewing the X-Rays taken of my shoulder, Dr. Aguiar diagnosed the problem as “frozen shoulder” (or adhesive capsulitis).



You may be asking what is frozen shoulder, the answer to which follows. In the shoulder, the

glen humeral joint (ball and socket joint) is surrounded by a fibrous capsule that is reinforced with several ligaments. This capsule/ligament complex serves several functions: 1) keep the joint water tight; 2) provide support to help hold the ball in the socket at the end ranges of shoulder motion; 3) provide sufficient volume to allow the shoulder to move through an incredibly wide range to position the hand in space.

When frozen shoulder syndrome occurs, this capsule becomes inflamed, thickened and contracted. This process dramatically affects shoulder mobility. The contracted capsule prematurely reaches maximal stretch before the shoulder reaches its normal end range of motion. As the capsule contracture increases, shoulder motion decreases. ([Source](#))

In short, frozen shoulder is caused by inflammation of the joint lining which causes scar tissue to form, thicken, and tighten in the connective tissue enclosing the joint, thereby restricting movement in the shoulder joint. While there are a number of actual or potential causes of frozen shoulder, apparently the condition is not uncommon in patients recovering from open heart surgery. Whatever might have been the cause of frozen shoulder in my case, Aguiar gave me a cortisone injection for some immediate relief and prescribed a course of physical therapy which I undertook at the [Reston Therapy and Fitness Center](#), with sessions scheduled twice a week plus home exercises. At the start of the therapy, I could only raise my right arm 90 degrees; however, after a month of therapy sessions, the primary focus of which was “joint mobilization” and doing stretching exercises, I was able to raise my straight up alongside my head with an overall increase in range of motion of the arm. With this progress I graduated from the therapy, with the therapist and Dr. Aguiar encouraging me to continue the stretching exercises daily at home.



**Jorge and Kerry**

## Transitioning Back to a Normal Life

### *Getting Back to Work*

On Friday, August 9, my supervisor (Tracy Quilter) came to visit me at my home. We talked about how my recovery was going and possible scenarios for getting me on track to return to work, hopefully by early September, especially in light of the possibility that I might need to again go through heart surgery. On August 27, the day after the TEE's positive outcome (i.e., that I didn't need to undergo a second open heart surgery), Tracy phoned to report that USAID authorized me effective Monday, August 19, to begin teleworking from home for up to 10 hours per week, with this ceiling to be revisited from week to week. This would allow me to start catching up on nearly six weeks of what I discovered was an accumulation of nearly 1,000 emails, participate in conference calls (e.g., the Bureau for Food Security biweekly call to the USAID Missions in Central America and Haiti who were implementing Feed the Future food security programs), and review and comment on documents (e.g., various proposals organizations had submitted to USAID seeking funding to help Central America's coffee rust-stricken farmers to address the growing crisis).

On Tuesday, September 3 (the day after Labor Day), Sonia and I made a trial run commute to the office, more for the benefit of Sonia to see that I would be able to make the 1+ hour commute each way. The next day, Wednesday, September 4 (one day less than two months after my heart surgery on July 5), I returned to work for an eight-hour day—and repeated that Friday, September 6. Thereafter, during the next phase of my recovery, I worked full-time Tuesdays and Thursday, and then part-time on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, teleworking or going to the office after my cardiac rehabilitation sessions on those days.

### *Getting My Heart (and Shoulder) Back in Shape – Cardiac Rehabilitation Program*

On Thursday, September 7, Sonia and I went for my first cardiotherapy session, this on its first day being comprised of an hour of paperwork and a half hour of workouts on the treadmill, recumbent bike, and two other exercise machines. This facility, located on the fifth floor of the Physicians Building adjacent to the Lansdowne Hospital, is well appointed with exercise equipment and a friendly and professional staff of administrators (Tamara and Jerome) and nurses (Brenda, Mark, Sandy, Tammy, Wendy) who monitored me as I went through my exercises. The regimen also includes after each use of a machine, wiping it with an antiseptic towel to keep it free of sweat, germs, etc. for the next user. The room temperature is kept on the cool side in addition to fans circulating the air which does help one from sweating and/or overheating.

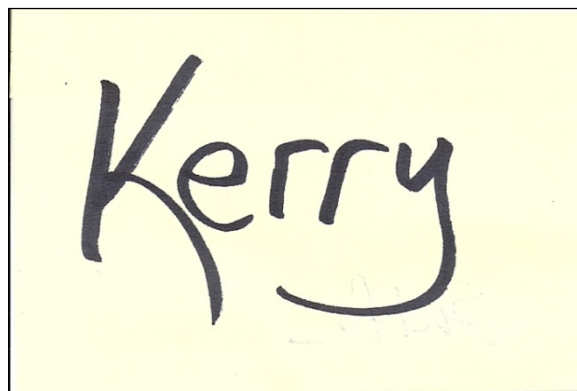


Kerry, Tammy, and Jerome

I originally scheduled my 7 a.m. appointments for Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays but during the following week, with a 7 a.m. slot having opened on Monday, I rescheduled my sessions for Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays. Further, the facility's management decided to open 15 minutes earlier at 6:45 a.m., this meaning the facility's door would open at 6:30 a.m. (rather than 6:45 a.m.), making it possible for me to be signed in, wired with the monitor, and blood pressure taken during the first five minutes so that I could quickly get on the treadmill. This earlier start time made it possible to get back on the road to my home in Reston much sooner, especially of concern given the volume of traffic on Route 7 East, most vehicles having just a driver headed to Tysons Corner (VA) or Washington, DC. On getting home, I quickly showered, dressed, and drove to the commuter parking lot to catch a bus to West Falls Church, there boarding the Orange Line Metro to my place of work (USAID) at the Federal Triangle Metro Stop (Ronald Reagan Building) in Washington, DC. As one more time saver, I soon discovered an alternate route to exit the hospital parking lot, saving 10 minutes on the drive back home, taking a back road for a mile to avoid much of the traffic jam on Route 7 East, in effect, avoiding delays in getting on Route 7 and having to sit through three or four traffic lights.

Of course, Sonia was concerned that I was putting too much pressure on myself to get back to work too soon and to get to the office too early. On the other hand, getting to the office as early as possible, even if only one hour earlier, meant only having to take two hours of leave rather than three hours on those days I had cardiotherapy. Being out two months for the surgery and recovery had really eaten into my sick leave and annual leave, creating a challenge not only to build myself back up (i.e., energy and stamina) but also my leave balances. Indeed, for a while, my sick leave went into a negative balance.

The typical cardiac rehabilitation session would consist of getting my blood pressure taken before and after the session. I would then get on the treadmill and walk 2.0 mph for five minutes to warm up, and then bump up the speed to 2.5 mph for 10 minutes, and then increased the speed to 3.0 mph for the last five minutes. I would then do 5 minutes on the upper body ergometer and 20 minutes on the recumbent bike. I begged off using the recumbent cross trainer (not shown) because I found it just too herky jerky on my arms and legs, especially worrisome during the period I was going through physical therapy for my frozen right shoulder. One day I asked Brenda why everyone else had a white name tag, while mine was beige. She explained that the beige name tag is for patients susceptible to fainting and falling. However, for all the time I put in rehab, I fortunately did not have any fainting or falling spells.



The minimum exercise time that I would complete was 30 minutes on these machines, not counting the five minutes of warm up on the treadmill. On one day, I added an extra five minutes on the treadmill and an extra five minutes on the recumbent bike to get my workout total time to 40 minutes (not including the five minutes of warm up). By graduation from cardiac rehab, the goal that I reached was a total of 50 minutes (including the five minutes of warm up).





**Kerry on Recumbent Bike, Treadmill, and Upper Body Ergometer**



**Tammy Explains the Finer Points of How to Pedal with My Arms**



As of early October, I was back at work (at the office or teleworking) except for the time I spent going to my cardiac rehabilitation and frozen shoulder physical therapy sessions. The cardiac rehabilitation staff were professional and friendly (no Nurse Ratched!) and the minutes spent huffing and puffing away on the treadmill or recumbent bicycle went by much more quickly when a nurse has a few moments to chat with the patient about whatever beyond monitoring-related questions. One nurse, commenting on the experience of working in the rehabilitation center, referred to it in passing as “three chicks in the rehab” which I suggested would be a great name for a Hollywood film or TV series set in a cardiac rehabilitation facility and focusing on the drama of the patients struggling to recover from heart disease and the nurses encouraging patients to keep up the good work amidst the struggles of their own personal lives.

One day, as I was on the treadmill, I noticed one of the nurses, Brenda, was checking with a patient on the recumbent bike to see if his medications had changed, how he was feeling, and so on. I later mentioned to Brenda that I felt like a passenger on a flight sitting at the front of economy, watching the flight attendant, with notepad in hand, taking the drink order for a passenger sitting in first class. A few days later, when I was pedaling away on the recumbent bike, Brenda with notepad in hand was checking with me on how things were going—and I asked if I could get Eggs Benedict and a blueberry muffin for breakfast – and a chocolate chip cookie for dessert, to which she replied: “Kerry, didn’t you learn anything in the class on risk factors for heart disease and the importance of a heart healthy diet?”



**Brenda Taking My Breakfast Order on "Boeing Byrnes" Cardiac Rehab Flight**

After almost three months, starting on 9/10/13 and ending on 11/29/13, I had attended approximately 37 cardiac rehab sessions, including classes on heart disease risk factors and healthy eating habits, the latter focusing on the good, the bad, and the ugly of fat and cholesterol. In addition, during the balance of the week, at work or on the weekend, I would do two 30-minute walks.



**Wendy and Kerry after the Healthy Eating Habits Class**



**Mark Checks Kerry's Blood Pressure Mid-Ride on Recumbent Bike**



**Tammy & Kerry Discuss Monitoring of Patient Heart Vitals**



**Kerry Getting Blood Pressure Checked Before and After Exercises**

On Friday, November 15, 2013, after my cardiac rehab session, I met with Dr. Pollock. He listened to my heart and indicated that the murmur seemed to be reduced, indicating that functioning of the mitral value was improving during the course of my recovery from surgery. While I asked if I could now get off the Metoprolol ER Succinate 25 mg tablets (beta blocker to slow my heart rate and lower my blood pressure), he indicated that I should continue to take this medicine to help ensure my heart did not overwork. Also, to lower my cholesterol and triglyceride levels, and raise good cholesterol (HDL) levels, I'm continuing to take Atorvastatin 10 mg tablets. Dr. Pollock indicated I was looking good, to keep up my exercise regime once I graduated from cardiac rehab in a couple of weeks, and come back to see him in six months. On Monday, December 2, I went to my last cardiac rehab session, putting in my time on the treadmill and recumbent bike and graduating (receiving my certificate of completion).



With the weather getting colder into December and January – and not having quite faithfully maintained an adequate exercise regime walking around the Ronald Reagan Building and/or our Reston Target store, I finally signed up for a membership in Reston’s new Lifetime Fitness facility that had opened in the fall of 2013. Open seven days a week from 4 a.m. to midnight, it will be hard to find an excuse each week to not get in at least five 30-minute exercise sessions at this excellent facility.

**Flight Log Epilogue:** As in the famous Paul Anka song “My Way” sung by Frank Sinatra, “the end is near” at least for this “reverse autobiography.” During our virtual stopovers for *Maintenance Encounters in the Realm of Hip Surgeons and Heart Savers*, you met some special people who helped keep me whole on the health front where I had major surgeries in 2011 (for a hip replacement) and in 2013 (open heart surgery for a mitral valve repair and a double bypass).

A special stopover was meeting Crystal Hawkins who reprogrammed my navigation system with the Epley maneuver to realign my inner ear crystals, thus “curing” the dizziness I had suffered for over a month. When Crystal’s parents named her, they surely didn’t envision that she would have a career path specializing in ear problems and helping patients overcome benign positional vertigo, in effect, helping them to get the “crystals” in their head back in place.

A couple of years earlier, Dr. Mark Madden conducted my left hip replacement surgery that relieved me of increasingly burdensome hip pain that no longer could be treated by pills or shots. After a string of heart specialist consultations, we met Dr. Paul Massimiano who repaired my heart’s mitral valve as part of open-heart double bypass surgery. These major surgeries were required for maintenance on “Boeing 007” Byrnes to keep me healthy, on the job, fit to play ball with grandson Braden, and ready for at least another year or two of work, before retirement, including flying to work-related destinations in Latin America and the Caribbean, if not also vacations in Hawaii and Colombia.

As you may have noted, the “Getting to the Heart of the Matter” section brought several lessons learned to the fore. The first is that, in matters of the heart, it is not a good thing to put off seeing a doctor when you find yourself worrying about some physical symptom that you are experiencing – I should have gone much sooner to see Dr. Tandeciarz about my shortness of breath, though it was more being worried about my dizziness than my shortness of breath that prompted me to see the doctor. Fortunately, when I told Dr. T about the latter symptom, she recognized the signs of a potentially serious heart condition. The second lesson is that short of a heart attack and possibly an immediate surgical intervention, it is not easy to get to a heart surgeon quickly. After my appointment with Dr. T, I wound up seeing and having diagnostics done by a series of Virginia Heart specialists including Dr. Bazaz (who reviewed with me the results of my hospital-based diagnostics and performed an echocardiogram), Dr. Patel (who conducted the TEE), Dr. Luy (who reviewed the TEE results and scheduled a cardiac catheterization), and Dr. Pollock (who conducted the cardiac catheterization)! Even when I met with Dr. Massimiano on June 5, the first open date for scheduling my surgery with him at Inova Fairfax Hospital was not until almost a month later on July 1 and even then my surgery date was rescheduled to July 5.

Following surgery, much of which I can’t describe because I was under anesthesia and thus unconscious, I shared my recovery experiences, including not only extensive interaction with health care professionals in my home or at their office, but also my non-normal recovery plagued by numerous bumps in the road that threatened to set back my progress toward recovery and plunged me in a mild state of depression. Fortunately, as things turned out, I didn’t need to go back into surgery for re-repair of the mitral valve and avoided going on (or staying on) an anti-depressant. I also put in motion a game plan to get back to work on my job at USAID, initially teleworking from home for up to 10 hours per week and then going to the office full-time some days and part-time others while in the cardiotherapy program three times per week. After completing cardiac rehabilitation, I finally signed up for membership in Lifetime Fitness, in order to motivate me – my mind – to do my exercises five times per week, and 30+ minutes per session, to help maintain a healthy heart.

**Flight Log Update:** Ultimately, with the passage of time, the “repaired” mitral valve was increasingly deteriorating in its functioning, to an extent that could not be addressed by more medication. After various diagnostics in late January of 2018, I decided to have the mitral valve replaced, the surgery for which was done by Dr. Eric Sarin on February 19 in Fairfax Hospital. While there were two complications, they were dealt with as follows. The first – I had to be taken from the ICU back into surgery when it was discovered there was internal bleeding around one of the drainage tubes. That problem was fixed (though I’m not quite sure how). The second problem, a small tear in my lung, took nearly a week to resolve. An X-Ray of my chest was taken each day or so to monitor the progress of the lung in closing up and healing the tear. On February 26, after a week in the hospital, I was discharged—and subsequently was blessed with a quick recovery with none of the post-surgery complications that plagued me after my 2013 heart surgery. Within a few weeks, I was able to do a 30-minute walk without any shortness of breath – and my cardiologist, Dr. Dean Pollock, proposed and supported the idea that if I kept up a walking regime, there was no need for me to go back into cardiac rehabilitation. In the weeks that followed I was successful in building up my stamina and able to walk faster, covering the same distance (about 1.5 miles) in less and less time (now walking that distance in 30 minutes). Bravo Dr. Sarin!!!



**Dr. Eric Sarin, INOVA Medical Group**

With progress being made on my recovery from heart surgery, I was able to turn my attention to getting back to trying to bring closure on this virtual stopover journey from Miami, Florida to Reston, Virginia.



**Dr. Shenandoah Cassiday (John Billingsley) on the CBS TV-Series *Intelligence***

*Hell, Gabriel, you proved something last night that philosophers have wondered across time immemorial. The mind is a collection of perceptions, calculations, memories, instinct. But, uh..., ultimately the most important decisions...they are not made by our mind, are they? No, sirree! Where we find our most profound intelligence is, after all, in the heart.*

**(Dr. Shenandoah Cassiday, *Intelligence*, Season 1, Episode 9, “Athens”, March 23, 2014)**

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While yet in the hospital following my heart surgery in 2013, I began to reflect on two additional virtual stopovers that I yet wanted to make, the first of these being my ***Real Estate Encounters in the Realm of Community Founders and Mortgage Lenders***, in which I share the story about how Reston came into being and how I came to live in our current house.

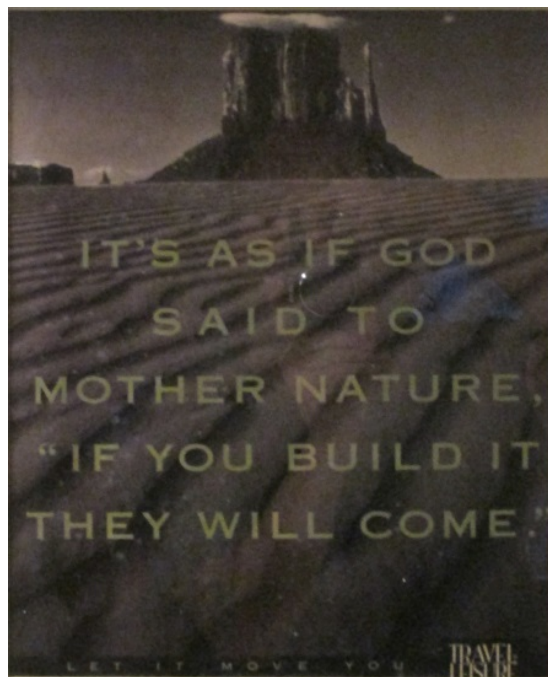
## Chapter 18

### *Real Estate Encounters in the Realm of Community Founders and Mortgage Lenders*

On this virtual stopover, we touch down in Reston, Virginia, where we'll meet a community founder and a mortgage lender who each had an impact on my personal life during the 30+ years that I've lived in Reston. This section's two vignettes, introducing **Robert Simon** (a community founder) and **Carlos Galván** (a mortgage lender), trace out how their lives intersected with my own.

