



CIGAR BOX BULLETIN

Retired Men's Association of Greenwich, Inc.

60 Years of Fellowship and Community Service
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Here are the volunteers who publish this Bulletin each week for your enjoyment. **Editor/Chairman:** Chet Risio. **Scribes:** Av Rivel, Gran Burgess, Kurt Schaffir, Arnold Gordon, Ed Farrell, Gerry Lessuk, Steve Elliot, and George Stockbridge, Emeritus. **Archivist:** Harold Frost. **Format and Layout:** Gene Schwartz, Jack Cuff, and Andrzej Mazurek. **Reproduction/Distribution:** Chet Risio.

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September 6, 2017

President DON CONWAY brought the assembled members to their feet, introducing BOB BISHOP as pledge leader, followed by TOM HEALY who, with GEORGE UBOGY on the keys, led the singing, starting with America, followed by an upbeat rendition of Hey Look Me Over! and Oklahoma!

He then, assuming the role of Corresponding Secretary, amused us with a story of how, making his choice among women offering looks, financial knowhow and other gifts, a man found physical appeal the most compelling.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

1. RUSS HARDEN reminded us about the RMA picnic next week, and TAD LARRABEE gave us advance notice about the RMA luncheon/dinner in November.
2. ERV PORTER called our attention to the Greenwich Old Timers Athletic Association's Charity Golf Tournament on September 11. For information call the Griff Harris golf course on 869-2900.
3. More drivers are needed for Call-A-Ride. On a personal note, JOHN FEBLES (jfebles13@gmail.com) is looking for a patent attorney. In addition, he told us that the Salvation Army needs a volunteer to serve as coordinator for its Kettle Drum program to be set up at the ACME Riverside Commons, for the weekends between Thanksgiving and Christmas.

COMMITTEES

VISITING: DON CONWAY commented that we miss CHUCK STANDARD'S report on members under doctors' care. He asked for a volunteer to fill Chuck's shoes

PROGRAM: JOEL BLUMBERG reminded us that our speaker will be **Dr. Vincent DeVita**, long-time Director of the National Cancer Institute (see below).

Next week's speaker, HORST TEBBE told us, will be **Captain Nina Willner** who will speak on her Army Intelligence experience during the Cold War.

MEMBERSHIP: HORST TEBBE reported attendance by 110 members and four guests. The guests are Jim Steen, guest of BOB ROBINS; Andy Holmes, guest of JAY SCHONDORF; Bill Burke, guest of FRANK SCARPA; and Al Kestenbaum, guest of PETER ARTURI. We serenaded **two birthday boys:** JERRY SCHWENDEMAN, 78, and FRED GOLDSTEIN, 70.

VOLUNTEERS: JOHN FEBLES reported 311 outside volunteer hours by 104 members, and 34 inside hours by 22 members. Seventy-five hours -- the highest for the week -- were reported by MIKE AMOROSO.

SPECIAL EVENTS: "Oklahoma" at Goodspeed on September 21 is waitlisted. ABBEY SMOLER: 203-531-0236. Details below.

THE SCOREBOARD

BRIDGE: PETER STERN did double duty. He reported that the bridge group had 8 players. KURT SCHAFFIR was first with 4750, JOHN FEBLES second with 4110, and RON FRIEDMAN third with 3560.

GOLF: On golf he reported that 19 members played – 16 did 18 holes and 3 did 9. ROS CURTIS was closest to the pin on the 7th, JOHN AWDZIEWICZ was closest on the 15th, and JOHN KNIGHT hit the longest drive on the 17th. Four players beat 100, notably including JAY SCHONDORF with 94. KEATING HAGMANN made an Eagle on the 9th. Next week's captain will be MIKE RYAN.

HEARTS: TOM HEALY reported 8 Hearts players. PETER BERG (who plays everything) won Game 1 on Table 1, and JACK SWEGER won Game 2. On Table 2 TOM HEALY won both Game 1 and Game 2.

TODAY'S SPEAKER

Cancer remains the second most common cause of death in the U.S. **Dr. Vincent DeVita** has been at the forefront of cancer treatment and research since the 1960's. He was appointed in 1980 by President Jimmy Carter to be the Director of the National Cancer Institute of the NIH, and was medical director of the Yale Cancer Center.

He provided a unique perspective on the history of cancer research, the people involved, and the institutions which supported it. The great and continuing level of work has been supported by the War-on-Cancer Act of Congress which provides funding through the NIH.

Dr. DeVita focused on Hodgkin's Disease as an example of the level of research work required and the level of success achieved – an increase in the cure rate from a few

percent to over 70 percent. There have been great advances in the practice of oncology overall – a 26 percent reduction in the mortality rate -- and in the emergence of new technology.

This is, of course, too complex a subject to be effectively covered in a brief speech. Dr. DeVita called our attention to the book “The Death of Cancer,” recently completed by his daughter, Dr. Elizabeth DeVita Raeburn, which could help us get a better overall understanding.

