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## Mount Airy bowmaker makes mark

By Constance Garcia-Barrio

"The hills are alive with the sound of music," the famous song says, and more Philadelphia homes will be, too, if Elizabeth Vander Veer Shaak has her way. "Music can add such joy to life," says Shaak, 62, a Mount Airy resident who makes bows for violins, violas and cellos and owns Mount Airy Violins & Bows. "It can make an enormous difference."

Shaak took a roundabout path to her craft. She double-majored in fine arts and audiology at Ithaca College in New York. As a graduate student in psychology at Bryn Mawr College, she helped to develop a test to reveal hearing deficits in babies before they otherwise showed signs of deafness. Though she originally planned a career in audiology, she also considered becoming a midwife. However, in 1980, after a year of graduate school, Shaak realized that her life lay in music. She'd studied the piano and guitar from age 12 and at one point had taken lessons from Alicia Bjornsdottir, a world-class Swedish violinist and fiddler, when the latter lived in Wyndmoor.

"For most bowmakers, our career path isn't a straight line," Shaak says. "The thread that binds us all is attention to detail. There are some 240 steps in making a bow, and it takes about 70 hours." The careful work suits Shaak, who says she likes working with her hands.

Shaak first studied bowmaking – a particularly unusual choice for women of her generation – at 29. In 1982, she got a job replacing the worn horsehair on bows (bowstrings are made from the hair from horses' tails) at Primavera House of Violins on Rittenhouse



Courtesy: Mount Airy Violins & Bows

**Making violin bows in her shop in Mount Airy is Elizabeth Vander Veer Shaak. She has learned her trade over decades of study in the United States and abroad.**

Square. Adolf Primavera, a third-generation violin maker, was then at the end of his career. After the store folded in 1983, Shaak began studying bowmaking with William Salchow, considered the "father of American bowmaking," in New York City.

Honing her skills and broadening her knowledge of music – which is integral to the craft – meant travel. In the early '80s, Shaak lived in Bulgaria, where she studied the country's folk music. Next came a 1986 sojourn in France. "The French method of bowmaking is more intuitive," she says. "You use the wood's strengths to create the best possible bow ... A machine may make a good bow, but it doesn't have the sensitivity of the human hand."

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## Multicultural Philly

### Asian Arts Initiative connects cultures

By Constance Garcia-Barrio

If you listen closely at the door of Asian Arts Initiative (AAI), 1219 Vine St. in Chinatown North, you can almost hear the stereotypes shatter. Begun in 1993 as a program of Painted Bride Art Center, a multicultural performing arts venue in Old City, AAI was launched to promote understanding and defuse tension between Asian-Americans and African-Americans. AAI has grown to become an independent multidisciplinary community arts center, but its mission of building cross-cultural understanding remains. It presents works that address the Asian-American experience, including by taking a frank look at Asian-American interactions with black Americans.

Some common views of African-Americans and Asian-Americans have long driven a wedge between the two groups. Studies show U.S. society often sees Asian-Americans as a "model minority" whose members quietly succeed despite difficulties, while many Americans consider blacks to be inherently low-achieving – and do not take into account the systemic racism that limits the education, housing, health

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Paola Noguerras

**'Yin Yang,' a photograph by Klyde Breighton, is among the artwork displayed at Asian Arts Initiative, which seeks to build cross-cultural understanding.**

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## Health Brief

# Hands on for health: Try massage



iStock

By Constance Garcia-Barrio

A massage may seem like the ultimate luxury, yet its bouquet of health benefits for seniors can make it a good investment. "Massage can improve circulation, help to manage pain and promote deeper sleep," said licensed massage therapist Lisa Kaye of Philadelphia, whose oldest client was 104.

Massage can also help counter years of wear and tear by easing joint stiffness. Some seniors turn to massage to better prepare for joint replacement surgery. "Massage can improve local circulation of blood and lymphatic fluid pre- and post-surgery," said Christopher Deery, a licensed massage therapist in Phoenixville who has many older clients. "It can leave the tissue more supple and promote healing."

Besides addressing specific conditions, massage often works on another, crucial level. "As we age and lose friends and spouses, the need for touch may become an issue," Kaye said. "As human beings, we seek safe, nurturing touch. When I give a massage, I'll do an arm, then cover it with the sheet, then massage the other arm. A woman in her 80s finds it comforting being tucked in and snug in that way. She missed that kind of care in her childhood. Massage is as much about touch as the other benefits."

Therapists emphasize the importance of clients' input in order to give a good massage.

"One size does not fit all," Deery said. "When working with older clients, I realize that certain positions may be painful, or some clients may be on medication that causes them to bruise easily, but I still rely on clients for specifics. For example, do they want light or firm strokes?"

Kaye agreed. "Don't be shy about expressing your needs," she said. "Have you had surgery that may affect your massage? Do you like the music? Do you prefer silence? How's the room temperature? I can adjust those things if you tell me what you want."

You can tap several sources to find a massage therapist. Get recommendations from senior centers, physical therapists or word of mouth. In addition, the American Massage Therapy Association's website at AMTAMassage.org has a section called "Find a massage therapist."

Ask questions before you make a choice: What kind of training have you had? How often do you work with older adults? What do you charge? Do you offer an introductory price for the first massage or multi-massage packages?" Once you find a massage therapist you're comfortable with – relax and enjoy!

*Constance Garcia-Barrio is a freelance writer and author of a novel based on African-American history in Philadelphia.*

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## Multicultural Philly

# New frontiers: PCA staff reaches out to immigrant elder populations

By Marcia Z. Siegal

There are nearly 41,000 foreign-born older Philadelphians, according to the American Community Survey. Comprising 15 percent of Philadelphians 60-plus, they often settle in insular communities of fellow immigrants. Isolated, facing language barriers, and often suspicious of institutions and government due to trauma suffered in their native lands, they can find it difficult to overcome obstacles to get the help they need. This help can be all the more vital as they become frail. Many cannot count on their children to care for them in their old age, as was traditional where they came from.

As part of Philadelphia Corporation for Aging's (PCA's) efforts to connect with underserved minority elders, Sung Young Yun of PCA's Community Relations Department reached out to Leela Kuikel, who heads the



Bhutanese American Organization (BAO) – Philadelphia. The organization represents a new local community of refugees: ethnic Nepalese from the Himalayan nation of Bhutan

who faced persecution and mass expulsion in their homeland. The city's Bhutanese community, though tiny, represents one of the newest frontiers for Community Relations as it builds bridges to help immigrant elders access aging services and supports.

### A team effort

Yun, PCA's Asian outreach coordinator, met Kuikel years ago during one of the many Asian-American networking events she attends to strengthen PCA's connections to Philadelphia's immigrant communities. Subsequently, she worked with him to organize a "lunch-and-learn," sponsored by PCA, to acquaint Bhutanese seniors with aging services



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**A Bhutanese man peers out from his shelter. Refugees from the Himalayan nation of Bhutan are among the immigrant populations reached out to by the Community Relations Department at Philadelphia Corporation for Aging (PCA).**

and other community supports available to them. That collaboration proved essential. Kuikel helped identify a site that would appeal to attendees, a South Philadelphia restaurant popular with Bhutanese refugees, most of whom have settled in that area. In addition, he helped to translate the presentations into a Nepali language. He also joined PCA's Asian Advisory Committee, made up of community leaders who support Community Relations' efforts to develop ties and share information.

Philadelphia's Asian community is highly diverse, comprising settled groups like Koreans, Chinese, Vietnamese, Cambodians, Laotians and Filipinos, as well as newer arrivals like the Bhutanese. Also among the more recent immigrants are Chinese people from the Fujin province, whose members speak a different dialect from the usual Mandarin or Cantonese, and a surge of Southeast Asian Indians, including Hindu and Christian groups, who have varying customs and languages.

The Albanian immigrant community is well-established in Philadelphia, with many settling in the city after World War II and during the 1990s. But it also constitutes a new frontier for the department, says Wanda Mitchell, PCA's director of community relations. The staff began reaching out to the Albanian community after realizing that many of that group's elders have not assimilated and are unable to access the programs and services that would benefit them.

Besides working with Asian groups, Yun also helps Community Relations connect

with other ethnic communities. She is working to identify trusted individuals within the local Albanian population to partner with PCA for outreach and information-sharing and to identify Albanian elders in need of assistance. Once those ties are established, one of the first steps will likely be a lunch-and-learn, she says. The department is also exploring having PCA materials translated into Albanian.

