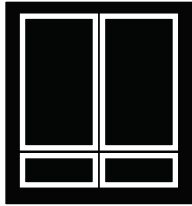


# Hi

WINTER 2014



# Neighbor!

News & Information for Neighbors & Friends  
of the Rock Creek Woods Community

## ***Get Ready for Winter if it's not too Late!***

After two mild winters, it seems we are having a real one this year, including actual snow and (dare we say?) potential power outages. It's time again to stock the firewood, fleece, flashlights and foot warmers.

**Fireplace:** See the article inside about ways to make your fireplace heat more efficiently.

**Food:** In case of an outage, start eating! If you store perishables in coolers outdoors, be sure to seal or weight down the tops because the squirrels are very resourceful and eat anything. Don't forget your gas grill - lots of fun to cook out in sub-freezing temps, and the food will not be too hot by the time you get it inside!

**Shoveling** - Don't forget to clear the fire hydrants in the event of another Snowmageddon.

**Lighting:** For light without fire hazard try battery-powered fluorescent lanterns.

**Electronics Vacation:** Checking in on neighbors, PEPCO-calling circuits, catching up on novels, puzzles, sledding, snowshoeing, and cross country skiing.

## **Judith Klein Honored at Centennial Celebration in Germany**



Getting on in years, how do you provide for two unmarried daughters, deaf from childhood measles? If you had substantial wealth as did Judith Klein's grandfather, Herman Veit Simon, back in Berlin early 20th century, then build them a nice a large home with an adjacent orchard and small farm. The house was finished in 1913, one year before Herman died, at the edge of Gransee in Brandenburg, some 50 miles north of Berlin, a pleasant region of woods and small lakes. Daughters Eva (then 27) and Katharina (23) moved in. Eva had taken to art, managed some years in Rome on her own. The house really was more Katharina's and so was named "Katharinenhof."

Eva and Katharina would ship eggs, vegetables and fruit regularly to their brother's family in Berlin. His six children spent summer holidays at Katharinenhof with their indulgent aunts. We have one letter from July 1932 from Judith's older sister, Ulla, complaining to their mother of how 7-year old Judith was impossible to keep clean after romping in the fields

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- Kid Safety • Farewell to Dick Pelz • Navy Shell Collection

*Judith Klein cont.*

all day with the horses and dogs. "Sie stinkt den ganzen Tag von Hund und Dreck," wrote Ulla.

All came to an end in 1938 when the Nazi laws forbidding Jewish people from owning homes or real estate forced Eva and Katharina to sell. The estate was "aryanized," picked-up by a man with good Party connections for a fraction of its worth. Eva and Katharina then lived in their mother's apartment in Berlin until April 22, 1942 when all three were deported to Theresienstadt. Their mother died in April 1943 aged 81. On May 6, 1944 Eva and Katharina were transported to Auschwitz, directly to the gas chambers.

Brandenburg, following the War, was part of the German Democratic Republic. Katharinenhof, like similar large homes, was "socialized." The Gransee public housing authorities chopped up the interior into twelve small apartments following Soviet interior decorating standards.

After German re-unification, the restitution laws of the Federal Republic applied to former East German property. Judith, on behalf of her surviving family, sought to recover Katharinenhof. In 2001, this beautiful old house was once again theirs. Then what? Neither we, nor any other relatives of Judith could live there,

even for part of the year. Katharinenhof had to be sold. But who would want to buy such a place? Particularly after the interior had been desecrated and the structure itself needed shoring-up.

We expected that nobody would take an interest in the house. Weeds would grow over the rusting "for sale" sign, the roof would collapse and the Gransee city government would then demand that we raze the house – knock down the ruins and bury them into the ground. A discouraging prospect.

To our surprise and delight, a group of nine young families, living close to one another in the Kreuzberg area of Berlin, bought the house in August 2007. They call themselves the Katharinenhof Association. One family lives there full time. The man is an environmental engineer; his wife a physician who was heartily welcomed into the staff of the Gransee hospital. The others come for weekends. They built a large modern kitchen and cleared out a huge room for eating together. The families are a bohemian lot, don't mind the cramped GDR apartments; they just want a place to crash. Imeke de Welde, a young lawyer, told us that she joined the Association so that her boy would be able to run around in the country and get dirty. Judith could relate to that.



