



With appreciation for your creative contributions that have made this edition of the *Bugle* so interesting. - The Buglers:

Sarah Beers  
Linda Chapman  
Lois Kraus  
Russ Leng  
Ron Rucker

Angelika Brumbaugh  
Phil Chapman  
Max Kraus  
Nancy Rucker

Cari Burkard (Design and Layout)

## My Most Memorable Thanksgiving

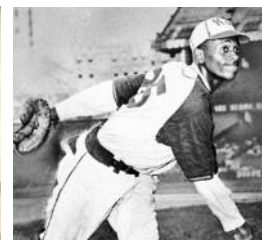
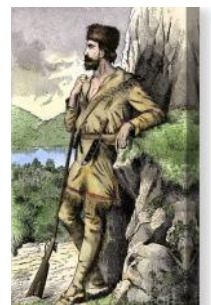
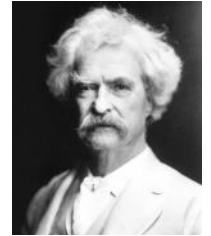
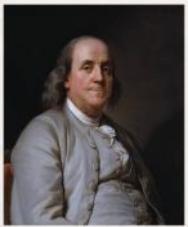
Linda P.

The warmest Thanksgiving day I ever remember was in 1976 and so much of the celebrating took place out of doors. As usual, my extended family of almost 30 gathered at a home in a small Connecticut town to celebrate Turkey Day. Being aware that 1976 was the bicentennial year of the founding of the United States of America, we had decided that all should come dressed as their favorite dead American that year.

With an age span from 3 years to 70+—and including 16 children—everyone arrived and gathered on the front lawn under the ancient trees. Some early Americans were instantly recognizable—Benjamin Franklin, Paul Revere, Betsy Ross, but others were a mystery for a while—such as my mother as a dead American Elm, little Alice as her dead cat, Mama Cass, Simon Legree, and my out of costume father keeping us guessing with clever props for his favorite Americans such as Cole Porter, Ty Cob, and Satchel Page. Among the children were: Laura Ingalls Wilder, Daniel Boone and (I can't believe I stitched up a 3-piece white suit for the kid) Mark Twain. Seeing Cardinal Spellman and Mother Theresa (she was an honorary American) strolling arm in arm around the front yard drinking bubbly nearly caused a car accident.

But after dinner the day ended in the usual way. The children disappeared **completely** unsupervised, the women spent the remaining hours in the kitchen washing the dishes, and the men all retreated to the TV Room to “watch the game”. Snoring could be heard.

*For additional memorable Thanksgiving anecdotes, please go to pages 6-9*



## Nancy Lee R.

I was born in Baltimore, Maryland and spent most of my adult life living in the area. My father took me to the theater, symphony, baseball games, football games, and basketball games. In addition we would have special dinners or lunches together that still make me smile.

I married in college for the first time and moved to Southern Maryland where I had two children and then was divorced.

After a few years wandering around I found myself back in Baltimore. Employment opportunities were abundant and I started working for a Public Accounting Firm. A year later a new tax person joined the firm. Bill was originally from Maryland and after living in Iowa had decided to move back to Maryland. He worked in the downtown office and once a week he came to my office and shared a joined desk area with me. That was in September of 1983. Before Christmas his wife asked for a divorce and in Iowa you got a 90-day no fault divorce.

Fast forward to Valentine's Day 1984 and Bill's divorce was final. I quickly asked him out for dinner and we were married in September 1984. To say it was a marriage made in heaven sounds funny, but it was. We just celebrated our 40th wedding anniversary and I couldn't have a better life partner.

Over the years I have had many health challenges. My being diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis in 1987 presented us with trials that we had not counted on. Support from a loving spouse, family, and positive attitude continue to get us through the unknowns of this disease.

Interest in a variety of fiber arts has kept my fingers busy. These include rug hooking, tatting, knitting, spinning, beading, stump work embroidery, and smocking to name a few. Of course I have more than a few projects in progress and more than that planned in my head.

I have always liked to get my hands in the soil. Raising plants from seeds or starts and then preserving that produce either by canning or freezing is very satisfying. As a result of all my years of canning, three years ago I became the Food Superintendent for Addison County Field Days.

In 2007 we bought a house in Hinesburg. Bill did not see the house in person until the night before settlement. We lived in that house for 15 years.