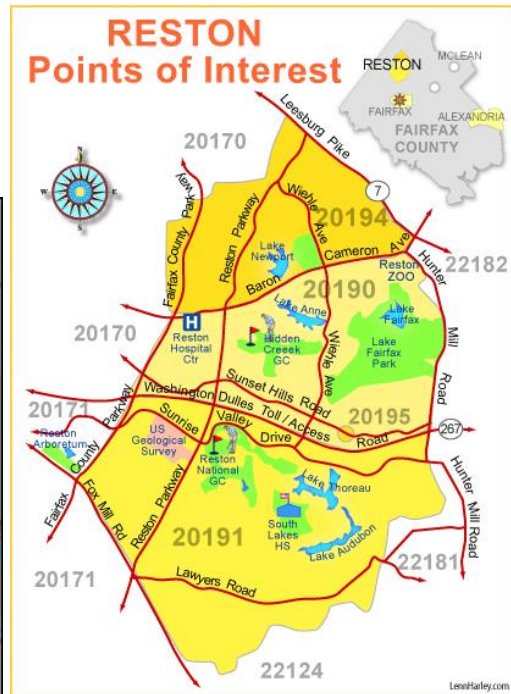
#### Community Founder

There's an element of the vignettes that follow that is reminiscent of the film *Field of Dreams* (1989) in which an Iowa farmer, Ray Kinsella (Kevin Costner), hears a voice telling him "If you build it, he will come." Ray is inspired to build a baseball field in the middle of a cornfield.





In a somewhat similar vein, a New York City real estate businessman "heard a voice" that inspired him to build a town ("A Place Called Reston") in the middle of what for years had been a farm in northern Virginia.



### The Reston Story

That Big Apple businessman "built it" and over the ensuing 50 years this "New Town" would attract and become the home of nearly 60,000 residents. One of these residents in this real life *Town of Dreams* is now the man who built "it" – **Robert Edward Simon, Jr.**

*Robert Edward Simon, Jr. (4/10/1914 – 9/21/2015)*



*Where there is no vision, the people perish.*



### **An Interview with Robert E. Simon, Jr. (8/25/86)**

After graduating from Harvard University, a young **Robert E. Simon, Jr.** took over the family's real estate management and development business which included controlling interest in the equity ownership of New York City's Carnegie Hall, which Simon himself ran for 25 years. In the mid-1950s Carnegie Hall was facing potential competition if another concert hall (Lincoln Center) was built. In 1960, Simon sold the Carnegie Hall properties to the city of New York, and used the sale's proceeds (\$5 million for the equity with \$2 million of that owned by the Simon family) to buy 6,750 acres in Fairfax County, Virginia. How these two transactions—the sale of Carnegie Hall and the purchase of land in Fairfax Country, Virginia—came about and impacted on my personal life is an interesting story that begins with Robert E. Simon Jr.'s father in the early 1920s.

### **The Sale of Carnegie Hall:**

Robert Simon Sr. (1877-1935) owned a real estate conglomerate named [HERCER Realty Corporation]. In 1925 Simon Sr. purchased Carnegie Hall from Louise Carnegie, widow of Andrew Carnegie, with the understanding that he must maintain the building with its concert stage for five years, unless another hall capable of taking its place was built.... Simon formed Carnegie Hall Inc. and oversaw the entire operation of the properties from 1925 until his untimely death from a heart attack in 1935; his wife and four children inherited majority ownership. The presidency of Carnegie Hall Inc. passed from Robert Simon Sr. to M. Murray Weisman from 1936-1939, and to Robert Simon Jr. in 1940. Except for the years 1943 to 1946, when Simon served in World War II, he remained president of Carnegie Hall Inc. until 1960 when the Hall properties, with its four concert halls and 130 studios and stores, was sold.



Under the leadership of the Simon family Carnegie Hall expanded and grew. Significant improvements included the addition of street-level storefronts, the renovation of the studio towers and the replacement of the Hall's original organ. These improvements enabled Carnegie Hall to remain open during the Great Depression and to continue a tradition of musical excellence.

In 1955, plans were announced for the Lincoln Square (later Lincoln Center) project, a slum clearance initiative to provide Fordham University with a midtown location, a new Metropolitan Opera House, and a new concert hall for the New York Philharmonic, which had made its home at Carnegie Hall since 1892.... Robert Simon Jr. made the decision to sell the Carnegie Hall properties. He received an offer from real estate developer Louis Glickman of \$5,250,000, conditional on the contract becoming null and void if New York City or the New York Philharmonic offered to purchase Carnegie Hall. ...

In December 1959, violinist Isaac Stern lamented to philanthropist Jacob Kaplan that his recent performances with the New York Philharmonic could be his last at Carnegie Hall and that something more should be done to save it from demolition. Kaplan agreed to fund a new effort if Stern was willing to spearhead the campaign. A committee was mobilized, and Kaplan pledged \$100,000 towards a new campaign to have the City of New York purchase Carnegie Hall. Stern had to convince Mayor Robert Wagner that Carnegie Hall would not compete with Lincoln Center, but should instead be saved to serve as a national center for teaching music and the development of young artists. The Bard Act of 1956 1960 amendment by Senator MacNeil Mitchell—championed by Stern—permitted the City to acquire buildings of “special character or special historical or aesthetic interest or value” by purchase or condemnation. These developments provided the legal means for Stern and his committee to spring into action. He appealed to politicians and civic leaders, and contacted dozens of famous musicians to sign a petition in favor of saving Carnegie Hall. Their signatures were added to thousands already gathered by earlier committees.

On June 10, 1960 the New York City Board of Estimate approved the purchase of Carnegie Hall [for \$5 million over the existing mortgage]. ... Simon had lowered the purchase price by \$250,000 as [the corporation's] contribution to the Hall. The buildings were leased to the nonprofit Carnegie Hall Corporation, newly formed to run the Hall with Isaac Stern as its president. Stern remained president until his death in 2001, when the title was retired in his honor, and the Carnegie Hall Corporation continues to operate Carnegie Hall today (Source: The Robert E. Simon Jr. Collection of Carnegie Hall, as updated in September 2014 by Robert E. Simon, Jr.).

With the proceeds from the sale of Carnegie Hall, how did Simon come to buy the northern Virginia land that would become the town of Reston, Virginia?

### **The Purchase of Land in Fairfax County, Virginia**

In reflecting on this question, Simon recalled that in 1961:

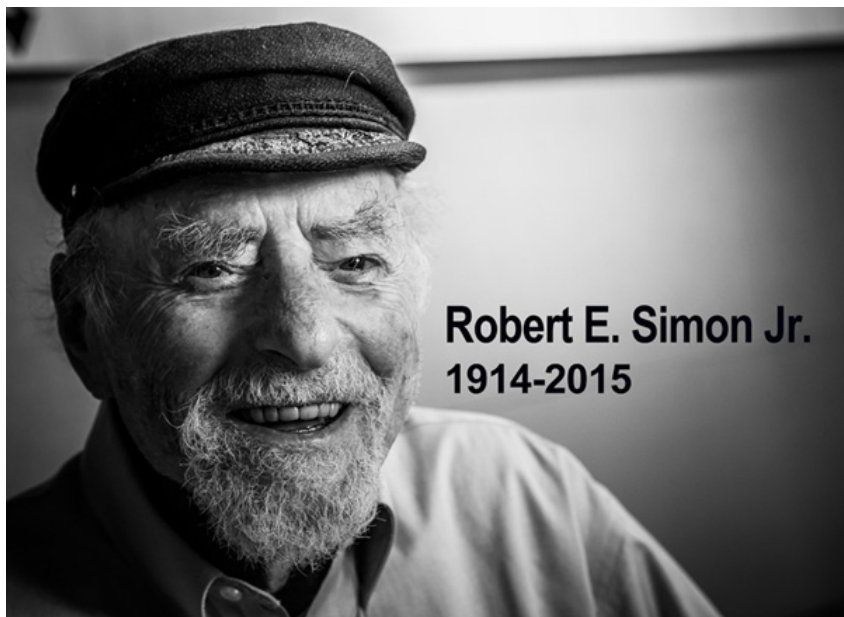
A representative of the [Washington realty] firm of Shannon & Luchs was given the assignment to sell...[a 6,750-acre parcel of] Virginia [countryside] property. He spoke to Jim Lannegan in New York hoping to interest Roger Stevens [a New York-based real estate entrepreneur, founding chairman of the National Council on the Arts, and at a later date the first chairman of the Kennedy Center], but [he wasn't interested and]...Jim called a friend of his, Henry Wright, “Henry, do you know anybody that is interested in 6,000-odd acres in Virginia?” Henry replied, “Maybe, if you come on up and see me.” The person he had in mind, of course, was one Bob Simon.

The project was really out of my [area of] expertise, but it seemed such a marvelous opportunity. The location was fantastic. Construction crews had started moving earth on the land on which the magnificent Dulles Airport terminal building and runways would be built. An airport like that in what seems like a desert will cause the desert to flower. And the Dulles Airport was being put into Fairfax County, then the single, fastest-growing county in the United States. The property was 18 miles from the nation's capital and fastest-growing metropolitan area in the United States. And to top it all off, the property was beautiful and the price was right: \$800,000 in cash over a \$12,000,000 interest-free ten-year mortgage. It was an irresistible challenge (Source: Robert E. Simon, Jr., "The Genesis of Reston," Reston Lecture Series, January 12, 1966, as updated in September 2014 by Robert E. Simon, Jr.).

Simon spent the 90 days between the signing of the contract to purchase the property and taking title of it to develop "the program" – his vision for the property to become a "New Town." He did so by making a list of everything he had found enjoyable in his travels in Europe and the United States and then crossing off the list what didn't make sense. After developing "the program," Simon hired Conklin + Rossant to develop a master plan for this "New Town," the planned community that would come to be known as "A Place called Reston." The name, suggested by Simon's wife and mother, derived from Robert E. Simon's initials (RES) plus shorting "town" to "ton."

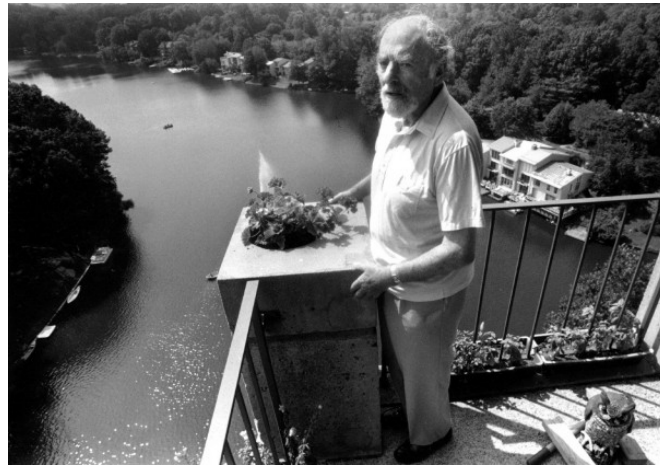
In 1964, when the \$2,000,000 had been used up paying for the initial planning and early construction of Reston and 50 banks had turned down requests for financing, Simon brought in Gulf Oil as an investor to help finance the project's implementation. In 1967, Gulf retained a consultant, Bob Ryan, to advise them whether to continue providing financing for Reston, Ryan succeeded in being elected president of Reston, VA, Inc. by the Gulf directors and forced Simon out as Chairman of the Board.

[Ryan] pledged to stand by Simon's innovative master plan and kept some of his key executives, but concentrated on churning out cost-competitive "production housing" that had little of the architectural distinction of the original clusters. Still, the lower prices attracted more buyers, and by 1979, when [Gulf] sold its interests to another energy giant, Mobil, Gulf had recovered its investment and paid Simon \$1 million for his stock in the company's Reston subsidiary. (Source: Encyclopedia Virginia, as updated in September 2014 by Robert E. Simon, Jr.)



Robert E. Simon, Jr. (1966 and 2015)

In 1993 Simon returned to Reston, taking up his residence in Heron House, Reston's first high-rise which overlooks Lake Anne and Washington Plaza in Lake Anne Village Center. In 2004, a bronze statue of Simon was placed on a park bench on Washington Plaza, the original heart of the community that Simon built. In 2014 *Money* magazine named Reston, celebrating its 50<sup>th</sup> birthday, as the 10<sup>th</sup> best place to live in the United States. That same year Simon celebrated his 100<sup>th</sup> birthday. Sadly Simon passed away just over a year later on September 21, 2015 at the age of 101.



**Flight Log Memories:** In the early 1980s, my parents, who were living in an apartment on East 56<sup>th</sup> St. in New York City, not far from the West 57<sup>th</sup> Street location of Carnegie Hall (which had been owned by the Simon family up to 1961), began looking into where they would like to live in retirement. Ultimately the location they chose was in the Washington, DC area, specifically, a townhouse in Reston, Virginia. They based their decision on the many positive benefits Reston offered, not the least of which was its proximity to Dulles Airport. This was a key criterion for my father, Francis Byrnes (see vignette) who, was planning ahead to the day that he would retire and would want ready access to an international airport to facilitate traveling to the developing countries to work as an international agricultural development consultant after retiring from the Rockefeller Foundation. With the foundation, my father had worked in the Philippines from 1963-1968 with the International Rice Research Institute and in Colombia from 1968-75 with the International Center for Tropical Agriculture. In 1975 the Rockefeller Foundation reassigned my father to the foundation's headquarters in New York City to assist in establishing the International Agricultural Development Service (IADS), the offices of which were located within the foundation's offices.

My parents' plan was to live in the Big Apple while my father worked with IADS and, in the meantime, rent the Reston townhouse until dad retired when they would relocate to Reston. But, not too long after purchasing the Reston townhouse, the Rockefeller Foundation decided to relocate IADS to Washington, DC. This decision resulted

in sending my father to the DC area to locate office space for IADS. Perhaps coincidentally, the office that my father located for IADS in Rosslyn, Virginia was not only just across the Potomac River from IADS' principal client (the U.S. Agency for International Development located in the Department of State), but also a little over a half hour from Reston where my parents had purchased the townhouse originally intended to be their retirement home. When IADS moved into the organization's new office in Rosslyn, my father and mother moved to their Reston townhouse located on the 18<sup>th</sup> hole of the Reston Golf Course. Once my parents were living in Reston, much closer to us in Alabama (where we were living at the time) than when they lived in NYC, it was even easier for Sonia, Shannon, and me to drive up in a day from Alabama to Virginia for a family visit—and this was our introduction to Reston!

In 1983 I began looking for a new job, leading to an invitation by USAID to come to Washington, DC for a job interview. However, before that opportunity translated into a job offer, my mother, Ethel Byrnes (see vignette), died in March of 1984, precipitating a quick trip to Reston for the funeral. A few months later the job offer materialized and in late October 1984 we drove from Florence to Reston, moving in with my father until we could sell our house in Florence and reinvest the proceeds in a home in the Washington, DC area.

In the meantime, having placed Shannon in third grade at the Terraset primary school serving the neighborhood where my father lived, we limited our house hunting to the area serving Terraset. Within this limited search area and having sold our house in Florence, we were able to locate a townhouse (2161 Greenkeepers Ct.) meeting our needs. In early 1985, we closed on that property which happened to be located on the 7<sup>th</sup> hole of same golf course, just a 15-minute walk across the golf course from my father's townhouse.

In 1993, the same year that Robert Simon moved from New York City to Reston, Sonia and I sold our Greenkeepers Ct. townhouse on Reston's south side and purchased a patio home (Cambridge model as shown below) at 11501 Woodstock Way in the Woodstock Cluster on the north side of Reston, not far from the Lake Anne Village Center's Washington Plaza where Robert Simon moved during that same year into his 13<sup>th</sup> floor condo in Heron House.



**Woodstock Cluster in Reston, Virginia**





### **Our Home in Woodstock Cluster - 11501 Woodstock Way (plot 13-C)**

Over the ensuing two decades (1993-2014), while I never met Mr. Simon, I occasionally spotted Reston's #1 celebrity and giant in the ***Realm of Community Developers*** when he was visiting Reston locations such as Washington Plaza in the Lake Anne Village Center. Being somewhat a shy person myself, whenever I did have a chance to approach Simon, introduce myself, and say hello, I passed on such opportunity, that is, until recently when, on Friday, May 2, I sent a letter to him requesting if it might be possible for me to meet with him to discuss my writing project.

To my surprise, the very next day, after spending mid-day walking around Reston Town Center's Pet Festival and coming home to take a nap, Sonia woke me to tell me that Bob Simon was on the phone. You can imagine how fast I woke up, took the phone from Sonia, and said hello to him. Simon was most gracious and indicated he had received my letter and asked what would be convenient time in the coming week to meet with him at his condo. We agreed on getting together on Tuesday at 5 p.m. What follows are a few highlights of our conversation plus a photo of the two who heard that Voice, one called to build Reston and the other to live here.

On this initial visit with Mr. Simon I didn't want to take up a lot of his time, so focused on thanking him for meeting with me, telling him a bit about my writing project, and mentioning that I had written down a few questions that I wanted to ask him. I passed to him the draft vignette I had written about him from secondary sources, indicating that I'd welcome any feedback from him by phone or when we next had a chance to get together. When he asked if I had a pad to take notes, I said I could jot down information on the same page on which I had written my questions.

For the first question, I mentioned that I had recalled reading that Simon played the piano and asked what had been the impetus for learning to play this instrument. Back in the days when he was a child, Simon recalled, "no self-respecting living room was without a piano; it was a piece of furniture; and my mother felt that all of the children should learn how to play the piano. So I learned to play the piano somewhere around when I was five to seven years old." While Simon never thought of pursuing a career in music, in later years, when living on Long Island for 15 years, he got together every week or so with a couple of other musicians—a cello player and a violinist—as a classical trio to play the music of such composers as Beethoven, Haydn, and Mozart—not a public performance, just to enjoy making music.

Years later, once he moved to Reston, he met each week for a couple of years with a more professional duo (cello player and violinist) to play classical music. He found it difficult to keep up with them because they wouldn't accommodate by slowing down in difficult passages, as had the Long Island string duo. Simon found he had to put in more and more time practicing to keep up with the pace of the trio's other two members. After two years of this, he said to himself "what's the point?" and called it quits on his amateur musical career. I had a reason for asking Simon about playing the piano but will return to this near the end of this vignette.

Next I asked Simon about what he did back in New York City after Gulf Oil squeezed him out of Reston in 1967. After the land for Reston had been purchased in the early 1960s, Simon commuted back and forth between northern Virginia and the Big Apple. After the fallout with Gulf Oil, Simon returned to NYC to continue managing the family's real estate business. But he also took on consulting assignments, including visiting an Indian reservation on behalf of then Secretary of the Interior Stewart Udall, reporting on community conditions in Los Angeles in the wake of the Watts Riot of 1965, and even taking on an assignment to Thailand.

The conversation then turned to the issue at the core of the difference between Simon and Gulf Oil, the former having planned for seven plaza-centered villages and one town center within the overall town of Reston, and the latter trying to maximize return on its investment by increasing the density of housing per acre and ditching the concept of plaza-centered villages in favor of the now-conventional shopping center model which has as its "center" not a lake or plaza but a huge parking lot. I recalled, in this regard, that I had noticed that the housing density in the Links Pond Cluster we lived in after moving to Reston was less than that of the neighboring cluster (Colonial Green) been built after Links Pond, reflecting a trend by the developer to squeeze in more houses and a greater profit out of each new cluster built.