**Members of the Katharinenhof Association (and goat) on the front steps of the house.**

We are so pleased to see that life has returned to the long-empty rooms. Little children are all over the house and fields, enjoying themselves just as Judith did decades back. The Katharinenhof Association has adopted Judith and made us feel that we are part of their family and that we should come visit any time and share in the joys of this beautiful old home that has so many memories for Judith. To us, this is very, very satisfying.

On last August 31st, the Association, along with the Gransee Mayor and Town Council, celebrated the 100th anniversary of Katharinenhof's construction. They invited Judith to take part in the ceremony and speak about her memories of childhood visits. Next Spring, we shall take our grandson Zachary to Germany after he graduates college, to Berlin and to Gransee so that he can see where Judith grew up and how she spent many happy summers.

*– Tom Klein*



**Judith Klein surrounded by Gransee dignitaries and the paparazzi at the ceremony celebrating the 100th anniversary of the building of Katharinenhof.**



**Judith Klein fielding questions from the press about her childhood memories of Katharinenhof.**

## **My Trip To India**

**Daniel Freymann**

Over spring break from Lafayette Elementary School in DC I went to India with my mom. She works for the International Finance Corporation which is part of the World Bank Group and travels often to India and other countries. My dad was born in India so I was excited to see where he grew up.

First stop was New Delhi where we met our friends the Mullen family who are from Germany and work in India. Next morning we flew together to Guwahati in Assam, a state in India. There we joined about a dozen other expats and drove together for 2 hours to the town of Chillong where we stayed a few nights and I had to take a cold shower. The other kids wanted to play soccer all the time. I like soccer too, but not like they do. I tried to introduce American Football. But no. It must be soccer.

From Chillong we drove 6 hours to a hotel where we would stay to go on safaris! The first safari we went on was on an elephant. To get on the elephant we had to climb a small tower to a platform. From there we stepped on to benches hanging on the elephant's side. A wooden bar held us firmly in place.

The elephant walked through tall grass. It was really cool seeing rhinos except that my elephant was really crowded but that was ok. We got so close to rhinos that if I were at ground level and completely insane I could have touched them!



We didn't just see rhinos. We saw other elephants including a little baby elephant that was really cute. It was amazing. The next day right after an early breakfast we went on a jeep safari. It was a lot different than the elephant safari because we were going a lot faster. But actually I think we saw more variety of animals on the jeep safari.

On our last day at that hotel it was Holi, which is a big festival where you throw colored powder on people. It was fun but I didn't like how all the parents were spending forever trying to figure out if the colors were "organic".

The next day we drove another 3 hours to a village. The villagers were very nice and they cooked all their food by hand. I saw a chicken get executed. At the village there was an awesome tree house made out of bamboo. We went on a hike and at some points in the hike we could see Bangladesh! Also on the hike, we crossed a bridge over a waterfall that was completely made out of live roots. It took 30 years to manipulate the roots into the right shape. My friends and I went exploring along the waterfall for awhile. It was so cool.



After school each day, the boys in the village played soccer. We made many friends in that village. One day we visited their school and they had a performance where they sang the national anthem to us.



We said goodbye to the expats. My mom and I met up with some Indian friends and went to the Taj Mahal! It is so symmetrical and amazing and epic and awesome. I couldn't believe it was just a tomb. My mom and I also went to the Red Fort by ourselves early in the morning. In Agra we visited another village that was very interesting but disturbing and much dirtier than I'd ever seen in India. But as usual, the villagers were very nice. They did a ceremony for us and they put bindis, which are red dots that Indians wear on their heads, on our heads.



It was almost time to fly back to the USA but before that my mom and I went to New Delhi and visited some other Indian friends. We went to a badminton court and all played badminton.

A few days later my mom and I flew back to DC and we were lucky enough to get on business class! My trip to India was very fun, exciting, and interesting.