Such outreach efforts are labor-intensive because they need to be customized for each group, Mitchell says. Relationships need to be established and cultivated, translators for languages and dialects have to be found for events and presentations, informational materials have to be translated, feedback from each community must be solicited to ensure that PCA's efforts are effective, and outreach must be ongoing to maintain awareness and connection.

People born in African and Caribbean nations are among the city's fastest-growing immigrant populations. PCA Service Coordinator Supervisor Kia Gaymon works with Community Relations to connect with these groups. She serves as PCA's representative on the Mayor's Commission on African and Caribbean Immigrant Affairs and, along with PCA Interfaith Outreach Coordinator Sandy Lawrence, often represents the agency at events in the African and Caribbean communities. Community Relations also helped PCA create a working group of leaders and

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## Multicultural Philly

# 'My grandmother's doll': The story of how I finally rediscovered my long-lost Dutch relatives

By Gloria Rohlfs

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After having moved to Germany to find work teaching during the recession in 1972, I decided to track down my maternal grandmother's relatives. I was 26. My mother's parents had emigrated from the Netherlands to the United States in 1911. My mother never learned Dutch and had had no contact with the relatives back in the Netherlands. All family contact had been lost when my grandparents died.

Because I did not speak Dutch, a Dutch acquaintance accompanied me to the address on an old envelope my mother had sent me. In a rural village, we found a brick house with a thatched roof that had been built by my grandmother's brother, Dirk. We knocked on the door, and my acquaintance introduced me to the startled woman who answered it,

who had not seen anyone from my family since World War II, when two uncles had visited. Despite the years of no contact and my inability to speak the language, Dirk's daughter, Betje ("Bet-yeh"), welcomed me warmly and invited me back for a visit.

In preparation, I began learning Dutch because most people in this rural region of the Netherlands did not speak English. When I arrived back at the house some six months later, Betje ushered me into the living room to meet her mother, my great-aunt "Tante" Cori. After greeting her, I noticed a two-foot-tall porcelain doll wearing traditional clothes, standing on the mantel. I thought I recognized the doll from family stories. In halting Dutch, I asked, "Was this my grandmother's doll?" Tante Cori responded, "Your grandmother's brothers took this doll out of her suitcase. They were angry that she was leaving." This doll had gained mystical status

from stories that my mother had told me. My grandmother had grieved that the doll, representing family, had remained behind when she departed for the United States.

When I asked Tante Cori why my grandparents had left, she replied: "I was 13 years old at the time, and ..." then her face contorted in tears, and she rushed from the room. Betje finished the story. "Your grandfather had stolen chickens and would have had to go to jail, so they moved to America." Grandma made the ocean crossing a few months after my Grandpa, with my mother, who was 1. Emigrating was difficult for my grandmother, who did not speak English. She was far from loved ones and yearned for that doll – and for her mother, whom she never saw again. I hadn't realized how alone I'd felt in Europe, far from family and friends,

until I saw my grandmother's doll.

I returned to the United States in 1979 to spend time with my parents, who had health challenges. I have maintained contact with those Dutch relatives and met more family of both my grandparents during subsequent visits. I have maintained both communication and a family tree, re-establishing a connection that was broken long ago.

*Gloria Rohlfs is a retired nonprofit administrator, psychotherapist and career coach. She enjoys making music, painting and going to fun events in Philadelphia.*



Courtesy: Gloria Rohlfs

**Left: a family doll the author found in the Netherlands. Right: the author with her great-aunt 'Tante' Cori in 1976.**

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# The Ralston Center: A pioneer in serving seniors, past and present

By Constance Garcia-Barrio

In the early 1800s, senior women who lacked money often ended up in the almshouse, the shelter system of yesteryear. Sarah Clarkson Ralston aimed to change that fate by pioneering a new role for women.

Ralston and a group of other philanthropic women founded the Indigent Widows and Single Women's Society (IWSWS) in 1817. The organization, which ran a nonsectarian residential facility exclusively for women – the first of its kind in the nation – offered an alternative to the almshouse, said Terry R. Snyder, librarian and associate professor of history at Haverford College. IWSWS stood apart as an organization created by women for women, Snyder said. But the venture had its limits: IWSWS did not house women with

dementia, and it was understood that only white Christian women could live at the facility.

The society changed its name to the Ralston Center to honor Sarah Clarkson Ralston in 1973 and switched from a residential facility to one that's program-driven in 1985. The Ralston Center also broadened its focus: It now seeks to address critical issues affecting older adults of both genders. Among those challenges: "There is nowhere near enough housing for low-income seniors," said Neville Strumpf, president of the Ralston Center board of managers and a well-known gerontologist. "We partnered with community groups to build the Joseph J. Hill Ralston Mercy-Douglass House, which has 55 apartments for low-income seniors living independently."



Courtesy: the Ralston Center

**The Indigent Widows and Single Women's Society, now the Ralston Center, circa 1885. The society ran the nation's first nonsectarian housing facility for women.**

The center – which is headquartered at 3615 Chestnut St., adjacent to the campus of the University of Pennsylvania – also helps seniors live more comfortably in their homes through the Ralston My Way program. Residents 55 and older in Northwest Philadelphia can turn to My Way for assistance with everything from home care to light housekeeping, handyman repairs and yardwork, all provided at a reasonable rate, said Joseph A. Lukach, CEO of the center.

"We are focused on quality of life in aging, which is more relevant than ever before," Lukach said. "Our goal is to provide people age 55 and older with the services and support they need to live in their homes and communities."

Because nutrition ranks high on the list of priorities as we age, Lukach said, "the Ralston Center promotes a healthful diet." For instance, the center coordinates Food & Company, a program in which volunteers make wholesome soup for seniors. (*For a story on Food & Company, see the July issue of Milestones. Visit [pcamilestones.org](http://pcamilestones.org) and click on "2017."*)

The center aims to help older adults stay healthy another way as well: Seniors may take classes ranging from chair yoga to an abdominal workout through the Ralston Wellness program. The first class is free.

The Ralston Center also seeks to make public spaces more senior-friendly. "For example, we're advocating for better sidewalks and more benches at bus stops," Strumpf said. "It's all about being comfortable in your community."

## Center celebrates 200 years

Scrumptious hors d'oeuvres, sweet treats and good wine wowed guests at "Women Visionaries and the Care of Older People, 1817 to the Present," a presentation held this spring that celebrated both Women's History Month and the Ralston Center's 200<sup>th</sup> year of service to Philadelphia seniors. Speakers also served up food for thought at the event, held at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, 1300 Locust St.

At the celebration, presenters highlighted historical images of women. Sara Weatherwax, curator of prints and photographs at the Library Company of Philadelphia, located near the Historical Society, presented some images that showed older women in a harsh light. "They were sometimes portrayed as snoops who spied and eavesdropped on people," she said. Photographs of older women giving and getting affection from family members helped to provide a balanced impression.

Weatherwax noted that some elderly women – 42 was thought of as old in the early 1800s – stretched what the public considered "the appropriate sphere of women." Quaker matron Lucretia Mott (1793-1880), whose photograph Weatherwax showed, set Philadelphia howling by helping to found the Philadelphia Fe-

male Anti-Slavery Society. The group not only plunged women into politics, a no-no at the time, but also was an interracial organization, which many Philadelphians saw as adding insult to injury. Local author Harriet Beecher Stowe (1811-1896), whose image was included in the event program, inflamed tensions between the North and South with her 1852 anti-slavery bestseller, "Uncle Tom's Cabin."

Neville E. Strumpf, president of the Ralston Center board of managers, spoke of the creative, flexible thinking that has helped to keep the Ralston Center at the forefront of programs for Philadelphia seniors. "We aim to continue serving this city with relevant programs and useful information," said Strumpf, a professor emerita at the University of Pennsylvania's School of Nursing and director of the school's Gerontology Nurse Practitioner Program from 1985 to 2000. "This 200th anniversary celebration gives us all the more impetus to go forward with our mission."

\* \* \*

The Ralston Center, the Library Company of Philadelphia and the Historical Society of Pennsylvania jointly sponsored the celebration.

In addition, the center aims to become a hub of information. "Say you want to find out when and where to get a hot meal or how to start a community garden," Strumpf said. "We want to be able to direct you to the right organization."