Now we are settled into a lovely cottage on Deer Meadow Drive that is our forever home. We both feel privileged to have been welcomed by this community and absolutely love it here.

## Bill R.

I was born and raised in a suburb outside of Baltimore. I hate to admit this but I was a terrible student from grade school through high school. Upon entering college I realized I needed to get serious, and I graduated from the University of Maryland with a degree in accounting. My dad, who once said, "I am only wasting money on one semester," ended up being pretty proud.

With my degree in hand I was off to work and began my career as an IRS agent. I spent five years there and also passed the CPA exam. My new spouse and I moved to Iowa where I started work at a public accounting firm. My son and daughter were both born in Iowa. After six years and the start of a failing marriage, I headed back to Maryland to work for another accounting firm. Not much later my wife filed for divorce, which was granted early in 1984. Two days later an attractive employee, who worked in a different office, called me and asked if I wanted to go grab dinner. Six months later we were married, and this September will celebrate our 40th anniversary.

Around our tenth year of marriage, Nancy was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis. We adapted, especially Nancy, who refuses to give in to it. My career continued to advance. I went to night school to earn my MBA and passed the Certified Financial Planner exam. Eventually I became president of an accounting firm and also co-managed the money management section of that firm.

I retired in 2011 and we moved full time to our second home in our beloved Vermont. When we decided to sell our house in Hinesburg, we stumbled on EastView. We love it here and plan for it to be our forever home.



## “The Rainbow Bridge”

Angelika B.

Anyone who has loved and lost a dog has most certainly heard of the poem, “Rainbow Bridge”—“A tribute to pets that have passed...the poem has touched the lives of millions of pet lovers around the world.” An art historian, Paul Koudounaris, went on a mission to find the poem’s author. He found 15 separate claims of authorship filed under the title “Rainbow Bridge” with the US copyright office. But he also found the name Edna Clyne-Rekhy in Scotland. When he contacted her, “the 82-year-old had no idea that the poem she had written more than 60 years ago to honor her childhood dog, Major, brought comfort to so many people.” Major, her first dog, a Labrador Retriever, died in 1959. The day after he died she wrote the poem and put it in a drawer. Years later she typed a few copies for friends without adding her name. By the early 1990s, the poem had crossed the Atlantic Ocean. When Koudounaris reached Edna she told him the original paper was in her attic.



Edna Clyne-Rekhy

Koudounaris wrote, “As a concept, what nineteen-year-old year old Edna envisioned is a kind of limbo where deceased pets are returned to their most hale form and cavort in newfound youth in an Elysian setting, but it is not paradise itself. Rather, it is the kind of way station where the spirit of an animal waits for the arrival of its earthly human companion, so that they may cross the Bridge together to achieve true and eternal paradise in each other’s company, and to thereafter never again be parted.”

*Angelika condensed and quoted this material from the article “Rainbow Bridge: Setting the Records Straight” by Kelly Doktor in Yankee Golden Retriever Rescue Golden Times 2024 Volume 1 pages 15-16.*

## Gobsmacked

Ed S.

When the Annual Giving Fund (AGF) committee wanted to describe their feelings after reviewing the results of the latest fundraising campaign at EastView, they were torn, until someone remembered an expression used by some Anglo-Saxon living across the pond many years ago: Gobsmacked!

\$142,941 was raised from 100% of the cottage households and 100% of the Independent Living apartment households. This is \$45,000 more than the goal set for this year. Many wonderful financial gifts came from the folks and their families living in MeadowSweet and GardenSong.

It is expected that the total allocated to the hourly-waged staff will add about \$1.67 for each hour worked. That would be an average bonus of over \$1,550 awarded to each of these awesome people.

More than just the dollars, the AGF effort is meant to be an expression of the gratitude and admiration every EastView resident has for our fine staff. We know they know we care.

Gobsmacked indeed!

