

Celebrating Fourth of July Potomac

ALMANAC

NEWS, PAGE 4

Sarah, Venz, Kararina and Andrew Hanfland participate in the River Falls neighborhood's 4th of July picnic.

'Caring Is Our Main Ingredient'

NEWS, PAGE 3

Potomac Shop Fills Niche in Wedding Market

NEWS, PAGE 3

HomeLifeStyle

PAGES 5

CALENDAR, PAGE 6 ♦ CLASSIFIEDS, PAGE 7

PHOTO BY DEBORAH STEVENS/THE ALMANAC

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'Caring Is Our Main Ingredient'

Sunflower Bakery prepares young adults for skilled employment.

BY SUSAN BELFORD
THE ALMANAC

After graduating from Walt Whitman High School, Bethesda's Dillon Carone enrolled in a hands-on training program at Sunflower Bakery in Gaithersburg. The application process was intensive – but the program sparked his curiosity. His interest and enthusiasm led to participation in a three-day trial and then enrollment in the six-month pastry arts and baking program.

"I loved the program because every day I learned new skills — and now I've been hired as an employee here. Sunflower Bakery taught me to bake — and also gave me important tools for employment and for life," he said.

Sunflower Bakery was the inspiration of Laurie Wexler, Sara Portman Milner and Deena Leener who understood the need for skill-based training facilities for young adults with learning differences. They opened their doors in May 2009 as a pilot program in kitchen space donated by Beth Shalom in Potomac. As they gradually increased in size and as their donations and funding grew, they were able to move to their current facility on Ziggy Lane in Gaithersburg — a space they are quickly outgrowing because of the success of their program.

Sunflower Bakery whose motto is "Car-



Daniel Pollock makes swirl bars.

ing is Our Main Ingredient" is the only inclusive training program in the Maryland that trains young adults for employment in pastry arts, baking and related industries. The organization is guided by Jewish values and focuses on the individual. Every five weeks, a new 10-week training class is launched with only two students at a time to allow for one-on-one instruction maximizing strengths and encouraging positive self-esteem and independence. Its sister program, Café Sunflower which is located at 6101 Executive Blvd, #115 in North Bethesda and partners with the Jewish Federation of Greater Washington, gives students a variety of opportunities to experience employment in the restaurant industry. Both the bakery and the cafe teach students marketable and transferable skills for their futures.

"We have served over 175 young adults and teens including 75 Pastry Arts graduates, 77 summer program participants and



Sara Rosenthal working at Sunflower Bakery.

20 trainees and employees at Café Sunflower," said Executive Director Laurie Wexler. "We are delivering on our mission to prepare our students for skilled, competitive employment through professional instruction, on-the-job training and job matching."

Sara Portman Milner serves as director of student services and manages the enrollment program. "Our assessment process is intensive because we look for a good fit," she said. "We accept young adults and teens with a wide range of learning differences including autism (diagnosed and undiagnosed), ADD, ADHD, receptive and expressive language issues, executive functioning and more. We are always seeking students who really want to be in our program, can follow directions and who are able to deal with a stimulating environment."

SEE SUNFLOWER, PAGE 4

Hikers Keep EMS Busy

Increase in rescue calls.

BY PEGGY MCEWAN
THE ALMANAC

Montgomery County Fire and Rescue Service personnel were busier than usual the last few weeks along the Billy Goat Trail in the C&O National Historical Park. Specifically they were called to help with hikers along the Billy Goat Trail Section A, a 4.7 mile circuit starting on one end near Great Falls Tavern and winding around to just above Wide Water, upriver from Old Anglers Inn.

The frequency of calls is "even epidemic," said Pete Piringer, spokesman for MCFRS.

"It got really busy in the last 10 days," Piringer said on July 6. "We've had about 20 calls for service, mostly for trips and falls."

He said they have also had a few calls for hikers suffering from heat exhaustion, especially at the end of June when temperatures were higher than normal.