**Daniel and Mom - an unforgettable trip!**

## Editor's Notes

Dear Neighbors,

This issue, which was supposed to feature the *Kids of Rock Creek Woods*, was taken over by our wealth of new neighbors, by interesting travel stories and histories, and a fond memorial to an original owner. We hope to feature the kids, as well as our "First Decade" neighbors in our Spring 2014 newsletter. If you have kids or have lived here since the 1960s, we will be looking for you to participate! Thanks again to Tom Klein for his major contributions, particularly the stories about our new neighbors. While everyone else is communicating through Facebook and websites, Tom is making personal contact, something many people seem to have given up. I want to thank Tom for personally encouraging the participation of new writers from the neighborhood - Kathy Lednum, Greg Murray and Daniel Freymann are all featured in this issue. Special thanks also to Betsy Binckes for her tribute to Dick Pelz, a person of tremendous ideals and commitment. The world needs many more like him.

**Snow:** please remember to shovel your walks, (36" wide) and help neighbors in need, per Montgomery County law (<http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/mcg/emergency/snow.html#7>) which will prevent the poor mail carrier breaking his remaining good leg, etc. Fire Hydrants need to be cleared if they get plowed under. Enterprising young people looking to make some \$\$ shoveling should announce themselves on the listserv. I'm sure there will be interest!

– MAT

## New Newsletter Editor Needed

Dear Neighbors,

After six years of editing and partially writing this newsletter, I feel it is time for a new editor to keep things fresh and to potentially add some higher levels of design and style to *Hi Neighbor!* I know there are several print and web design specialists in the neighborhood who could make some interesting changes. It is a fun job and one that carries on a long tradition of communication amongst the folks of RCW. Please inform Pati if you are interested in taking over the reins!

### RCWCA OFFICERS

President – Pati Young  
 Vice President – Julie Marcis  
 Secretary – Betsy Binckes  
 Treasurer – Rhonda Teranto

## New Neighbors -- Dwight And Audrey Fincher

For Dwight and Audrey Fincher of Gaithersburg, a long search for a just right mid-20th century contemporary home ended when they discovered 3915 Rickover. When do they plan to move in? Spring 2015! Dwight and Audrey's daughter, Susanna, is now in her junior year at Quince Orchard High, and the Finchers want to stay put until she graduates. But this gorgeous Goodman home was just too unusual to let pass. Beyond the noteworthy modern architecture, of which they are fans, Dwight and Audrey were enamored by the sense of community. "It was something immediately palpable the day we first visited the open house and met other neighborhood homeowners," said Dwight.

Presently, the Fincher's eldest daughter Erin is living in the house along with her friend, Eric Peterson. Erin is a graduate of UMBC, where she was in an inter-disciplinary program combining biology and graphic design. Currently, she is in the second year of a two year internship at NIH where she works in the Bio-Informatics Department. Eric Peterson is an electrician working in Baltimore. His specialty is residential electrical landscaping, and he is also expert in audio-visual installations.

The middle daughter, Bethany, is a sophomore at the University of Maryland, living on campus. She plans to major in Geography and Global Information Systems. Susanna, the youngest, loves to write, draw, and hang out with good friends. She is often involved with school or community theater productions either acting or as crew support. She is also learning to drive.



Dwight is an architect and partner in the firm Wilmot Sanz, which specializes in the design of healthcare facilities. His recent work includes the Inova Heart Institute, renovation and expansion of Sibley Hospital in Washington and

designing the Cabin Branch Medical Campus Master Plan (Clarksburg, MD). Projects currently under construction include the Inova Fairfax Woman's and Children's Hospital and the New Sibley Hospital Patient Tower in Washington DC. Dwight's hobbies include camping, fishing and other outdoor activities. One of the things he will miss about his current residence will be the easy access to the Potomac River. He's not quite sure where he will store the canoe and kayaks yet.

Audrey, a native of Queens, New York, studied fine arts as an undergraduate at Queens College. She went to the University of Oklahoma to study architecture and married fellow student Dwight. After coming to Maryland, Audrey decided that elementary school teaching was really her calling and took an education degree at Hood College. After some years in the classroom – kindergarten through 5th grade – Audrey became a "consulting teacher," providing guidance to other elementary school teachers. Audrey is an avid runner and regularly participates in marathons. She is also an FTM (first time marathon) coach for the Montgomery County Road Runners Club, helping others to be successful in the sport. She looks forward to easier access to the Rock Creek trails.

