

Letter from the Editor

I've been thinking a lot about tolerance lately. Our capacity for tolerance seems to align with age. As toddlers we have no tolerance for disruption of eating or sleeping routines. We enter school with little tolerance as we learn to share and play nice with others. As a teen and young adult, we knew everything leaving little tolerance for new thought. As we mature, life experience helps us look for a balance between what we know and believe and what others know and believe...tolerance. We fail at this repeatedly but eventually develop enough tolerance allowing us to function in the world around us. In the late stages of life, time is of the essence. It takes center stage leaving little or no tolerance for fools or foolish ideas.

As I enter this late stage of life, I find myself living in a world where intolerance has morphed into contempt. Contempt, merely because someone does not agree with us, makes it hard to keep an open mind...to exercise tolerance. This saddens me.

The ability to discuss ideas rationally and to explore areas of common ground that makes ideas turn into reality are at the root of arriving at a better place...a greater good. Groton Neighbors exists because of the effort of many working together to bridge differences and arrive at a better place.

I am encouraged by the sense of community that Groton Neighbors embodies. We all are responsible for bringing a spirit of cooperation and neighborliness that helps us collectively arrive at a better place. Ideas may spring from one individual, but the realization of ideas is due to the willingness of each of us to come together and create something larger than any one of us individually...a greater good.

We welcome our newest members pictured on this page and I hope you all enjoy reading stories from fellow members about life experiences as grand as an African safari and as mundane as a country mouse. They are fulfilling and they are fun. But more than that they are living examples of finding a better place. 🏡

Be safe. Stay well.

Bill

New Members



Daedra Jones



David Jones



Lost Lake Evening Cruise

By Krys Salon



On August 15, 2022, 22 Groton Neighbors gathered on the shores of Lost Lake to board three pontoon boat and head out on an early evening cruise on Lost Lake and Knop's Pond. The group enjoyed fair skies and mild weather. While cruising members enjoyed friendly conversation, wine, and snacks.

While cruising the group enjoyed learning more about the history of the lake from Alex Woodle, a member and lake resident whose

family has lived on the lake for many generations. Alex has personally researched the history of the lake and continues to seek information about the lake's past.

After cruising the group enjoyed dessert and friendly conversation on the deck after sunset.

Thank you to Sue Norberg and Kay Deck for donating your boats and time to help with this evening and to Sue Norberg for donation of the wine for the evening. 🏡



[**CLICK HERE**](#) to watch video
courtesy of Bob Lotz

Finding the Natural philosopher

By Bob Pine

In 1969, Becky and I went to live in the then peaceful, and little known, country of [Afghanistan](#). We had been married for just a year. I taught civil engineering at Kabul



Tirish Mir looms over village enroute to Kafiristan

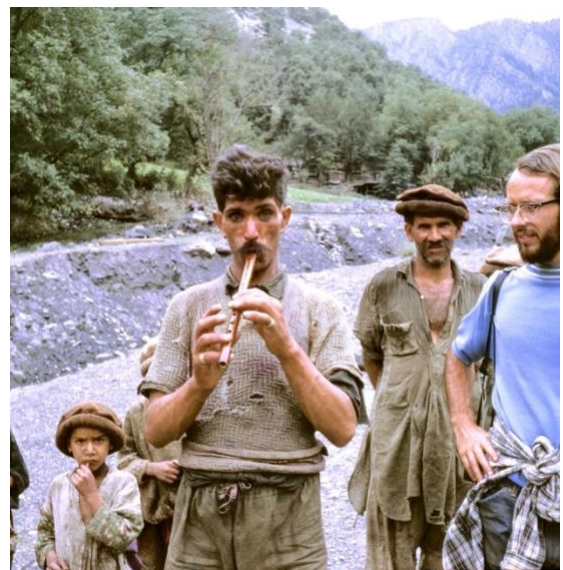
Photo: Bob Pine

University. Becky taught English. For two years we were immersed in the Afghan culture, and we also got to travel. Those two years changed my life. They served to define my relationship with Becky, to re-define my core values, and to open my eyes to my need for connection with the natural world around me.

This story is about two short trips we made in quick succession: one

in northern [Pakistan](#) along the border with Afghanistan; and one in Afghanistan along the border with Pakistan. This, of course, is an area of recent terrible fighting and upheaval. But then it was known for remote mountain cultures and stunning landscapes.

The original goal of our first trip to northern Pakistan was the town of Gilgit and the Hunza Valley, where people live to some of the oldest ages on earth. I had read about Hunza in National Geographic and had long been intrigued. Gilgit also sits at the base of Nanga Parbat, a 26,000-foot mountain at the western end of the Himalayas. I wanted to see a five-mile-high mountain.



Kafir man playing Bob's Afghan recorder.

Photo: Bob Pine

We had a map but not much more information when we headed off. We took a bus down through the Kabul gorge, a deep chasm cut by the Kabul River with an amazing, and scary, road carved into the rock ledges on the side - it happens to be ranked as one of the 10 most dangerous roads in the world - then down through the Khyber Pass to Peshawar.

The next day we took a bus up through the Swat valley, a green, fertile valley framed by agricultural terraces stepping up the bordering hills, arriving at the town of Kalam where the river became steep and the valley narrow. Swat is now ruled by the Taliban but then by none other than the Sultan of Swat. Our map showed a road from there to Gilgit, but in Kalam we were told that the roads further north had been blocked by mudslides.

They said it would take a week to get to Gilgit on horseback, so we shifted plans. We knew that to the west, along the Afghan border was the town of Chitral, in many ways similar to Gilgit. Chitral lies at the base of 25,000-foot Tirich Mir, at the eastern end of the Hindu Kush. It also happens to be an area with a different, and perhaps even more amazing culture, the Kafirs, idol and nature worshippers who had long ago retreated to the mountains to maintain their ancient religion.



We were able to catch a bus, a rickety old school-type bus, and traveled over rocky roads to the town of Dir, part way to Chitral. Dir is near the Afghan border and known primarily as a major smuggling outpost. As we were approaching Dir it was turning dusk and I have a vivid memory of the passengers on the bus first talking among themselves then shouting at the driver, who speeded up - a lot - while the men on the bus all took out their long old rifles. They were clearly afraid of robbers, but we were much more afraid of the overcrowded bus crashing.