\* \* \*

For more information, call 215-386-2984, email [info@ralstoncenter.org](mailto:info@ralstoncenter.org) or visit the website [ralstoncenter.org](http://ralstoncenter.org).

*Constance Garcia-Barrio is a freelance writer and author of a novel based on African-American history in Philadelphia.*



Courtesy: the Ralston Center

**A resident of the Indigent Widows and Single Women's Society, now the Ralston Center, sits in her room in the late 1860s.**

## Multicultural Philly

# Musings on my mysterious brother

By Maralyn Lois Polak

My brother Marty has been gone three decades now. As time passes, I miss him more and more, especially during holidays, when I experience a tremendous emptiness that no number of festivities can allay. I yearn just to hear his voice.

Marty was a gentle, kind man who liked cooking, music, science fiction and travel. He was two years younger than me. As small children, we took baths together under my mother's watchful eye. Yet as adults, we weren't especially close, even though, for a time, we lived on the same Philadelphia street.

Only after he died in 1992 did I discover some "separated at birth" kinds of coincidental commonalities, like a shared fascination with "The Wizard of Oz" that extended into our adulthoods. I still have an Oz Emerald City dollhouse, and in Marty's effects, I found an Emerald City lamp. We also had the same Pentax macro-lens-equipped camera for ultra-close-ups.

### Coming out

Marty was gay. However, though he had a series of male "roommates," he was never "out." He hadn't actually ever told me about his sexuality. But one day, a few months after our mom died from a peculiar home accident, he stopped by my apartment and mentioned that he was "sick" – a suspicious blotch had appeared on his butt. That was how he – and I – found out he had AIDS. He was in such denial that he had never even been tested. The "blotch" was Kaposi's sarcoma, of course.

Toward the end of his life, Marty became an AIDS counselor, doing community volunteer work in Poughkeepsie, New York, with prisoners and migrant workers, educating them on safer sex. Being useful like that, he said, made him happier than at any other time in his life.

Marty and his friends got their kicks from dinner parties, opera, canasta and "Jesus Christ Superstar." I know he liked computer fantasy games. I know when he was younger, he tried to write science fiction. I know whenever he left a message for me on the telephone, he never said his name – just "Call your brother." And now I can't.

### Password-protected

My little brother's brain rests in a transparent box near my desk – mute, bloodless, contained – all I have left of him. No, I don't mean his crenellated lobes lie marinating in formaldehyde. I'm talking about a half-dozen of his computer discs – password missing, access denied – that contain his last meanderings of consciousness: the Lost Boy's array of games, tunes, sound effects, random notions, furtive jottings – a secret language entirely his own, with no Rosetta Stone in sight.

He died alone, at 3 a.m., in a strange hospital in a small city, in a locked ward, away from the other patients. Even wearing two pairs of gloves, none of the doctors and nurses wanted to touch him. Too late, I arrived – the day after my ego sought to delay his death for my own convenience.

I reunited with his corpse in the morgue. He was cold, pale marble with a beard. I barely recognized him, kissed his clammy forehead. "I wouldn't do that, if I were you," warned the funeral director, whisking Marty away on a gurney.

### Ultimate adventure?

Two days later, my brother reappeared as ashes in a cardboard box. Diminished in size yet homeopathically potent, he rode in the car seat next to me all the way from Poughkeepsie to Philly, where he spent the next two weeks in some badly needed posthumous R & R on my rose-tiled English dining-room sideboard as he and I engaged in silent but spirited debate on the nature and/or duration of the afterlife.

I reminded him that our father described death as "the ultimate adventure." Marty, the fast-food manager with two master's degrees, must have thought of heaven as Hamburger Heaven – a gargantuan pair of golden arches with a rapidly aggregating sign: "Three septillion souls served, and counting."

*Maralyn Lois Polak's writing has appeared in The New York Times, The Philadelphia Inquirer, the Washington Post, The Philadelphia Daily News, Andy Warhol's Interview and elsewhere.*

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# My genealogy journey: Finding the family my mother never knew

By Linda L. Riley

My mother was 6 months old when her mother died, and her father put her up for adoption. Nine decades later, with the help of a genealogy website, I found the brother she never knew and discovered a new branch of my family tree.

Mom's life was punctuated with loss from infancy, but she was the most optimistic, indomitable person I've ever known. Maybe that's why she survived.

She was born in Westville, New Jersey, in April 1918, one of twin girls. Her parents had married in 1915; her mother was 19, her father 30. They had their first child, a son, the following year, and twins two years later.

Whatever elation and chaos followed the birth of twins was soon overwhelmed by the 1918 flu epidemic, which claimed the lives of first my mother's mother and then, five days later, my mother's twin. Presumably overwhelmed by caring for an infant, my mother's father put her up for adoption.

## A secret revealed

Mom's was not a closed adoption, with records sealed; it was an arrangement between friends of friends, legal but without secrecy – at least, among the adults. Her adoptive mother knew her new child's family: who they were, where they lived. None of this information was shared with my mother until she was 12. That might seem like a thoughtful choice – to wait until she was old enough to understand. But in fact, the revelation came out of pure panic. You see, my mother's adoptive father had just come home from work, collapsed on the doorstep, and died of a heart attack in his wife's arms.

It was August 1930, less than a year after the stock market crash of 1929. The new widow panicked, not knowing how she was going to provide for herself and her 12-year-old daughter. Somehow, the memory of the "other," birth family seems to have risen in her mind. Why she thought that, a year into the Great Depression, the family that had let an infant go might welcome a 12-year-old with open arms is a mystery. But she quickly reconnected with the family, and my mother was introduced to a whole new cast of cousins, aunts and uncles, and her grandmother on her father's side. She also learned that she'd had a brother two years older than she; but

strangely, none of her newfound kin could tell her anything about what had happened to him. He seemed simply to have vanished.

From age 12 on, Mom was subjected to a barrage of threats and tears from her adoptive mother, who struggled to keep a roof over their heads: "If you're not good, you'll be sent off to live with that family" – or "Don't you love me? Maybe you'd rather live with *them*."

Despite all this, my mother was an optimist. If there was a positive way to look at something, she would find it. She even joked that she'd married my father, a younger man, because she wanted to be sure not to marry her own brother. But beneath the joking were nagging questions that she verbalized from time to time: Where was her brother? What had happened to him? Was he alive?

The other thing that nagged at her was that she knew nothing about her mother – just her first name. The family she'd met was all on her father's side. They told a story of two spinster aunts who had come from Florida to see Mom but turned around and left when they learned she hadn't been baptized. Was it true? If her father's people knew anything more about her mother's family, they never shared it. Where had her parents met? Where was her mother from? What was she like? What did she look like? Somehow, they couldn't tell her anything.

Her birth father, who by then had moved to California, remained an unknown by mom's choice; she was adamant that she'd had a father and didn't need or want another one. But when she was 19, she relented, taking a bus across the country to meet her biological father. Maybe she thought he would solve the mysteries she'd been living with. If that was her motivation, she was mostly disappointed. Her father made much of how closely she resembled her birth mother but told her nothing more, and of her brother, said vaguely only that he had "lost him."

I knew my mother had tried to track down her brother, seeking records of adoptions and deaths from the courthouse in Camden, with no success. She did obtain her own adoption records and learned her mother's maiden name and age when she had died, but that was all.

## An adopted quest

In middle age, I took on my mother's quest as my own. In 2002, I joined Ancestry.com,



Courtesy: Linda L. Riley

**Vivian Riley, the writer's mother, was adopted at 6 months and never knew her brother, 'Westcott Junior,' whom the writer tracked down through online research.**

a genealogy website where you can create a family tree using information you know, plus facts you find by searching online record collections including birth, marriage and census records. (See story on page 9 for details.)

I built my tree slowly, painstakingly searching online census records. I was fortunate because I knew the names of my mother's father – he and his "lost" son shared the distinctive first name of Westcott – and those of his family members, so I found them fairly easily. I also found some surprises: A marriage certificate showed that Mom's father, Westcott Senior, had remarried in April 1919, just seven months after his first wife's death. But a year later, in the 1920 census, he turned up in Idaho, living in a boarding house and listed as a widower. Meanwhile, his new wife was listed as living with her mother in New York City. It seemed his marriage of 1919 had dissolved quickly.