Another member of the family and running buddy for Audrey is Dodger, a 7 year old golden retriever, who is also fairly effective at keeping deer out of the yard.

Not yet living in the house, Dwight explains that "I need some projects to feel connected and to personalize the home until we move in." One such project is the unusual and handsome wooden plaque for the house numbers "3915" which shows to all that this is a home for architects and lovers of fine arts!

– Tom Klein

## New Neighbors: Paul Matelic and Julie Kim

When Paul Matelic and Julie Kim purchased their Goodman home on 3946 Rickover, it seemed like everything happened when it was supposed to happen. That's how Julie describes their purchasing experience.

After their move to the DC area from Detroit in 2008, Julie visited a friend living in the Holmes Run Acres neighborhood in Virginia and admired its midcentury modern style. She told Julie about Michael Shapiro and his "Modern Capital" blog. Paul and Julie met Michael himself not long after at an open house showing. They chatted about their common interest in modern architecture and remained in touch.

Last year when they were ready to buy, there were no Goodman homes on the market. They knew they didn't want a live in a traditional colonial. They hired Michael Shapiro as their agent, and when 3946 came on the market, they saw an opportunity to own a Charles Goodman home. They particularly liked that the home was in almost original

condition, and they were looking for a house they could renovate. The only problem was that when Michael suggested that they visit the home, they were on their way to South Korea. It was only on the day of their return that they first visited their soon to be new home. They closed in May of 2013 and in June moved in.

Their Goodman house is the second historic home for Paul and Julie. In the Detroit suburb, Dearborn, Michigan, they had purchased a house in the "Ford Homes Historic District," which contained some 250 3-bedroom homes built in 1919 by Henry Ford for workers in his near-by tractor factory. Like our Goodman houses, the Ford workers' homes were of different designs and were set back from the street at varying distances to avoid the appearance of a typical monotonous suburb. Paul and Julie were struck by this similarity in concept. They still own their Dearborn house. Read the fascinating story of the Ford homes in [www.ford-homes.org](http://www.ford-homes.org).

Julie grew up in Signal Mountain, Tennessee; Paul in Dearborn Heights, Michigan. Julie went to Wellesley College, earning a BA in Architecture in 1989. Paul attended Lawrence Tech in Detroit (BS, Architecture 1991), studying part time while working in the architectural field. He became a partner in the firm, "atelier 4 Architecture" while still an undergrad at Lawrence Tech. Julie and Paul both entered the graduate program in architecture at MIT in 1991, meeting in their final year of study, and then became professional collaborators as well as husband and wife.

After MIT, Paul and Julie established an architecture practice in Detroit, building on Paul's earlier contacts. Paul and Julie co-founded the architectural practice, "studioZONE," working on projects in Detroit until 2004.

Julie conceived of something different, what she calls a "fluid and open architectural studio," based on collaboration of participating architects around the world. In 2000, Julie opened "c2 Architecture Studio [constructWO, PLLC]." In 2004, Julie left studioZONE to devote herself full-time to this new venture. Paul joined as a consulting partner.

Julie, simultaneously with her practice, started an academic career at the University of Detroit Mercy where she became a tenured Associate Professor and director of its graduate program in architecture. Paul also took up teaching, as an adjunct Professor of Architecture at his alma mater, Lawrence Tech.

In 2008, Paul was invited to join the Washington office of the global architecture and engineering firm, HOK. He worked there for two years and then moved to a senior architectural position with Jacobs Global Buildings, part of a huge international firm that provides consultative and construction services. With these firms, Paul was the Design Lead for major projects in Saudi Arabia and elsewhere in the Middle East, including the King Abdullah Petroleum Studies and Research Center in Riyadh.