Kafir women keep time for dancers

Photo: Bob Pine

We did get to Dir, where we found that the standard transport from there to Chitral was a 16-person jeep to cross a high mountain pass - not appealing. But with good fortune, we met a Pakistani government official who invited us to travel with him to Chitral the next day in his private jeep. We gratefully accepted.

In Chitral we hired a jeep and rode into the mountains. It had been cloudy coming into Chitral in the afternoon but in the morning, part way to the Kafirs, the clouds opened and one of the most spectacular mountains I have ever seen rose miles into the sky above us. This mountain had a massive presence like I had never experienced. The Kafirs believe that fairies live on Tirish Mir, and they would come down from time to time to protect the crops and harvests but also to dance in the fields and forests. If I believed in fairies, I would want them to live on a mountain as exotic and beautiful as Tirish Mir.

We walked through their village and fields. The Kafirs had fair skin and blue eyes, unique in the whole region. The women wore long black dresses, adorned with multiple bracelets and necklaces and with long headdresses covered with shells. They were often chanting in groups and sometimes would stand and dance. Visitors were rare and the Kafirs were intrigued as much with us as we were with them. We could not speak their language so communication was difficult, and our many questions could not be answered, though personal connection with them was easy.



Kafir drummer

Photo: Bob Pine

We knew that on the other side of the border, in Afghanistan, the Kafir people had been converted by force to Islam just 70 years before and now lived as Muslims in the area once called Kafiristan, land of non-believers, and now called Nuristan, the so-called land of light. We decided to take a trip up the Afghan side of the border to see what had happened to this remarkable culture.

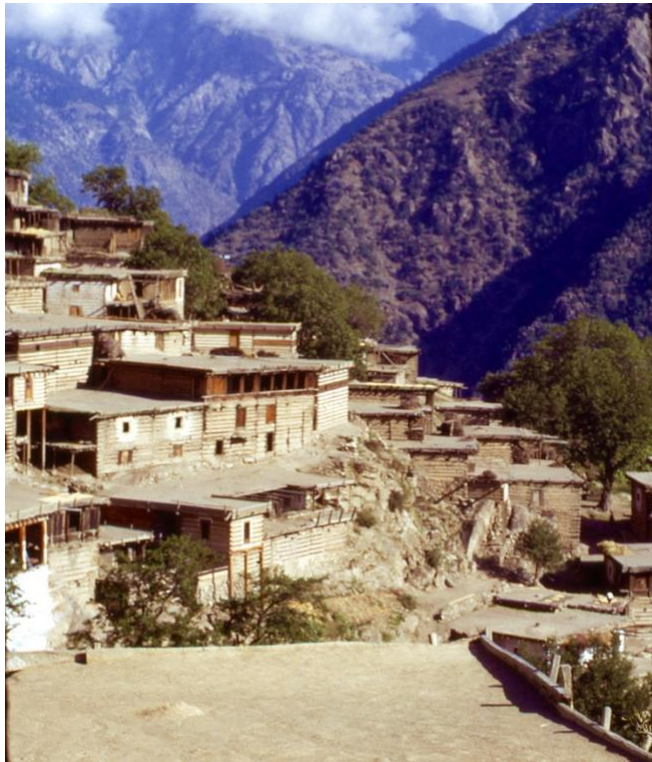
We knew that a friend of ours, Tom Guttierre, had been to Nuristan recently, serving as a guide for Bill Bradley, soon to be a New York Knick and later US Senator, who was traveling after his time as a Rhodes Scholar. Tom told us how to get there, two days travel, and where to hike to find the people who lived high on the mountainsides to which they had retreated. He also told us to find a man named Gullam Allah, who had shown Tom and Bill Bradley the village and fields and forests and at one point had picked a plant and rubbed it on Bill Bradley's hand, causing considerable pain. He had then picked another plant to rub on the same area, which made the pain cease. He then had talked about how nature was in balance, and we needed to find and understand that balance. Tom said this was a man deeply connected to nature and a true natural philosopher.

A few days later we again took a bus down through the Kabul gorge to Jalalabad and the next day hired a jeep and rode along the Kunar River and then deep into the mountains to the village of Kamdesh. We arrived late at night and stayed in a teahouse in the valley far below the Nuristani villages high on the mountains. In the morning the innkeeper came to us, stood silently in front of us and then asked in Farsi, "don't you recognize me?". When we said no, he showed us a tattered copy of National Geographic with him standing in front of his teahouse. We apologized for not recognizing him but assured him he was very famous. I wondered if perhaps Bill

Bradley had come to Nuristan because he read about it in National Geographic.

We asked the innkeeper if he knew of a man named Gullam Allah and where to find him. He said that Gullam Allah was in Petigill, a two-day ride on horseback. But he said that a nearby trail lead up the mountain to a different village that we could reach in a few hours, so we started the climb.

As we approached the village, we were met by a young man who spoke English and had been told of the impending arrival of visitors – of which there were very few. He arranged for us to stay with his brother and his family. That night his brother made a special dinner for us of pig knuckles, a local favorite. We said we would prefer to eat with him and his family, but he wanted to serve it to just us



Nuristan mountainside village. Each roof is another family's deck. Photo: Bob Pine

on an outdoor 'deck'. The houses stepped down the mountainside so each person's house opened to the roof of the next lower house so the deck was really a roof. I later wrote a poem about it.

On a black night
we sat on short stools
at a small table,
set at the edge of a flat roof,
a few thousand feet up the mountainside.

There were no lights,
except our lantern,
the stars,

a few fires on other mountainsides.

The fires looked like stars.

So, when the blackness of the sky
matched the blackness of the mountains,
the sky was all around.

And the space illumined by our lantern
became a small but friendly haven,
at the edge of the universe.