I mentioned to Simon that, since living in Reston from 1984, I had witnessed that the original Hunter Woods Shopping Center which had a quasi-plaza design was later torn down and rebuilt as a huge parking lot surrounded by a semi-circle of stores, exactly opposite of the goal Simon had envisioned for a community having at its heart plaza-centered villages. Simon then pointed out not only that the South Lakes Shopping Center had a parking lot surrounded by a half circle of stores but also that the way this "village" had been built hid the lake next to the shopping center, in favor of putting in more stores, thus forfeiting the extra value of there being a waterfront.

I asked if it was difficult for him in 1993 to return to Reston as his home in retirement. Actually, he said, where he was living in Long Island didn't afford the community life style he had enjoyed in Reston – and that getting around Long Island would require driving a car. When he found that he was frequently being invited to come back to Reston to participate in various events such as a ribbon-cutting ceremony and that Reston, especially Lake Anne Village Center, came closest to the community qualities he valued, he made up his mind to retire in Reston and rent a condo in Heron House. Today, from his condo on the 13<sup>th</sup> floor, Simon has a beautiful view of Washington Plaza, Lake Anne, the surrounding woods, and, in the distance ten miles or so away, the skyline of Tyson Corner. It was in this village community in 1994, when Simon was out for his daily walk, that he met Cheryl Terio who later became his wife.

Not wanting to overstay my welcome, I asked Simon if it might be possible to prevail on Cheryl to take a photo of Bob and me—and both kindly agreed. Before having the photo taken, I presented to Bob a bottle of red wine sent by Sonia who wasn't able to accompany me to the interview because of a painful knee. As Simon expressed gratitude, and in connection with the question I had asked him about when he learned to play the piano, I also gave to him a CD – *The Best of Martin Denny's Exotica*. I mentioned that **Martin Denny** (see vignette) was the piano player who, back in the late 1950s, created the musical genre that came to be known as "the sounds of Exotica", and that I thought that Simon, also being a piano player, would enjoy listening to this CD. He quickly replied as he opened the cellophane wrap on the CD that he looked forward to listening to the CD as he drank a glass of the wine that Sonia had sent.



**Kerry Byrnes and Bob Simon (Heron House, Lake Anne Village Center, Reston)**

**May 6, 2014**

The last time I saw Bob was at Reston's Founder's Day on April 11, 2015, at an event to honor Bob and his contributions to the creation and growth of Reston. Bob was in good spirits but frail and I only had a chance to briefly greet him after the event. He had just turned 101 years of age the day before on April 10. Earlier that month I sent a birthday card to Bob, its front portraying an image of the White House and the birthday greeting encouraging the recipient to display the card so that visitors seeing the card will be impressed that the recipient had received birthday greetings from the President. I added a note to Bob that he didn't need a birthday card from any President to impress us as we already were so grateful for what he done during his life to establish Reston. Sometime after Founder's Day I received a phone call from Bob who wanted to let me know that he had received and enjoyed the card; that was the last time that I spoke with him.

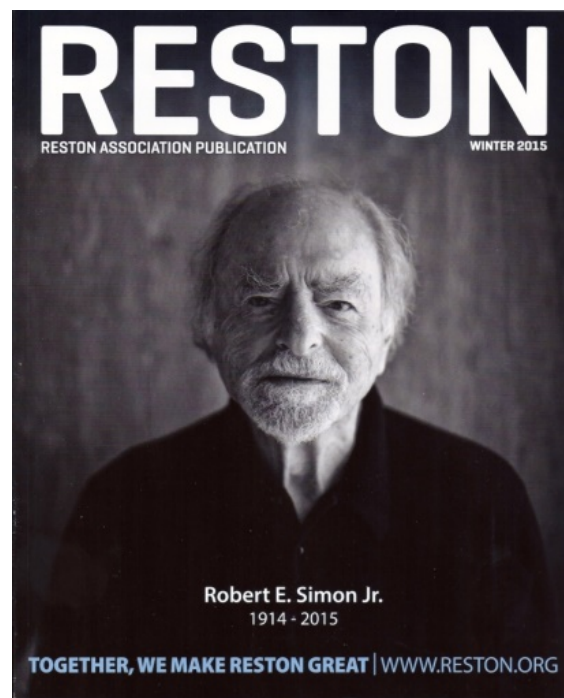
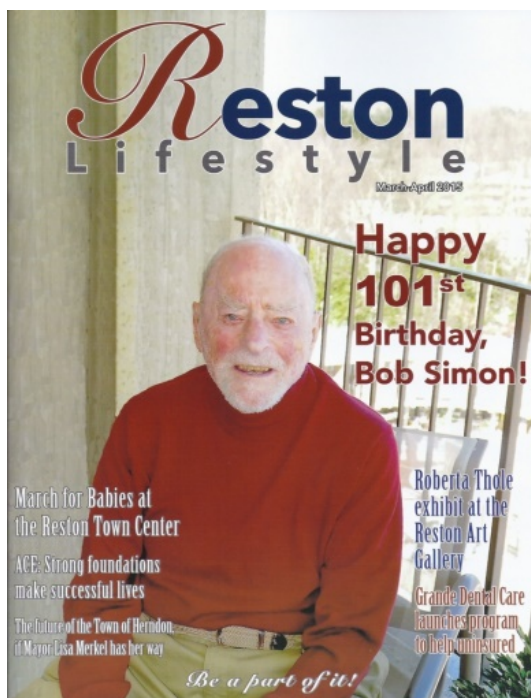


**Robert E. Simon at Reston's Founder's Day (April 11, 2015)**



In the fall of 2015, Sonia and I finally decided to downsize, purchasing a small three-bedroom condo in Reston Town Center in October. A few months later we sold our Woodstock Way house. Following a hectic six months of arranging to purchase the condo, preparing our house to go on the market (which it did in late December), selling the house, downsizing our possessions, moving to the condo on January 28, 2016, and settling in, we finally are enjoying our new “downsized” space and easy access to the amenities of Reston Town Center.

Indeed, in this regard, when I first met with Bob, he talked about a community effort to bring a 500-600-seat concert hall to Reston Town Center, asking if I was familiar with the Reston Community Theater which seats 300 persons. When I told him I had been in the building that houses the theater but hadn’t attended any performance there, Bob pulled no punches, quickly replying “That was a mistake!” Now that I am retired, I will have more time to rectify this mistake. Indeed, I envisioned looking forward to Bob being there to inaugurate the new concert hall once built and cheering him on as he cut the ribbon at the grand opening of the new facility. Sadly, however, this will not happen as Bob passed away on September 21, 2015 at the age of 101.



## Mortgage Lender

*Carlos Rafael Galván (7/29/56 – present)*



*Kerry, rates are now so low, this will probably be the last time you will refinance your house.*

**Carlos Galván** attended George Mason University where he graduated with a B.A. in Economics. While Galván was offered a scholarship to attend Georgetown University to study for an advanced degree, he passed on that opportunity in favor of continuing to work and make some money. In 1974, he joined Perpetual Savings and Loan in Washington, DC, initially working as a teller but eventually becoming a mortgage loan officer. After five years with PS&L, at the age of 29, Galván accepted a position as Branch Manager with McLean Savings and Loan in Reston, Virginia, later moving to the firm's headquarters in McLean. When NVR Mortgage purchased MS&L, Galván was one of two MS&L employees invited to join NVR, where he worked processing mortgage loans until joining Wells Fargo, working in Middleburg (VA) until 2013. That year Galván left Wells Fargo to join [George Mason Mortgage](#), where he continues to work with his office in Leesburg.

**Flight Log Memories** – As recounted in the Robert Simon vignette, my parents moved from New York City to Reston, Virginia in 1983, into a townhouse they had purchased a few years before in anticipation of spending their retirement years based in Reston. My father was fortunate in finding a good realtor (Gail Rush) and a great mortgage broker, **Carlos Galván**, who at the time was working with McLean Savings and Loan. In late 1984, I began a new job working with the U.S. Agency for International Development – and our family (Sonia, Shannon, and I) moved from Florence, Alabama to Reston, Virginia, initially taking up residence with my father until we could sell our house in Florence and purchase a house in the Washington, DC area. After moving in with my father, we enrolled our son Shannon in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade at nearby Terraset Elementary School. Once our home in Alabama sold, and with Shannon at Terraset and my father in Reston, my father hooked us up with Gail, his realtor, and Carlos, his mortgage broker.

I've always found Carlos to be not only a really nice person but also a great mortgage broker to work with, so much so that, over the years, I've chased after him to handle original and multiple refinance loans on two homes – our initial townhouse in South Reston (1985-1993) and our current home in North Reston (1993-present). No matter which firm Carlos was affiliated with – from MS&L in Reston and McLean, then with NVR in Fairfax, and later Wells Fargo and now George Mason Mortgage in Leesburg, Carlos always has been my “go to” guy for advice on financing and refinancing a home. During one refinance, Sonia and I got to the closing late in the afternoon, only to discover that the loan papers wouldn't reach that office in time to close that day. Carlos kindly called to tell us not to worry and that he personally would come to our house the next day to process the closing with us right in our own home. And that wasn't the first time that Carlos came to our house to make it a whole lot easier to get forms filled in and submitted.

Over the years, from when we bought our first home in Florence, Alabama, I've witnessed how mortgage rates dramatically declined from the high teens to around 3%, where rates hovered as of the time of the writing of this vignette in mid-2013. I would always keep my eye on those rates, waiting for them to fall enough to justify doing a refinance – and every time Carlos would tell me what a good deal I was getting and that this time will be the last time I would be able to refinance.

But, so far, there's always been yet one more time. At the time this vignette was being drafted, and anticipating mortgage rates would again fall below my current rate of 3.376%, Carlos and I were getting the paperwork ready to refinance once the rate hits 2.75% or even as high as 2.875%--and the rate eventually did hit a target within that range. My objective was to get the monthly mortgage payment as low as possible to make it all the easier to service the monthly payment once I retired and went on a fixed income.

As I see it, and excepting my parents and Sonia, Carlos did more for the wellbeing of my family than anyone else, helping me over the last 30 years to afford living in a nice home in “a place called Reston” which sits in the middle of Fairfax County, one of three highest income and most costly counties in the United States. If Carlos isn't a “giant” in the *Realm of Mortgage Brokers*, who else would be? As I've always told him, going back to when I first worked with him in late 1984, he is so customer- and service-oriented that I call him the next best mortgage loan officer since Jimmy Stewart played “George Bailey” in the Hollywood film *It's A Wonderful Life* (1946), the plot of which follows:

George Bailey has spent his entire life giving of himself to the people of Bedford Falls. He has always longed to travel but never had the opportunity in order to prevent rich skinflint Mr. Potter from taking over the entire town. All that prevents him from doing so is George's modest building and loan company, which was founded by his generous father. But on Christmas Eve, George's Uncle Billy loses the business's \$8,000 while intending to deposit it in the bank. Potter finds the misplaced money and hides it from Billy. When the bank examiner discovers the shortage later that night, George realizes that he will be held responsible and sent to jail and the company will collapse, finally allowing Potter to take over the town. Thinking of his wife, their young children, and others he loves will be better off with him dead, he contemplates suicide. But the prayers of his loved ones result in a gentle angel named Clarence coming to earth to help George, with the promise of earning his wings. He shows George what things would have been like if he had never been born. In a nightmarish vision in which the Potter-controlled town is sunk in sex and sin, those George loves are...dead, ruined, or miserable. He realizes that he has touched many people in a positive way and that his life has truly been a wonderful one. ([Source](#))



“George Bailey” (portrayed by Jimmy Stewart) in *It's A Wonderful Life* (1946)

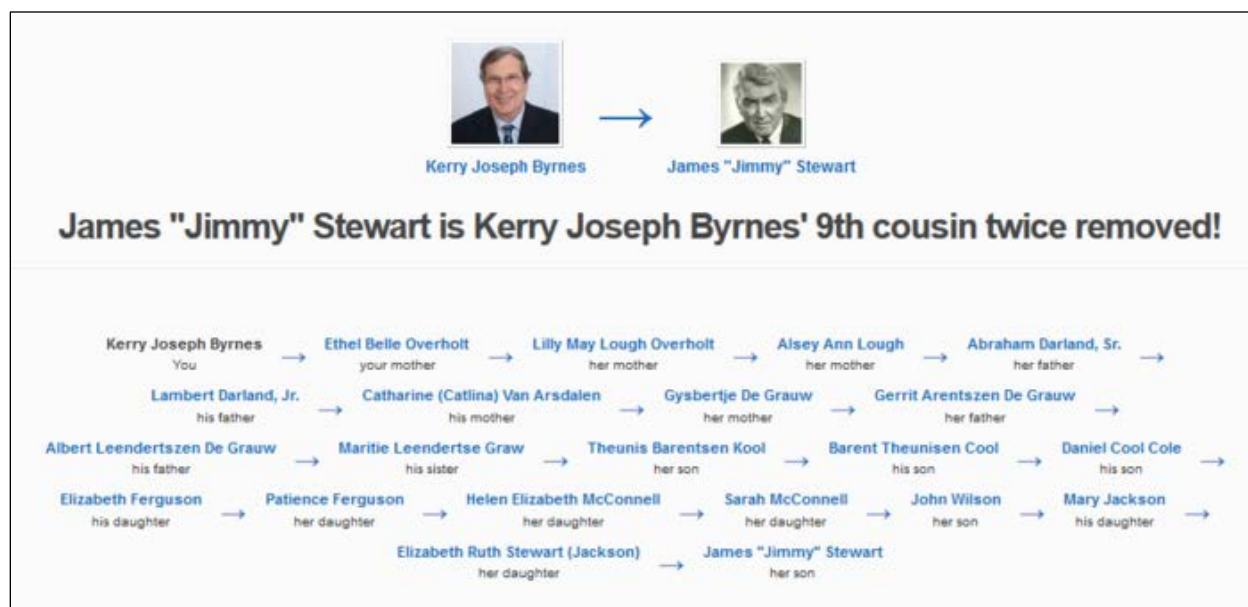


Even though Jimmy Stewart is no longer with us, the spirit of “George Bailey” is still alive and serving mortgage loan customers, not in Bedford Falls, the fictitious town in *It's A Wonderful Life*, but rather in Leesburg, Virginia, disguised as Carlos Galván. Working for USAID, my professional life over the past thirty years kept “Boeing” Byrnes frequently travelling, up in the air, but always yearning near the end of each trip to get back home, while Carlos Galván has always lamented (just as George Bailey did in the film) that he “always longed to travel” but was not been able to, being tied down to stay close in order to home in order to serve the mortgage needs of his customers. On multiple occasions from purchases to refinances, Carlos’ dedication played a big part in helping ensure that I did have a hangar (house) to fly home to after my business trips.

In case you are not able to find the welcome sign for Bedford Falls (as shown in below left photo), drive south on US 15 from the Potomac River, heading for the business district of Leesburg, Virginia, where you will be greeted by the Leesburg sign shown the below right photo. Carlos’ office will be not too far away.



While, as noted above, Jimmy Stewart is no longer with us, perhaps his spirit does live on among those who feel him to be a kindred spirit. Indeed, as I recently learned from Geni.com, Jimmy is my ninth cousin twice removed!



**Update:** In the fall of 2015, after having lived in our Woodstock Cluster house for 22+ years, my wife Sonia and I decided to downsize to and purchase a small three-bedroom, two bath condo in Reston Town Center (RTC). For years, after moving to Reston, “RTC” was nothing more than a field along Reston Parkway as one drove from South

Reston over to North Reston. When we had arrived in Reston in late October of 1984, we lived temporarily with my father in his townhouse just off the 18<sup>th</sup> hole of a golf course in South Reston. Once we had sold our home in Alabama, we similarly purchase a townhouse just off the same golf course. After living there for 9+ years, we sold that townhouse and purchased the house in Woodstock Cluster in North Reston. Then, 22+ years later, the process of downsizing to the condo proved a real challenge with the condo having only 52% of the square footage we had in the Woodstock Cluster house. However, we survived the challenge of the downsizing (giving lots of stuff away) and the move, setting up the household here in the condo on January 28, 2016. Now, as of this writing in September 2018, we have been “city dwellers” in RTC for over two-and-a-half years – and still happy that we live in Reston, recently rated by CNN/*Money* magazine as the best place to live in Virginia.

Of course, transitioning from our “patio home” to “condo” wouldn’t have been possible without the guidance and assistance two individuals who are keeping that *It’s A Wonderful Life* spirit of George Bailey alive and well in the Northern Virginia real estate and mortgage lending market. Those two individuals are Kim Spear (The Spear Realty Group) and Rick Elmendorf (formerly with Caliber Home Loans and now with loanDepot). We found in Kim the perfect realtor who was sensitive to our needs and wants and diligently kept an eye out to locate the condo that we were looking for – and never was pushy throughout the whole process. Further, while I always had turned to Carlos Galván when seeking a mortgage loan, following Kim’s recommendation I turned this time to Rick Elmendorf who quickly put together a financing strategy that made it possible for us to purchase the condo in October 2015, nearly three months before we actually sold the house in January 2016. So below, I share photos of Kim and Rick to nominate them, along with Carlos Galván, to the *It’s A Wonderful Life* George Bailey Hall of Fame.



**Kim Spear & Rick Elmendorf**

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Once a community is developed, and its houses built, purchased, and moved into, what remains is turning a house into a home. This brings us to our next to last virtual stopover during which I’ll share my *Homemaking Encounters in the Realm of the Two Women in My Life*, the second of the two other virtual stopovers I began thinking about writing while I was recovering in the hospital from heart surgery in 2013.

## Chapter 19

### *Homemaking Encounters in the Realm of the Two Women in My Life*

As I worked on trying to finish this memoir, it hit me that there were two individuals in my life who, neither celebrity nor giant in any of the virtual stopovers visited, yet had a greater impact on my personal life than any community or house in which I have lived or, indeed, any other person that I had known during my life.

Reflecting on this, a certain melody and lyric began to play in the jukebox of my mind:

*A chair is still a chair  
Even though there's no-one sitting there  
But a chair is not a house  
And a house is not a home  
When there's no-one there to hold you tight  
And no-one there you can kiss goodnight*

These are the opening lyrics Hal David penned for the Burt Bacharach song “A House Is Not A Home” for the film of the same name that first screened in 1964, coincidentally the same year Reston’s first residents began moving into their new houses. While it was Brook Benton who vocalized this song in the film, it was Dionne Warwick’s [cover](#) of the song that peaked higher on the Billboard Top 100 chart.

Similarly, while Robert Simon founded the community of Reston and an untold number of realtors and mortgage lenders (such as Carlos Galván, Kim Spear, and Rick Elmendorf – see their vignettes) helped buyers over the years to find a house and obtain a mortgage to finance purchasing that house, it wasn’t the community developer, realtor, or mortgage lender who converted houses, townhouses, and condos into homes. Rather it was the wives and mothers of the families who moved into those new abodes who are to be credited for turning those abodes into homes.