Julie's operation, not being tied to a particular site, was easy to shift to DC. Paul, in addition to his post with Jacobs is a consulting Principal, along with Julie, at "c2 Architecture Studio." They collaborate on projects in Saudi Arabia. Paul and Julie earlier had received professional recognition for projects in Detroit, including a transit station proposal for a Detroit light-rail system, the transformation of an ugly duckling building into an award-winning dental office, the proposed renovation and adaptive re-use of The Motown Center and Sanders Building, and the Huntington Woods Community Center.

Julie continues her academic career on top of her busy architectural practice. Since 2011, Julie is Associate Professor of Architecture at Catholic University. She coordinates the third year architectural design studio, is Director of the Comprehensive Building Design Studio and also is Director of the Summer Institute for Architecture for the School of Architecture and Planning.

There's more! Take a look at Paul and Julie's respective LinkedIn pages.



Julie and Paul have an 8-year old son, Max, who attends St. John the Baptist Catholic School. Max enjoys looking out the back to see the deer, rabbits, and birds that pass through the yard. About his new home, Max says "It's the coolest house ever!"

– Kathy Lednum and Tom Klein

## New Neighbors: Nick and Sophia Spencer

Meet our new neighbors in 3945 Rickover, Nick and Sophia Spencer. Nick was born and raised right here in Kensington, just off Summit Avenue; Sophia's home was Shanghai. Where did they meet? In DC? In Shanghai? No. On a ferry boat in the Jo San Islands in the South China Sea.

Nick is now Professor of Communication Design at Northern Virginia Community College in Alexandria, teaching Internet development, animation and multimedia. This follows a long career in graphic design. He lived in San Francisco in the 1990s, working as a private consultant on 3-D animation. He taught this subject at the San Francisco Academy of Art. In 1996, Nick transited to Internet development and design working with tech companies in San Francisco and San Jose.

The company that had employed Nick went down in 2001, along with many others in the "dot-com" bust. Nick took a long break, traveling in Asia and finally returning to the DC area. A position in Shanghai turned up with the Raffles LaSalle School of Design in Shanghai as head of the Multimedia Department, and to China he went.

Sophia was born near Shanghai. Her parents moved to Zhoushan Island, but she spent summers in Shanghai. Sophia attended university in Shanghai, where her interest was interior design. However, after graduation, she developed a career in marketing, and she became a marketing manager for a Shanghai Internet communications company, sina.com, responsible for customer relations.

Sophia and Nick's paths crossed in the summer of 2003. Sophia was on her way to visit her parents. Nick was on a business trip to the very same island – and on the very same ferry boat. They met while disembarking, chatted on the pier, exchanged business cards and agreed to meet in again in Shanghai. A friendship blossomed. A year later they decided to marry.

Thanks to our complicated immigration laws, the most feasible course of action was for Nick to resign from the Lasalle School in mid-2004 and return to Washington while Sophia applied for a "fiancée visa." In October, Nick made a return trip to Shanghai and visited the US Consular office in Guangzhou. Finally, the visa was approved. Sophia arrived in the States in 2005 and the wedding took place shortly afterwards.

Married, now in the States, Sophia has developed a career following her true love: yoga. After a specialized 200-hour teacher training course at Hot Yoga USA, Sophia earned her teaching certificate in 2005 and began work at various local yoga studios. She also has given classes at the SEC, NASA and – the White House. Sophia now has her own studio, "The Yoga Blossom Studio," located in her house. Her ap-

proach to teaching: "I encourage students to explore their ability under safe instruction and yet find their edge physically and mentally. My focus is to help students to build a stronger yoga practice and a much more relaxing life." Since 2008, Sophia also gives yoga teacher training courses.

Early December, Sophia began a second career building on her marketing experience back in China: Real estate. With her just-earned real estate license, Sophia has signed on with Weichert Realty.

Nick and Sophia have a 3-1/2 year old daughter, Cleo. How do like your new house, we asked Cleo? "I think it is great!"

So do Nick and Sophia. They had been living in a condo in Takoma Park and decided to move to a house. When they saw Rock Creek Woods, Sophia was awed by all the trees, not just the cherry trees lining the streets but the presence of so many large oaks throughout Rock Creek Woods. What fascinated Nick was how the design of the house seem to followed the "golden section" principle of design. Once moved in, Nick and Sophia were impressed by the friendly atmosphere of RCW. "Here, we feel part of a big family."