The next day our young friend showed us the village and we hiked around the mountainside fields. It turned out his grandfather had been king when they had still been Kafir idol worshippers. We saw some vestiges of the Kafir culture, but it was hard for us to discern then how deeply the Kafir culture remained, I later found

research saying many of the Kafir beliefs and customs indeed had quietly survived.



Becky with Kafir women

Photo: Bob Pine

That evening we again ate at his brother's house, this time with the brother and family. His brother told us stories about the land and the people and started a story about two men who had recently come to the village. He had shown them around and had rubbed nettles onto the back of one man's hand to make it sting and then another plant to sooth it. We said "Wait! We missed your

name! What is your name?" He said "Gullam Allah". We told him Tom Guttierre was our friend and had told us to find him, but the innkeeper in the teahouse had said that Gullam Allah was in Pettigill. He said "Oh, that is the other Gullam Allah".

I don't remember much more about that evening except for the easy way he talked about the world around him. I had gone to Nuristan with a hope of finding a natural philosopher who could explain the world around me. What I found was a quiet man who was a giver of gifts, experiential gifts about the world. He had given Bill Bradley a direct, and presumably unforgettable, experience about the balance of nature. His gift to us was a transcendent meal set at the edge of a roof, a few thousand feet up a mountainside. A meal that taught us how to see the world through different eyes.

And I remember the next day, as we hiked back down the mountain to begin our journey back to Kabul, the forests seemed more alive, almost as if fairies were dancing. 🏡

For the Good of a Child

By David Smith

September's selection for the Groton Neighbors book discussion was *The Children Act*, the 2015 novel by Ian McEwan. The main character, Fiona Maye, is a 60-something-year-old judge with the Family Division of the English court system, who must decide



David Smith leads our discussion

whether to require a young leukemia patient to receive life-saving transfusions against the religious belief of his parents. The novel's title refers to a [1989 British law](#), that in decisions concerning a child's upbringing, "the child's welfare shall be the court's paramount consideration." This is the law Fiona applies in rendering her decision. If only it were that simple!

And eight of your neighbors, **Betsy Bair, Diane Hewitt, Carole Greenfield, Carole Jewitt, Bill Knuff, Sue Pelletier, Sally Russell** and yours truly, met on Thursday the 15th to discuss how very un-simply McEwan's plot unfolds. As Sally observed, "For a short novel, there's an awful lot here".

Justice Maye and her professor husband Mark have spent their lives devoted to their careers. Now, at this late date, they find themselves childless and living more like siblings than lovers. Mark announces he intends to have an affair with a young woman at work, and Fiona crosses ethical boundaries in her feelings for the young leukemia patient. As Sue remarked, "Their situations mirror each other." But it's Fiona's actions we follow as they suggest a secondary sense to the novel's title.

The Children Act is touched with tragedy, regret and redeeming tenderness, as Fiona and her husband face the life their past decisions have created. If that's your cup o' tea, we're sure you'll enjoy the novel and/or the excellent film version, scripted by McEwan and starring Emma Thompson, available on both Verizon on Demand and Amazon Prime Video.

Watch for the date of our next book discussion in December, when our book will be [The Return: Fathers, Sons and the Land in Between](#) by Hisham Matar, winner of the 2017 Pulitzer Prize for Biography. When Hisham was nineteen, his father was imprisoned by the Qaddafi regime in Libya. The Return tells the story of his search to find the father who was taken from him so early. 🏠

The Christening

by Elizabeth Tyson-Smith

I was almost twelve when I got to launch a boat.

We lived in Camden, Maine, and my dad produced yacht designs from his closet-sized home office. He had designed a lovely schooner for a man from Connecticut, and for some unknown reason, this man had invited me to christen his new boat. I was so excited I could hardly wait to tell my friends I was going to launch her - quick to show off my knowledge of nautical lingo, for I was very proud that I was a sailor. And I



Lyman Morse crew fits out interior at their yard in Camden, ME.

was even more proud of my father's skill. I often leaned on the corner of his drafting board to watch him draw so precisely the lines that flowed into 60 feet of real, tangible sailboat. I loved looking at all his drafting tools precisely lined up at the top the slanted table; I marveled at the thin, crisp paper he used. Since we always had one of his boats on spec, I truly lived for sailing, which meant weekends on Penobscot Bay with my parents, windy and sun-drenched days when I perched on the bowsprit or wrestled with the jib – no winches for me! I would dare Dad to sail close enough to the wind that I could yell "turnbuckles under!"

I recall precisely what I wore for the christening that early spring day in 1954. I had put away my tomboy clothes and cowboy boots and actually had begun to entertain the idea of looking like a girl, so it was with some excitement that I chose the light blue dress, with its wide collar and matching belt. Of course, I wore crinolines under it, starched enough to stand unsupported on my bedroom floor. White socks and black patent-leather shoes completed my outfit. Each time I looked in the mirror I was somewhat startled by this different image of myself.



To me, boat barns always had an air of expectancy about them, a hum of building, of creating. Men sawed and pounded, winches creaked, and voices echoed in the large high-ceilinged space. The air was scented with a powerful combination of resin, paint, grease, and sea water. On launch days the buzz

cranked up a few notches. Like a birthing evokes both happiness and anxiety, so did each christening, and on this day the new owner was practically levitating off the floor.

This barn was located in Thomaston; other boats designed by my father had also been launched from here. Several smartly dressed people had showed up, as well as many of the builders. They too, were caught up in the excitement. Flood lights illuminated the sleek schooner poised on the ways, sitting high up in the cradle, stern to the open doors where the ways slanted down into the water. The American flag and the owner's pennant were mounted near the wheel. Her newly painted hull gleamed white, accenting the deep blue stripe under the rail which led the eye to MYSTERY in matching blue on her stern. Her home port, Greenwich, Conn. was below her name. She was elegant, and she was ready to sail.

I had only four words to say, and I was not afraid. Dad handed me the christening bottle of champagne, gorgeous in its multicolored satin ribbon wrapping. He pointed to a place on the bow, telling me to swing that bottle as hard as I would a baseball bat. As I climbed up on the little platform all by myself, the crowd hushed. The owner and his wife stood next to my parents, looking very pleased. Dad nodded to me, and I piped out as loudly as I could "I CHRISTEN THEE MYSTERY!!" and swung that bottle as if my life depended on it. Upon impact it exploded, and champagne sprayed all over the bow, and me. Instantly, horns, whistles and cheers filled the air as slowly and triumphantly Mystery slipped down the ways, gently sliding into the water. I stood stunned, champagne dripping down my dress. Something more than the actual event had happened, something powerful.