*2024 AGF Committee: Ulie H., Max K., Russell K., Connie L., Larry R., Ron R., Paul S., Ed S., Reg S., Deb V., and Sally W.*

## 句俳 Haiku

Orvis, I miss you.  
A dog with great attitude,  
confidence and pride.  
*Angelika B.*



## November Birthdays

|          |       |            |       |
|----------|-------|------------|-------|
| Nina B.  | 11/3  | Bob R.     | 11/18 |
| Frank W. | 11/10 | Martha D.  | 11/20 |
| Ann B.   | 11/12 | Tiffany N. | 11/24 |
| Bill R.  | 11/13 | Zita N.    | 11/24 |
| Ulie H.  | 11/14 | Betsy L.   | 11/28 |
| Max K.   | 11/15 | Ed S.      | 11/28 |
| Bob A.   | 11/16 |            |       |

**Believe***Larry R.*

Over 50 years ago in May 1972, a tall, attractive nurse named Lois F. entered the University of Vermont math class taught by Professor Holly P. Holly had a rush, a reaction that was unexplainable, about Lois. As the old saying goes – the rest is history – but little did they know then what that trail of history would become. Here is their story which obviously affected them greatly but also our society and our laws.

The new couple slowly and very carefully finally found the time to get to know each other. On Christmas of 1972, Holly cooked a fancy dinner and they exchanged friendship rings. They were a couple in a time when gay only meant being happy. Lois sailed through her nursing program and in 1973 they bought a house in Essex Center.

They next moved to Milton, Vermont, where they lived for the following 22 years. They joined all kinds of volunteer activities, both within the town and their church. Life was busy and their home, including their 15 foster children, made for a happy, full life together. Towards the end of their stay in Milton, they realized the discriminatory extra costs for benefits and on taxes for a gay couple. They heard about The Vermont Queer Town Meeting in Montpelier and, although uncomfortable with its name, they decided to explore and find out more about it. Through the workshop on legal issues for same-gender couples that was taught by Vermont attorneys Susan Murray and Beth Robinson, Lois and Holly discovered there were state rights they didn't even know about and thousands of federal benefits as well. This was a real eye-opener! One month later, they attended a meeting called the Vermont Freedom to Marry Task Force, which was a grass-roots education task force to educate all Vermonters about the issue of gay marriage. They were coached and trained on how to spread the word for marriage equality throughout Vermont. It was a game changer for them.

Before they knew it, they were giving talks through civic groups, as well as interviews for radio and TV. In July 1997, their attorneys decided the time was right to apply for a marriage license. Even though Lois and Holly were well known, admired and appreciated in their hometown, the town clerk (a friend) had to reject their marriage application.

The rejection was not unexpected. Their attorneys Susan Murray and Beth Robinson (of Langrock, Sperry & Wool) and Mary Bonauto (an attorney from the Gay & Lesbian Advocates & Defenders in Boston) immediately filed a lawsuit for Lois and Holly and two other couples: Stannard Baker and Peter Harrington and Nina Beck and Stacy Jolles. On July 22, 1997, the lawsuit (*Baker v. State of Vermont*) claimed that all married couples in Vermont should have equal access to the benefits of the law.

News and TV stations immediately jumped on this huge story! Their lawsuit was the first of its kind in the United States. Their case quickly rose to the Vermont Supreme Court, which heard the arguments from both sides, but ruled that the question of marriage equality should be decided in the Vermont State Legislature.

Before an always packed house including Lois and Holly who squeezed in just like everyone else to hear the debate, the Vermont House of Representatives and the Senate then heard the arguments. After arguments had been heard the vote total was: in the House a vote of 79 to 68 and in the Senate a vote of 19 to 11. This meant a total of 98 for marriage equality and 79 against. Vermont Governor Howard Dean signed the Civil Union Bill into law on April 26, 2000. It was the first such bill in the United States.

Lois and Holly had prevailed and were trailblazers who had fought for their rights. They had won an historic case not just for Vermont, but later for other states that eventually would follow Vermont's lead. Their epic battle for equality was the beginning of other similar cases for the gay rights movement. We sit here today with a totally changed and for-the-better social landscape because of their efforts.

We thank our wonderful neighbors Lois and Holly for their perseverance, grit, and determination to do what was right; that is, to fight for equality for all and not just a select few.

## Let's Take a Walk

*Lois K.*

We are so fortunate to live where we can walk in many directions and enjoy woodlands, views of the mountains, and savor it all in this serene place.

Here are some suggestions for walks:

Turn south as you leave EastView and go up the hill to the blue gate (1/2 mile). Turn around and you have walked a mile. Or continue on farther on South Street down to the first telephone pole. You have now walked a mile. Or go farther all the way to the Eddy Horse Farm. That is another 1/2 mile. Beautiful views the whole way.