Thinking about how to honor those mothers and wives, I first thought about titling this virtual stopover in honor of another Hal David composition, “To All the Girls I’ve Loved Before,” a song popularized by **Julio Iglesias** (see vignette) and [Willie Nelson](#), also coincidentally in the same year (1984) that my family – my wife Sonia, Shannon, and I – moved from Florence, Alabama to Reston, Virginia.

Fearing that titling this stopover as “Encounters in the Realm of All the Girls I’ve Loved Before” would be misleading, I finally saw that the “house is not a home” lyric clarified that the focus of this stopover would be honoring the two women who made the houses I have lived in during my life into the homes in which the members of our family have thrived over the years.

Hence this virtual stopover is titled *Homemaking Encounters in the Realm of the Two Women in My Life*. If you’ve already not guessed, the first of those two women was my mother **Ethel** who at 65 died all too young; the second is my wife **Sonia** who has stuck by me now for nearly 48 years and counting, with our 49<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary upcoming on August 30, 2018.

Taking a slightly different approach, this virtual stopover presents short biographies of Ethel and Sonia, followed by Flight Log Memories about both women.

***Ethel Belle Overholt Byrnes (6/21/18 – 3/3/84)***

*“there's a story behind everything. How a picture got on a wall. How a scar got on your face. Sometimes the stories are simple, and sometimes they are hard and heartbreaking. But behind all your stories is always your mother's story, because hers is where yours begin.” (Mitch Albom, For One More Day)*



*Found the Kate Greenway Book of Games at the sales shop of N.Y. Public Library – and enjoyed it so much that I went back and cleared out their stocks – to share with you all – memories of the games we once played (many I didn't know I even remembered until re-read). ...When I tried to share my enthusiasm with Francis, he commented: "We only worked!"*

**Ethel Overholt** was born June 21, 1918, at Spirit Lake, Iowa, the fourth child of Jonas Ira Overholt and Lily May Lough, who had three other children, two other daughters (Marie and Alice) and a son (John). Following high school Ethel became a reporter on the local newspaper in Indianola, Iowa and, from there, enrolled at Iowa State College in Ames, graduating December 1941 with a B.S. in technical journalism and nutrition. Her campus activities included Theta Sigma Phi (women's journalism fraternity); Kappa Delta; secretary of the Home Economics Council; editor of the *Freshman Handbook*; editor of the *Green Gander*; women's editor of the *Iowa State Daily Student*; and member of the *Iowa State Daily Student* Publication Board.

She married **Francis C. Byrnes** (see vignette) on January 8, 1942, in St. Cecilia Church, Ames, Iowa, going with him to Washington D.C., when he entered military service in the Office of the Chief Signal Officer. In February 1943 they moved to Dayton, Ohio when Francis was transferred to the U.S. Air Force. Their first son, Kerry Joseph, was born on 9/11/45. On separating from military service as a Lieutenant Colonel in mid-1946, Francis continued as a civilian in the same Air Force position until October 1948, at which time he joined the staff of Ohio State University in Columbus.



**Ethel with Kerry (Dayton, Ohio – late 1945)**



In Columbus, Ethel combined post-war homemaking with pursuing professional and civic interests. She served a year as president of the Theta Sigma Phi professional chapter and helped to manage the Matrix Table that each year recognized an outstanding national woman journalist. As a member of the Children's Conservation League, she organized a successful campaign to persuade local merchants to withhold Christmas and Santa Claus advertising on radio and TV until after Thanksgiving. She wrote a training manual on basic cooking for use in the state 4-H program, and as part of the sesquicentennial celebration of the State of Ohio she organized a statewide collection and compilation of recipes women used in the 1800s. Their second son, Kevin Francis, was born 11/30/50 in Columbus, Ohio.

In 1953, when Francis took a job with Michigan State College and the family moved to East Lansing, Ethel continued Theta Sigma Phi activities and worked with the Cub and Boy Scout programs. When Francis went on a part-time employment basis to accelerate study toward earning a doctorate, Michigan State hired Ethel to organize the office for and provide secretarial and general support to Russell Nye, professor of English, eminent humanist, and the Michigan State's first-named distinguished professor. With family interests stimulated by a three-month assignment in Europe in 1955 and constant interaction with international students on the campus (including bringing a young Vietnamese mother and her infant son into the Byrnes home for three months), the family prepared for an eventual international assignment. Their third child, daughter Kathryn Anne Byrnes, was born 12/22/57 in Lansing, Michigan.

Throughout the doctoral program, the research for which examined how Americans professionals coped with the challenges and frustrations of working overseas, Ethel abstracted literature, edited drafts of dissertation chapters, raised penetrating questions, and attended Francis' classes to take notes when he was away. On completing the degree program, Francis was employed by the Rockefeller Foundation with assignment to the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) in the Philippines beginning in late March of 1963. In the IRRI housing community of some 20 scientists and their families from 12 countries, Ethel stimulated communication among the wives by organizing weekly classes in which each demonstrated to the others how to prepare a favorite dish of her country. She also learned about communication problems that arise in situations where English is a second language for most of those involved. For example, at a social event, Ethel remarked that Chinese red was one of her favorite colors, with a woman from Taiwan immediately challenging her on why she was in favor of the Red Chinese.

With a move in late 1967 to Cali, Colombia, where the Rockefeller Foundation reassigned Francis to help plan, build, and staff the International Center for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT), Ethel helped with planning the center's landscaping, including the design, selection, and planting of the trees, shrubs, flowers, and the lighting of CIAT's 50-acre campus. As buildings were completed, she identified and acquired paintings, artifacts, and materials typical of the countries served by the center to complement the decoration plans for imported desks, tables, and chairs. She also worked with consultants on the design and selection of kitchen, dining, and housing facilities and equipment for the CIAT training and conference center.

Ethel's first grandson, Shannon Alexander, was born to her son Kerry and daughter-in-law Sonia on August 30, 1974, in Ames, Iowa. After life in Cali, Ethel and Fran moved in late 1975 to New York City, where he assisted starting up the International Agricultural Development Service (IADS – a Rockefeller Foundation initiative). After 12+ years of tropical living, Ethel soon was enjoying the sights and sounds, and hustle and bustle, of the Big Apple, living in an apartment on the city's East Side “where supplies and services are abundantly and conveniently available, and specialty shops a delight” (Byrnes 1975 Christmas Letter).



**Ethel with Byrnes Family in Miami, Florida (Christmas 1970):**

**Kevin, Francis, Ethel, Gertrude (Francis' mother), Sonia, and Kathryn**



**Shannon's Baptism in Ames, Iowa (October 9, 1974): grandmother Ethel Byrnes, great grandmother Gertrude Byrnes, and mother Sonia Byrnes (see vignette)**



**Grandmother Ethel with Grandson Shannon (Cali, Colombia – August 1975)**

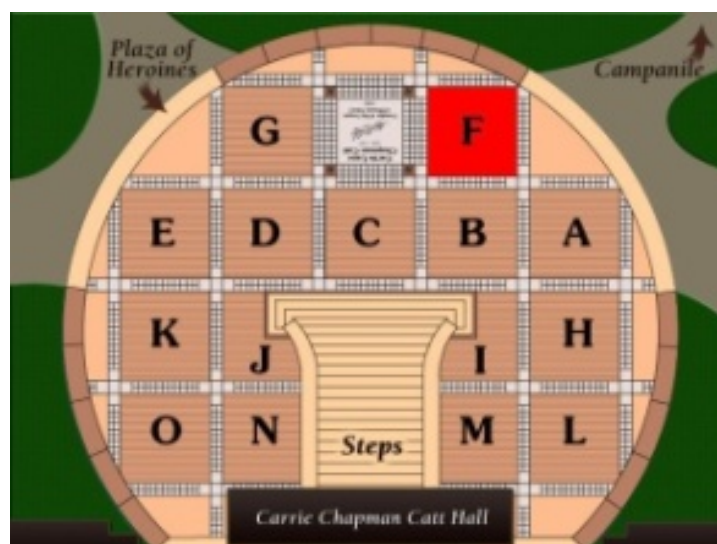


### **Christmas 1977: Ethel Helps Grandson Shannon Select a Christmas Tree**

In 1982, Francis and Ethel relocated to Reston, Virginia, moving into their townhouse on June 4, a rental property they purchased five years before in 1977. Francis continued working with IADS that eventually merged into Winrock International. A plus of living in the northern Virginia area was that Ethel was again close to her sister, Marie Overholt Lamont, who lived nearby in Arlington, Virginia.

On March 3, 1984, Ethel died in Fairfax Hospital after a valiant two-year battle with respiratory problems (emphysema) and a weakened heart. Paraphrasing a tribute that Francis wrote, wherever she went, Ethel made the world more beautiful; inspired and encouraged her family, friends, and community; and left behind evidence of her many contributions, many great memories, and two sons and a daughter: Kerry, Kevin, and Kathryn.

This short biography of Ethel draws on the bio that Francis wrote about her for the ISU Plaza of Heroines where a [brick](#) in her honor is located (Section F Row 27 per diagram below).



*Sonia Gomez Naranjo (3/13/45 – present)*



*The women's movement had just begun in Colombia when I began college during the early 60's. I knew that with a law degree I could not only become a lawyer but also a judge, a politician, an executive administrator of a hospital, or the president of a university. With this wide variety of choices available, the influence I could have on society was unlimited.*

**Sonia Gomez** was born in Colombia in Madrid, Cundinamarca, the first of the three children of Ezequiel Gomez and Ruth Naranjo, the other two being sons Orlando and Libardo. During his years of service with the Colombian Air Force, Ezequiel rose to Captain, including a period of training in the United States at Chanute Air Force Base in Illinois. Not long after her birth Sonia's family moved to Cali, Colombia, where she grew up, attending high school and the university (Santiago de Cali) where she graduated in 1968 with a degree in law.

The path that Sonia was on toward practicing law took a major turn when a friend recommended that she interview for a job as a research assistant on the laws and regulations component of a U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID)-funded research project that Michigan State University had recently been contracted to conduct on the agricultural marketing system of Colombia's Cauca Valley (see Kelly Harrison vignette). Sonia was hired and, arriving for her first day on the project, met another researcher, Kerry Byrnes, also recently hired to work on the project. After less than a year of working together and dating, Sonia and Kerry were married on August 30, 1969.



**Padre Joaquín Moreno-Chocano Simal Weds Kerry and Sonia (8/30/69) in Cali, Colombia**



Within a month or so, Sonia, who did not speak English, joined Kerry in Ames, Iowa where he had begun studying for a doctorate in Sociology at Iowa State University (ISU). She set out to learn English, taking classes from the wife of one of the ISU professors and watching (and listening to English on) television. In mid-1970, Kerry's graduate study was interrupted when he and Sonia left Ames to serve as VISTA Volunteers for a year-and-a-half in Miami's Edison Little River community where Sonia worked as a translator for a local primary school's social worker and also taught English for the community's Spanish- and Creole-speaking residents.

Returning to Ames in early 1972, and with considerably greater fluency in English, Sonia applied for a job at the Target store that had recently opened in Ames. Initially, Target turned her down for the job because, as a college graduate and lawyer, she was deemed to be overqualified. However, on her own, she registered a complaint with the local employment bureau and was told to go back to the store, where she found that the store had reconsidered its decision and hired her on the spot. During the years she worked with Target, she rose from putting tickets on the merchandise to being the assistant manager of receiving, along the way recruiting many Spanish-speaking wives to work in the store. In 1974, with the birth of her first child approaching, Sonia quit her job to prepare for and take care of the baby, Shannon Alexander Byrnes, who was born 8/30/74.

In the summer of 1975, after Kerry completed his doctorate and began a new job with the International Fertilizer Development Center (IFDC) in Muscle Shoals, Alabama, the family moved to Muscle Shoals, where they rented a house for a couple of years until they purchased their first home across the Tennessee River in Florence, Alabama. Once Sonia located a reliable babysitter, she went back into the work force, this time as a sales associate for Charles of the Ritz cosmetics at one of the department stores (Castner Knott) in the recently built Florence Mall. When a more attractive sales position opened at another mall store (Parisian), Sonia became a sales associate for Estee Lauder cosmetics. Her short career in cosmetics sales included being honored one year as Parisian's part-time salesperson of the year for the Estee Lauder product line. This award included a trip to New York City to visit the headquarters of Estee Lauder in New York City and meet Estee Lauder.

While living in Muscle Shoals and Florence communities, Sonia was active as a representative of both Colombia and IFDC's international community. On April 23, 1978, Sonia was one of the IFDC women featured in a *Florence Times* article and photos on "A World of Fashion" in which the women of IFDC appeared in an international fashion show wearing typical dress from their home countries such as Spain, Japan, and India – and Sonia (see photo below) wearing a traditional Colombian dress as she held a lit candle and danced the Cumbia, one of Colombia's traditional dances.





A year later, on May 6, 1979, the *Florence Times* carried an article titled “‘Woman Can,’ Says Colombian Teacher” highlighted Sonia’s education as a lawyer, her year-and-a-half service as a VISTA Volunteer in Miami, Florida, and her participation in community activities, including the IFDC Women’s Club (as president), teaching Spanish at the University of North Alabama, and being active in the Club de Amigas, an organization of local Spanish-speaking women.

On October 25, 1979, *The Flor-Ala*, the University of North Alabama student newspaper, heralded UNA’s “New Spanish instructor – Byrnes committed to advancing women’s role.” On April 11, 1982, the *Florence Times* carried a story titled “IFDC book features ‘international flavor’” which reported on an international cookbook compiled by the IFDC Women’s Club and featured a photo of Sonia preparing a Colombian recipe, the photo caption for which misspelled both “Sonya” and “Columbian.”

In 1980, Sonia’s celebrity status went national when she was included among several northern Alabama women as models for a national publicity campaign by the Women’s Bureau of the U.S. Department of Labor. The campaign included a series of four posters illustrating women exploring, choosing, becoming, and succeeding, with Sonia appearing in the “BECOMING” poster. The posters, distributed nationally, debuted in early September 1980 in Washington, D.C. and were viewed, among others, by First Lady Rosalynn Carter. On October 5, 1980, *The Florence Times* featured a story on this campaign titled “Happening” with photos of the campaign’s four posters. The “BECOMING” poster (with Sonia upper left) is shown below.



In 1984 Kerry accepted a position with the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) in Washington, DC, and the family moved to Reston, Virginia. With Shannon in third grade, Sonia began looking around for employment opportunities, doing occasional part-time clerical work on assignments with ManTech. One day she visited George Mason University to explore whether there might be an opening to teach Spanish at the college level. On introducing herself to the secretary of the Department of Foreign Languages, the secretary asked Sonia if she could wait just a minute, after which Sonia was invited into the office of the department’s chair who told Sonia she was just the person the department was searching for—someone who was a native speaker of Spanish, held a college degree, and already had experience teaching Spanish. On the spot, Sonia was offered a full scholarship to take the necessary undergraduate classes to become certified to teach high school Spanish.

After several semesters of study, Sonia was graduated and, with high marks for her student teaching at Reston's South Lakes High School (SLHS), where coincidentally her son Shannon would attend high school, she was offered a part-time job teaching Spanish at that school, soon thereafter being hired on a full-time basis. Interestingly, after four years of Shannon studying at SLHS and Sonia teaching there, one of the other teachers finally made the connection that 5' Sonia was the mother of 6' Shannon but then wondered how Shannon could be a foot taller than Sonia who replied: "You haven't met Shannon's father." Shortly after Shannon graduated from SLHS in 1992, a nearby high school offered her a job teaching Spanish. That school, Herndon High School, happened to be much closer to the new home in Reston that Sonia and Kerry had moved into during the summer of 1993.

From time to time, Sonia and Kerry traveled overseas, including a late 2001 trip to Cancún, Mexico over the Christmas holidays (see photo below).



**Sonia & Kerry Celebrate Arrival of 2002 in La Casa de Las Margaritas, Cancun, Mexico**

In 2004, amidst a family trip to Waikiki, Hawaii, including Sonia, Shannon, his girlfriend Jeannine, and her son Matthew (by her first marriage), Shannon proposed to Jeannine that they marry there in Hawaii, resulting in a memorable wedding for Sonia and all the family. For more detail on this event, see the vignette on Lloyd Kandell in *Tiki Encounters in the Realm of Exotica Musicians*.



**Sonia Wishes Shannon Well on His Wedding Day (Black Point, Oahu, August 17, 2004)**

On return to Reston for the start of 2004-2005 school year, Sonia continued teaching at HHS another seven years until July 2011, when she retired with 23 years of service teaching Spanish in the Fairfax County Public Schools system, plus many memories of former students whom she continues to run into from time to time. Over the years, when not teaching, Sonia often traveled to Colombia to visit her family in the summer or, during spring break, on trips with HHS students to countries such as Spain. On various occasions, Sonia traveled with Kerry to visit many Latin American countries, including Argentina, Chile, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Mexico, and Panama. She also travelled to and visited many European countries as well as in South Pacific. This travel had its inspiration not only in Sonia's passion for life and a curiosity to see the rest of the world but a lifelong yearning, like her father, to learn how to fly and become a pilot. But this was one "bucket list" wish that Kerry has firmly been steady in not supporting!

On September 17, 2008, Sonia became an "abuela" (grandmother) when Shannon and Jeannine's first child, Braden Ezekiel Byrnes, was born. Once Braden began to talk, he initially referred to Sonia and Kerry as a collective unit (Aba Abu) but eventually began individually referring to Sonia as Aba and Kerry as Abu.



**Sonia (Aba) and Braden (at about 1-year old)**



**The Byrnes Clan: Kerry, Jeannine, Braden, Sonia, and Shannon**

**Happy New Year 2012 (Reston, Virginia)**

In 2014, with Kerry and Sonia approaching their 45<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary on August 30, Sonia continued to run a tight ship around the house, taking charge of renovations; doing the cooking and overseeing yard work; organizing and hosting frequent visits of friends and family, especially Shannon, Jeannine, Braden, and Matthew; and constantly reminding Kerry that, once he retires, she's only going to cook once a day, and that we'll finally start using those nearly one million frequent flyer miles on American Airlines to do some of that vacation travel that Kerry has long promised.



**Sonia with Braden at Mon Ami Gabi Restaurant, Reston (September 2013)**



**Sonia Celebrating Kerry's 72<sup>nd</sup> Birthday in Hawaii (September 11, 2013)**

**Flight Log Memories:** Almost needless to say, no matter how much the various giants and celebrities, spotlighted in the realms visited during our virtual stopovers, had an impact on my life, none with the possible exception of my father Francis Byrnes had more influence and impact on me than my mother Ethel and my wife Sonia.

Not only was my mother taken from me when she died at the young age of 65 but, for over twelve of those years, she and my father lived overseas (1963-68 in the Philippines and 1968-1975 in Colombia). This allowed only occasional opportunities to see her when I visited those countries or when she was on home leave in the United States. One exception was the year that I lived with my parents in Cali from late summer 1968 to early fall 1969, while I was working with Michigan State University on the PIMUR project (see Kelly Harrison vignette).