"I christen thee MYSTERY"

Although I could not have articulated it then, this almost-twelve-year-old girl had connected with the magical moments of new beginnings, the rich depth of possibilities. Soon, I would launch into young womanhood, perfect in my innocence, healthy, sleek, and well-designed. I would head out to new horizons far from home, towards a life full of joy and challenge. And I would always cherish my memory of this unique experience, so full of promise, so deeply tied to my Maine roots and to that lucky, lucky girl that I was. 🏡

Botswana Delta Diary

Exploring the Okavango August 16 – 30, 2021

by Jan Cochran

I am not sure exactly when Dennis became curious about African Wild Dogs. He told



me that they were in the same family as wolves, which he loves, so when he first learned of them (probably watching some nature show on television) he became intrigued. He started to do some research and the more he learned, the more interested he became. The first I heard of them is when he told me “We need to go to [Botswana!](#)” He knew my answer. I’d been fascinated by Africa since I was a child and had, as a result, spent a few months in Kenya when I was 17. That’s a story for another time, but Dennis knew I’d be thrilled to return to Africa.

Having determined that we would be going back to Africa, this time to Botswana,

Dennis began to research which tour company was best for us. He settled on Natural Habitat Adventures (NatHab), out of Boulder, CO, partially because they specialized in small group tours (7/8 guests per trip) but also because they had the blessing of the World Wildlife Fund. We booked our trip for May 2020, long before we ever heard the word coronavirus. Four reschedules later, we were finally on our way in August 2021. (I’ll spare you the tedious details of travel during a worldwide pandemic, but here’s a clue – endless health forms, repeated Covid tests, masks, masks, masks.)



August 16 - 18

We left Boston the evening of August 16. After a change of planes in Amsterdam, 18 hours of airtime and several time zones we arrived in Johannesburg on the seventeenth of August. We spent the night at the airport hotel, boarded a smaller plane the next morning and finally arrived in Maun, Botswana in the early afternoon of



Wednesday, August 18. Our Expedition Leader, Richard Avilino, was there to meet us. We also met the other guests: Jonathan and Debbie, who, we found, live outside of Denver, Harold and Mary Ellen, from Detroit, and Andrew, a cinematographer we learned had been hired by NatHab to film our adventure. Apart from Richard and Andrew, the rest of us were around the same age, though Dennis and I were the only people who were truly retired. After assisting us with our entry into the country, Richard guided us to the small airplane that

would take us to our first destination, Qorokwe Camp. We would become very familiar with these small planes, as they were the way we would travel from camp to camp. Most were Cessnas, large enough for 12 passengers, max.

The complications of Covid did result in some changes in our itinerary. Usually, guests who have booked NatHab's Secluded Botswana Safari start their trip in Zambia, viewing Victoria Falls and staying at Toka Leya camp, located on the Zambezi River nearby. Covid made things just too much of a challenge to risk more people, an additional country. We would have loved to see the Falls but were happy to have the extra days in Botswana. The other change was that, due to Botswana just reopening for visitors in June, tourism was way down. As a result, the company that maintains the "camps" offered NatHab an upgrade from their usual "Adventure" category tented camp, up to "Premium" level. To quote Dennis "We went from Holiday Inn level accommodations to the Ritz Carleton" safari style.



After a half hour flight, we touched down at Qorokwe Concession, located in the southeastern region of the Okavango Delta. We deplaned and climbed, for the first time, into our official safari vehicle, a large, eight-seat Toyota Landcruiser. I came to know this vehicle well over the next twelve days and appreciated how perfect it was for the sandy trails throughout the concession, how well it responded to the challenges

presented when we went off-road or got a little wet. I must note that this vehicle was not the domestic version of Landcruiser Toyota sells here in the States, but the model made specifically for safari travel. (Richard told us it's the vehicle used most often by safari tour companies.)



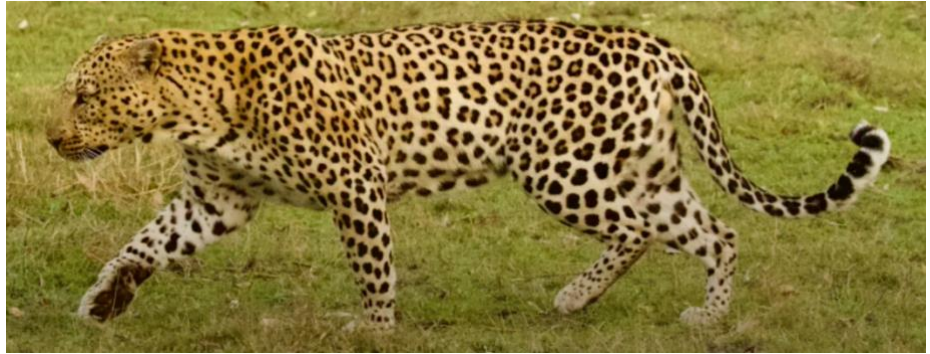
Before setting out, Richard explained a few practicalities: we'd change positions within the Landcruiser each day, so everyone had a chance to sit in the favored front row position. If we needed to take a

break to go to the "bush loo" we were to tell Richard that we needed to "check the tires" and he'd stop the vehicle. After checking carefully, he'd identify a bush or termite hill we could safely and discreetly squat behind. We began the trip rather self-conscious about this, but I noticed that we all got into a comfortable routine rather quickly. As for boarding the vehicle – no simple doors or easy steps. Instead, we would haul ourselves up using toeholds on the outside of the truck. Up, and over, scrambling onto the seats.