Once the construction at Helen Porter Nursing Home is finished, take the path from EastView to the back of Helen Porter Nursing Home. Bear right toward the wooded area. There is a lovely path in the woods called Libby's Trail. Or walk toward town past the ambulance driveway and before you reach the baseball field turn right at the sign for the TAM trail. You can follow it a long way. (The entire TAM trail circles the town of Middlebury.)

If you want to go farther afield consider driving south of town to Creek Road. There you can take a flat walk along the creek. Or drive up Rt. 125 to the Bread Loaf campus. You can walk on any of the ski trails and roads there. Or stop at the Robert Frost trail and take the trail walk, stopping to read the poetry along the lovely marked loop.

There are so many opportunities here to get out and savor the beauty of our locale. Enjoy.

## Orchestra Winds Up ... and Down!

*Chris P.*

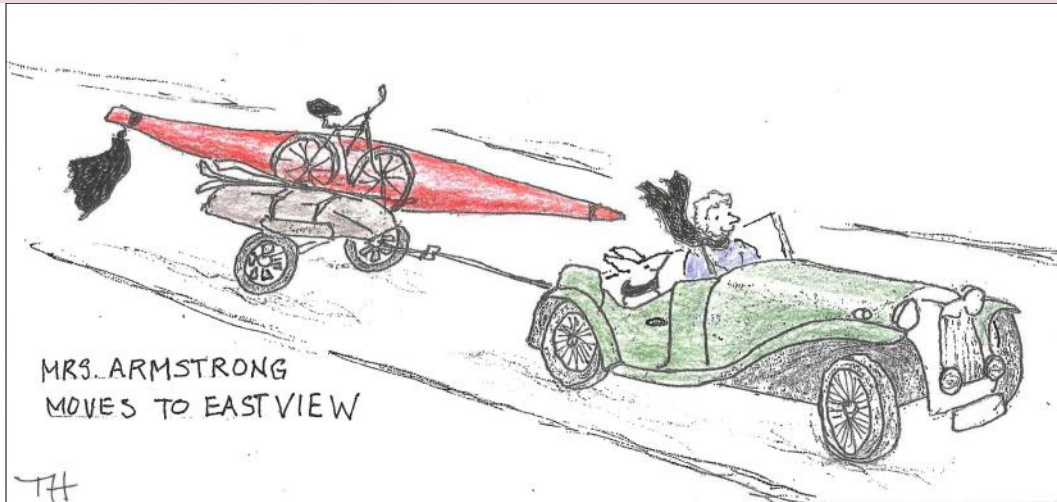
EastView's Community Orchestra will present its final concert in December. This will be the 13<sup>th</sup> program in our three-plus years of existence. Soloists (Connie, Paul, and Barney) and a trio (Angelika, Betsy E., and Kate B.) will provide some pleasing vocals — as will you, in a few holiday-themed sing-alongs. The instrumentals will be varied; one of them a challenging, slow, and beautiful piece composed by banjoist Jens Kruger called "Slow Clouds". Guest pianist Kate G. has just begun rehearsing with the orchestra, and we are all obviously excited about what the piano has added to the mix. Chimes, guitars, violin, cello, bass, and banjo complete the 17-strong ensemble.

The concert dates and times are as follows: **Friday, December 6** (Dress Rehearsal with audience); then **Tuesday, December 10**, and **Friday, December 13**, all starting at 2:30 pm. Hope to see you there!



*Photo by Max K.*

**Front row, L to R:** Kate G. (at piano), Linda K., Holly P., Connie L., Chris P.; **Back Row, L to R:** Jan W., Bob P., Angelika B., Buz B., Linda C., Janet G., Linda S., Kate B., Barney H., and Paul S. (Missing from photo: Betsy E.)



## My Most Memorable Thanksgiving, cont'd. from Page 1

### Patsy C.

Everyone has a favorite Thanksgiving dish. My sister, Kathleen, absolutely loved stuffing!

Growing up, everyone in my home had specific Thanksgiving responsibilities. My Aunt Tally was the master of the stuffing. She thought of this as an honor, as well as an onerous task.

Her preparation started days in advance. Slices of bread were spread over every kitchen surface because the bread had to become stale to form the perfect main stuffing ingredient. The turkey giblets (what a strange and ominous word that is!) were boiled, producing an odor that permeated the entire house. Next, the celery and onion chopping was accomplished with great vigor. Fresh herbs were essential, so several store trips for the freshest herbs ensued. Finally, the dressing was ready, the turkey was stuffed, cooked, and served, and Kathleen raved about Tally's stuffing. Every year this drama was reenacted and the dinner was a great success.