– Tom Klein

### ***Kid Safety***

***Drive slowly and be watchful!***



***This is our usual reminder to be vigilant while driving around the neighborhood. We have a large and growing contingent of kids, from toddlers to teenagers, who walk, bike, SLED and play along our streets and sidewalks. Please observe the 25 mph speed limit and keep your eyes open for kids darting into the street unexpectedly. Tell your visitors the same, and don't use cell phones while driving (illegal anyway!).***

***Snow Season brings new hazards, combining slippery roads with kids sliding down lawns and hills on sleds. Please keep an eye out for the unexpected.***



## New Neighbor: Bruce Nichols

A big welcome to Bruce Nichols who recently moved into 3913 Rickover. Those of you who went trick-or-treating on Halloween will remember the splendid large pumpkin in front of his house with the letters "R C W" carved on the side.

Bruce is the proprietor of Metropolitan Interiors on Wisconsin Avenue in Georgetown, a store that specializes in vintage 20th century furniture and furnishings. Bruce loved collecting things that interested him, and his hobby gradually evolved into a retail business. He began in the early 2000's with a stall in a cooperatively run store on U Street NW. In 2006, he established an independent location. In 2010 Bruce moved to Wisconsin Avenue.

Log on to the store's web site and view Bruce's extraordinary and unusual collection ([www.metro-interiors-dc.com](http://www.metro-interiors-dc.com)). Metro could easily be a modern-day annex to London's Victoria and Albert Museum.

Bruce's father was a warrant officer in the Navy. As with all military families, there were frequent moves around the States and also to Hawaii and Guam. Which place did Bruce find particularly memorable? North Chicago, when he was between 8 and 11. What Bruce found remarkable, and memorable, was that despite being the only white boy in the neighborhood, within a short time race had become unimportant; and Bruce soon felt totally accepted.

Bruce moved here from Northern Virginia. He observes that the Maryland suburbs are much more multi-cultural than Northern Virginia, an atmosphere he prefers.

Bruce's move was precipitated by a divorce; his ex-wife retained their mid-century contemporary home. He wanted another home of this type. His realtor showed him a number of properties in Virginia and then said that there is a house in Montgomery County that might suit him. On Rickover Road. That's where his friends John Collier and Marc Gagarin live!

Busy as he is with refining his store, Bruce is very interested in painting and furnishing his new abode. The neighborhood welcomes Bruce's energy and talents to add to the Rock Creek Woods spirit and camaraderie.

– Greg Murray and Tom Klein



## Fireplace Tips

First and foremost, we have our chimney checked and cleaned annually to make sure there are no fire hazards associated with buildup or cracks in the masonry.

The first fire-burning tip we got, from Annabel Kaufman, has probably been discovered by most neighbors who've had a fire. For a downstairs fireplace, put a piece of newspaper on top of the wood and light it. Once it is burning well, light the fire. This primes the chimney by forcing air up the chimney at the damper. Otherwise you'll have a lot of smoke in your room before the fire gets going, especially on really cold days.

The most effective way to get significant home heating from a fireplace is to install a fitted fireplace insert (\$2000-3000). Several neighbors have these. If, however, you want to get more heat from the regular fireplace, there are a few tricks that will help. We have a fitted cover with glass doors, which radiate some heat. Our chimney sweep (Steve Coats, Chimney Masters) recommended a "fireback" and a "Grate Wall of Fire". A fireback is a cast iron panel that you put behind the grate. It reflects heat, and it also heats up and re-radiates the heat back into the wood and your room. That also means a smaller amount of wood is needed to keep the fire going. The "Grate Wall of Fire" (e.g., <http://www.woodlanddirect.com/>) is a grate that is angled, so more of the coals are exposed, radiating more heat into the room. This grate prevents logs from rolling out and also lessens the amount of wood needed to maintain the burn.

Bring both as far forward in your fireplace as you can without smoke spilling into the room. Our fireback is a few inches in front of the back wall.