I was lucky enough to sit behind Richard on that first drive, so had a chance to question him a little bit about Botswana, conservation and concessions. I wasn't sure what was meant by the term "concession, so Richard explained that it refers to is land Botswana has designated as a Wildlife Management Area (WMA). Instead of directly managing it, as we do our national parks in the US, some of the reserves in Botswana are outsourced to a private company on a 15-year lease. I suspect that the relatively short lease period gives flexibility, so that when a lease is renewed the contract terms can change, stay updated. For example, while in Botswana, I noticed



that solar power is the primary source for power in the camps, which made me wonder if that was one of the terms in the contract. Richard also explained to me that the money paid for the lease goes to the tribe that had lived on the land prior to nationalization. This, along with other considerations specific to the needs of the particular tribe, such as a new school bus, are specified in the lease. The tribe has a great deal of input on decisions regarding the land that had



been theirs. It had also been decided, wisely in my opinion, to limit the number of guests within a concession to, at most, 50. By charging a premium price for these valued spots, Botswana limits the impact on the environment yet still benefits, as does the tribe, financially. The concessions where we stayed were all managed by Wilderness Safaris. Within each concession, there are “tented camps” where guests stay, with various levels of accommodation, as mentioned earlier.

We drove a meandering route to Qorokwe Camp, and I was overwhelmed to finally breathe the scent that always reminds me of Africa, that lovely, distinct spicy smell of African sage, dry earth, life. We passed herds of impala and kudu, came upon



elephants sedately pulling leaves off marula trees, saw giraffes peeking at us from behind bushes. In time, Richard came to a watering hole and stopped. Staff from the camp had thoughtfully brought comfy chairs, treats (both sweet and savory) tea, coffee, and wine. It was our first experience with “high tea”. I was surprised to see the wine, and delighted when Mary Ellen asked for a glass, for I, too, wanted to toast our first day in the bush. After four flights, and the stress of travel, we finally relaxed, sat down, and sipped our wine. As the sun dropped, we watched the elephants come to drink.

After tea, we had a brief drive from the watering hole, past more impala and a troop of noisy baboons, around a corner and arrived at the camp. Located on a lagoon in the south-eastern region of the Okavango Delta, Qorokwe has eight “tented” suites, each with indoor and outdoor showers, large central bedroom, elegant bathroom with double sinks. The walls on the lagoon side were screened, but otherwise open, so as we lay in bed, we could hear the hippos snorting in the water outside. Dennis and I had stayed once at Kitchwa Tembo, in Masai Mara in Kenya, so had been expecting something similar for our Botswana trip. Our lodging at Qorokwe was quite a step up from this. Each of the four places we stayed during the trip offered the same level of comfort – excellent! The tents were tents only in the very slimmest sense of the word. They did contain a modest amount of canvas somewhere in the construction. All were large, overlooking a river, lagoon, or marshy area. Each had the lovely soft king-sized bed with mounds of pillows, surrounded by mosquito netting that was decoratively bound during the day and thoughtfully draped around the bed for us by the staff at night. The staff also tucked “bush babies” (covered hot water bottles) into our beds each night when they prepared our room. At each camp there was a main function area, where we would relax in the lounge, have a drink at the bar, eat dinner at a table beautifully set overlooking the water. These common areas were all open, though there were canvas sides that could be unrolled if the weather turned cool enough to warrant it. There was always a fire pit where we could sit and enjoy the evening, and a pool if we chose to swim. The number of rooms varied – eight at Qorokwe, a few more at other camps, but never many. The guest tents were all set far enough apart for maximum privacy and were raised so they were at or above eyelevel for most of the large animals (elephants, in particular.) Each tent/room was accessed by a raised boardwalk that connected it to the main function building.



That first official day, Richard talked with us about the importance of obeying camp rules, stressing that during the day we were free to come and go to our rooms by ourselves but once it was dusk, and the animals had begun to move about, we were

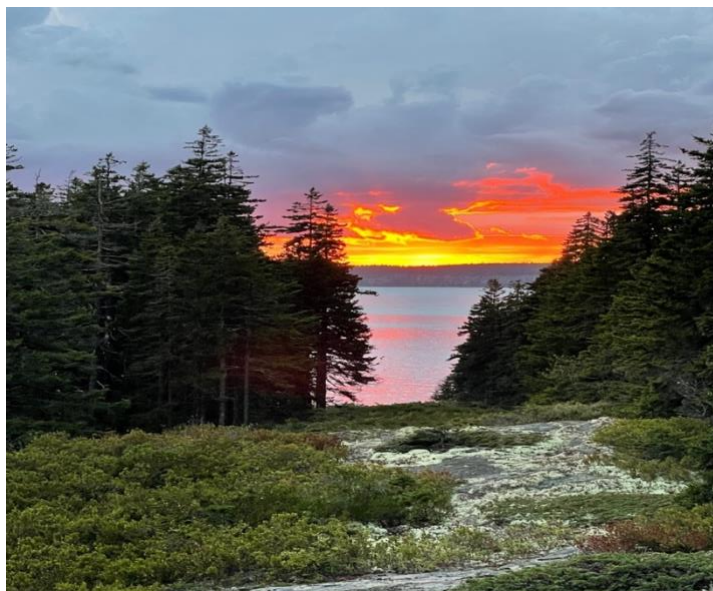
to ask one of the staff or Richard to escort us back to our rooms. Under no circumstances were we to walk around unescorted. He also mentioned that in the rare event that we encountered an animal during the day when we were on our own on the boardwalk, we were to remain very, very still and quiet. The animal would eventually walk away, or someone would notice and assist us. We learned early on to totally respect these rules that were directed toward our safety. (This was pretty much a no-brainer when you awake to the roar of lions.) We were also shown an air horn, conveniently placed in our room at each of the places we stayed. Should the need arise, we could summon help with it.