Then came the year, unbeknown to us, that Tally discovered Pepperidge Farm stuffing. For some reason, none of the family noticed the absence of the bread aging, the giblets cooking, or the vigorous chopping. Only when we sat down to dinner and Kathleen took her first bite of stuffing did we become aware that something was different. Kathleen swallowed, smiled, and said, "Tally! This is the best stuffing that you have ever made!" There was a moment of silence, followed by a round of laughter.

That day Tally retired from stuffing production. Long live Pepperidge Farm!

### Jan W.

Growing up in a small Iowa town, Thanksgivings were always filled with happy and delicious traditions. My aunts, uncles, cousins, and grandparents all got together for the day, rotating the hosts each year. Every family contributed food to the very traditional meal: turkey, stuffing, mashed potatoes, gravy, mashed sweet potatoes topped with marshmallows, cranberry sauce, homemade butter horn rolls, and pumpkin pie and real whipped cream for dessert.

Of course, the women cooked and served and one man carved the turkey. There was lots of laughing, bad jokes and my uncles' annual debate as to whether a farmer, corporate executive, or Marine officer (their careers) had the best life.

A few not so idyllic incidents did occur. One year my aunt gave us all food poisoning. She never admitted it was her turkey and stuffing, rather she claimed we all had come down with the flu. Another Thanksgiving, two male cousins threw my mother's good china out the bathroom window because they didn't like the pumpkin pie on it. Another time, my aunt made a "new" stuffing with wild rice. No one approved and tradition prevailed.

All my Thanksgiving celebrations are a blend of wonderful memories. As you read these memories does Normal Rockwell come to mind as he does to me?

**Gordon C.**

*The Haudenosaunee Thanksgiving Address*

This is not a personal story of a Thanksgiving event. It is an acknowledgment that our Native American friends are acutely aware of the bounty provided by Nature and their obligation to use these resources wisely and be thankful.

The Haudenosaunee (the French labeled it the Iroquois) is a confederacy of tribes, mostly in Northern New York State and nearby Canada. Established in the pre-contact period, the members are Cayuga, Oneida, Onondaga, Mohawk, and Seneca. (The Tuscarora joined more recently.)

The Thanksgiving Address may be recited several times during the year. There is no connection to the Pilgrims or to our National Holiday.

Parts thanking Earth Mother and the Creator are shown here:

*The Earth Mother—We are thankful to our Mother the Earth, for she gives us all we need for life. She supports our feet as we walk about upon her. It gives us joy that she continues to care for us as she has from the beginning of time. To our Mother we send greetings and thanks. Now our minds are one.*

*The Creator—Now we turn our thoughts to the Creator, our Great Spirit, and send greetings and thanks for all the gifts of Creation. Everything we need to live a good life is here on this Mother Earth. For all the love that is still around, we gather our minds together as one and send our choicest words of greeting and thanks to the Creator. Now our minds are one.*

There are several more paragraphs offering thanks to the people, the plants, the trees, the animals, the fish, the waters, and more. Each paragraph concludes with the affirmation "Now our minds are one."

The affirmation reflects the mode of tribal governance which focuses on building consensus rather than by voting. Tribal elders sit around the fire and pass the talking stick from one to the next who speaks honestly while the others listen "from the heart." The cycle continues until all minds are one. Our founding fathers were cognizant of this practice as they deliberated the Constitution.

I can send the complete text to any who wish to have it. Also, it can be found in *Braiding Sweetgrass* by Robin Wall Kimmerer in the chapter entitled "Allegiance to Gratitude."

**Angelika B.**

My first Thanksgiving in this country was a new experience. Thanksgiving in Germany is only a church service. Here in my parents-in-law's house it was a chaotic wonderful gathering of adult and little cousins, neighbors, friends, and various dogs. In the middle of this great and enjoyable mayhem I found my father-in-law sitting on a stool in the kitchen in front of the oven. Upon my astonished question he said that he guarded the turkey because my mother-in-law would pull it out since she claimed food is ready when it smelled.



**Janet G.**

Two years ago, we planned our Thanksgiving dinner here at EastView for 16 people. We invited our usual family group which included our local daughter Dena, and husband Matt, Sam and Nora, grandchildren of high school age, Matt's parents from just north of NYC, our daughter Leah from south of Rochester, NY and another local family with three daughters.