A fireplace plug may help keep cold air from flowing out of the fireplace when it is not in use, as most dampers don't seal perfectly, and they are also made of cold cast iron. We've just gotten one - it's a blowup insert that you obviously pull out each time you have a fire. It's a bit tricky to insert correctly, but it helps. This could be a useful addition, especially for people who rarely use their fireplace.

– Rick Stumpf

*(Editor's Note - Rick has been safely making fires at 4010 Rickover for 15 years, and like the consummate scientist he is, has done extensive research and consulted his chimney sweep every year for safety [esp. with a kid in the house] and efficiency tips. He does not let us roast marshmallows, though!)*

☞ **In Memoriam - Dick Pelz** ☞  
**1923-2013**

Richard "Dick" Pelz died Tuesday, December 17, 2013 in Seattle Washington. He was 90 years old. He was born in Evanston, Illinois, graduated from Northwestern University and then received his law degree from the University of Chicago--where he met his wife Kelly. With the outbreak of World War II he responded the call to serve by joining the Army Air Corp. He was one of the first Americans into Paris when the Nazis left in 1944.

He came to Washington DC in 1953 as the Legislative Director to Washington State Democratic Congressman, Don Magnuson. After working with Representative Magnuson, Dick started his career with the federal government eventually working 25 years in the Department of the Interior under Secretary Stuart Udall and then in the Department of Energy as Assistant Solicitor for Water and Power. He retired from the DOE in protest in 1986 when President Ronald Reagan proposed the sale and privatization of the federal power administrations, including the Bonneville Power Administration.

Dick Pelz was an integral part of the Rock Creek Woods community from the time the first Goodman house was built in 1959 until the time he and Kelly left for Seattle Washington in 2005. Their departure left a void in the community and those of us who knew them continue to miss them.

In the early years of the neighborhood Dick was part of a group of young, politically active and bright people that were close and raised their children together. They set the tone for our community and to this day RCW is a very close knit, caring and supportive place to raise a family. He was a caring and dear friend to many in the neighborhood and welcoming to all his children's friends who came into their home. He was known for his readiness for a pick-up game of basketball with anyone who was willing, including the neighborhood children. He had a strong moral compass that guided his life. This could also be seen in his family including the five exceptional children he and Kelly raised, his commitment to community and his professional and volunteer work.

Dick saw working for the Federal government as service to his country. The Pelzs were "movers and shakers" in the neighborhood. One of Kelly's innovations was the neighborhood Labor Day picnic. They were often the first people to meet and greet the new neighbors and if they were here today they would have loved meeting the new neighbors as the new neighbors would have enjoyed their spirit and energy.

He was also very active in his church, Pilgrim Church, in Wheaton. He was a founding member and writer of the constitution of the church. He remained active in the church, involved in the church's governance, leading committees, and singing in the choir.

As I live my life I have seen and experienced the lives of those who pass through, but few have had the impact that Dick has had on others. Whether he was erecting a basketball hoop for the neighborhood children, being a mentor to children at risk through CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocate) quietly supporting his candidates (remember the Hatch Act) at the national, state, and local level, feeding the hungry on Thanksgiving Day, or being a friend, he was focused on the needs of others. Always the environmentalist, he refused to use his garbage disposal preferring to compost, and he traveled daily to his job in Washington with 4 other men from the neighborhood. From this carpool came the annual neighborhood traveling potluck New Year's Eve celebration. Of course after the meal ended and we waited for the New Year he led us in games of charades or trivial pursuit. The advantage of having Dick as a member of the community was his sharp mind that would eventually engage others in lively conversations of world and national events and keeping us informed on the important issues of the day. While the rest of us kept ourselves comfortably warm on a cold winter day or dry on a rainy day, he and Kelly often would be off to demonstrate on the Mall for causes dear to their hearts. He lived his life with purpose and passion.

He is survived by his wife, Kelly, 5 children and their spouses, 9 grandchildren, one brother and numerous friends.