At long last, I found my mother's missing brother, also in the 1920 census, in Long Island, New York. The last name was spelled differently, and he was in an unexpected place, but there was young Westcott Junior – one of two children living as "wards" of two women. My conclusion: The little boy had been put up for adoption, too. I went on to search the 1930 and 1940 censuses and every other avenue I could think of – but after 1920, my mother's lost brother was nowhere to be found.

It seemed I'd hit a dead end. Until 2010, when I received a brief message from a woman through Ancestry.com, inquiring about Westcott Senior:

*"I'm interested in finding out more about this man to fit his children into my family tree. Would*

*you allow me to see your tree containing his information?"*

I was amazed. Could this inquiry lead me to my mother's brother? I replied, explaining that Westcott Senior had had only three children, and told her what I knew. Her response blew me away: She said my mother's father "was the missing link we have sought for so long."

A few more exchanges and we had confirmed the connection. The woman was my cousin – the daughter of my mother's long-lost brother. I'd found him, in a sense, at last. The last name was different – his adoptive family had given him their name. But, through a long and convoluted search, including DNA testing, my newfound cousin and her sisters had found what they thought was his real name, had traced him back to foster care, and had searched Ancestry.com for him – which led them to me. They'd had no idea he'd had siblings; in fact, their father had been told he was the only child of a British couple killed in a car crash.

A flurry of emails followed, and the four of us arranged to travel from Philadelphia, Connecticut and Maryland to meet in New York City for lunch. I remember sitting across the table from one of my cousins, who is a dead ringer for my mother. Since then, I've had a chance to get to know them more, meeting for meals, having lunch, visiting museums and filling in the blanks of our parents' lives.

My one regret is that my mother never knew that I'd found her brother; she died in 1994, eight years before I first logged on to Ancestry.com. But I believe she knows and that the two of them are together at last.

Linda L. Riley is the former editor of Milestones.



## Researching your family's roots: Web-based resources make it easy

Researching your ancestry can be a big project, but there are resources to help. The first step in creating a family tree is to record what you know. Collect the names and factual information you know about your family members, starting with yourself. Note the dates and locations of significant life events such as birth, marriage, military service and the birth of any children. From there, work both backward and forward; record the names and significant life events of your parents, spouse and children, then your spouse's parents and siblings, and so on.

You can create a family tree yourself. Alternatively, there are free templates available online, and many books you can buy or borrow from your local library will provide both a family tree format and guidance on doing your research. At some point, you will come to the end of what you know and will need to begin using some of the tools available, such as census records, to find your forebears.

The first Federal Population Census was taken in 1790, and the census has been taken every 10 years since. The records from the 1950 census and others going forward are not available, but you can access census data from 1940 and earlier. These records can be searched online, or you can go to the Regional Archives branch in Philadelphia at 14700 Townsend Rd. or the National Archives in Washington, D.C., to access them on microfilm.

### Online resources

If you have access to a computer, there are numerous websites you can use to set up a family tree and search for your ancestors. Some are free, while others require a paid subscription. Here are descriptions of just a few.

**Familysearch.org:** This free site gives users the ability to create a family tree online, add what they know about their families, and begin to search a variety of records to track their lineage. The record collections cover a wide range of information from

Africa, Europe, South America, Asia, Ireland, the United Kingdom and the United States. Among them, are Alabama's Civil War service records of Confederate soldiers, British newspaper obituary archives, Dutch Reformed Church records from Namibia, and records of burials and baptisms in Samoa.

**MyHeritage.com:** This site offers free family-tree-making software that you can download. The site enables you to add about 250 relatives to an online tree, free of charge. Paid upgrades permit more family members to be added. The databases provide access to records from countries around the world as far back as the year 1000, but it does not include any Native American records.

**Ancestry.com:** This is a subscription-based family-tree-building site with fees that depend on what sets of records you wish to search. "United States only" is the least expensive option and gives you access to all of the federal census records through 1940, plus many state census records and a variety of birth, death and marriage databases. You can join for one month, six months or a year, with cost savings if you sign on for a longer period. For additional fees, you can access records in other countries, among them 16th century United Kingdom birth, marriage and death records.

All three sites have a feature that hints at or leads to more information about individuals listed in your tree. They also offer tips on doing research and ways to connect with others who share ancestors with you.

As you continue your research, you'll find many other resources besides census data, but the census is a good place to begin because it is easily searchable if you have a name, birth date and general place of residence for your ancestor. The census also lists others who were in the household, their relationship to the head of household, and the ages and occupations of each person. And once you get started, there is always more to discover.



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# August 2017

## SUNDAY

6

**ACANA African Festival.** 2-8 p.m. Great Plaza at Penn's Landing. 215-922-2FUN.

13

**Second Sundays Classic TV & Cinema Series.** "Leave it to Beaver" (Episode: Weekend Invitation) & "Ocean's 11" (1960). 8:30-11 p.m. Spruce Street Harbor Park. 215-922-2FUN.

20

**Caribbean Festival.** 12-8 p.m. Great Plaza at Penn's Landing. 215-922-2FUN.

27

**Circus Week at the Garden Railway.** The first circus was held in Philadelphia in 1793. See the Big Top & circus trains, learn the history of the circus, & watch for a few surprises. 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Morris Arboretum of the Univ. of Pa. 215-247-5777. (Through Sept. 4 at various times.) \$

## MONDAY

7

**Coffee & Conversations: Liver Wellness.** American Liver Foundation discusses functions & diseases. 9:30 a.m. KleinLife: NE Phila. 215-698-7300.

14

**Trip: Shady Maple.** Lunch on your own & shopping time. 9 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Departs/returns: PSC - Avenue of the Arts. Register: 215-546-5879. \$

21

**Breast Cancer Support Group.** 1-2:30 p.m. Center in the Park. Register: 215-848-7722.

28

**African-American Journeys.** 1 p.m. Center in the Park. 215-848-7722.

## TUESDAY

1

**Jewish Memoirs & Lunch.** Discussion of modern Jewish history through personal experiences. Facilitated by Dr. Reena Friedman. 11:45 a.m. KleinLife: NE Phila. 215-698-7300.

8

**Oldest Road in the USA: The King's Highway.** Created in 1650 by Charles II, the highway runs from Charleston to Boston. Documentary filmmaker Jason Sherman discusses historic treasures in Northeast Philadelphia along Frankford Avenue. 2 p.m. Phila. City Institute. 215-685-6621.

15

**Mahjong.** 1-3 p.m. Center in the Park. 215-848-7722. (Also Aug 29)

22

**E-Gadget Help Desk.** Want to download E-books to read at home? Bring your phone, tablet, e-reader, laptop or other device for hands-on assistance. No appointment necessary. 3:30-6 p.m. Katharine Drexel Library. 215-685-9383. (Tuesdays & Thursdays)

29

**MorningsOut Senior Social.** Social/educational gathering for gay, bisexual & transgender men 50 & older. Activities include occasional outings, speakers & events. Light refreshments. 10:30 a.m. William Way Community Center. 215-732-2220.

## WEDNESDAY

2

**Foot Specialist: Dr. Allan Jaffe.** Take a step toward healthier feet. 10 a.m. PSC - Avenue of the Arts. 215-546-5879.  
**Staying Cool in a Changing Climate.** Workshop on extreme heat & energy efficiency for Phila. seniors. Refreshments & \$25 gift card for participants. 2:30-4:30 p.m. McPherson Public Library. Register: 267-737-8063.

9

**Tu B'Av & August Birthday Party.** For the Jewish "Day of Love," celebrate the love of a partner, child, friend, relative, animal or people in general. Entertainment by singer Debbie Feeser. 11:45 a.m. to 1:45 p.m. KleinLife: NE Phila. 215-698-7300.

16

**Blood Pressure Screening.** 9-11:30 a.m. Center in the Park. 215-848-7722.  
**Laughter Lunch.** Share a funny joke for National Tell a Joke Day. 12 p.m. Center in the Park. 215-848-7722.

23

**Sit & Stitch.** Informal evening of needlecrafts with knitters & crocheters. All skill levels welcome. Formal instruction or assistance not guaranteed. 6 & 7 p.m. Lucien E. Blackwell West Phila. Regional Library, 215-685-7433 & South Phila. Library, 215-685-1866.