"The sense is the Billy Goat A Trail is one of the most challenging in the United States," he said. "You have to jump crevices and climb rocks. Once you get to a certain point there is a sign that says [the trail] is difficult, if you are not up to the challenge, turn around."

Piringer said that is a warning to take seriously. There are several hikes along the C&O Canal that do not require the physical stamina of Billy Goat Trail A.

He suggests visitors to the park talk to rangers about other hiking paths or go online and read the "Know before You Go"

SEE HIKERS, PAGE 4

Potomac Shop Fills Niche in Wedding Market

Say Yes for Less in Cabin John Shopping Mall.

BY PEGGY MCEWAN
THE ALMANAC

Pamela Vito says she sells wedding gowns but what she really gives her clients is a wedding experience.

She is there for "her" brides, helping them select the right dress for their special day at a special price.

Vito is the owner-manager of Say Yes for Less in the Cabin John Shopping Mall at Tuckerman Lane and Seven Locks Road. She sells designer wedding gown samples at 30-75 percent off retail. She also has veils and accessories to go with her gowns.

With that amount of stock available, Vito is able to sell off the rack and, sometimes, help a bride with a wedding gown crisis.

Like Cassidy Busch of Alexandria,

"I had a dress and I've been afraid to try it on because I gained weight," she said.

When she tried it on, just weeks before the wedding, just as she feared, it was too small. "It was a bit of a wedding dress crisis," her friend Anna Davis of Arlington said. "So me and her fiancée went into crisis mode and started looking for off the rack dress."

After many phone calls, Say Yes for Less was the first store they visited. "[Vito] has a great selection of dresses in all sizes," Davis said. "Pamela was great at putting Cassidy at ease."

And they found a dress that made everyone happy. "It was very serendipitous," Busch said.

Vito stocks over 350 dresses in sizes 2-20, so she was confident about helping

Busch, even with her tight schedule.

Here is a time line describing that tight schedule: Busch met with Vito on Thursday, July 6, hoping to find a dress, she did and got measured for a few alterations. She picked up the ready to wear dress on Monday, July 10 and left for her Colorado wedding on Wednesday, July 12. In less than a week she went from selection to a perfect fit of a perfect wedding dress.

"That's what we do," Vito said. "I found she needed it in a week and I said that's what we do."

Vito has been working with brides for 35 years, she said. She and her mother, Hannelore — "it's like Cher, only one name," Vito said, had a bridal salon in Al-



Say Yes for Less opened recently in Cabin John Mall.

exandria, Hannelore's Bridal Boutique. "We started small," she said. "At first we made the dresses. It just grew and grew."

But they closed the shop, planning to retire, but after about six weeks, Vito said, she couldn't stand it. So she took an idea that seemed like a good business direction when she was working, to sell designer samples at reduced cost. Her years in the business helped as, she said, she knew many shop owners who were willing to send her their samples.

She brought this new idea into reality in May when she opened Say Yes for Less.

Busch considers herself lucky to have met Vito. "Pam's been great and her mother is amazing," Busch said.



Sean Harris with Peanut Butter from Squeals on Wheels.



Catherine Reichert, Jack Gilbert, Chase Huckelman, Gavin Kaplin, Benjamin Roth, Tessa Cross, Emily Crump, and Caroline Sikes enjoy the picnic.



Sunny weather for the River Falls neighborhood's Fourth of July picnic.

Cabin John Park Volunteer Fire Department members Kevin Washington, Corey Phelps, Craig Parton, Marius Gobet, Andreas Lair-Ferrari, and Steve Hobson



Hikers Keep EMS Busy with Rescue Calls

FROM PAGE 3

guidelines published by the National Park Service.

Piringer said MCFRS works closely with the National Park Service to learn about the trails in the C&O Canal National Historical Park; MCFRS is responsible for rescues in the park and the Potomac River. Their partnership resulted in a reduction in drownings in the river which Piringer attributes to getting the word out to the community that

the river is unsafe for swimming, and posting signs in different languages throughout the park telling of the dangers of the water.