It was while working on that project that I met, fell in love with, and married Sonia. Once my parents left Colombia and returned to the United States, and while they lived in New York City and later in Reston, Virginia, we could hop in our car and drive up to NYC or Reston to visit them. Sadly my mother suddenly passed away in March of 1984 before I had a chance to be with her one last time.



Looking back, it was my mother's mentoring and tutoring that taught me a work ethic as I learned how to handle domestic chores around the house, including everything from keeping my room neat and tidy, to vacuuming, doing laundry and ironing clothes, cooking, washing and drying dishes, and changing the diapers of my baby sister Kathryn. Mom also liked to read books and this probably had a great influence on me during my early years in school as I became an avid reader, less so once I grew older and could allocate more time to watching television, especially given all the reading that I had to do during my regular day job. Sonia also credits my mother with teaching me such manners and social graces as I have though I am constantly being reminded by Sonia that there is yet great room for improvement.

Probably the early experience of helping to look after my sister Kathryn when she was an infant (twelve years my junior) inspired me to propose to my parents that we take in a young Vietnamese student who, while studying at Michigan State and living in a student dormitory, discovered that she had arrived in the U.S. with child. Those early experiences, plus traveling to far-flung developing countries while working with IFDC and not being able to spend more time with my own infant son Shannon, laid the foundation not only for the special affection I have for my grandson Braden but also the very close bond that he and I have forged since his earliest days here on earth.



**Kerry with Braden as Infant**



**Kerry with Braden at Three Years Old**





**Abu & Braden at Reston's Vapiano Restaurant**



**Braden's Colombia Display in Kindergarten (2014)**



**Fan of Colombia in the 2014 World Cup, Braden Painted Colombia's Colors on Abu's Face**

A particularly special memory is how warmly my parents welcomed Sonia into the family, looking out for her when she remained behind in Colombia and I returned to the U.S. to start my doctoral studies at Iowa State. This support continued over the years, my mother Ethel, wherever she was living at the time (Cali, Colombia; New York City; or Reston, Virginia), frequently sending letters to Sonia to share motherly advice and recipes as well as emphasizing that understanding another culture is a two-way street and that folks wherever we were living (Iowa or Alabama) had just as much an obligation to understand Sonia as she did to understand the local culture.

As I worked on this memoir, I spent a great amount of time going through family files, discovering and organizing family photos and letters – and realized that I had not even delved into the carbon copies that my mother made and saved for me of all the letters she typed and sent to me during those years when I was studying at Michigan State and Iowa State. Once I got around to re-reading those letters, I discovered many more memories that would have been wonderful for this memoir to share. However, one skill that I did acquire in life – and that my mother pushed me to acquire – was learning how to type, as this proved not only a useful skill while in college but essential during my professional career, especially when I transitioned from a Royal manual typewriter to a Smith-Corona electric typewriter and eventually to working on a desktop PC in the office or at home or on a laptop while I was traveling.

Of course, these are only some of the memories that I could share about the two most important women in my life and for whom I have an enduring and never-ending love that can never repay all the love and support they have given to me over the years.

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As we approach landing at Washington, DC's National Airport, there is just one more virtual stopover to be made, this for some *Colorful Encounters in the Realm of Latin American Art*.

## Chapter 20

### *Colorful Encounters in the Realm of Latin American Art*



**Frida Kahlo (7/6/1907 – 7/13/54)**

*There have been two great accidents in my life. One was the trolley, and the other was Diego. Diego was by far the worst.*

In July 2013, while yet in the hospital recovering from heart surgery (see *Encounters in the Realm of Heart Savers*), the idea of writing one additional –and final – chapter to this memoir came to me, a chapter focusing on my ***Colorful Encounters in the Realm of Latin American Art***, showcasing not so much the few Latin American artists I have met but rather the Latin American paintings and other art objects Sonia and I collected over the years.

The story begins with recounting some parental influences and a few tales of paintings that, like fish, got away, after which I share, country by country, visual images and memories of the paintings that didn't get away.

#### **Parental Influences**

Born in Dayton, Ohio, I grew up in the Midwest (Ohio and Michigan) of Iowa-born parents (see Francis Byrnes and Ethel Byrnes vignettes). From my early years, at least from the time I was in third grade in 1953, I recall my parents had a print of ***Stone City, Iowa* (1930)** by American painter **Grant DeVolson Wood** (2/13/1891 - 2/12/1942). As shown below, the painting depicts a rural/farm scene with hills planted to rows of corn that, on reflection, was a constant reminder of our family's rural roots in Iowa, even as we were living just outside East Lansing, Michigan (1953-63) with the cornfields of Michigan State University just across the street from our house.



***Stone City, Iowa (1930) & Grant Wood***

This painting represented a rather subdued (conservative) art form compared with the prints of two very colorful paintings by Russian artist **Vladimir Grigoryevich Tretchikoff** (12/13/1913 – 8/26/2006) that my father acquired a little over a decade later, after he began working in 1963 with the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) in the Philippines.



*Chinese Girl (The Green Lady), Balinese Girl, & Vladimir Tretchikoff*

These Tretchikoff prints, framed and hung in his home office, reflected a quite different taste in art than the Grant Wood print that my parents had displayed in their home until my father passed away in 1999. To this day, my brother Kevin has one of the two Tretchikoff prints but none of us, Kerry, Kevin, or Kathryn, recall what happened to the other print or the Grant Wood after my father's passing—perhaps they were sold as part of the disposition of my father's estate or given to someone but we can't remember to whom.

### **Three That Got Away**

**Valley of the Headhunters (Pat Jordan)** – My initial foray into collecting art began with a painting gifted to me by Pat Jordan, a next-door neighbor. Some years earlier, before meeting Pat, our family was keeping an eye on the new house being built next to our house. One Saturday afternoon, I saw that a man was surveying the progress of the build and I approached him to ask if he would like to buy a ticket for a Christmas tree from our Boy Scout troop. It turns out that this man was the owner of the house and, once built, he and his wife moved into it. From time to time their son Pat would come to visit. Pat was living in New York City where he worked as a radio disk jockey; at one time, according to Pat, he managed two of the most famous rock and roll artists of the day, namely, Neil Sedaka (“Oh Carol” and “Alice in Wonderland”) and Jimmy Jones (“Handy Man” and “Good Timin”).

Years later, while I was studying at Michigan State and needed a place over the Christmas holiday break to get away from the dormitory, the Jordan family kindly let me stay with them a time or two. Even while I was living in the dormitory, Pat and I got together from time to time for a hamburger, driving around the East Lansing area, and talking about this or that. Pat surprised me one day with the gift of **Valley of the Headhunters**, a beautiful oil painting that he had painted. Prior to this gift I had no idea he was a talented painter.





*Valley of the Headhunters (1953)*

Now the above *Valley of the Headhunters* image was not the painting that Pat gifted to me but rather the poster for the film of the same title. The painting Pat gave to me was an oil on canvas, drawn as an abstract in pastel browns, greens, and yellows, depicting a jungle scene, with the foreground and perimeter being the jungle framing in the distance (and in the middle of the painting) a clearing in which skull-like objects appeared to be hanging on bamboo-like trees. While it is hard to describe the painting's look and feel, it is more difficult to recall how this beautiful piece of art got away from me.

I had just finished my Master's degree in 1968 and was heading to Colombia to visit my parents, hoping to land a job on an agricultural marketing research project the U.S. Agency for International Development had awarded to Michigan State University (see **Kelly Harrison** vignette). I had removed the **Valley of the Headhunters** painting from its frame and rolled it up to travel with me. On my way to Cali, Colombia, I made a stopover in Toluca, Mexico to visit the young woman who at the time was my girlfriend. This probably was about the seventh time I had traveled to Toluca to visit her after meeting her in 1964 when I lived in her parents' home as a summer exchange student. At visit's end, I was moved to give the **Headhunters** painting to her as a token of my affection. However, just a month or so later, after I had started working in Cali on the MSU research project, I met another young woman (**Sonia Gomez** – see vignette) and, less than a year later, we married on August 30, 1969. Thus, now some 50+ years later, the **Valley of the Headhunters** painting is a distant memory, though Sonia and I are still together!

**Indonesian Woman (unknown artist in the style of A. Hasim)** - Those two Tretchikoff paintings of young Asian women must have had an effect on me. Some thirteen years later in 1976, I was in Indonesia on a short-term assignment for the International Fertilizer Development Center (IFDC). One day, while in Djakarta and walking around a shopping center, I spotted an art gallery. On perusing the gallery's offerings, one painting caught my eye – a portrait of a young Indonesian woman, similar to the painting shown on the following page.

The clerk told me that the woman in the painting I was admiring was the artist's wife. As the story goes, Indonesia's first president, **Sukarno (Kusno Sosrodihardjo – 6/6/1901 – 6/21/1970)**, on meeting the wife of the artist, commissioned him to paint a portrait of her. That artist was **A. Hasim (1921-1982)** and his works to this day are displayed in the Sukarno art collection in Djakarta, Indonesia. During the ensuing years, other artists were apparently inspired to paint their own versions of Hasim's wife, thus the Djakarta art market soon had no shortage of different painters' versions of this famous portrait.



I think that the gallery clerk wanted something like US \$30 for the “copycat” painting (oil on canvas) I was admiring. My reaction at the time was that the asking price was high but the clerk was quick to reassure me this painting was of the highest quality – and that I look in any other art gallery in the shopping center to see for myself that other artists’ versions of this portrait were of inferior quality. So I took the clerk up on this challenge, spent a half hour looking around other galleries, and found the clerk was absolutely correct in defending the painting I was interested in as being of the highest quality compared with roughly the same portrait rendered by other artists. So I went back to the original gallery and bought the painting for about \$30.



*Indonesian Woman (A. Hasim)*

But this purchase came back to haunt me when, on returning home and hanging it on the wall of our bedroom (big mistake!), my wife Sonia quickly became suspicious, wanting to know who was the woman in the painting. I tried to plead my case, telling her the story of the origin of the painting, but to no avail. Eventually I sold the painting for \$60 to an Indonesian engineer working at IFDC on a yearlong assignment. That painting is probably the only painting in the world that was purchased by a gringo in Djakarta, Indonesia, hauled all the way to Muscle Shoals, Alabama, and then sold to an Indonesian who hauled (or shipped) it all the way back to his home in Indonesia where he now has the pleasure of having it hang on the wall of his home, assuming that his wife was more liberal (or less suspicious) than mine.

**Ensonación (Bernadino Labrada)** – During one of my trips to Cali, Colombia, I arranged with one of my wife’s friends, Beatriz Neira, who was knowledgeable about Cali’s art galleries, to visit some of them in hopes of finding something of interest that I felt I could afford to purchase. Beatriz drove me to several galleries, the last of which was that of Colombian artist **Bernardino Labrada**. Nothing caught my eye until I spotted **Ensonación** (shown below). With as much disinterest as I could muster, I asked Señor Labrada the painting’s price, to which he replied \$5000 – and to which I gulped! I asked how could this painting be priced so high, at which point he retrieved that year’s edition of the Diner’s Club book celebrating Colombian artists and turned to the page showing this as a featured painting in that year’s biography of Labrada. He then added that the painting “está muy cotizada” which I interpreted as meaning the painting was “a quality piece of art in great demand.”



***Ensonación* (Bernadino Labrada)**

A year or so later Sonia and I visited Cali and I revisited Labrada's gallery. I was greeted by Labrada and casually perused his offerings, with one eye on alert to see if **Ensonación** was still available – and there it was hanging unsold in its same location! As if Labrada would not recall my earlier visit to the gallery and the price he had quoted, I thought surely, with the painting yet unsold, I could be the beneficiary of seller's remorse, that is, that Labrada by then would have surely lowered the painting's price. But he had not and now was asking \$6000 for it.

A few days later I arranged for Sonia and her sister-in-law Martha to visit the gallery. Martha left her car parked a block or so away, while I kept a low profile—crouching out of sight in the vehicle. I had told Sonia and Martha to be on the lookout for **Ensonación** and to casually ask its price. I suspected that Labrada was artificially inflating the painting's price, hoping some wealthy (if not also gullible) gringo – not that I was wealthy but I had visited his gallery twice – would shell out \$6,000 for this painting.

When Martha spotted the painting and inquired about its price, Labrada immediately replied “\$6,000” to which both Martha and Sonia displayed great surprise. But Labrada immediately reassured them that this painting “está muy cotizada” and that, in fact, a gringo was in town who had now visited the gallery twice and surely would come back to buy the painting. On saying “adios” and returning to the car, Sonia and Martha couldn't contain their laughter – about the gringo who was just about to come back to the gallery to buy the painting but all this time had been hiding in the car a block from the gallery. Just as well that I hadn't bought **Ensonación** when I could have purchased it for US\$5,000. As it turns out, Sonia didn't like the painting and would have crucified me had I brought it home and told her that the painting was “muy cotizada” and had cost me only \$5,000!

Years later, in the summer of 2013, while doing research for this section on ***Encounters in the Realm of Latin American Art***, I was curious what might have become of Labrada (if he might still be alive) and what might have become of **Ensonación**. Amazing what you can track down on the Internet, as I found that **Ensonación** was still available for sale but that Labrada now was asking [US \\$9,449](#) as this painting apparently had now become “muy, muy cotizada.”

While **Ensonación** didn't actually get away from me (other than having never owned it), this is more than I can say for the other two paintings – **Valley of the Headhunters** and **Indonesian Girl** – that did get away from me, the former gifted to my once Mexican girlfriend and the latter, under pressure from my suspicious (jealous) wife, sold to an Indonesian who took the painting back to his home country.

There was only one Latin American painting that I brought home from a business trip that Sonia did not appreciate and encouraged me to gift it to a Colombian friend who had admired it. This painting, shown below, was probably acquired in Guatemala, Bolivia, or Peru but I don't recall exactly which of those three countries. It now hangs on a wall in the home of one of Sonia's friends who does like this painting.



Well, enough about those paintings that got away. In our next series of country-specific vignettes, I'll share photos of the paintings and art objects that didn't get away. First up: Bolivia.

### **The Ones That Didn't Get Away**

Fortunately, over the years, I acquired some interesting pieces of art (paintings and sculptures) that were appreciated by both Sonia and me -- and most still in our possession! The first Latin American *object d'art* that I ever purchased was a Colombian painting of **Simón Bolívar**. While this virtual stopover is titled ***Colorful Encounters in the Realm of Latin American Art***, this painting was not colorful, rather painted in black, white, and grey! We'll get to that painting in the section below on Colombia.

But first we begin with a virtual stopover in Bolivia. Then, in alphabetical order, we'll visit a number of other countries of Latin America and the Caribbean where I acquired Latin American paintings or other *object d'art* items. While this series of **Latin American art vignettes focus on "encounters" with Latin American Art, not on the artists**, from time to time I did meet a few of the artists whose works are featured during this stopover. Where possible, I have tried to provide photos of each artist (if a photo could be found on the internet) even if I didn't meet or get a photo of him or her.

A special thanks to Jennifer Harrell, the photographer who took the photos of the paintings and art objects featured in the country-specific sections of this chapter's encounters in the *Realm of Latin American Art*.

## Bolivia

The highest location (not highest price!) for an *object d'art* or painting that I acquired in Latin America was La Paz, Bolivia. In January of 2002, I was in La Paz working with the USAID Mission and Bolivian trade officials to design an Andean Regional Trade Capacity Building Program. On January 18, about halfway through my stay, I visited two art galleries, at each purchasing an *object d'art* (as shown below). The first, purchased in a shop called Wiñaya, was an abstract sculpture of a mother and infant carved in marble by **Ramon Tito**. I was fascinated by the sheer simplicity and beauty of this sculpture.

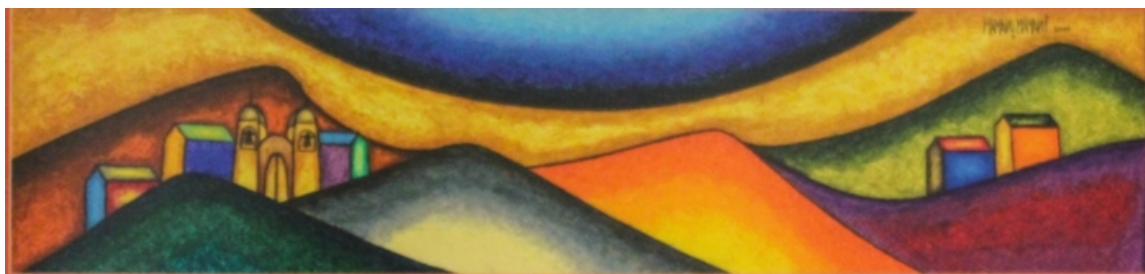


*Escultura de Piedra Marmolena* (Ramon Tito)

The second *object d'art* was a painting titled ***Puebla de Luna*** by the Bolivian artist **Roberto Mamani Mamani** (12/6/1962 – present), purchased in the Alternativa Centro de Arte. Having made several field trips to Bolivia's harsh *altiplano* (highland), it was interesting to see how this painting so colorfully represented those highlands, with small towns on the skyline of an otherwise desolate terrain. This painting's brilliant colors are also prominent in the traditional dress of Bolivia's indigenous peoples.



Roberto Mamani Mamani



*Pueblo de Luna* (Mamani Mamani)



## Colombia

Some 34 years before the aforementioned 2002 visit to Bolivia, I worked for a year in Cali, Colombia as a researcher with Michigan State University on the Integrated Rural Urban Marketing Project. On October 17, a little over a month after arriving in Cali, I was walking through one of the city's original shopping centers and discovered an art gallery where one painting caught my eye, a caricature of *Simón Bolívar* painted by **Marcolfo Obregón Sanclemente** (1932 – 7/4/10).



**Kerry's First Art Purchase: *Simón Bolívar* (Cali, Colombia, Fall 1968)**



**Marcolfo Obregón Sanclemente**

The painting depicts Bolívar in his last tuberculosis-ridden days. While this painting was the original, the artist had painted five copies but most of those had already been sold. The “copy” that was yet available in the gallery did not appear to be of the same high quality as the original. Having just received my first paycheck from MSU, I decided to invest it in purchasing the original painting. Later, after I had met Sonia and she saw this painting, she told me that Obregón had been her art teacher when she had been in school.



***“Simón Bolívar”* (1967) (Marcolfo Obregón)**



About a year later in August of 1969, Sonia and I were in Bogotá on our honeymoon. On our first morning there (Sunday, August 31), we took a walk near our hotel (Tequendama) and came about an artist selling paintings. When we didn't see a painting that caught our fancy, the artist invited us to come to his apartment where we spotted a *Don Quijote* painting that we bought.