30

**Yoga at the Art Museum.** Practice your poses with Dhyana Yoga. Space is limited; attendance is first-come, first-served. 6 & 7 p.m. The Anne d'Harnoncourt Sculpture Garden (weather permitting), Phila. Museum of Art. 215-763-8100. (Wednesdays)

## THURSDAY

3

**Waterfront Sessions Live Music Series: CRUISR with Former Belle (Solo).** 6:30-9:30 p.m. Spruce Street Harbor Park. 215-922-2FUN.

10

**Israel Scouts Friendship Caravan.** Performance for all ages. Shows at 9:30 a.m. & 12:45 p.m. KleinLife: NE Phila. 215-698-7300.

17

**AARP Safe Driving Course.** Two-day refresher. 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Register: 215-546-5879. (Continues Aug. 18) \$

24

**Waterfront Sessions Live Music Series: Derrick Hodge.** 6:30-9:30 p.m. Spruce Street Harbor Park. 215-922-2FUN.

31

**Waterfront Sessions Live Music Series: West Philadelphia Orchestra.** 6:30-9:30 p.m. Spruce Street Harbor Park. 215-922-2FUN.

## FRIDAY

4

**Smooth Jazz Summer Nights: Fourplay.** 7:30-9:30 p.m. Great Plaza at Penn's Landing. 215-922-2FUN.

11

**Israel Scouts Friendship Caravan.** Song & dance program. Lunch: 11:30 a.m. Show: 12:15 p.m. KleinLife: Center City. 215-832-0539.  
**National Book Loves Day.** Bring your favorite book for discussion. 1 p.m. Center in the Park. 215-848-7722.

18

**Ballet Performance.** Presented by Olga's Ballet School. 10:30 a.m. KleinLife: NE Phila. 215-698-7300.  
**Bariatric Surgery Information Session.** Options for when your weight threatens your health. 8-9:30 a.m. Nazareth Hospital, Marian B Conference Room. Register: 855-537-7968.

25

**Smooth Jazz Summer Nights: Lin Roundtree.** 7:30-9:30 p.m. Great Plaza at Penn's Landing. 215-922-2FUN.

## SATURDAY

5

**Delaware Opera Company Presents: "La Boheme"** by Puccini. Bittersweet tale of friendship & young love. Sung in Italian with English subtitles. 8 p.m. Venice Island Performing Arts & Recreation Center. 215-725-4171. (Aug. 9 at 8 p.m. & Aug. 13 at 3 p.m.) \$

12

**Community Health Fair.** Free health screenings: HIV/STD, blood pressure & diabetes. Food, music, giveaways & children's activities. 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Home Health Care Plus. 215-474-2273.  
**Festival of India.** 1-7 p.m. Great Plaza at Penn's Landing. 215-922-2FUN.

19

**High Seas Saturday.** Pirates & sailors land for the annual swash-buckling spectacle. New this year: The Schooner Northwind will offer one-hour sails of the Delaware. See the fort as the British did. 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Fort Mifflin on the Delaware. 215-685-4167. \$

26

**Family Tour: Fairmount Water Works.** Learn about the grounds outside of this historic site, including Fishway Dam. Guided orientation of "Water in Our World" & short film about the building's role in Philly's history. 1 p.m. Presented by Let's Go Outdoors. Register: 866-878-3595.

## Milestones

Events that end with a \$ require an entrance fee or advance ticket purchase. Events that are free may request a donation or offer items for sale. Please call the number listed for information on pricing or other questions about an event.

Send your calendar items to:

ATTN: Calendar Editor  
PCA Communications Department  
642 North Broad Street  
Philadelphia, PA 19130-3409  
Phone: 215-765-9000, ext 5081  
Fax: 215-765-9066  
Email: acolombo@pcaphl.org

## In Season

# Variations on classic gazpacho

Gazpacho, a cold soup from the Andalusia region of Spain, is typically made with tomatoes, cucumber, garlic, vinegar, olive oil and stale bread. Gazpacho can be a cool, refreshing dish to enjoy in the summer. Here is a classic recipe with some unique variations that incorporate fruit and other Pennsylvania-grown produce. The cantaloupe, cucumbers, peaches, peppers and tomatoes used in these recipes are all in season this month.

### Classic Gazpacho

(Servings: 4 to 6)

#### Ingredients:

2 lbs. tomatoes, blanched, peeled, seeded and roughly chopped  
2 medium cucumbers, roughly chopped  
1 slice bread, 1 inch thick, crusts removed  
1 clove garlic, minced  
2 tbsp. sherry vinegar  
¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil, plus more for drizzling  
Salt, to taste

Sun gold tomatoes, halved, for garnish

#### Directions:

In a blender, combine the tomatoes, cucumbers, bread, garlic, vinegar, olive oil and purée on high speed until smooth. Strain the gazpacho through a fine sieve over a large bowl; season with salt. Chill in the refrigerator for at least 2 hours before serving.

Divide gazpacho among 6 chilled bowls. Drizzle with olive oil and garnish with sun gold tomatoes. (Note: Gazpacho can be made a day ahead, covered and chilled.)



iStock

### Green Grape and Cucumber Gazpacho

(Servings: 4 to 6)

#### Ingredients:

4 medium cucumbers  
2 lbs. seedless green grapes  
2 slices of stale white bread, 1 inch thick, crust removed  
½ cup skinned hazelnuts, toasted  
¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil, plus more for drizzling  
2 tbsp. sherry vinegar  
1 cup ice water  
Salt, to taste

Garnishes: finely chopped chives and a drizzle of olive oil

#### Directions:

Combine all ingredients in a blender and purée. Strain through a fine sieve; garnish as indicated (if desired).

### Roasted Red Pepper Gazpacho

(Servings: 4 to 6)

#### Ingredients:

1 slice bread, 1-inch-thick, crusts removed  
2 medium cucumbers  
2 lbs. tomatoes  
2 roasted red peppers, skinned and seeded

1 clove garlic  
2 tbsp. sherry vinegar  
¼-½ cup olive oil  
Salt, to taste

Garnishes: Sliced basil and a drizzle of olive oil

#### Directions:

Combine all ingredients in a blender and purée. Strain through a fine sieve; garnish as indicated (if desired).

### Peach and Cantaloupe Gazpacho

(Servings: 4 to 6)

#### Ingredients:

2 lbs. peaches  
2 medium cucumbers  
2 cups chopped cantaloupe  
1 cup slivered almonds  
1 cup toasted bread cubes  
1 clove garlic  
2 tbsp. red wine vinegar  
Salt, to taste

Garnishes: Slivered almonds with mint leaves

#### Directions:

Combine all ingredients in a blender and purée. Strain through a fine sieve; garnish as indicated (if desired).

Source: *The Tasting Table Test Kitchen*

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## Immigrants

• continued from page 4

stakeholders from these communities to share information and ideas for serving elders.

Lawrence coordinates the meetings for this effort, called the African and Caribbean Elders Initiative.

### Keeping the faith

One of PCA's most effective modes of outreach to immigrant groups like those from Africa and the Caribbean happens through alliances with faith institutions. Community Relations' Lawrence collaborates with houses of worship and faith leaders from varying denominations to disseminate information to immigrant and other minority elders to help them age well.

Many Philadelphia immigrants find their second home at their churches, mosques and other faith institutions. "Houses of worship embody faith for living and healing and are a very strong part of immigrant traditions," Lawrence says. "They are safe havens where everybody is welcome. People come not only to worship but for socializing and fellowship. They feel secure there."

Often gravitating to nearby houses of worship that their fellow immigrants also attend, these elders enjoy connecting with those who share their language and culture. Their faith institutions offer one of the most effective ways to reach them. It is not only recent immigrants but also more established populations who remain in need of PCA outreach, Lawrence says: "Many of the elders stay at home taking care of their grandchildren while their children are off working. They are extremely isolated and have not surmounted cultural and language barriers. They're not

confident ... catching a bus to go somewhere, or they may not have applied for SEPTA senior ID or Shared Ride due to language or documentation challenges. But they will ride in the church van or go with their families to worship."

Through PCA's Clergy-Aging Interfaith Coalition, which Lawrence coordinates, "We reach out to congregations," she says. "We build close relationships with faith institutions and explore better ways of meeting the needs of Philadelphia's often invisible elders." Health and wellness are a major focus. Lawrence sends a biannual newsletter to faith leaders featuring updates and information on aging and critical programs for seniors. PCA also sponsors a biannual Clergy & Seniors Day, organized by the agency's Clergy-Aging Interfaith Coalition, at which attendees learn about aging resources and hear from experts on aging issues.