"We used to have double digit drownings," Piringer said. "So we got signage in different places, all a coordinated effort with the Park Service."

He also said the Park Service Rescue helicopter assists in all rescue calls, to be there for support and, sometimes, to take an injured or dehydrated hiker to a local hospital.

Potomac's Cabin John Park fire stations 10 on River Road and 30 on Falls Road are first responders to calls for rescues along the Billy Goat Trail.

"Our response is pretty quick," Piringer said.

As for his suggestions for hikers, he said they should wear proper hiking footwear and carry plenty of water and a charged cell phone.

"There are trail markers, know where you are," Piringer said. "That helps us get to you more quickly."

Advice on Hiking

Online, the National Park Service offers these suggestions for people planning to hike the Billy Goat Trail, Section A:

- ❖ Allow enough time to finish entire hike before sunset
- ❖ Be prepared for weather changes and extremes
- ❖ Carry and drink adequate fluids
- ❖ Do not drink water from streams, river or canal
- ❖ Wear sturdy hiking shoes
- ❖ Stay on trail and do not travel alone
- ❖ Stay off slippery rocks and cliff faces

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Interior designer Joe Van Goethem transformed a walk-in closet in his McLean home into a wine cellar.

PHOTO COURTESY OF JOE VAN GOETHEM

Redefining Space

Designer thinks outside the proverbial box.

BY MARILYN CAMPBELL

A local interior designer believes in thinking outside the box when it comes to making the best use of space in one's home.

"My advice to homeowners is to embrace spaces within their homes as if they were never assigned," said Joe Van Goethem of Joseph Van Goethem Interior Design in McLean. "Depending on location, a space previously designated as a walk-in closet can be purposefully transformed into an intimate guest bedroom, home office, or multi-purpose wine cellar and bar."

Van Goethem followed his own advice when he transformed a walk-in foyer closet in his home into a multipurpose wine cellar, complete with a wine refrigerator, beer cooler, ice maker and cigar humidor. "Why a walk-in closet if it's seldom used, and only to become an open invitation for hidden clutter?" he asked. "Envision new, functional possibilities for every space within your home."

Van Goethem, who not only designed the space, but also completed the construction himself, believes that "playing with scale and attention to every detail are key when considering the transfor-

mation of a confined space such as a walk-in closet," he said. "[The] closet had a nondescript narrow solid door, glued-down wood veneer floor, shelving and hanging rods, and one light fixture."

In finishing the project, Van Goethem widened the door framing to accommodate a new French door and added storage space for a concealed television. He also installed an intercom to allow those in the cellar to communicate with those in the kitchen.

"I ripped up the old floor [and replaced it] with Spanish marble tile flooring," he said. "I added a baseboard and crown moulding, and created a grid of moulding on the walls which I painted with Farrow & Ball's Purbeck Stone. I installed Extra Fine Arrowroot

Grasscloth hand crafted wallcovering by Phillip Jeffries within the recesses of the grid."

Van Goethem said his goal was to make the design of the new cellar consistent with

the aestheticS of the rest of his home. The space includes a large drum light fixture and side lamps. An oversized cabinet holds the stemware and barware. He added a commissioned seascape painting by California artist Jonathan Koch and modern teapots by Washington, D.C. ceramicist Joe Hicks.

"Details are important in design, but they are everything ... when transforming a small space like the repurposing of a walk-in closet," said Van Goethem.

"My advice to homeowners is to embrace spaces ... as if they were never assigned."

— Joe Van Goethem

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ENTERTAINMENT

Submit entertainment announcements at ConnectionNewspapers.com/Calendar. Photos and artwork welcome. Deadline is Thursday at noon, at least two weeks before event.

ONGOING

Youth Photography Competition.

Deadline July 14, 11:59 p.m. at Photoworks, 7300 MacArthur Boulevard. Watch Me: A Juried Photography Exhibition, on display Sept. 15-Oct. 22. Meet the juror from London, Ashley Givens, Saturday, Aug. 12. Visit www.glenechophotoworks.org.