*Don Quijote* (Pinér)

This painting, signed by an artist named **Pinér**, was hung at the bottom of the stairs leading from our first floor to the second floor of our former house, as if Don Quijote were beckoning one to charge up the stairs, reminiscent of the “‘Teddy Roosevelt’ Brewster” character in the Hollywood film *Arsenic and Old Lace* (1944).

Years later, while living in Reston, Virginia, Sonia discovered that a Colombian friend had prints of two famous paintings by the Colombian artist **Omar Gordillo Solano** (1942 – present) who was famous for his graphite sketches of street children.



Omar Gordillo

When Sonia realized that her friend was not interested in these prints that she had stored in a closet, the two worked out an exchange, Sonia giving up some china pieces in exchange for the friends' two prints (shown below).



**Niño de La Calle and Niña de La Calle**

In 1992, Sonia and I were visiting Sonia's family in Cali. Sonia's brother Orlando and I went out to run some errands but, on our way home and spotting an art gallery, I asked Orlando if we could stop and see what the gallery might be offering. One painting, titled *El Florero* by Colombian artist **Eduardo Mejía**, caught my attention. The gallery had another Mejía, titled *Un Torso*, but I was not interested in it. I asked the price of *El Florero* but was suspicious that the salesperson quoted an inflated price. So Orlando and I thanked the clerk and left. Later that day or the next Sonia and Martha (Orlando's wife) visited the gallery and negotiated a much better price on both paintings. Not too long after this purchase the gallery called Martha to offer to buy back the paintings at a higher price. Apparently, not long after the sale, Mejía had received a prestigious art award which, in turn, raised the market value of his paintings. We decided to pass on the offer and kept the paintings, hoping that their value would continue to rise over the years.

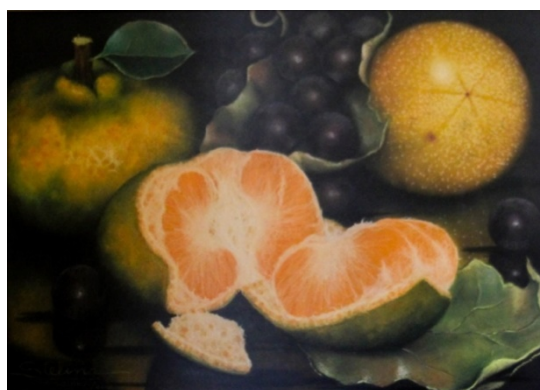


***El Florero and Un Torso* (Eduardo Mejía)**

One year, on returning from her trip to Colombia to visit her family in Cali, Sonia arrived with an original still life painting of a mandarin and other fruit titled ***Mandarina*** by **Stelina (Stella Villegas L.)**, an artist with whom Sonia went to school years before.



**Stelina (Stella Villegas L.)**



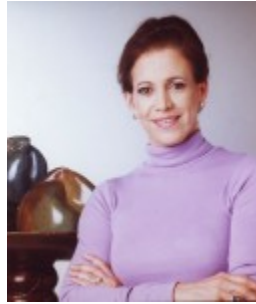
***Mandarina*** (Stelina Villegas L.)

As beautiful as the ***Mandarina*** painting was, much more stunning was Stelina's portrait of my wife (shown below) that Sonia commissioned.



***Sonia Gomez Byrnes (1993)*** (Stelina Villegas L)

In January of 1999, I traveled to Medellín, Colombia to conduct a three-day Organizational Management for Sustainability (OMS) workshop for a number of NGOs. After the workshop, I met with Colombian artist **Lucy Correa**, the sister-in-law of Harry Wing, a longtime friend and former USAID colleague.



**Lucy Correa**

After a sightseeing tour of the city, Lucy took me to her home where I had a chance to see if I would be interested in purchasing one of her art works, painting or sculpture. What caught my eye was a sculpture titled ***Coronada de Coral***, an original and unique piece in ceramic mounted on a wooden base, which I purchased.



***Coronada de Coral (Lucy Correa)***

I was not thinking practically when I purchased this item. First of all, the item, given its size and weight, was not easy to pack for safe shipment. I feared that my purchase packed in a box and shipped as a piece of luggage from Medellín to Cali and then from Cali to Miami to Washington, DC might result in my new acquisition arriving in more than one piece. Several days later, on arriving at my home in Reston, Virginia and unpacking the box, I discovered that my purchase had only suffered one piece having broken off the back side of the sculpture. Fortunately, I was able to glue that piece back on the sculpture. For display effect, I repainted the base from black to brown and put a light behind the figure as shown in the above photo.

Some years earlier, in 1993, Sonia and I went to Cali, Colombia to visit her family for Christmas. On December 30, a few days before our scheduled return flight home, Sonia asked me to accompany her to the Castillo art gallery where she had placed an order for our son's collection of athletic event tickets to be mounted into a framed collage. While Sonia was dealing with the salesman on that order, I browsed the gallery's paintings and saw one – ***Mujer Reflejada en el Espejo*** – by an artist named **Atensio**. The painting was in black and white, not color. After negotiation, the manager agreed to sell this painting in its beautiful frame for a very low price.



***Mujer Reflejada en el Espejo (Atensio)***

On one of Sonia's trips to Colombia, she visited Bogotá, where she discovered a very interesting art gallery, Torano Diseño, specializing in practical art objects made of stone and glass. The gallery's designer is **Ramón Carreño Ospina** (1951 – present).



**Ramón Carreño Ospina**

I was very surprised when Sonia returned home and presented me the lamp shown below. It now sits on top of one corner of the hutch in our dining room and, when switched on, adds a special ambiance when we have guests for dinner.





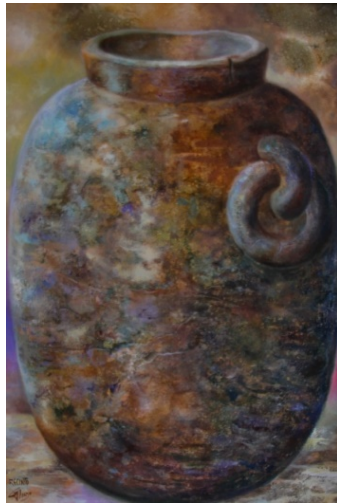
***Lámpara (Ramón Carreño Ospina)***

In May 2006, I was in Bogotá on assignment with USAID to provide support to the Policy Component of USAID/Colombia's Alternative Development Project as well as office coverage and technical support for two weeks while the Mission's Economist (Paul Davis) accompanied USAID's Chief Economist (Arnold Harberger) on field trips around Colombia. The office secretary (Nina Galeano) assisted me in tracking down the name and address of the store where Sonia had purchased the *Lámpara*. On visiting the store, I hoped to find a surprise gift to take to Sonia, and hit the jackpot when I spotted *Florero de Vidrio en U*, the flower vase shown in the photo below.



***Florero de Vidrio en U (Ramón Carreño Ospina)***

During one visit to Cali, Sonia and I came about an artist (**Galindo**) who was displaying his paintings in a city park. When the artist saw that we had not taken interest in any of his paintings, he invited us to come over to his apartment a few days later. On the appointed day and time, we knocked on Galindo's door and were invited in. Looking around, Sonia spotted an oil on canvas painting titled **Recinto** (as shown below).



**Recinto (Galindo)**

The painting was not framed, just stretched and mounted on a wooden frame. We were intrigued by the colors in the painting and its almost translucent quality. A price was agreed upon and, on return home, Sonia had the painting framed which cost nearly three times the price we had paid for the painting. Given the high price of having a painting framed in the U.S., on later purchases we arranged for a painting that we had purchased to be framed and packaged in Colombia for an additional charge and then took the package as one of our pieces of luggage at little or no additional baggage charge. As beautiful as this painting is, we sadly remember later learning that Galindo had died of AIDS at a very young age.

While my parents were living in Colombia from 1968 to 1975, they acquired two interesting pieces of art. The first was what appeared to be a painting of a large bowl (*jarro*) that I titled **Jarro en Tejido**. This was not a painting but rather a composition of weavings assembled to form a bowl, and then mounted and framed. One can barely make out that the artist's name that I've settled on as **Gibaberjer**.



**Jarro en Tejido (Gibaberjer) (1974)**

The second *object d'art* was a collage created by the Colombian artist **Humberto Elías Vélez Escobar** (8/12/1943 – present). The collage shows what I would describe as “leaves in the jungle”, presumably composed using real leaves and other artistic materials to create the composition shown in the photo below.

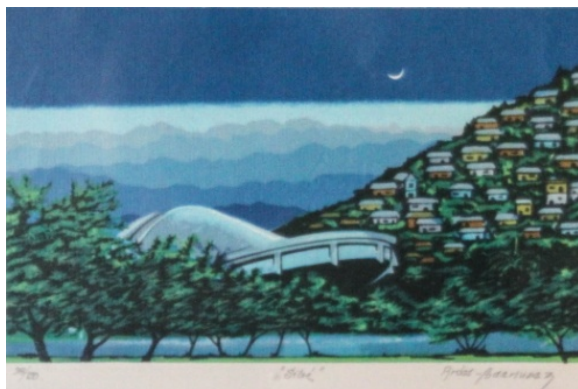


*Hojas en La Selva (1973-1974) (Humberto Elías Vélez Escobar)*

With my father’s passing in 1999 (and my mother’s passing in 1984), my brother Kevin proposed the following system for the three children (Kerry, Kevin, and Kathryn) to select and divide up our parents’ personal belongings. Kevin assigned to each of us a set of colored “Post-It” notepads. Kevin taking the color green, while Kathryn and Kerry were assigned pink and blue notepads, respectively. With our color-coded Post-It notes in hand, each walked around dad’s apartment, putting a Post-It note on any item of interest. For example, I put a blue Post-It note on each of the aforementioned items, the *Jarro en Tejido* and the *Hojas en La Selva*.

We agreed that, if no other sibling put a Post-It note on an item, it would belong to the sibling who had put the Post-It note on it. Both Kathryn and I put one of our Post-It notes on a Colombian sculpture of a horse that Sonia and I had given to my father. At the same time, Kathryn and I had put Post-It notes on a Colombian copper bowl. With both of us competing for the same two items, I offered to Kathryn that I’d give up my claim on the horse in exchange for Kathryn giving up her claim on the bowl, and she agreed. Thus, all of our parents’ household effects were amicably divided up among the siblings or, in the case of unwanted items, sold or donated to charity. Fortunately, neither Kevin nor Kathryn took an interest in either of the two paintings I had marked with my blue Post-It notes – the *Jarro en Tejido* and the *Hojas ne La Selva* – so I didn’t have to do any horse trading to claim these two pieces of Colombian art. As part of the downsizing needed to move to the condo, we gifted the “Hojas” to my son.

Over the years, Sonia bought or received as a gift from her brother Orlando several Colombian paintings. These included *Siloe*, *Una Calle en Cartagena*, and *Abuelo con Los Nietos*, shown in the photos below.



*Siloe* (1990 - #98/150) (Rodas Bermudez)



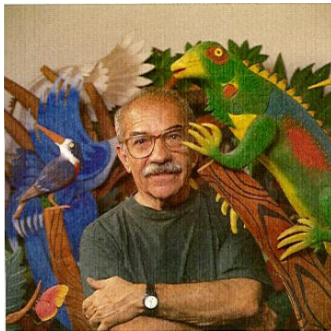
*Una Calle en Cartagena* (1992)



*Abuelo con Los Nietos* (Luis Carlos Rodriguez)



Colombia also is a great country for picking up statues of animals rendered in bronze or other metal. Hernando Tejada Saénz (2/1/24 – 6/1/98) sculptured the pair of cats shown below



**Hernando Tejada Saénz and Los Gatos**

**Alejandro Valencia** (see first photo below) sculptured the stallion (see second photo) that Sonia gave to me on return from one of her trips to Cali.



**Alejandro Valencia**

Following my double bypass and mitral valve heart surgery on July 5, 2013 (see the chapter on my *Encounters in the Realm of Heart Savers*), I did not travel overseas to another country until January 19, 2015, when Sonia and I traveled to Cali, Colombia to visit family and friends. On February 21, Sonia's brother Libardo and wife Nena took us by car up the Cauca Valley to visit Roldanillo, home town of **Omar Rayo Perez**, a famous Colombian painter, sculptor, caricaturist, and plastic artist noted for his work in abstract geometry primarily employing black, white, red, and yellow as illustrated in the painting below on the left.





**Omar Rayo Perez (7/10/1935 – 6/10/2013)**

Roldanillo hosts the Rayo Museum of Latin American Painting and Engraving that Rayo founded in 1981. We visited the museum's various modules featuring art by Rayo and other Latin American artists, our last stop being the museum gift shop where we had a fleeting temptation to purchase a Rayo serigraph until we learned that its price was 5 million Colombian pesos (over US\$ 2000). Fortunately, the gift shop offered some more affordable options (at 2.5% of the serigraph's price) that made it possible to pick up the two lithographs of Rayo's geometric art (left and right below). Nena and Libardo also gifted us with a Lazy Susan decorated with another Rayo painting.



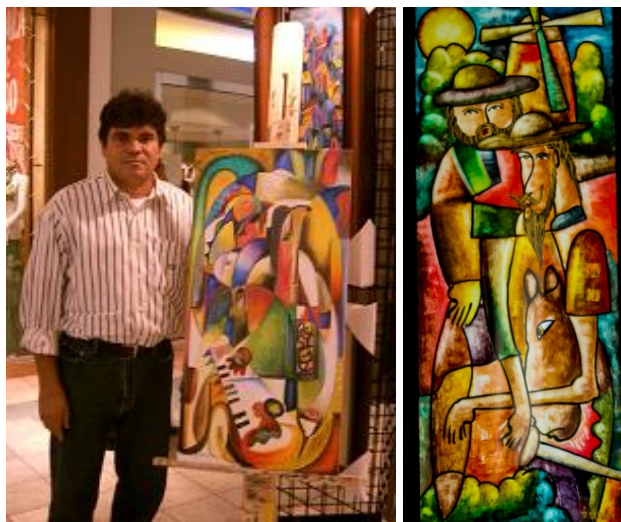
As we were returning to Cali, we learned that a four-vehicle accident had blocked a major intersection in the town of Yumbo, making it impossible to proceed onward to Cali. But Libardo was able to bypass the accident by driving back through the town and returning on the same highway on which we had come until we reached a point where we could take a road to the airport and connect with another road back to Cali. Despite the double bypass, we made it back to Cali safely and alive. In this I was more fortunate than Omar Rayo who early on June 7, 2010 collapsed, while eating breakfast at his home in Roldanillo, and died on his way to the hospital in Cali after having suffered a heart attack.

## Dominican Republic

In September of 2004, I was in Fajardo, Puerto Rico to participate in the negotiation of the proposed U.S.-Andean Trade Promotion Agreement, participating in the U.S. Government delegation to the Trade Capacity Building (TCB) Working Group, a non-negotiating group focused on developing trade capacity building-related technical assistance to the Andean countries. A “highlight” of this round, held at the Wyndham El Conquistador Resort & Country Club, a hotel built on the side of a hill overlooking the Caribbean, was the hotel being hit hard on September 15 by Hurricane Jeanne, resulting in some of the hotel’s guest rooms on the lower levels being flooded, while the storm also washed a mudslide down the hill and into the hotel’s pool. Some of the hotel’s cooking facilities were also damaged, resulting in steaks having to be grilled on portable barbecues rather otherwise prepared in the kitchen.

For this trip, we had made plans for Sonia to join me a day or so after I arrived but, on arrival at the San Juan Airport, she was nearly stranded there, which I learned when she reached me by phone to tell me that the hotel had cancelled the shuttle from the airport to the hotel. I immediately spoke with the hotel management about this and was told that the hotel had stopped sending the shuttle to the airport to pick up guests because the hurricane’s damage had left the hotel with a shortage of guest rooms, as many had been flooded during the storm. Fortunately, my room on the next to top floor of the hotel had sustained only a minor invasion of water during the storm when the wind blew the rain horizontally onto the porch and under the door to my room. I firmly told the hotel management that my wife was waiting for the hotel’s shuttle at the airport, that the hotel needed to immediately send the shuttle to pick her up, and that, since Sonia was my wife, she was welcome to stay in my room! I was able to reach Sonia by phone to let her know that the shuttle was on its way to pick her up. Within a couple of hours, a huge tour bus pulled up to the hotel entrance with just about one passenger, Sonia, disembarking.

On Friday, at the end of the round, Sonia and I returned to San Juan, where one of Sonia’s longtime Colombian friends (Ramón Neira) picked us up and hosted us for a couple of nights in his home in a town near San Juan. The next day, Saturday (9/18), Ramón and his wife drove us around to see some of the local sights including a nearby shopping mall where we had lunch, after which we discovered that the mall was hosting a home fair that weekend, with one booth, the [Latin Art Gallery](#), offering a variety of paintings, one of which, *Don Quijote* (see below photo) by **Gustavo Serra** (1965-present), an artist from the Dominican Republic, caught our eye and pocketbook. (see photos on next page).



Gustavo Serra & *Don Quijote*

## Ecuador

In August of 1992, I was in Quito, Ecuador to work with USAID/Ecuador to develop the technology component of a concept paper for the Mission's proposed Agricultural Sector Development Project. During this trip, I spotted in the Gold Mask Art Gallery two very colorful paintings by Ecuadoran artists. The first painting, *La Puerta en la Calle* (an oil on canvas) was by Ecuadoran artist **Gilberto Almeida Egas** (5/30/28 – present). I found very appealing its simplicity and rich colors (the door in blue and the Indian woman and children dressed in blue and orange clothing). However, more intriguing was how the painting drew one's eye to the passageway (staircase) beyond the door, leaving one wondering where the staircase might lead.



*La Puerta en la Calle* (Gilberto Almeida Egas)

The second painting, *Indio Montado en Caballo* by Ecuadoran artist Pedro Naiupari, was painted in “tempera” and ink and purchased a few days later on August 22.



*Indio Montado en Caballo* (Pedro Niaupari)



I was again in Quito in mid-January of 1993 to lead a “Sustainable Private Agricultural Research in Latin America and the Caribbean (SPARLAC)” workshop for 40+ participants, also providing technical support to USAID/Peru on the sustainability of FUNDEAGRO, the USAID-supported Agricultural Development Foundation. After the day’s sessions on January 18, I visited one of the city’s art galleries, the Galería de Arte Metropolitana, where I purchased *Ventana Multicolor*, a watercolor by Ecuadoran artist **Victor Eduardo Almeida**.



*Ventana Multicolor (1991)* (Victor Eduardo Almeida)

During this same visit to Quito, I also found two other paintings. The first was *Mujeres en El Mercado* by **Olga Perez**, a painting showing a group of Ecuadoran indigenous woman in the marketplace.



*“Mujeres en El Mercado”* (Olga Perez)

The second was a serigraph titled *Amor No. 3* (#95/175) by the Ecuadoran artist **Oswaldo Guayasamín** (7/6/19 – 3/10/99), bought on January 23 in the Gold Mask Art Gallery.