Through all PCA's collaboration and outreach efforts, immigrant elders "are discovering us, and we're discovering them," Lawrence says. "It's all grassroots. We go out to where they are, and it's opened many doors."

Contact Marcia Z. Siegal at [msiegal@pcaphl.org](mailto:msiegal@pcaphl.org).

PCA's Community Relations Department responds to requests for participation in community health fairs and other events, including many held in ethnic and minority communities and faith institutions. To request PCA participation in your event, contact Wanda Mitchell at 216-765-9000, ext. 5340, or [wmitchell@pcaphl.org](mailto:wmitchell@pcaphl.org); or Kim Lawrence, community relations supervisor, at ext. 5345 or [klawrence@pcaphl.org](mailto:klawrence@pcaphl.org).

## PCA's language services for seniors

Philadelphia Corporation for Aging (PCA) offers language interpretation and translation services at no cost to non-English-speaking seniors in Philadelphia. For more information about PCA's outreach to immigrant communities, see story on page 4.

The PCA Helpline at 215-765-9040 offers English and Spanish options. PCA also contracts with an on-call language interpretation service that enables communication in more than 140 languages. The agency maintains telephone lines in: Chinese: 215-399-4944; Hindi: 215-399-4943; Khmer: 215-399-4940; Korean: 215-399-4941; and Vietnamese: 215-399-4942.

PCA's website, [pcaCares.org](http://pcaCares.org), offers automatic translation into 17 languages: Arabic, Chinese (Cantonese and Mandarin), Dutch, French, Greek, Hindi, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Polish, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish and Swedish. To translate text, click on the down arrow next to "English" that appears at the top of every page. A drop-down menu with the languages will appear. Click on the desired language and all website text will then be translated.

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Skin care	<input type="checkbox"/>
Light	<input type="checkbox"/>
Moderate	<input type="checkbox"/>
Heavy	<input type="checkbox"/>

M

## Multicultural Philly

# Finding her new 'family' involved lessons in survival, kindness and love

By Tania D. O'Neill

READER  
SUBMISSION

When I arrived in New York City from Europe on a U.S. steamship after World War II, I'd already learned fear and terror, but I'd also learned kindness and love. These things come in many forms and, of course, being a child of 5 1/2, I was very lucky to have had both my parents throughout the travails of the many close calls and escapes from injury, separation or death we had experienced while fleeing from both the Soviet-Russian murdering invasion and the Nazi intruders as we scrambled to retreat from my homeland in Eastern Europe.

But what does a child know? Fortunately, having my parents with me had provided me with a sense of safety, even after the time when I was not yet 3 and we and all the other passengers – refugees – on the last train from who-knows-where all ran from the train to try

to hide because we were being strafed, or shot at, by British fighter planes. Being so young at the time, I did not consciously remember that event later in life, but when a sudden sonic boom sounded when I was 18 and sitting at a school desk, I found myself under the desk before I even realized what it was I'd reacted to!

But onboard the steamer, I did not yet realize the roles other people can play in one's life. One day, a man I'd previously noticed on the ship, whom I'd naturally greeted, smiled at me. On that ship, he alone – as always – wore white clothes with a bandana around his neck, but as a child, I did not find that strange. I smiled and greeted him, and he extended his arm, holding something out to me. Taking it, I went to show my mother. It was an orange! Wow – what a gift! We refugees hadn't seen an orange since before the war began.

The man found me nearly every day after that and each time gave me an orange. I had

not noticed, but Mother said, years later, that he did not give fruit to any of the other children. I remember that man and his broad smile. He always smiled to me, was very kind to me, and although it did not matter to me, I remember he was a black man, the first one I had ever seen. Later, I was told that his white clothing meant he was a cook on the ship.

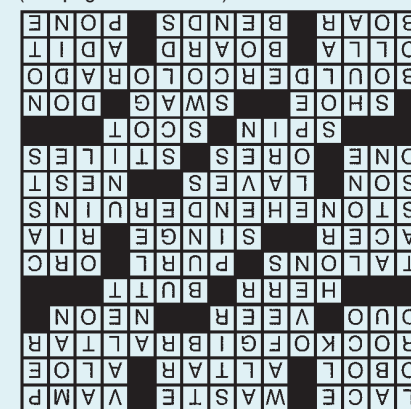
Soon after our arrival in the United States, my family moved to Philadelphia. One of my first American friends, who taught me to play jacks, was a black girl from the neighborhood (at the time, we said "Negro") who was my age. It was natural that we played together.

Today, I live in the multi-ethnic East Oak Lane area, with the best neighbors and community around me. I'm glad my Ukrainian parents taught me to judge people by their actions and principles rather than their superficial differences. That's what makes for true "family" – and good community, in the "family of mankind."

*Tania D. O'Neill is a retired medical assistant and technician who studies her Ukrainian heritage and culture, especially embroidery. She does comparative studies of Ukrainian designs with those from around the world, especially the Far East.*

## Crossword puzzle solution

(See page 19 for clues.)



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## Bowmaker

• continued from page 1

In 1987, Shaak spent time with master bowmakers in Belgium. Upon returning to the United States, she worked at Vintage Instruments in downtown Philadelphia.

### *There are some 240 steps in making a bow, and it takes about 70 hours.*

Chance and convenience brought Shaak to the site that would become Mount Airy Violins & Bows at 6665 Germantown Ave. in 2003. Her daughter, Juliana, then 11, and son, Gabe, then 9, were attending Project Learn Cooperative School in Mount Airy when a creaky building a half-block away became available. "It used to be Maude's Curiosity Shop," Shaak recalls. "A number of people had inquired about buying it, but Maude, an older woman, decided that she wanted it to be a violin shop." And that's what it became.

Shaak's shop is a sensual delight alive with the scent of woods whose colors range from honey to brandy. The store sells violins, violas and cellos and their bows; offers instrument rentals; and provides restoration and maintenance services. Shaak's clients have included internationally renowned cello player Camden Shaw of the Dover Quartet and the late jazz violinist John Blake Jr.

Shaak is mindful of the environmental and workers' rights issues related to the materials she uses. She has begun experimenting with maple as an alternative to ebony, which is endangered and may be banned. She also uses silver instead of gold for the metal parts of bows, not only because it cuts costs but also because of the wretched conditions in which some gold miners labor. "I make a traveling bow that has no ivory, ebony, black oyster shells or other items that might be flagged at an international border crossing," she says.

Shaak also strives to address the needs of the community around her. "It's easy to live in a shoebox in this craft, but part of my mission is to respond to the wider community," she says. For that reason, the shop offers a rental program for students who may not be able to afford to buy an instrument. Quality



Courtesy: Mount Airy Violins & Bows

Quality bows can range in cost from hundreds to thousands of dollars.

bows alone generally start at \$350 to \$400, Shaak notes, and handmade bows may cost thousands of dollars. Shaak also has begun doing outreach at Masterman School, where she replaces strings and un-sticks pegs at no charge. In addition, she re-hairs bows at Philadelphia High School for the Creative and Performing Arts for minimal cost.

The shop also supports local musicians by holding "works-in-progress soirees" at which musicians present pieces they're compos-

ing. The events are open to the public, and the musicians receive all the proceeds from a free-will offering.

For any artist or craftsman, Shaak says, the question boils down to this: "How are you going to make a mark in the world? How are you going to do something memorable?"

*Constance Garcia-Barrio is a freelance writer and author of a novel based on African-American history in Philadelphia.*

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## Multicultural Philly

# 'Outsider' volunteers for Haiti

By Constance Garcia-Barrio

A revolution with guns and machetes more than 200 years ago gave birth to the Republic of Haiti. Today, nonviolent strategists including volunteer Ray Torres, 65, have become midwives to a new well-being in the Caribbean nation. In 1994, with years of social activism under his belt, Torres joined a delegation from the First United Methodist Church of Germantown (FUMCOG) as a volunteer to aid Fondwa, a village in southern Haiti.

Torres' past social justice work had led him to do everything from peeling potatoes to defying the Pentagon. In December 1978, Torres and other peace activists chained themselves to the doors of the Pentagon to protest the U.S. production of nuclear weapons. A guard had to climb in a window, fetch bolt cutters and cut the protesters loose. Police arrested 11 people, including Torres, but later dropped the charges.