Food Pictures. Deadline Aug. 1, 11:59 p.m. at Photoworks, 7300 MacArthur Boulevard. Foodies: A Juried Photography Exhibition, on display Sept. 15-Oct. 22. Meet the juror Debra Moser, Friday, Sept. 15. Visit www.glenechophotoworks.org.

Pups on the Patio. 4-7 p.m. every Thursday at Silver, 7150 Woodmont Ave., Bethesda. Guests can enjoy drinks, appetizers and dinner with their pets outside on Silver's patio. Visit www.eatatsilver.com for more.

2017 Canal Boat Excursions. At Great Falls Tavern Visitor Center, 11710 MacArthur Blvd., Potomac. April-October, Saturday and Sunday at 11 a.m., 1:30 p.m., and 3 p.m. June-August, Friday, Saturday and Sunday at 11 a.m., 1:30 p.m. and 3 p.m. To confirm the boat ride for your visit, call 301-767-3714 for details as special circumstances may affect this schedule. Prices: \$8 for adults (ages 16-61), \$6 for seniors (ages 62 +), and \$5 for children (ages 4-15). Children aged three and under ride free. In addition to the boat fee, there is an entrance fee to the park of \$10 per single vehicle.

Tally Ho Toastmaster's Club. First and third Mondays each month, 7:30-8:30 p.m. in the Potomac Community Center, 11315 Falls Road.

VisArts Cocktails and Canvas Class. at VisArts in the Painting & Drawing Studio, 155 Gibbs St., Rockville. Price \$40. Visit www.visartsatrockville.org/cocktails-and-canvas for more.

Thang Ta. Wednesdays, 6-7 p.m. at Sutradhar Institute of Dance and Related Arts, 1525 Forest Glen Road, Silver Spring. Learn the ancient art of the sword and spear. \$25. www.dancesidra.org.

Weekly Blues Dance. Thursdays 8:15-11:30 p.m. in the Back Room Annex at Glen Echo Park, 7300 MacArthur Blvd. Capital Blues presents rotating DJs and instructors with beginner workshop 8:15-9 p.m., no partner necessary. \$8 for all. capitalblues.org

Weekly Swing Dance. Saturdays, 8 p.m.-midnight. The DC Lindy Exchange presents a swing dance with live music in the Spanish



Art Exhibit

“The Earthenworm” by Lars Westby is part of “Off the Wall,” 3-D Sculptures by the Maryland Federation of Art. Exhibit continues to Aug.5 at the Waverly Street Gallery, 4600 East-West Highway, Bethesda. Visit waverlystreetgallery.com/ for more.

Ballroom, Glen Echo Park, 7300 MacArthur Blvd., Glen Echo. Beginner swing dance lesson at 8 p.m., followed by dancing. Admission \$16-\$18, age 17 and under \$12. www.glenechopark.org.

Argentine Tango with Lessons.

Most Sundays, 6:30-11 p.m. in the Back Room Annex at Glen Echo Park, 7300 MacArthur Blvd., Glen Echo. Argentine Tango lessons followed by a Milonga most Sunday evenings. Beginner lesson 6:30-7:30 p.m. and intermediate lesson 7:30-8:30 p.m. Cost is \$15/lesson and includes the Milonga. For just the Milonga, cost is \$10 and the open dance with DJ runs 8:30-11 p.m. No partner required. www.glenechopark.org, 301-634-2222.

Contra and Square Dance. Fridays and Sundays 7-10:30 p.m. in the Spanish Ballroom at Glen Echo Park, 7300 MacArthur Blvd. The evening can include square dances, mixers, waltzes and other couple dances. All Contra and Square dances are taught, no partner necessary. Lessons at 7 p.m., followed by the called dance with live music at 7:30. \$13 for nonmembers, \$10 for FSGW members, \$5 ages 17 and under. www.glenechopark.org, 301-634-2222.