Oswaldo Guayasamín



Amor No. 3



Almost three years later in November of 1995, I was conducting a three-day Organizational Management for Sustainability (OMS) workshop for NGOs in Bogotá, Colombia. On November 17, late in the day on my way back to the hotel, I spotted an art gallery, Carrión Vivar, and asked the driver to stop, discovering another Guayasamín serigraph, this time in color, titled *Ternura* and quickly decided to purchase it, since Sonia had so greatly enjoyed *Amor No. 3* that I had brought home from Quito in 1993. Unfortunately, our downsizing to a condo resulted in having to gift “Tenura” to a friend.



*Ternura* (Oswaldo Guayasamín)

In November of 2000, I made a whirlwind 15-day trip (11/4-18) to five Andean countries (Bolivia, Peru, Ecuador, Colombia, and Venezuela) to lead a joint USAID-Andean Community assessment of trade capacity building technical assistance needs in the areas of WTO obligations, business facilitation, and civil society participation in the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) process. During our visit to Quito, I discovered two paintings in the Imaginar Casa de Arte, the first of which, *Acrílico en Verde* by Patricio Bermeo (1953 – present), was purchased on November 13.



Patricio Bermeo



*Acrílico en Verde*

The second, purchased a day later on November 14, was *Iglesia Rodeado de Casas*, an oil and acrylic by V. Arnujo.



*Iglesia Rodeado de Casas* (V. Arnujo)



## El Salvador

In late May and early June of 1990, I was on assignment to USAID/El Salvador, working in San Salvador to prepare the “Terms of Reference for the Process to Privatize El Salvador’s National Agricultural School.” On June 6, in one of San Salvador’s art galleries, I found a small and affordably priced painting titled *El Río* by **Oscar Linares** (1960 – present). I love the painting’s brilliant coloring in shades of blues and greens as shown below. While the style of the painting has an element of not being quite realistic (e.g., proportions), it avoids the “fantastic” style sometimes referred to as “art naïve” such as the paintings showing “choo choo trains in the sky.” The style of the *El Río* painting has been called “primitivista.”



Oscar Linares



*El Río* (1989)

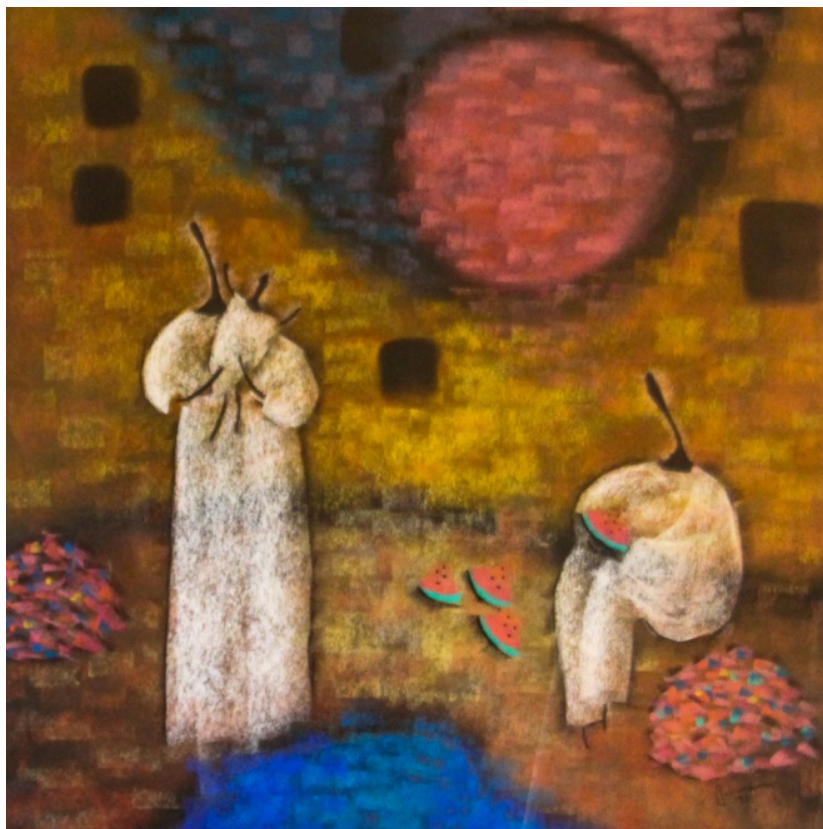
## Guatemala

In the late 1980s I visited several Central American countries – Honduras, Guatemala, and Costa Rica – to conduct a study on how entrepreneurs got into producing and exporting melons and became successful in that business. Not too long after that, in late April of 1991, I was in Guatemala to assist the USAID Mission in developing a concept (pre-design) paper to guide future USAID project assistance to the coffee sector of Guatemala, resulting in my report titled “From Coffeepot to Cafeteria: Toward an Alternative Model for ANACAFE’s Extension Program for Small Farmer Coffee Producers.” But I was definitely less interested in coffee than melons when I discovered an art gallery (Espacio) near my hotel that was exhibiting paintings by the Guatemalan artist **Lucia Rohrmann**. Of particular interest to me was that several of her paintings featured melons (more specifically, watermelons) as a central theme.



**Lucia Rohrmann**

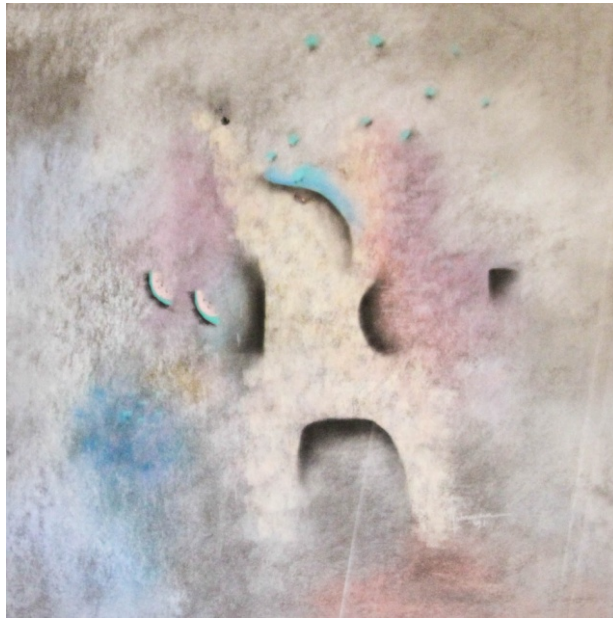
During this and two subsequent visits to Guatemala City and the Espacio art gallery, I bought the three watermelon-themed paintings shown in the following photos. The first, *La Familia*, was purchased on April 30, 1991.



*La Familia* (1991) (Lucia Rohrmann)

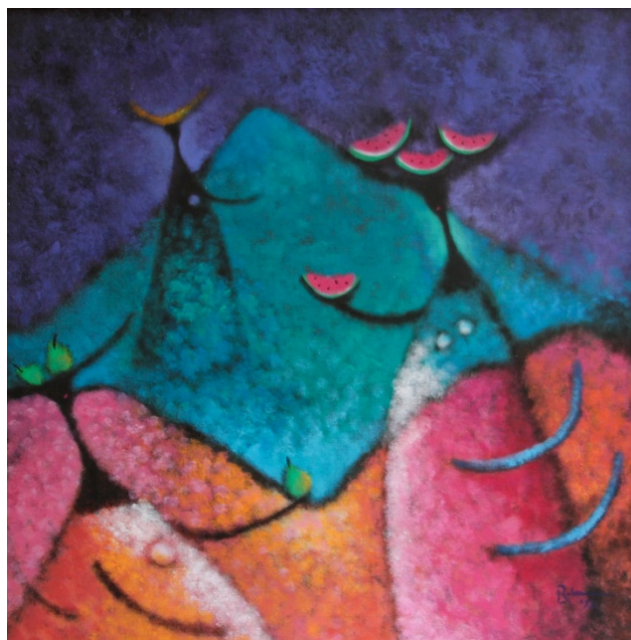


I returned to Guatemala City in November 1991 to assist USAID's Regional Office for Central American Programs (ROCAP) in preparing a concept paper for a proposed project tentatively titled Sustainable Environmental Protection and Agricultural Trade. During some free time, I returned to the gallery where I had purchased *La Familia*, discovering another Lucia Rohrmann painting titled *Mana del Cielo*.



*Mana del Cielo* (September 1991) (Lucia Rohrmann)

In late January of 1993, I again visited Guatemala City to participate in the annual EXITOS (PROEXAG II) workshop to discuss the challenge of promoting the sustainability of USAID-assisted export promotion organizations. After work I returned to the same gallery to discover yet another melon-themed Rohrmann painting, *Ofrendas de Amistad*, which I purchased.



*Ofrendas de Amistad* (August 1992) (Lucia Rohrmann)

A last *objet d'art* acquired during two trips to Guatemala was a wrought iron tree with ceramic versions of many of Guatemala's birds. I found this piece in the gift shop of the El Camino Real Hotel. On getting home, one of the branches had broken off, so I found a nearby metal shop that soldered the branch back onto the tree. The job had not been completed before I had to leave on another overseas trip, so my wife Sonia picked up the tree, hung it back on the wall, and put the birds on the branches. Stepping back to admire this piece, the nail on which it was hanging suddenly pulled out of the wall, with the tree crashing to the ground and the otherwise inanimate birds "flying" off their hooks, many of them breaking. Thus, on my next trip to Guatemala, I purchase enough birds to replace those that had broken, plus a backup supply just in case.



## Haiti

Excepting a short landing in the late 1970s at the Port-au-Prince airport in Haiti, during which I didn't deplane, I've never set foot in Haiti. However, during a work-related trip to the Dominican Republic in the early 1990s, I went to the handicraft market with the objective of trying to find a Haitian painting similar to one my wife's brother Orlando owned and found one (shown below) that I titled *"Women in Market."*

While the painting is signed by "Marc" (a noted Haitian painter who paints in the style shown in the painting below), I have no factual basis to claim the painting actually was painted by Marc. It may have been painted by some other Haitian artist who then signed the painting "Marc," especially given that I bought it for US\$25 – and surely real – original – paintings by "Marc" fetch much higher prices.



*"Women in Market" (Marc)*

## Jamaica

In September of 1995, I was in Kingston, Jamaica to conduct a three-day Organizational Management for Sustainability (OMS) workshop for a number of Jamaican NGOs. During some free time, I stopped by an art gallery where I met the Jamaican painter Patrick Waldemar who subsequently invited me to his home where I spotted one of his paintings that I found of sufficient interest to buy. The painting, a watercolor titled *Wood Nymph*, has an interesting surprise if you look carefully.



**Patrick Waldemar**



*Wood Nymph* (Patrick Waldemar)



## Peru

In February of 1994, I visited Lima, Peru to work with the USAID Mission in conducting a two-day “Organizational Management for Sustainability (OMS)” Workshop for eight NGOs, after which my team provided technical assistance to these NGOs. On February 17, I visited Galería 715, which would become my gallery of choice when visiting Lima. Amy Regas, a colleague from Chemonics who was assisting me to conduct the workshop, tagged along. After some looking around the gallery, I spotted one painting that I really liked: *Recuentros* (1993) by **Sofía Elsa Mejía Calle**. However, I was hesitant that, if I purchased this painting, Sonia might not like it, a risky outcome given the painting’s hefty price. Amy, not knowing Sonia, assured me that Sonia would love the painting—which, fortunately, on returning home with the painting, Sonia did love.



*Recuentros* (1993) (Sofía Elsa Mejía Calle)



Sofía Elsa Mejía Calle



During another visit to Lima in 1994, my USAID colleague and longtime friend Harry Wing and his wife Amparo (sister of Colombian artist Lucy Correa) invited me to dinner at their home. The Wing's, also art aficionados, had collected many fine paintings during the years Harry worked in numerous developing countries as a Foreign Service Officer with USAID. In Lima, Amparo also was very active each year in organizing the *Noche de Arte* (Art Night) hosted on the grounds of the Ambassador's home. *Noche de Arte* brought together dozens of Peru's best artists who offered their paintings at a reduced price and shared some of the sale price as a donation to charity. While I was in Lima for only one art event (one actually held during the day), a painting in the Wing's apartment inspired one acquisition, a serigraph titled *Muelle en Lurin* by the Peruvian painter **Fernando de Szyszlo** (7/5/25 – present).



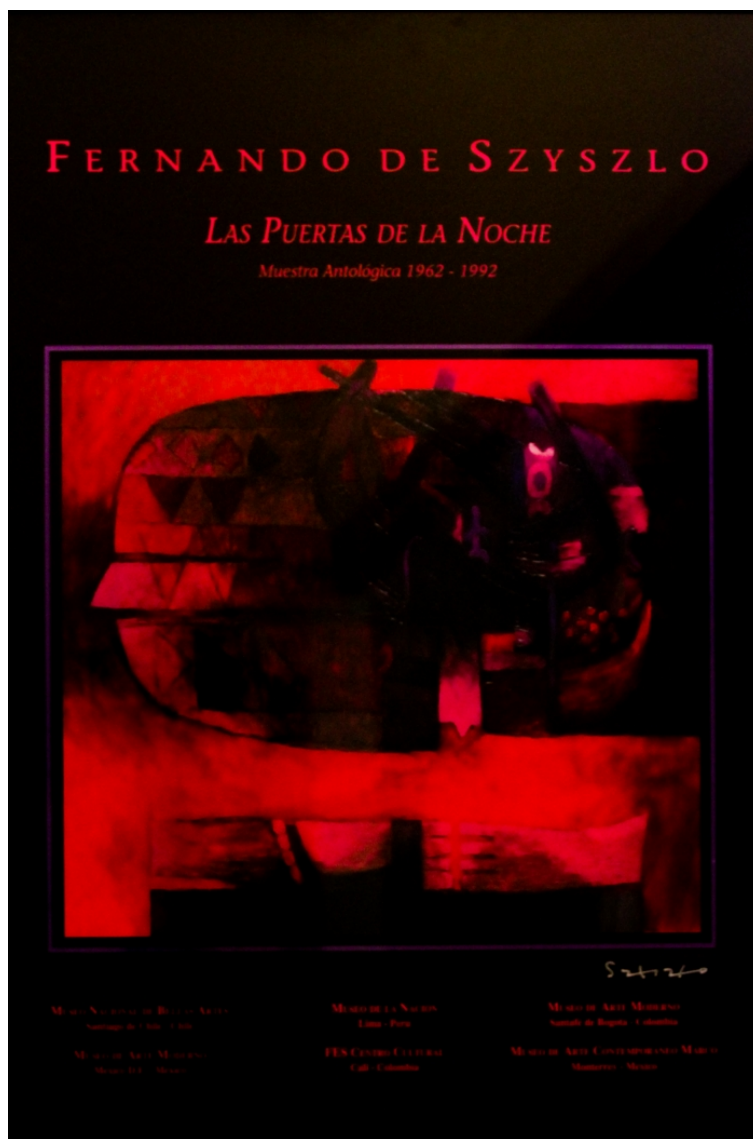
**Fernando de Szyszlo**



*Muelle en Lurin* (Fernando de Szyszlo)

I first saw this serigraph when I visited the Wing's apartment one day for lunch. This Szyszlo serigraph was beautifully framed and hung on the living room wall. The next day I phoned Harry or Amparo (I now forget which) and asked if by any chance Amparo could obtain another copy of this serigraph, actually the last one of the run (#199/199). Later that day Amparo phoned me with the news that she could obtain a copy of this serigraph for US\$300, if that price was acceptable to me—and I said: “Go ahead and make the purchase and I’ll reimburse you.”

At some point after that 1994 visit to Lima and the acquisition of the Szyszlo serigraph, I was visiting Cali, Colombia during a business trip and had an appointment to meet with a contact in the Fundación para la Educación y el Desarrollo Social (or Fundación FES). The highlight of the visit turned out to be discovering that the FES had been one of six cities (one in Chile, two in Colombia, two in Mexico, and one in Peru) to host of a retrospective exhibition of Szyszlo paintings. This caught my attention when I saw a master poster promoting the exhibition in all six locations and learned that the poster was available for purchase and had been autographed by Szyszlo. Interestingly, the piece of Szyszlo’s art portrayed in the poster was from the same series of paintings that had included the *Muelle en Lurin* serigraph I had purchased in Lima in 1994. The exhibition, titled *Las Puertas de La Noche* (Ports of Night), covered the work of Szyszlo from 1962-92.



In early November of 2000, I was back in Lima as part of a tour of the five Andean Community countries (Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, and Venezuela), leading a collaborative USAID-Andean Community (CAN) assessment of areas in which these countries would welcome technical assistance to help them meet their obligations as members of the World Trade Organization (WTO) as well as advancing business facilitation measures and building civil society support for the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) that was being negotiated by the Western Hemisphere's 34 democratically-elected governments (except Cuba). With a small amount of spare time on November 8, I made a quick visit to Galería 715 where I found another melon-themed oil on canvas painting which, since untitled, I christened as *Mujer con Sandías* painted by the Peruvian artist Carlos Palma Tapia (1952 – present).



**Carlos Palma Tapia**



***Mujer con Sandías* (1991) (Carlos Palma Tapia)**

In late January of 2002, I was in Lima to work with USAID/Peru to transfer management of the Andean Regional Trade Capacity Building Program from the Office of Regional Sustainable Development in the Bureau for Latin American and the Caribbean to USAID/Peru. After work on January 24, I took a taxi to Galería 715, where I discovered a beautiful oil painting titled *Soy de Colores* by **Ernest Álvarez Pachas**.



*Soy de Colores* (2001) (Ernesto Álvarez Pachas)



**Flight Log Epilogue:** Almost every time I went into an art gallery in Latin America, I was amazed by the beauty and creativity of the region's artists. Generally, most of the Latin American art that Sonia and I acquired was purchased between 1989 and 2000, a period when I frequently traveled in the region – and before it got more difficult to travel after 9/11/2001. Before then, the stewardess would allow me to put a purchased painting in the small closet on the right as one boards the plane (e.g., a Boeing 737) or behind one of the seats in the last row of first class. However, after 9/11, airlines such as American were reluctant or did not allow one to carry a large-size painting on board, requiring it be shipped as a piece of one's luggage or as cargo.

Another factor working against acquiring more Latin American art has been a general upward trend in art prices, thus making it increasingly more costly to purchase high quality art. At the same time, while we had much more wall space to hang art when we moved in 1993 from our townhouse in South Reston to our patio home in North Reston, each new painting hung on the wall increasingly left less room to hang future acquisitions. The end result is that we reached a saturation point, especially as we neared 70 years of age, where we're less concerned about acquiring "more stuff" (as in George Carlin's famous routine) and more concerned about downsizing – and figuring out what we are going to do with all these paintings once we downsize (or move beyond that). Currently Sonia and I are in negotiations on this issue, Sonia's nephew Santiago (now living in Chile) having indicated he'd love to inherit all of our Latin American paintings. That was news to me and led me to share with Sonia another possibility that had been on my mind, namely, donating our Latin American and Caribbean paintings to the [Art Museum of the Americas](#) collection in Washington, DC. How this will be resolved remains to be seen.