Several in our group had dietary requests – gluten-free, no dairy, no pork and we noticed that those providing our food had not only learned each of our names in advance, but also any food restrictions. The chef at Qorokwe, Cisco, would come out prior to dinner each night and announce what we'd be having. Dennis and I were both a bit disconcerted to find that dinner that first night was kudu stew. Before we had a chance to ask Richard about this, he explained that no, the herd we'd seen on our way to the camp was not hunted. The meat we had for dinner was from Kudu raised domestically for food. To my surprise, it wasn't in the least gamey but very delicious. (I must add that the other meat featured that first night was goat. It was equally tasty.) 🏔️



[CLICK HERE](#) TO READ MORE of Jan's Delta Diary

Photos used in this article were taken by Jan's husband, Dennis Matthews. Dennis has assembled an album slideshow of photos from their African adventure. To see the entire collection of photos [CLICK HERE](#)



Sunset over Frenchmen Bay

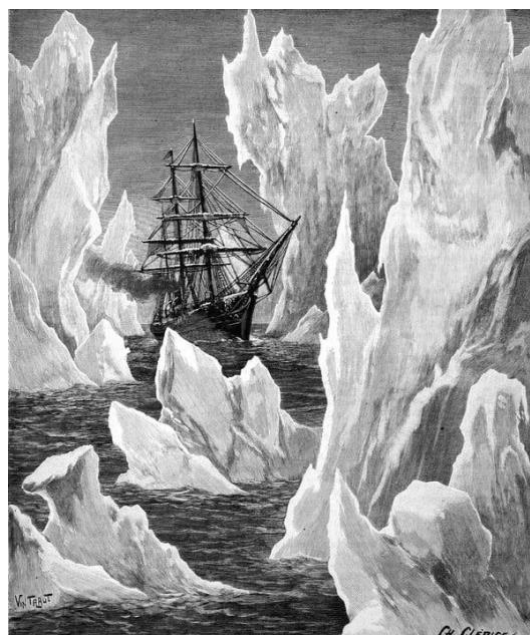
Photo: K. Geils

Boundaries

By Bill Knuff

The physical limitations of age find us playing pickleball rather than tennis these days as we continue to test the boundaries of what is possible for each of us. While I have successfully managed to fight off whatever misplaced interest I might have once had for polar exploration, I am fascinated by the stories and lessons from those who have not.

Most of us are very familiar with the epic story of the polar exploits of the ship [Endurance](#) and the unparalleled leadership shown by Ernest Shackleton while saving his entire crew from disaster on an expedition to the Antarctic in 1914. Lesser known is the story of the [Belgica](#) and its ill-fated expedition into the Antarctic under the command of Adrien de Gerlache seventeen years earlier. The stories of these two very different men explore limits of human endurance and test personal boundaries under the most inhospitable conditions. This leads me to [Ben Saunders](#)...



Ben Saunders is a polar explorer I stumbled upon while exploring the [TED Talk](#) website. From the comfort of my desktop, I learned that Ben has skied to both North and South Poles documenting his adventures and sharing his story with those who will listen. Our motivations for the things we do are many and

complex. Some grow up wanting to be an Edmund Hilary, a John Glenn, a Tony Fauci...or a polar explorer! Not sure where that comes from but in Saunder's case, it only took being told he *"Would never amount to anything"*. [CLICK HERE](#) to watch a brief TED Talk by Ben Saunders

We are fortunate to be leading full and productive lives in a community and among friends and neighbors who care. This caring helps motivate us to keep exploring our own personal boundaries. When we run into physical roadblocks, our mind offers a path opening worlds beyond our physical reach. Never stop exploring. 🏔️



A Mouse in My House

By Sally Russell

There is a mouse in my house...more than one but only one who truly bothers me. The others I can tolerate. They make scampering noises in my walls and use the rafters like a bowling alley with acorns as bowling balls. They don't bother me. But the one that bothers me is the one who found my pantry cupboard. There is only one that hogs all the food for himself. And my cat who is semi-retired can't seem to do anything about it.

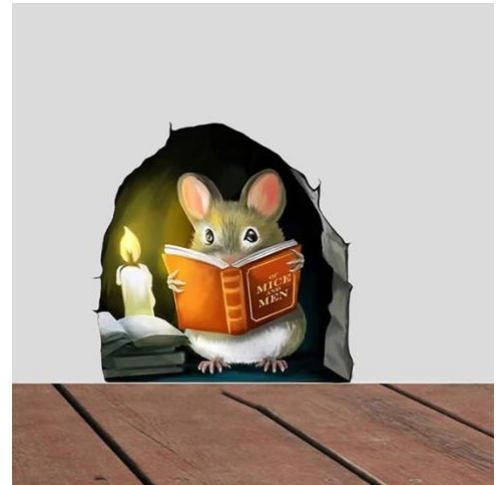
Now I like nature and I have fondness for critters, especially after growing up reading Peter Rabbit and Wind in the Willows. I moved here from the city, determined that my new role in life will be conservator and caretaker of all God's creatures who live in my yard, all the birds, bees, and flowers, happy to coexist with them all.

Of course, I was a little surprised when the first few spring nights brought me a chorus of tree frogs hatching in my vernal pool, peeping, and quacking with a racket to rival the 18 wheelers I thought I had escaped roaring down Rt. 495 within earshot of my condo. The first night of this, I yelled to as many tree frogs as would listen, "Knock it off! I can't sleep!"

I didn't move back to the city when the mallard in my pond was attacked one night by a panting predator. I didn't know what it was, but I heard its breathing and the heartbreaking screams of the duck. I ran around my decks in the dark screaming,

"Stop it, stop it, leave him alone!" sure that I would find nothing but a pile of feathers and a bone in the morning. But there was the duck, happily swimming the next day just as if a narrow escape from the jaws of an animal that wants to eat you is no big deal. No, I didn't plan to move back. I only said, "Well, nature is not as benign as I thought it was. I'll have to get used to it and sleep through duck screams. They are on their own at night."

But this mouse in my cupboard has become the bane of my existence. It's either him or me, and I have embarked on a campaign to outsmart the



little nuisance. First, I looked for humane ways to get rid of him. I bought a contraption which plugs in the wall and sends electric signals through the wires that according to the directions “rodents can’t stand and will exit the way they came in”. The consumer is warned not to have pet gerbils or other rodents as pets, or they will lose their sanity. I plugged this state-of-the-art gizmo in the outlet in the cupboard and smugly thought the problem was solved humanely.