Late Night Comedy. Fridays (open mic night) and Saturdays (established comedians) at Benny's Bar & Grill, 7747 Tuckerman Lane, Potomac. Benny's is open 8 a.m.-1 a.m. Fridays and Saturdays. www.BennysBarGrill.com.

Drop in Art Activities. Every Saturday 10 a.m.-12:30 p.m. in the Candy Corner Studio at Glen Echo Park, 7300 MacArthur Blvd., parents

and children can explore a new art form or theme. \$10/child, parent combo. Drop-in only. www.pgip.org.

Mommy & Me (& Daddy, Too).

Third Tuesday each month. 10 a.m. at Rockville Town Square. Meet for a morning out with active learning and creative play with lunch specials, story time, arts and crafts, sing-alongs, prizes and more. rockvilletownsquare.com/events/mommy-and-me.

Glen Echo Park Films. Saturdays and Sundays. Arcade Building, 7300 MacArthur Blvd., Glen Echo. Films about the Park's history are shown on rotation in the lobby. Free. Visit www.glenechopark.org for more.

SilverWorks Studio & Gallery.

Wednesdays, Thursdays, Saturdays and Sundays, 10 a.m.-6 p.m. Glen Echo Park, 7300 MacArthur Blvd., Glen Echo. SilverWorks Studio & Gallery is a working silversmith studio and includes an ongoing exhibition, as well as sales of the work of artist-in-residence Blair Anderson. Free. Visit www.silverworksglenechopark.com.

Art Glass Center at Glen Echo. All day Wednesdays; Fridays, 10 a.m.-2 p.m.; Saturdays, 10 a.m.-4 p.m.; Sundays, noon-4 p.m. Art Glass Center, Glen Echo Park, 7300 MacArthur Blvd., Glen Echo. Ongoing exhibitions feature work of resident artists. Sculpture, vessels, functional art and jewelry for sale. Classes are taught year-round for beginner, intermediate and advanced students. Visit www.artglasscenteratglenecho.org for more.

Yellow Barn Studio & Gallery.

Saturdays and Sundays, 12-5 p.m. The Yellow Barn Studio & Gallery

presents free exhibitions of emerging artists' work. Each weekend features the work of a different artist. Most artwork is also for sale. www.yellowbarnstudio.com.

Potomac Games Group.

Wednesdays, 6:30 p.m. at Potomac Community Recreation Center, 11315 Falls Road, Potomac. The world is in the midst of a Golden Age of new board and card games for players of all ages. Free. Contact event host Randy Hoffman at 412-983-5411 or wrandyhoffman@gmail.com.

CAMPS, CLASSES & WORKSHOPS

Registration is Open. for Montgomery County Recreation and Montgomery Parks Summer Programs and Activities. Email ProgramAccess@MontgomeryParks.org. Visit www.MontgomeryParks.org/ access for more.

Photography Class. 7-9:30 p.m. through July 12 at Glen Echo Park, 7300 MacArthur Blvd. Digital Printing II- Fine B/W and Color Printing class, six sessions. Visit glenechopark.org or call 301-320-1400 for more.

Toca Summer Soccer Camp. 6-8 p.m. through August 9 at Avenel LP, 10051 Oaklyn Drive. Improving skills, making friends and staying fit. Email info@tocajuniors.com, or call 301-221-8305 for more.

My Gym Potomac Camp. 1-4 p.m. August 7-Sept. 4 at My Gym Potomac, 11325 Seven Locks Road. My Gym camp includes themed games and craft, gymnastics, sports, and snack. \$40 for members, \$45 for non-members. Email

potomac@mygym.com or call 301-983-5300 for more.

FRIDAY/JULY 14

Meet the Artists. 6-9 p.m. at the Waverly Street Gallery, 4600 East-West Highway, Bethesda. “Off the Wall,” 3-D Sculptures by the Maryland Federation of Art. Exhibit continues to Aug. 5. Visit waverlystreetgallery.com/ for more.