While perhaps not as big a frustration as letting a prized painting getting away from one's possession, it frequently was frustrating as I searched through art galleries to discover a painting that I immediately fell in love with until the gallery representative told me the price for the painting such as was the case with the **Ensonación** painting by Labrada. Any number of times in both Peru and Colombia I spotted a painting I would have bought at \$500, only to be told its price was \$5000. I concluded that, while I may not have the best of tastes when it comes to Latin American art, I know how to select expensive paintings that I can't afford. And while I am no lover of browsing through museums, quickly a victim of museum feet, I do enjoy looking through commercial art galleries. Indeed, in the course of working on this virtual stopover, I realized that one can view a lot of Latin American art on the Internet using Google to track down virtual art galleries. Let your fingers do the walking rather than your feet!

All in all, Sonia and I have enjoyed the colorful Latin American and Caribbean paintings and sculptures that we acquired over the past 45+ years, going back to purchasing my first painting (*Simón Bolívar*) in Cali, Colombia in 1968. These colorful and decorative works of art add sparkle to our home, the interior of which is totally painted from walls to ceilings in the same soft color. Hence these colorful paintings bring our home to life in what otherwise would be just a set of rooms painted in the same color.. I hope, through this chapter on *Colorful Encounters in the Realm of Latin American Art*, that you have enjoyed seeing the Latin American art we were fortunate to acquire and some of the background on where and when each item was purchased.

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With this colorful tour of Latin American art that Sonia and I collected over the years, our inbound flight to Washington, DC is now descending, wheels down, and ready to land. As our plane touches ground and taxis to the gate, let me take a moment to reflect on our journey in the following *Inbound Flight Epilogue*.



## Chapter 21

### *Inbound Flight Epilogue*



*Thank you, Orville and Wilbur, Amelia, Neil and Buzz for teaching us that you can't create the future by clinging to the past, and with that, you're history. Instead of looking behind, Delta is looking beyond. ...We're not simply saluting history. We're making it.*

#### **Delta Airlines Aviation Leaders TV Commercial (2013)**

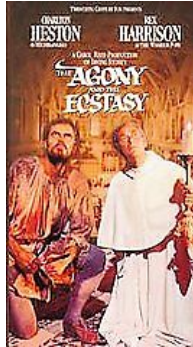
This introductory quote, narrated by film actor Donald Sutherland, derives from a series of Delta Airlines “Aviation Leaders” commercials that aired on television in the United States in 2013. In a way, the virtual stopovers made during our two flights from Guatemala City, Guatemala to Washington, DC might be viewed by the reader as “Boeing” Byrnes “clinging to the past” and “looking behind,” in effect, a trip into the realm of nostalgia. While writing this “reverse autobiography” was a nostalgic trip, reflecting on the biographies of the persons that I saw, met, knew, studied under, and/or worked with over all those years was a springboard for recalling the many personal memories that I have shared with you.

It was philosopher George Santayana (1863-1952) who famously quipped: “Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.” This was a slight modification of a statement earlier made by British philosopher Edmund Burke (1729-1797): “Those who don’t know history are destined to repeat it.” Our virtual stopovers, while forays into my past, were not undertaken with the objective of not repeating the past. Rather my motivation was to remember the past, examine how that past may have influenced my own professional and/or personal life, and share those memories with those reading this memoir.

As I neared completing this memoir, at 70 years of age, I have — knock on wood — 10, 15 or possibly another 20 years to live. After the death of my father (Francis Byrnes – see vignette) in 1999, just a week short of his 82 birthday, I realized with regret that my father had not made more progress to crank out at least a draft of the book he was writing on his experiences in “international institutional innovation.”

While I had reviewed an outline of his book long before my father took ill in 1998, somehow during the last year of his life he had other priorities, amidst which I failed to prod and help him to crank out the book’s proposed chapters. Rather than complete a draft of his book, dad kept working nearly full-time for 15 years after my mother’s death in 1984, including up to one month before his passing in July 1999. While he often traveled during those years to many developing countries, when at home other obligations and interests occupied his time and attention, including being always ready to take on new consulting assignments that took him back to this or that developing country; going to his grandson’s (Shannon’s) basketball games; watching golf, NCAA basketball, and Washington Redskins football on TV; and always being there to support his three children — Kathryn, Kevin, and Kerry.

Perhaps one driving force behind writing this memoir was that I wanted to leave a document that held together as a finished product, not just an outline or table of contents offering glimmers of what I could have written had I only taken the time to stick to the task of getting the “damn thing” finished. From time to time, when friends asked how the “book” was coming along or if I had finished it, I was reminded of the film *The Agony and the Ecstasy* (1959) in which Pope Julius II (Rex Harrison) asks Michelangelo (Charlton Heston) how his painting of the Sistine Chapel's ceiling is coming along.



*Pope Julius II: "When will you make it end?"*

*Michelangelo: "When I'm finished."*

The Prologue to this memoir spoke to the possibility that the songs we now hold dear as “oldies” held the potential back when they were in the Top 40 to be windows into the future. When one is young, there are untold remaining years left in one’s life. Now, many of those remaining years later, certainly with only a few years left, I was reflecting on my own life one evening as Sonia and I were driving to a dinner party.

Just then I heard on the car radio Paul Anka singing his composition *Times of Your Life*. The song’s lyrics sum up the bittersweet nature of memories in the context of time slipping away on one’s life.

*Times of Your Life*

*Good morning, yesterday  
You wake up and time has slipped away  
And suddenly it's hard to find  
The memories you left behind  
Remember, do you remember*

*The laughter and the tears  
The shadows of misty yesteryears  
The good times and the bad you've seen  
And all the others in between  
Remember, do you remember  
The times of your life (do you remember)*

*Reach back for the joy and the sorrow  
Put them away in your mind  
The mem'ries are time that you borrow  
To spend when you get to tomorrow*

*Here comes the saddest part (comes the saddest part)*

*The seasons are passing one by one*

*So gather moments while you may*

*Collect the dreams you dream today*

*Remember, will you remember*

*The times of your life*

*Gather moments while you may*

*Collect the dreams you dream today*

*Remember, will you remember*

*The times of your life...*

Rather than letting the remaining “times of my life” slip away, I realized a few years ago that one thing I had learned from my father’s life was to not put off until tomorrow what I can make progress on today. Hence, in the fall of 2012, I began to spend spare moments recalling the “times of my life” and “gathering mem’ries” while I still could.

Working on this memoir entailed doing research on the Internet to track down information; sorting through family records and photos; reaching out to many others for assistance to track down information; drafting vignettes and frequently rewriting them; and weaving and organizing the vignettes into an overall narrative – and getting the document from Word onto the website where you are reading this memoir on line or perhaps have downloaded it to your computer, iPad or tablet, or even smart phone. I hope you have found the end result and the memories shared as having made for an informative and interesting read, as they say, time well spent.

You’ll recall that the late **Dale Brubaker** introduced in the Prologue and subsequently in his vignette as my high school American Government teacher and a Spartan Educator, inspired me to write this “reverse autobiography.” In late 2012 and early 2013 I shared drafts of several of this memoir’s early vignettes with Dale. He always replied with words of encouragement, one of his last emails to me before his death stating: “You are the potter at the wheel, Kerry, and when it feels right to you, you will know it.”

Hopefully the final product is up to the old proverb that “if a job is worth doing, it’s worth doing well” or the similar adage that “anything worth doing, is worth doing right.”

At the end of the day, I hope that you will judge that I got it right, that it was worth doing, and that I did it well — albeit the “it” (this memoir) turned out much longer than I ever could have anticipated when I first started writing it.



*Our lives are a tapestry. Each moment is a thread on which the next thread is woven.*

**(John Noble as Henry Parrish, “The Golem”, *Sleepy Hollow*, Fox TV, 12/9/13)**

As many others have reflected, one's life is a "tapestry." The former Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor put it this way: "We don't accomplish anything in this world alone... and whatever happens is the result of the whole tapestry of one's life and all the weavings of individual threads from one to another that creates something." As this memoir recounts, my life's "tapestry" owes much to others who came before and influenced my own personal life and professional career, beginning with my parents (Francis and Ethel Byrnes), my wife Sonia for the past 47+ years, and "close encounters" with many others, be they giants or celebrities, who impacted on the evolution of my education, professional career, and/or my personal life.

On our flight from Miami to Washington, DC, you met numerous "giants" and "celebrities" during our virtual stopovers in diverse realms that included Priests and Popes; Spartan Sports; Film and TV Personalities; Superheroes, Muppets, and Clowns; Photojournalists and Filmmakers; Book Authors; Film Composers; Soundtrack Retailers and Producers; Folk, Latin and Exotica Musicians; Junkies, Jailbirds, and Other Persons of Interest; Hip Surgeons and Heart Savers; Community Founders and Mortgage Lenders; The Two Women in My Life; and Latin American Art.

Looking back, all the "close encounters" with the persons we met in these various realms expanded my horizons and enriched my life. I hope that by sharing these memories with you, this memoir has enriched your life, even introducing you to new realms that you may now further explore on your own.



### Three Video Captures of Claude from *Two English Girls* (1971)

In May 2014, I notified USAID of my decision to retire on September 30, 2014. Perhaps, as in the François Truffaut film *Two English Girls* (1971) (see above image captures from that film), I had looked in the mirror, as did Claude (the film's protagonist), and said to myself: "What's wrong with me today? I look old today?" I empathize with Claude as in recent years my own life has been slowed by cataract surgery, hip replacement surgery, and heart surgery (twice). Even if I wasn't "looking" all that old I was increasingly "feeling" old.

This led me to make a two-columned list, the left noting the “pros” in favor of retiring and the right the “cons” against retiring. When I looked at the list, the number of “pros” far surpassed the “cons.” For reasons related to recovering from heart surgery, and reduced demand of USAID Missions in the LAC region for support from Washington, DC-based staff, traveling for USAID to Latin American and Caribbean countries was becoming less likely.

In fact, after my first heart surgery on July 5, 2013, I did not make any more trips overseas for USAID, confining the scope of my work to my office cubicle and meetings within USAID or nearby. Thus, as you read this memoir, you were with me on my last two flights for USAID, the outbound flight from Guatemala City to Miami and the inbound flight from Miami to Washington, DC, just a few months before my heart surgery.

A little over a year after my heart surgery, and paraphrasing what they said about Elvis, “Kerry left the [Ronald Reagan] building” on 9/30/14 to move on to the next chapter of his life — retirement and whatever that may bring.

In the end, what did it all mean?

Think of your life as a story. ... Stories are what we use to find meaning in our lives. Now, imagine for a moment that we lived without the understanding that our story must eventually end. What if our lives were as infinite as the universe, if the ticking clock never stopped? What would our story be then? Would we...still love? Or care? Would those tiny, fleeting moments that mean everything ... mean anything at all? (Dr. Daniel Pierce on *Perception* - Season 3, Episode 5 – “Eternity” – aired 7/15/14 on cable’s TNT channel)



*Perception*'s Dr. Daniel Pierce (Eric McCormack)

In the Foreword to this memoir, I wrote that as one looks back on his or her life, questions remain: “What was my purpose in life?” From my eight years in a parochial school, the answer to that question was simple: “God created me to know him, love him, and serve him.” Of course, easier said (and remembered) than done (and practiced) in real life.

Perhaps another way of stating the “purpose in life” question is to ask: “What difference did my life, my story, make in fulfilling that purpose?” In this regard, I recently noted some guidance that might be helpful in answering such questions. This guidance was provided in the opening and closing narratives for the film of Mark Helprin’s *Winter’s Tale* (2014):



*“Destiny calls to each of us. And there is a world behind the world where we are all connected. All part of a great and moving plan. Magic is everywhere around us. You just have to look. Look. Look closely. For even time and distance are not what they appear to be. ... We are all connected. Each baby born carries a miracle inside. A unique purpose. And that miracle is promised to one person and one person alone. We are voyagers, set on a course towards destiny...to find the one person our miracle is meant for. But be warned: As we seek out the light...darkness gathers. And the eternal context between Good and Evil is not fought with great armies ... but one life at a time. ... No life is more important than another. And nothing has been without purpose. Nothing. What if we are all part of a great pattern that we may someday understand? And one day, when we have done what we alone were capable of doing...we get to rise up and reunite with those we have loved the most...forever embraced. What if we get to become stars?*

**Beverly Penn (as narrated by Jessica Brown Findlay in *Winter's Tale*, 2014)**

As I indicated in the Foreword, I'm fairly convinced that I'm not likely in this lifetime to become a star—even a “giant” or “celebrity.” Nor am I likely at my own life's end to be whisked away to become a star, having fulfilled my purpose, once I have found, as narrated by Penn in *Winter's Tale*, the one person for whom my miracle, the one I was born with, was meant.

The problem is that one is not likely during one's own lifetime, perhaps not even near death's arrival, to realize what that “one miracle” might have been or who might have been the person to whom one is destined to pass that miracle. Nevertheless, if one paraphrased or put a twist on what my father (see **Francis Byrnes** vignette) often said, one “can't quit trying” trying to figure out what that “one miracle” is or trying to find “the one person [that] miracle is meant for.”

Reflecting on my professional career of 40+ years working in one way or another with the U.S. Agency for International Development on agricultural and rural development issues in Africa and Asia, and since 1989 focusing on Latin America and the Caribbean, I frequently found myself asking if I could have been more successful in fostering effective strategic and programmatic investments in agricultural and rural development (ARD). In this regard, reflecting on my own limited contributions as compared with those of the *Development Leaders* with whom I had encounters during my career, a recent MSNBC cable channel public service announcement (PSA) caught my attention.

This PSA, delivered by Melissa Harris-Perry, shared the following memory about her father:

We grew up in the Jim Crow South. And [my father] would give me birthday cards and instead of signing them “Love, Daddy”, [he] always signed them “The struggle continues, Daddy.” And I was a little kid and I was like ‘What is he talking about?’ But what it means and what I've taken on as my own is you don't have to have all the answers and all the solutions to all the problems today. These problems have persisted, and lots of folks have been working on them. And you take up the banner, and you work on them during your lifetime, and then you pass it on to the next. (Melissa Harris-Perry, MSNBC)

The lesson I drew from Melissa's reflection is that, when working in development, especially in agricultural and rural development (ARD), it is helpful to remember not only that lots of folks have worked on the ARD challenge in the developing world but also that this challenge persists, and that nobody has all the answers and all the solutions to the challenge of how to accelerate sustainable ARD. Yet, paraphrasing Melissa, the time has come for the next generation to “take up the banner” to focus more strategically on the ARD challenge.

In this regard, just after retiring from USAID on September 30, 2014, I received a thank you note from Steven Long, a young development professional with whom I had worked while we were both at USAID. I'm not sure if I was born

with a “miracle” or if Steven is the one to whom I was destined to share that miracle (if indeed I was born with one). All I tried to do was provide mentoring support to a “next generation” colleague whom I considered had potential, as Melissa Harris-Perry said, to “take up the banner” and more strategically address the ARD challenge.

Here is what Steven wrote:

*I wanted to formally thank you for everything that you did for me while I was at USAID and after as well. Your mentoring of me was very much instrumental in building my personal capacities around USAID program design and expansion of responsibilities related to Latin America and the Caribbean. I both feel I would not have made it at USAID, nor would I have landed the amazing job that I have.... It really saddens me that I won't be running into you in the field, but I think if anyone deserves a rest and some R&R after so many years of work, it is definitely you.*

*I was very happy that so many people showed up for your going away party because for every person that was there, there is no doubt in my mind that 10 other persons from all over the world would have stood up to say you helped them as well. I think that your willingness to take not only the time but also the trouble to help and mentor people is what makes you special and unique.*

With no disrespect to these kind words, perhaps one's life is not about discovering one's miracle and passing it along to another but rather hoping that, along the way, one has extended kindness to others, done good deeds for those in need, or worked on projects that, in the end, made this world a little better place for one's family, friends, colleagues, community, and especially the less fortunate, notably the millions of poor at “the bottom of the pyramid” who yet struggle in the developing world in search of pathways to a more prosperous future.

In spite of all of my own reflections on these questions, I came to the conclusion that life may yet give me a few more years to work on figuring out their answers or, if not answered by life's end, it shall remain for the future to witness the denouement of and write the last chapter of my story.

*It has been said that a man is not dead while his name is still spoken, that we are only truly gone when we've disappeared from the memories of those who loved us, meaning a great artist never dies. As long as his books are read, his painting admired. As long as our songs are sung, we may each of us live forever.*

[Narration by Dr. Henry Morgan (Ioan Gruffudd) on *Forever* - Season 1, Episode 9: “6 A.M.” – November 18, 2014]

*It's a new day. There are memories to be made. ... We are told that those who ignore the past are doomed to repeat it, while those who dwell in the past would like nothing more than to repeat it over and over again. But memories, like photographs, have a way of fading with time. ... Some memories are so powerful that they never fade. ... Memories which become more powerful every time we remember them. ... Thus, making our present lives seem a little more faded. But let's not think about that now.*

[Narration by Dr. Henry Morgan (Ioan Gruffudd) on *Forever* - “Season 1, Episode 15: “Memories of Murder” – February 24, 2015]

*Yes, some memories are precious...and we need to hang on to them. But Emily Dickinson wrote: 'Forever is composed of nows.' And she's right. If we root ourselves too deeply in the past, we'll miss what's right in front of us.*

[Narration by Dr. Henry Morgan (Ioan Gruffudd) on *Forever* - “Season 1, Episode 19: Punk Is Dead” – March 31, 2015]

***The End***



**Bangladesh**

**Dr. Kerry J. Byrnes**  
**International**  
**Agricultural and Rural**  
**Development**  
**Advisor / Consultant**



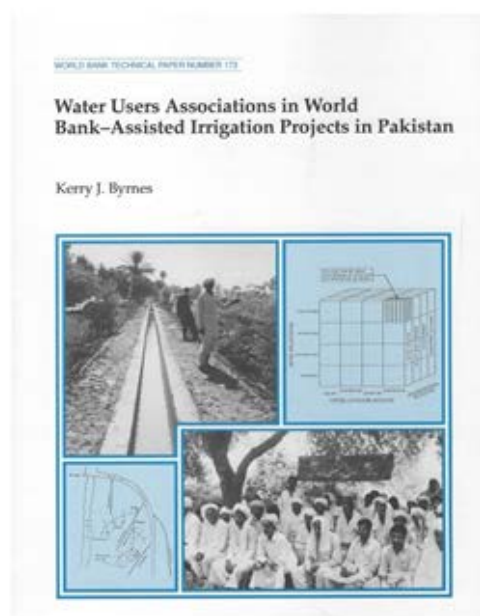
**Guatemala**



**Indonesia**



**Report for USAID**



**Report for The World Bank**