After waiting what I thought was a reasonable length of time, I realized the zapper was having no effect and the mouse was still hard at work devouring all my food. He even decided to build his nest there, he was having so much fun.

Back at the hardware store, I whined to the salesperson that my mouse was still at it. He kindly called the 800 number on the box to find out what the story was and was told that contrary to the instructions, each house should have at least one on every floor in opposite outlets. And so, after another outlay on my charge account, I armored my house so that it would be the most miserable place in the world for rodents. It worked on the bowling mice and red squirrels who took up residence. I heard a racket one night and surmised they were packing their bags and moving out. “There”, I thought, “Peace at last!”

The house was indeed clear of outside pests, but upon checking, the mouse still resided in my cupboard. I thought, “Just my luck to have a deaf mouse” and made other plans. A friend said, “How about a ‘Have a Heart’ trap?” I decided I didn’t have a heart where this mouse was concerned and bought an old-fashioned mouse trap and set it in the cupboard. I baited it with cheese every night and every morning the cheese was gone, and the trap still set. I baited it with peanut butter and in the morning the peanut butter was gone, and the trap still set. I was beginning to admire this mouse. I continued to set the trap and for good measure put all the food not in cans in jars and plastic containers.

One night I heard a snap. “Ah”, I said, and sure enough, when I opened the door, there was my friend with his beady eyes staring at me, dead as a doornail. “I won, I won! I’ve got you!” I said and settled back in my country house confident that the superior intelligence of humankind will win every time.



Within two days, there was evidence of activity in there. With the electric zappers, plastic containers and mousetraps, another mouse has moved in. “Oh, God,” I said, “he told his deaf cousin!” 🏠



Lois Young, Pat Hatrvisen, Mike Manugian, and John Boynton start the day in the Groton Neighbors booth at Grotonfest. Hope you stopped by our booth to say hello.



Shift change at Grotonfest as Bob & Judy Anderson join Karen & Dick Bettencourt at the GN booth for what proved to be a perfect fall day in New England.



Groton Neighbors

*Helping each other live
independently
at home*

BOARD MEMBERS:

Bob Pine
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Jason Kauppi
Vice-President

Bob Anderson
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Mimi Giammarino

Carole Greenfield

Brooke McKeever

Krys Salon

*Contact us to learn about
joining our growing
community*

Sudoku and Picdoku Puzzle Solutions

2	3	8	9	7	5	6	1	4	8
1	5	4	2	8	9	3	6	7	5
4	8	9	6	1	3	5	2	7	8
7	1	3	8	4	9	6	5	2	7
6	2	5	8	7	4	1	9	3	6
3	4	6	1	5	2	8	7	9	3
8	6	2	5	1	7	4	9	3	8
5	7	3	4	2	1	6	8	9	7
9	1	3	6	8	9	2	7	5	4

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40
41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50
51	52	53	54	55	56	57	58	59	60
61	62	63	64	65	66	67	68	69	70
71	72	73	74	75	76	77	78	79	80
81	82	83	84	85	86	87	88	89	90
91	92	93	94	95	96	97	98	99	100

Puzzle Page

Sudoku: Fill in the blanks such that each row, each column, and each 9-block grid contains the numbers 1 through 9 without repeating in any row, column, or 9-block grid. The solution can be found on the previous page.

	1		6			2		5
			3	4				8
		2			7		9	
	3					5		9
		4				3		
5		6					1	
	7		1			9		
3				2	4			
8		1			5		3	

PICDOKU: For those of you who tend to be more visual PICDOKU follows the same rules as Sudoku but uses images instead of numbers.



Click on [PICDOKU – ROAD SIGNS](#) to try your hand. 🏠

Poetry Corner

And the Winner Is...

By Barbara Rich
April 2020



I'm not interested in how much you earn or how much you weigh.
I want to know if you can saunter past your ego,
And snuggle up to the welcome of a shy smile.
I don't care where you went to school, or how old your car is.
Tell me if you can let yourself not-know,
And accept not being chosen.
It doesn't matter what you have in the bank,
Or whether your clothes match,
Or how many times you've broken your vows. Can you
Use twenty muscles to smile instead of forty muscles to frown?
I don't care whether or not you pray,
Or only eat organic,
Or volunteer at a food pantry.
You have my full attention when you shiver with delight
At the wild geese singing poems overhead.
When all is said and done, which will happen when we least prefer,
When laundry is done, taxes paid, masks discarded, relatives forgiven,
When the unexpected is here and now,
Then, what matters? What matters then?
And the winner is?
Real, messy, non-judgmental, heart-breaking, unconditional love.

What's Cookin'

The Best Pumpkin Bread

★★★★★ 448 Reviews

Level: **Easy**

Total: **1 hr 20 min**
(plus cooling time)

Yield: **2 loaves**

Active: **1 hr 20 min**

This pumpkin bread is perfectly moist, not-too-sweet and couldn't be easier. It's perfect for toasting and slathering with butter or cream cheese, and maybe a drizzle of honey or maple syrup.



Ingredients:

- ✓ Unsalted butter, for the pans
- ✓ 3 1/2 cups all-purpose flour, plus more for the pan (see Cook's Note)
- ✓ 3 cups sugar
- ✓ 1 cup vegetable oil
- ✓ 4 large eggs, lightly beaten
- ✓ One 15-ounce can pure pumpkin puree
- ✓ 2 teaspoons fine salt
- ✓ 2 teaspoons baking soda
- ✓ 1 teaspoon baking powder
- ✓ 1 teaspoon ground nutmeg
- ✓ 1 teaspoon ground allspice
- ✓ 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- ✓ 1/2 teaspoon ground cloves
- ✓ 2/3 cup water

Directions:

- 1** Preheat oven to 350 degrees F. Butter and flour two 9-by-5-inch loaf pans.
- 2** Whisk together the sugar and oil in a large bowl until well combined. Whisk in the eggs and pumpkin until combined.
- 3** Combine the flour, salt, baking soda, baking powder, nutmeg, allspice, cinnamon and cloves in a medium bowl and whisk until well combined. Add half the dry ingredients to the pumpkin mixture and stir to combine. Add half the water and stir to combine. Repeat with the remaining flour and water.
- 4** Divide the batter between the prepared loaf pans. Bake until cake tester comes out clean and the loaves are golden brown, about 1 hour. Let the loaves cool in the pans on a wire rack for 10 minutes. Remove from the pans and let cool completely, about 1 hour.