Another time in the '70s, Torres and some associates planned to shadow Chilean secret agents who were in the United States during the infamous dictatorship of Chilean ruler Augusto Pinochet. Torres and his group aimed to protect Chilean exiles living in Washington, D.C. When the Washington Post broke the story about the group and blew the agents' cover, the latter left the country, ending the threat to the Chilean nationals.

Torres, a retired psychiatric social worker, has also run a soup kitchen – a post from which he gained his potato-peeling experience, advocated for peace in war-torn Nicaragua, kept tabs on Pennsylvania's nuclear reactors and launched a credit union in one of West Philadelphia's poorer neighborhoods.

### 'An outsider's perspective'

Now Torres uses his knowledge as a volunteer for Haiti. He felt drawn by the country's poverty and "outsider" status. "Since it threw off slavery and won independence, many nations have treated Haiti as a threat and an outsider," says Torres, who co-chairs FUMCOG's Haiti Committee. "But in a way, my roots give me an outsider's perspective."

Born in Mexico City, Torres lived there with his parents until age 3. His father, who was from Mexico, taught medicine at the National Autonomous University of Mexico,



Courtesy: Ray Torres

**Ray Torres (right) worked with Haitian leader Heraldo Beauvais as part of his volunteer efforts in Fondwa, Haiti.**

where Torres' mother, who hailed from suburban Philadelphia, had gone to study languages. When she decided to return home, she had to run a gauntlet of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement requirements to bring Torres and his three sisters with her. Maybe his mother's struggles deepened Torres's sympathy for Haitian refugees fleeing to the United States.

"Many Haitians fled their homeland in leaky boats with little food and water, but if they reached Miami, U.S. Immigration returned them to Haiti," Torres says.

As a teen living in Cheltenham, Torres further developed a sense of social justice thanks to his neighbor, nonviolent activist Richard Taylor. Taylor gave Torres a copy of Gandhi's autobiography and works by Martin Luther King Jr. and took him to a meeting in Philadelphia where King talked about the Poor People's Campaign, a 1968 effort to gain economic justice for disadvantaged people in America. "It was the last time Dr. King visited Philadelphia," Torres says.

### A vision for change

Led by the vision of "Father Joseph" Philippe, a Haitian Catholic priest and the subject of a documentary film, Torres became a key member of a group that helped to raise money to start a bank in Fondwa called Fonkoze. "The bank provides micro-loans to the organized poor in Fondwa," Torres says. "Fonkoze began with one office and three employees and has grown to 46 branches nationwide and 230,000 members."

• continued on page 19



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## Asian Arts

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care, and even fresh food available to many African-Americans.

Tension between black Americans and Asian-Americans hit a flashpoint after the 1992 verdict that acquitted four Los Angeles police officers in the beating of African-American motorist Rodney King. In the riots that followed, some blacks in Los Angeles looted and burned businesses owned by Koreans, causing millions of dollars in damage. After-shocks of the verdict swept the country and led to demonstrations, some of them violent, in cities including New York City and Newark, New Jersey. Some communities who saw the potential for clashes between Asians and blacks responded with speeches, forums and television ads urging interracial harmony. The Painted Bride created AAI to reach hearts and minds in Philadelphia through the warm, direct language of paintings, plays, photography, puppet shows and other art forms.

AAI's forthright programs and sometimes-unusual exhibits inform, challenge and entertain. One painting currently in the gallery includes a white man above the bust of an attractive woman of color with the words, "She had always imagined herself the wife of a white man." Another artist uses a street as a canvas to paint large, fanciful flowers. "We give artists of different ages, backgrounds and ethnicities a platform to reach the public," said Julia Shaw, director of development and communications at AAI. "Visitors to our gallery gain a broad perspective."



Paola Nogueiras

**An onlooker views artwork at Asian Arts Initiative in Center City, whose current exhibit looks at interracial relationships.**

It seems impossible to measure to what degree AAI has cooled conflicts and increased understanding between blacks and Asians, but those goals remain critical to the center's programs. A case in point was "Loving Blackness," an exhibit AAI presented earlier this year. "More than 20 artists looked at tension and solidarity between and among our communities through painting, photography, sculpture and video," Shaw said, noting that "ongoing instances of systemic injustice" give the issues continuing relevance.

A current exhibit, "A More Perfect Union: Celebrating the 50th Anniversary of Loving v.

Virginia," looks at interracial relationships. It includes audio and video in which interracial couples talk about issues such as how family members have reacted to their relationships and how the public has sometimes felt free to chime in. For instance, one woman of color wrote a poem called "I Am Not the Nanny" that she wrote after a stranger assumed that the fair-skinned little girl with her was the child of an employer rather than her own daughter. "A More Perfect Union" will be on display through August 25.

Inclusiveness tops AAI's agenda, and its location puts the center in a unique position

to promote that value. AAI's neighbor on one side is the Sunday Breakfast Rescue Mission, a shelter for homeless men. Artist Leroy Johnson, 80, winner of a Pew Fellowship for the Arts, gives weekly drawing classes at the shelter under the auspices of AAI. On the other hand, luxury lofts also have sprouted nearby. AAI's Pearl Street Project aims to transform the alley that runs behind the center by painting the street and sidewalk – an effort in which neighbors can take part. "The Pearl Street program began as a place for inclusive dialogue between the diverse neighbors that live nearby," Shaw said.

To further the goal of building community and creating inclusiveness, AAI has developed programs for a range of ages. In May, the group held a puppet show, "East Meets West," that featured different kinds of puppets from both Asian and Western traditions. "The medium of dolls or puppets reaches across ages and cultures and helps communities find one another in peace," Shaw said. AAI offers a sliding scale of payment for shows to help attract the broadest possible audience.

AAI hosts plays, concerts, workshops and more. The Pearl Street Block Party, which is open to the public, will take place Saturday, October 7, from 1-5 p.m. "This event will feature performances, art-making and community connection," Shaw said. For information about upcoming events, call 216-557-0455 or go to [AsianArtsInitiative.org](http://AsianArtsInitiative.org).

*Constance Garcia-Barrio is a freelance writer and author of a novel based on African-American history in Philadelphia.*

## Chinatown: Philadelphia's ancient and thriving gem

Asian Arts Initiative, located in Chinatown North, looks to the future as it examines the diverse experiences of Asian-Americans and imagines and helps to bring about positive community change. But the roots of Philadelphia's Chinatown (New York, Boston, San Francisco and other cities also have Chinatowns) reach back to the mid-19th century, when Cantonese immigrants started businesses near Philadelphia's wharves. Lee Fong opened a laundry in the 900 block of Race Street in the late 1860s or early 1870s. Other laundries and restaurants followed. Chinatown grew slowly until the 1940s, when the post-World War II years saw a new wave of immigration.

The original plans for the area's urban re-

newal in the 1960s and 1970s – a wider expressway, a ball park, Market Street East, and later, the Pennsylvania Convention Center – would have sliced up Chinatown. Iconic sites like the Holy Redeemer Chinese Catholic Church and School at 915 Vine St., where mass is offered in Cantonese, Mandarin and English, would have been demolished.

Thanks to the activism of Cecilia Moy Yep, the daughter of a Cantonese father and a German mother, PennDOT and other agencies had to re-work their proposals. Moy Yep, who had grown up in Chinatown, was a widow with three young children when she first mounted a fight to preserve the area in 1966. She led a committee that lobbied politicians and mounted demonstrations to help

keep Chinatown whole. Moy Yep dubbed the battle "the Alamo of Chinatown," as she and her children remained in their house on the 800 block of Race Street while bulldozers flattened the homes of their former neighbors mere feet away. Moy Yep, a savvy businesswoman, continued working to strengthen the area over many years.

The core of today's Chinatown district lies between Vine Street to the north and Filbert Street to the south, and Eighth Street to the east and 12th Street to the west. Visitors can see the magnificent, 40-foot Friendship Gate at 10th and Arch streets; enjoy the annual Chinese New Year parade; and taste Cantonese, Japanese, Korean, Burmese, Vietnamese and other Asian cuisines in the neighbor-



G. Widman for Visit Philadelphia

hood's many restaurants. Bakery-cafes with light, flavorsome pastries; gift shops; acupuncture clinics; markets; and apothecaries where one can buy items like royal jelly tonic also help to make Chinatown one of Philadelphia's cultural gems.