Wayne Wilentz Concert. 7 p.m. at Margery's Lounge at Normandie Farm Restaurant, 10710 Falls Road, Potomac. Visit www.popovers.com/ or call 301-983-8838 for more.

SATURDAY/JULY 15

Tommy Lee Ryan Concert. 7 p.m. at Margery's Lounge at Normandie Farm Restaurant, 10710 Falls Road, Potomac. Visit www.popovers.com/ or call 301-983-8838 for more.

SUNDAY/JULY 16

Photo Workshop. 3-5 p.m. at Glen Echo Park, 7300 MacArthur Blvd. Glen Echo. Headshot Workshop: “The Headshot Exchange” with Tom Wolff. Bring a thumbdrive. \$70. Email wolffphoto@gmail.com for more.

WEDNESDAY/JULY 19

Mike Surratt Concert. 1-2 p.m. at Damascus Senior Center, 9701 Main St., Damascus. Mike Surratt returns to perform his summer tunes and hits. Free. Call 240-777-6995.

Maija Rejman Concert. 7 p.m. at Margery's Lounge at Normandie Farm Restaurant, 10710 Falls Road, Potomac. Visit www.popovers.com/ or call 301-983-8838 for more.

SATURDAY/JULY 22

Rob Patrick Concert. 7 p.m. at Margery's Lounge at Normandie Farm Restaurant, 10710 Falls Road, Potomac. Visit www.popovers.com/ or call 301-983-8838 for more.

SUNDAY/JULY 23

Introductory Waltz Workshop. 2:45-6 p.m. at the Spanish Ballroom at Glen Echo Park, 7300 MacArthur Blvd. The 45-minute dance lesson begins at 2:45 p.m. with a half-hour introductory Waltz workshop and a more advanced move presented the last 15 minutes. Social dancing follows until 6 pm. \$10. Visit www.WaltzTimeDances.org

WEDNESDAY/JULY 26

Tom Saputo Concert. 7 p.m. at Margery's Lounge at Normandie Farm Restaurant, 10710 Falls Road, Potomac. Visit www.popovers.com/ or call 301-983-8838 for more.

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Pot Luck Dinner!

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NEWS Sunflower

FROM PAGE 3

Baking lends itself beautifully to people with certain disabilities. Our instructors are amazingly caring and provide a structured learning environment where each student experiences success while learning important job skills."

Graduates are currently employed at Chouquette, Clyde's Restaurant Group, Founding Farmers Rockville, Giant Food, Harris Teeter, Hot Breads Bakery & Café, Marriott Marquis, Nothing Bundt Cakes, Safeway, Stella's Bakery Rockville, The Cakery, Wegmans Germantown, and Café Sunflower. Eighty-five percent of graduates secure employment within six months of their graduation.

Sunflower Bakery has captured the home-made baked goods market with over 16,350 purchases in 2017. The Jewish holidays are their busiest time — they sold almost 30,000 hamantaschen during Purim 2017.



In addition to providing sweets during holidays, Sunflower is a full-service bakery which provides cookies, bars, pies, breakfast breads, cakes, cupcakes, cookie platters, and custom holiday cakes on a daily basis. They offer a "Sweets of the Month" subscription program for monthly dessert packages, gluten-free, peanut-free, kosher and seasonal treat, — and deliver weekly to seven locations in the D.C. area. They offer non-profits a 10 percent discount. Employee and graduate Dillon Carone said, "The lemon bars are absolutely my family's favorite; they hope I will bring them home every day."

At the graduation, Steve Rakitt, CEO of the Jewish Federation of Greater Washington, said, "Imagine if each of us could be a mentor to another, someone who 'lights up' the potential in others, to help him or her flourish and thrive. And imagine if we went beyond just 'lighting up' so that he or she is no longer dependent on our inspiration. He is 'lit up' — as a Talmudic commentator says — 'until the flame rises by itself on his own accord.' That is what Sunflower Bakery does every day."