My Thanksgiving style, for over 50 years, has been full of lots of details, which I start planning at least a month before the holiday. Our refractory table is opened up and set formally with crystal, china, silver and a lace cloth. There are many traditional parts to the table: pumpkins, pressed fall leaves, Pilgrim figures, turkeys made out of pine cones and pipe cleaners, mints, candles, flowers and each person has a place card and token gift.

Additionally, I make lots of dishes: wild rice, stuffing, the turkey, chocolate mousse, apple sauce, and maybe pumpkin pie. Everyone else brings a contribution.

So, on the morning of Thanksgiving, the table was set, all the food made and by late morning, I was ready to put the turkey into the oven. Fred went up to the Inn with Betty (our dog) and Leah for a walk. When they returned, they informed me that they had just hung up with Dena. Matt had come down with Covid, his parents had already left for home and since we had all been together the night before, TG was CANCELLED! What a blow!!

Everyone still shared the food, but from afar. Fred, Leah, and I sat at our lovely table alone. It was sad, but the meal was still delicious.

**Alec L.**

*Holidays, Southeast Asia, 1966*

The entire month of November, like every month, lacked chronology and specifics, no days of the week, no sequence of numbers. Seasons were wet or dry. Thanksgiving lacked a place in time, and would, therefore, not occur. A large number of turkeys were pleased with that outcome, not unlike the loss of December or July. Indigenous calendars bore no resemblance to ours, and ours served no purpose, inhibiting the slow passage of time. It's likely I ate peaches from a can, while sitting on the ground, waiting for a year to end, almost content with silence and boredom.

**Vanda C.**

The plan, 25+ people for Thanksgiving dinner. The turkey is huge and has been stuffed the evening before (this is back when we didn't worry about stuffing the bird the night before). The bird is in the oven with the oven set to go off at 5 am on Thanksgiving day. Mom and Dad get up at 7 am. How come they can't smell the turkey cooking.....the oven didn't go on. Mom turns the oven on to 500° for an hour then down. Best turkey dinner we ever had!





**Lois A.**

In 1952 Bob and I were married students at Bowling Green University. One of my professors suggested that we host a student couple from Africa for Thanksgiving Dinner. My cooking and baking experience at that time was less than zero, but our enthusiasm for showing a foreign couple our wonderful tradition of a table loaded with a fat turkey, five vegetables, four pies, and candles in the shape of Pilgrims gave us confidence to try. I don't remember whether the turkey was edible but Finasi and Ife M. became our friends, sharing dinners and stories of our two cultures. We kept in touch as they returned to Nigeria to start a school in their village.

**Holly P.**

On Thanksgiving Day, 2007, Lois and I found ourselves in our new motorhome at Congaree National Park in SC. We were the only campers, so had our choice of sites.

It was a warm, dry day. After the Ranger assured us there were no snakes, we took off on a wonderful hike. The trail was flat with a fascinating ecosystem, totally unlike Vermont. We worked up a good appetite for dinner.

Using only the microwave, we substituted stuffed chicken breasts for turkey. It was **not** a traditional Thanksgiving dinner but was the most memorable Thanksgiving we have had.

**Ron Rucker**

A native Californian in Cambridge, MA, November 1960, absent from home on Thanksgiving for the first time in his life. There was neither the time nor the money to travel cross-country, something that was not yet a common happening for students. As a first-year graduate student in the Harvard University Music Department, I had struck up a friendship with a classmate from Oklahoma. Bill had a car – many of you will probably remember the long vanished (last produced in 1961) DeSoto. Cape Cod was unknown territory but why not drive to the very tip, Provincetown, for a holiday outing. I suppose in our ignorance we hoped that we would find some cozy restaurant serving a proper New England Thanksgiving dinner. As you can readily guess, the then strictly seasonal village was shuttered tight. I cannot remember that we saw a single person. Retracing our drive, we finally found proper holiday sustenance in Hyannis. It was dark when we returned to Cambridge, newly acquainted with a small slice of New England.

**Pumpkin Decorating Contest Winners**

**Best in Show**

Judy D.  
Honorable mention:  
Lisa P.

**Favorite Carved**

Judy D.  
Honorable mention:  
Dining Services

**Favorite Painted**

EV Painting Group  
Honorable mention:  
Bob B.