## Don's Column

### Lessons derived from soda and roses



By Don Harrison

#### A few bucks

Before Big Pharma ate up all the corner druggists, there was a soda counter in every drugstore. That meant a big market for the soda jerk – the kid who sold the soda and ice cream. For a young person trying to earn a few bucks, the job was a natural fit.

A natural fit, that is, unless “Doc” (all pharmacists were known as “Doc”) caught you adding a little ice cream to your friends’ milkshakes.

For me, the need for spending money caused me to quit the track and cross-country teams. The coach was furious. “You must be a commie,” he sputtered. I never did learn how a kid’s political leanings were supposed to affect how fast he ran or how high he jumped; the Soviet entrants in the Olympics did OK, and presumably most of them, if not all, were commies.

#### Good-neighbor policy

I decided to send flowers this spring to my long-suffering wife (and caregiver), ordering them in advance from a responsible, reputable florist we’ve used before.

My mistake was picking Mother’s Day weekend.

An email reported the flowers had arrived at 11:40 a.m. that Saturday, but they were nowhere to be found. I phoned, and the florist’s swamped assistants graciously said that they’d send another, which they did.

The original package apparently had been left at the wrong house, because between 7 and 9 the next morning, it appeared miraculously at our front door.

Maybe, someday, we’ll learn what neighbor discovered the flowers and brought them to us, intact. Until then, this will have to do as an expression of our gratitude.

*Milestones Editor Emeritus Don Harrison served as deputy editor of the Daily News opinion pages and as an assistant managing editor and city editor of the Philadelphia Bulletin.*

## Haiti

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Torres not only helped Haiti’s economy; he also played a part in the country’s environmental health. In 1997, he co-led a delegation from Witness for Peace, a national grassroots organization of people committed to nonviolence, to lobby for proper disposal of toxic Philadelphia incinerator ash illegally dumped in Haiti. “We collected samples and held rallies,” he says. “It took years of lobbying, but finally the ash was removed and returned to the U.S.”

Among other obstacles, Haiti faces a “brain drain.” “Only 1 percent of Haitians attend college, and of that 1 percent, only 15 percent stay in Haiti,” Torres says. He served on the board of Partners in Progress, a U.S. nonprofit instrumental in establishing the University of Fondwa in 2004. The first Haitian university to focus on rural needs, the school offers degrees in agronomy, veterinary medicine and business administration.

Torres stepped forward again after the Haitian earthquake of 2010, which destroyed

much of what Phillipe had accomplished. “The earthquake hit Fondwa very hard,” he says. “It leveled a school and the university.” Torres worked with Haitian neighbors in Philadelphia to help rebuild the island nation. Committee members donated their own money and helped to raise additional funds to provide food, water and shelter.

Fondwa had just begun recovering from the earthquake when Hurricane Matthew struck in 2016. “The storm leveled many homes in Fondwa,” Torres says. “FUMCOG raised over \$20,000 to help in the rebuilding effort.”

Torres has felt great satisfaction in helping Fondwa. “Father Joseph’s vision of economic democracy in Haiti has motivated me to stay involved, and I’ve come to see him as the Martin Luther King of Haiti,” he says. Torres’ volunteer work also has led to an unexpected treasure: He met fellow FUMCOG member Eileen Gilkenson, now his wife of eight years, through their mutual interest in Haiti.

*Constance Garcia-Barrio is a freelance writer and author of a novel based on African-American history in Philadelphia.*

## Crossword

### At the quarry

#### Solution

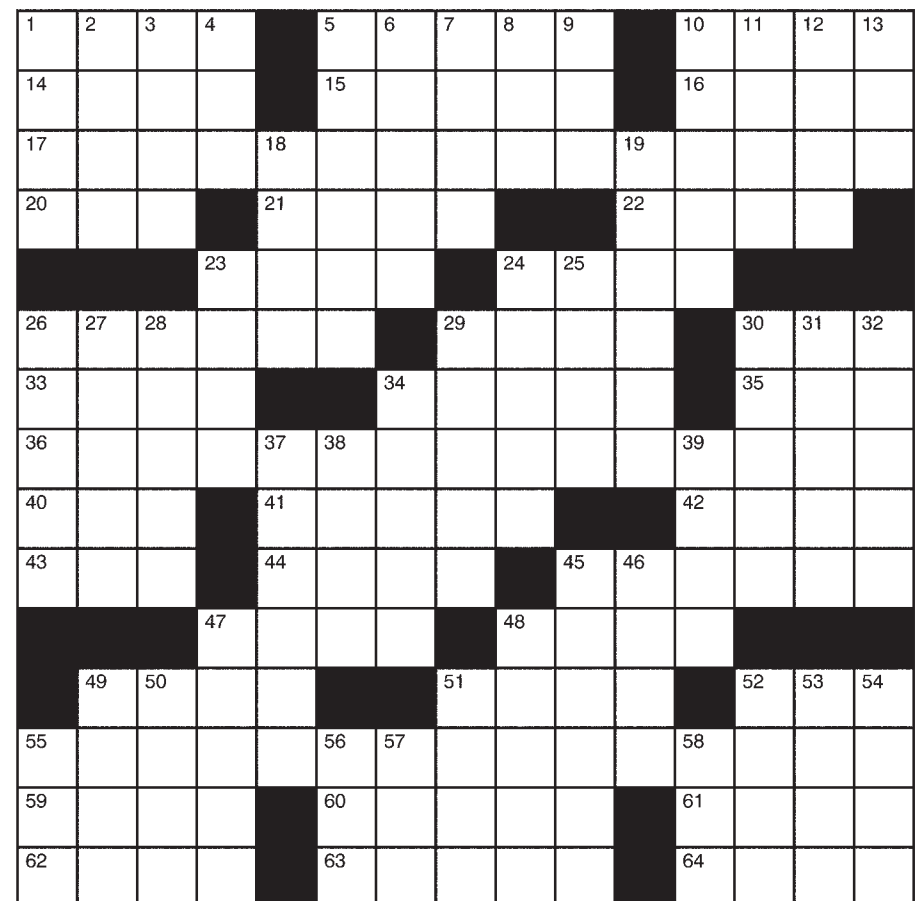
The solution can be found on page 14.

#### Across

- |                       |                          |                     |                         |
|-----------------------|--------------------------|---------------------|-------------------------|
| 1 Thrash              | 23 Man from Munich       | 40 Dombey and       | 51 Booty                |
| 5 Make poor use of    | 24 Target                | _____               | 52 Barcelona bigwig     |
| 10 Flirt              | 25 Claws                 | 41 Rinses           | 55 Western college town |
| 14 Greek coin         | 29 Murmuring sound       | 42 Snug abode       | 59 Earthen jar          |
| 15 _____ boys         | 30 Grampus               | 43 Purse item       | 60 Governing body       |
| 16 Century plant      | 33 Maple tree genus      | 44 Iron _____       | 61 Mine passage         |
| 17 Symbol of strength | 34 Burn                  | 45 Sets of steps    | 62 Farm animal          |
| 20 Pair               | 35 Inlet                 | 47 Motor trip       | 63 Curves               |
| 21 Turn aside         | 36 English tourist mecca | 48 Culloden fighter | 64 Cornbread            |
| 22 Type of light      |                          | 49 Kind of horn     |                         |

#### Down

- |                          |                      |                      |                    |
|--------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|--------------------|
| 1 _____ Jim              | 11 Choir singer      | 29 Years             | 48 Weapon          |
| 2 Leigh Hunt hero        | 12 Complain          | 30 Bay window        | 49 Concert number  |
| 3 Palm tree              | 13 For each          | 31 Lave              | 50 Oahu attraction |
| 4 Game animal            | 18 Heating apparatus | 32 Throws            | 51 Scrutinize      |
| 5 Thin biscuits          | 19 Hunting trophy    | 34 _____ seas        | 52 Wall decoration |
| 6 Creator of Ragged Dick | 23 Band instrument   | 37 Ran away          | 53 Pagan deity     |
| 7 Agitate                | 24 Stoppers          | 38 Mata _____        | 54 Communication   |
| 8 Actor Hunter           | 25 Yen               | 39 Military group    | 55 Hairstyle       |
| 9 Blunder                | 26 Italian poet      | 45 Burns             | 56 Decline         |
| 10 Attendant             | 27 Obey              | 46 Japanese immortal | 57 Richard _____   |
|                          | 28 Sierra _____      | 47 _____ heat        | 58 Talk            |





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