– *Betsy Binckes*

## Navy Shell Collection (Mollusks, that is!)

I spent my summers on the beaches of Long Island with my head down, walking the shore looking for shells. Since childhood I have collected shells from every coast I visited, from the cold northern beaches of Nova Scotia and Maine, to the colorful, high-diversity coral reef-fed beaches of the Florida Keys. As a tropical geoscientist, I go to many places in the Caribbean, including the Bahamas, the Mesoamerican Barrier Reef in Belize, the Yucatan and the Isthmus of Panama, and pick up as many shells as I can. I have jars and bottles and large shells as household decoration. My fun being limited mainly to the western Atlantic, I have long wished to go shell hunting in the Indo-Pacific, for the variety, complexity and stunning beauty of the shells there. Someday, I wished...

Imagine my surprise when Pastor Darlene Meyers of our neighborhood Church of the Brethren contacted me to ask if I would look over a shell collection inherited by one of her parishioners, the daughter of retired Navy Lieutenant Commander and cryptologist William E. Dyer. He collected live mollusks while on active duty from 1955-1977, sailing on a ship nicknamed the *Grey Ghost*. From his few records and old newspapers, we know the ship sailed off the coast of South Africa, Kenya, possibly Egypt, and made it to Guam in the Pacific, all places to find extraordinary shells.

Certain shells and other marine life contain neurotoxins in their tissues for defense. Think jellyfish stings, fire coral, and the cone shell's barbs to name a few. *Conus* in particular were collected by the Navy for these neurotoxins, which were intended to be applied to military biological warfare. This is unfortunately all we know, since Mr. Dyer's papers did not include any collection records. I was certainly eager to look over this treasure trove. My job was to identify the specimens and determine their value if possible. The shells, it was hoped, might bring in some income to Mr. Dyer's family while the estate was settled.

In May 2013, Darlene dropped off a large crate and more of the shells. They were securely wrapped and stored in old Kodak slide magazine boxes, except for the very large specimens. I got to work using several references from Smithsonian Libraries, as well as popular shell identification books (esp. *Compendium of Seashells* by Abbott and Dance) and several very helpful websites meant for serious collectors. Shell identification seems simple enough, if not for the diversity and number of the specimens at hand. I was also grappling with morphologic differences between juveniles and adults of the same species, and a high degree of intra-specific variation, making it tempting to "see" several species instead of just one. Alternatively, subtle variations that

truly signal different species may look too subtle to use as a species splitter (if, in truth, you don't need DNA to achieve this). Then there are limitations to what the books can show to account for this variation, and things get a bit tricky. So I was in WAY over my head, as we marine scientists frequently are, but that is never enough to stop me. I even corresponded with people in remote places to confirm or correct some of my identifications via emailed photos. Finally, I work in the Department of Paleobiology in a major museum. I am surrounded by an endless sea of cases full of fossils. I hoped some inspiration had transferred from the fossils to me as I walked past them in the hallways.

Slowly I got (most of) the shells sorted and identified, spending many evenings going back and forth between books and internet sites, fussing over one or two shells at a time. What fun (seriously!) I was having.

Why I am telling you all this? The original object of this work was to figure out if the shells would bring in any income to the family of Mr. Dyer. Sadly, without collecting records, it will not be possible to sell them to serious collectors, who require documentation of provenance. Happily for the rest of us who like shells, Darlene and I are planning to have a sale one day soon at the church, where neighbors and interested friends can come and shop for some lovely decorative specimens, vase fillers, samples for science projects, collections to interest kids in marine sciences, or just something pretty to put on your coffee table or desk. Stay tuned to the neighborhood listserv and come shop. Be warned that I will be there first, so come by early for best selection!

– Maggie Toscano

**A few examples from the Dyer collection.**



*William Edwin Dyer Sr., a Kensington resident, was a Navy lieutenant commander and cryptologist from 1955 to 1977. He majored in chemistry and education at (now) Truman State University in Missouri and received a master's degree in education from the University of Maryland. After active duty he taught science and technology at Julius West Middle School in Rockville. He died in 1995 at the age of 71.*

**Hi Neighbor!** is a publication of the Rock Creek Woods Civic Association. To contribute stories or items of interest to the community, personal milestones, photos and announcements, please email them to the Editor (mtoscano13@verizon.net). Contributors include Head Reporter Tom Klein, Kathy Lednum, Daniel Freyman, Greg Murray, Betsy Binckes and Rick Stumpf. Thanks!