**Funniest**

James B.  
Honorable mention:  
Lydia A.

**Best Individual**

Nancy H.  
Honorable mention:  
Mary B.

**Most Unique**

Lisa P.  
Honorable mention:  
James B.

**Best Group Creation**

Dining Services  
Honorable mention:  
Rebecca B. &  
Jennifer M.



**Welcome to EastView!**

Welcome to new residents and staff who have joined the EastView Community in the past month!

Residents: Harold A. and David M. (GS), and Doug & Alicia S. (IL).

Staff: Star H. and Brooke L. (Servers), Kira M. (Housekeeper), and Michael W. (RCA).

**EV Art Committee Cards**

At the foot of the stairs in the lobby, there is a rack of note cards/greeting cards featuring paintings and photographs by our very own EastView artists. Profits go to the EastView Art Committee, which uses the funds in a variety of ways to benefit the greater EastView community. One card costs \$2.50, four cost \$8.00, and eight cost \$14.00.

## Some Reflections on Thanksgiving

Russ L.

Thanksgiving is my favorite holiday. There is no shopping, no stress over gifts to give or what to do with gifts received. It is just a gathering of friends and relatives to enjoy a feast together and to be grateful for what we have been given in our lives.

We like to think that Thanksgiving began with us, but, even in North America, the Canadians have us beaten by 43 years. In 1578, early English explorers arriving in Canada arranged a celebration to express gratitude for the survival of their fleet. Centuries before the Europeans arrived, Native Americans were holding annual celebrations of gratitude for the fall harvest.

The Thanksgiving celebrated by most Americans dates back to a feast held by 52 Pilgrims and 90 Wampanoag people in Plymouth in 1621. Both parties had survived a terrible year of hardship and lives lost to disease and scarcity. Expressions of thanksgiving were mixed with mourning. The communal feast later came to be associated with the desire of the two peoples for a future of peaceful relations.

In 1789 President George Washington convinced Congress to encourage states to set aside an annual “day of thanksgiving and prayer,” and most states did so. Thanksgiving became a national holiday in 1863 during the Civil War. Abraham Lincoln (goaded on by the enterprising editor of *Godey’s Lady’s Book*, Sarah Hale), issued a proclamation for a day when war-weary Americans would pause to be grateful for all that they still had, as well as to “implore the Almighty hand to heal the wounds of the nation.” It was another hard time when gratitude was mixed with mourning.

Thanksgiving, or something like it, is celebrated around the world. Germany’s *Entredankfest* is a festival of thanks. Celebrants bring fruits of the harvest to the local church, and then enjoy a communal feast. Japanese celebrations of the rice harvest began in the seventh century. Today’s Japanese use the occasion to thank those whose work contributes to the community, such as fire-fighters and teachers. Korea’s *Chuseok* harvest festival brings families together to express gratitude, and to pay their respects to their ancestors.

Most Americans think of Thanksgiving as a secular holiday, but its focus on gratitude is consistent with most religions. In Liberia it has become a Christian holiday, with churches auctioning baskets of food donated by the congregation. Some argue that the Pilgrim celebration was modeled on the Jewish holiday, Sukkot. Sukkot is when Jews express gratitude for the bounty of the land, with remembrance of their ancestors who endured forty years in the desert. Muslims celebrate Ramadan with thirty days of fasting during daylight hours, followed by evening communal meals. The voluntary fasting reminds Muslims of their good fortune in living without hunger. Buddhism does not have a holiday devoted to thanksgiving, but gratitude and compassion are so central to Buddhist teaching that Thanksgiving is often the favorite national holiday of American Buddhists, albeit often without the turkey. Tamils in India celebrate the harvest with Thai Pongal, a four-day celebration of gratitude to the Sun God, Mother Nature, and farm animals.

It is true that the peace between the Pilgrims and the Wampanoag did not last, that America had to deal with another year and a half of war before Lincoln’s dream of healing could even begin, and that today’s observance of gratitude has to compete with professional football on TV and with the holiday’s link to “Black Friday” bargain-hunting. Nevertheless, there is still the gathering around the table when I like to think that most of us are reminded of how grateful we should be for the bounty of the harvest, and for relatives and friends who have enriched our lives, including, as in 1621 and 1853, for those whom we have lost.



Photo by Gail L.



Photo by Gail L.