Cook's Note

When measuring flour, we spoon it into a dry measuring cup and level off excess. (Scooping directly from the bag compacts the flour, resulting in dry baked goods.)

Tech Tip

By Bill Knuff

NEW FEATURE facilitates fulfilling service requests

Auto Open Request (AOR)

You may have noticed a new email from Groton Neighbors appearing in your email inbox. This email provides a list of open service requests in search of a volunteer along with a link providing more detail as well as the ability to assign yourself to volunteer for one or more request on the list.

After a two month test, we are pleased to announce Auto Open Request (AOR) is now part of our standard request fulfillment process. AOR is another tool to help *fulfill service requests in a more timely and efficient way.*

For members who generously offer services to fellow members, Auto Open Request (AOR) streamlines communication and simplifies assignment. *Each AOR email is tailored listing requests only for services which you have offered to provide.* The ability to assign yourself to any of the services listed on your AOR email results in *more timely assignment and reduced uncertainty* while waiting for confirmation.

Groton Neighbors

Dear William,

Here is the list of the current open requests.

Requested Service Time	Approx. Duration	Member	Service Requested	City	Destination	Date/Time Flexible?
Sat, 5/21/2022 6:30 PM - 3 hrs	John D	Ride Local	West Groton	First Parish Church	No	View

If you have any questions, please call the office at 978-272-0123, or reply to this email.

Thanks for all you do.

Groton Neighbors

This email was sent in response to the use of the ClubExpress platform and website by Groton Neighbors. It was generated by:
 Gembrock Systems, LLC
 1051 Penimeter Drive, Suite 200
 Schaumburg, IL 60172
 7-866-HELP-CLUB (457-2582) - Outside the US, call +1 847-255-0270

Service Request Information

Below are details of the service request. Click "Confirm" to sign up for this request.

Member: John D
 Service Request #: 1582
 Description: Ride to and from First Parish Church for Comedy Night
 Date/Time: Saturday, May 21, 2022 at 6:30 PM
 Duration: 3 hours, 0 minutes
 Time Flexible?: No
 Service: Trans - Ride Local
 City: West Groton
 Destination: First Parish Church
 1 Powderhouse Road
 Groton, MA 01460
 Transportation: Round Trip
 Initial Pickup Time: 6:30 PM
 Appointment Time: 7:00 PM
 Return Pickup Time: 9:00 PM
 Drop-off Time: 9:30 PM
 Special Instructions: SMOKE AVERSE. COVID BOOSTER DATE: 10.23.21 PLEASE CONTACT MARY ON HER LANDLINE ONLY. IT MAY TAKE MORE THAN ONE CALL TO REACH HER.

[Confirm](#) [Return to Home Page](#)

So, please take a moment to review the next AOR email to see if any of them might fit into your schedule. AOR emails are sent every Monday-Wednesday-Friday only if there are unassigned requests.

Helpful Hint: To ensure you see the entire list of open requests, we recommend resetting your availability matrix to "most likely available". The Office Staff can do that for you. As always, the decision to assign yourself to a request is entirely up to you.

If you have any questions, please call (987) 272-0123 and one of our capable Office Staff will help you..

Thank you for all you do. 🏡

From Commune to Community

By Becky Pine

Published in the Boston Globe, on July 3, 2016, as part of their 'My First Home' series. Reprinted with permission of author.

Our first home was a commune. After marrying, Bob and I first globetrotted a bit, renting in two university communities and in then-peaceful and unknown Afghanistan, where we loved the easy bonding of a small ex-patriot community, all of us 'strangers in a strange land'. Returning to the USA, we felt acute culture shock in our parents' suburban neighborhoods. Ironically, I had been excited about moving to Kabul, but I worried about feeling isolated in the suburbs. We wanted something different for ourselves, so when we could afford to buy, we looked for a large house and planned to find friends to live in it with us.



A perceptive realtor quickly brought us to a three-story Victorian in Groton, extolling the town's unique community benefits as she drove. The house's three units seemed to offer the ideal combination of privacy and togetherness for three family groups. We bought it, advertised for kindred spirits in an alternative newspaper, and soon had a family with two kids on the

second floor and a divorced mom with part-time kids on the third floor.

We worked out a schedule of shared cooking and clean-up tasks for group dinners about four nights a week. We planted a garden, built a compost pit, and played cards together. We also joined a food co-op and began making friends. Our hippie living arrangement was a source of curiosity, and some envy, especially the part about arriving home after work to a cooked meal and good companionship around the table.

In the spring, the second and third floor families opened the stairs between their units and combined their food and cookware in the larger kitchen. Soon after that, they went camping for a weekend together, without inviting us. Bob and I felt left out of our own commune.



But then the truth came out. Rather than being excluded from a happy family commune, we'd been oblivious to the soap opera drama happening above us. The second-floor dad and the third-floor divorcee abruptly moved out together, and our communal life ended.

But our life as members of our community was just beginning. We welcomed our first child, met other young parents, and started learning about local political issues. Soon, we were serving on town committees and speaking at Town Meetings. We joined a church, and attended virtually every cultural event in town, many of which featured performances by friends.



Our need for kindred spirit housemates declined as our social network expanded. We became normal (capitalist?) landlords, seeking tenants who led quiet lives, paid the rent on time, and didn't ask much from us. The house served us well; the apartments got smaller as we opened and closed doors in different space configurations to house three kids, two exchange students and two home-based businesses over the years.

Those long-ago communal dinners were delicious but being part of a community is what has truly nourished and enriched us over the 42 years we've lived in Groton. We would never consider leaving, though we did move – across the street – after 30 years, to a big house with more land and a fabulous view. And who knows; as we and our kindred spirit friends age, this could be the perfect place for the Groton Golden Girls and Guys Mutually-Assisted-Living Community. 🏡