"By supporting, encouraging, training, and preparing young adults for employment, Sunflower lights up — and raises up — countless lives. You touch not only today's graduates, but those who came yesterday and will come tomorrow. Not only your clients, but also their families. Not only the clients and families, but the customers. And not only the clients, families, and customers, but the whole community."

Sunflower Bakery and Café need community support too. Support them through purchasing their sweets from their online menu, by stopping by Café Sunflower or Sunflower Bakery or through donations. Students and parents may look on-line at training programs and facilities at sunflowerbakery.org or call 240-361-3698.

A Near Catastrophe, Always

By KENNETH B. LOURIE



As I bring our two cat carriers up from the basement in order for "The Buff Boys" to acclimate in anticipation of their impending visit to the veterinarian, I can't help but think back to the spring of 1976. That's when an appointment to mend my male cat, Tillie, nearly went very wrong.

To this day, the circumstances still haunt me. Tillie had been a surprise birthday gift given to me in September 1975, along with a puppy I named Gus (both named after a W.C. Fields' movie, "Tillie and Gus").

Tillie was an all-black domestic short hair. Gus was a German Shepherd/St. Bernard mix. He was beautiful. He had a white-ish beige coat, floppy ears and a curly tail.

Introduced to one another at 6 weeks old, Tillie and Gus were the best of friends/siblings. Though I made sure they spent their evenings inside, during the day, both were outside. (We had a fenced-in yard so Gus was confined. Tillie however, as you might imagine was not. He had the run of the neighborhood.)

Sure enough, one day, Tillie got into a cat fight. His tail had been bitten and was beginning to abscess. I knew I had to take him to the veterinarian. However, I was in college and had very little money to spare. Nor did I have a credit card either. (Those were the days before credit card companies solicited college students.) In a financial bind, I called my parents and asked for money (I did work in the dining hall all through college but lived in a house off campus and had the usual room and board-type expenses).

They sent me \$25. (In my mind, I can still see the check.) In addition to whatever other money I could scrape together, I guess it was enough so I took Tillie to the "vet" for repair. He stayed overnight. The next day, I got the call that he was ready for pick-up. That's when the event occurred that has affected me/my animal-owning life going on — four decades plus.

I went by myself. I had a car; a 1970 Ford Maverick, but no cat carrier. I was, apparently, planning on simply holding Tillie in my arms as I had done the day before. However, the pick-up was not nearly as uneventful as the drop-off.

Once I got outside the building, Tillie began squirming (his tail had been shaved and had stitches where the abscess/bite had been inflicted) and broke free from my grasp. He ran off about 20 yards — or so to the rear of this modest one-story building and stopped just shy of a chain-link fence which separated where we all were to another neighborhood — beyond my reach. My fear: had Tillie climbed over that fence somehow, he likely would have been gone forever.

Slowly I approached Tillie, repeatedly calling his name as quietly and reassuringly as I could, trying not to rattle, startle or scare him in any way; presuming post-surgery, in an unfamiliar place, possibly in pain, it might not take much from his father to cause him to scamper off and disappear.

As I casually walked toward him, amazingly, Tillie sort of stood still, enough for me to scoop him up. Which I did and then carefully walked back to my car and drove us both home without any further ado — except for the rest of my taking-cats-to-the-"vet" life. And yes, that means now.

And though I'm not stupid enough to transport cats without cat carriers anymore, I am only at ease once we're back home and have let the cats out of their boxes and released them into the house (all our cats are indoor cats). Throughout this process, I must check the latches on their carriers a half-a-dozen times; in the house, in the car, in the parking lot outside the "vet's" office, in the waiting room, in the examining room and then again afterwards; back in the waiting room while I pay, in the car on the way home and finally in the driveway as I prepare to carry the carriers/cats across the yard and into the house. Once inside with the cats/carriers in hand, finally I can relax. Home at last.

Forty-one years ago; it seems like yesterday, or maybe tomorrow if the "vet" can see us. And that's what worries me. Been there and unfortunately, have done that.

Kenny Lourie is an Advertising Representative for The Potomac Almanac & The Connection Newspapers.

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