SPECIAL EVENTS

The Events are open to all members, spouses, candidates and guests. For reservations contact trip coordinators ABBEY SMOLER (203-531-0236) and MIKE FERRARESE (203-554-0678). Checks for payment are to be made out to the RMA, and must be received within two (2) weeks following the making of the reservations or the reservations will be cancelled.

GOODSPEED OPERA HOUSE. The musical, “Oklahoma”, September 21, 2017. Lunch; Gelston House Cost; \$120p/p. Bus departs St. Catherine’s 9:45 am. Status: Wait listed

NEXT WEEK’S SPEAKER

Capt. **Nina Willner**, Army Intelligence. “Forty Autumns, a Tale of Family, the Iron Curtain, and Spycraft”

Scribe: KURT SCHAFFIR

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Member Profile of FRANK J. SCARPA

This is the sixteenth in a series of Member Profiles intended to allow members to get to know one another beyond a face and a name tag.

I was born in Derby, Connecticut—six weeks before Pearl Harbor—to parents who were themselves children of Italian immigrants, I was educated in the local parochial school and was an avid participant in the Boy Scouts and Little League baseball. My father, who was a small business owner, had his sights set on my attending Fairfield Prep. He envisioned a career as a CPA for me, but I avidly wanted to become a jet pilot. The teen-age onset of myopia brought me back to reality and re-set my goals toward a future as a physician.

In 1959, I attended the College of the Holy Cross as one of 90 pre-medical students. Our ranks were whittled down to 30 by the time of graduation. Inspired by my freshman honors literature class, where we read 30 books in the first semester, my lifelong appetite for reading was turbo-charged. Guest lectures by such luminaries as Robert Frost, Tom Dooley, William F. Buckley and Martin Luther King, Jr. were inspirational. But I began to chafe at the bitter Worcester winters and the dullness of dorm life. So, when the opportunity to spend my junior year abroad at the University of Vienna arose, I jumped at it. (Five years of German language study had prepared me for this.) Realizing that my medical school acceptances might be jeopardized by this “unorthodox” path, I nevertheless enriched my spirit by frequent trips to the symphony, opera, theater and museums and the liberal use of weekends and holidays to see a lot of Europe. Prior to that year, I had never been outside the northeastern U.S.!

Retrospectively, it seems that this departure from the “usual” route to medical school somehow facilitated my acceptance by the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine in 1963. During those next four years, I married Lorraine (nee) Coogan and decided to pursue a career in surgery. Hopkins allowed me to stay on for two years after graduation as an intern and assistant resident.

But, the Vietnam War had heated up after the 1968 Tet Offensive, and the U.S. Army Medical Corps claimed me in 1969. While giving out cigars at Ft. Campbell, Kentucky upon the birth of our first child, I was handed my orders for a Southeast Asian tour of duty. Most of 1970 was spent there—first as a junior surgeon at the 19th Field Hospital in the Central Highlands, then as Brigade Surgeon for the 196th Light Infantry Brigade south of Danang. Both assignments required a lot of time in helicopters, either accompanying seriously wounded soldiers or checking up on other doctors at battalion “fire bases”. (These were indeed “life perspective changing” experiences.*) After a final six months at the U.S. Army Hospital at West Point, my surgical training was completed in 4 years at Vanderbilt University Hospital in Nashville.

We returned to Connecticut in 1975 and eventually landed in Greenwich in the early '80s, joining the Greenwich Surgical Group in the practice of general and vascular surgery. Two more children had arrived by then, and they all attended Greenwich public schools. Lorraine worked in NYC and eventually started her own business in Fairfield county. I became somewhat involved in “organized medicine” and served as president of the Fairfield County Medical Association and the Connecticut Chapter of the American College of Surgeons, and Councilor of the Connecticut State Medical Society and Delegate to the AMA. In Greenwich, volunteering impulses were satisfied by service on the boards of GEMS, the Greenwich Symphony, the Nathaniel Witherell and the Greenwich Old Timers.



Frank in Vietnam



On the way to Ground Zero on 9/11

Starting in the '90s, I did short term service in surgery and medical care delivery in Croatia, Turkey, Haiti, Bolivia and India--each under the aegis of different altruistic organizations.

On the morning of 9/11/01, while dazed patients sat in my waiting room absorbing the news, I received call from Americares. They were looking for physician volunteers to travel by helicopter to the World Trade Center site.

I immediately volunteered to be of assistance, and then had all my afternoon office patients re-scheduled. I then went to the Greenwich Hospital Entrance, where I met with Drs. Doran and Wilkinson from the Greenwich Emergency Department. A Greenwich Police Car took us to Sikorsky Airport in Stratford and we boarded a helicopter already laden with supplies and flew to the Wall Street Heliport arriving there at 3:30 pm.

The scene was one of eerie silence, with ash coating the streets like snow and partially burned office papers wafting in the breeze like confetti.

We later learned that Tower #7 collapsed at that very time). But there were no "injured patients". After offloading the medical supplies, the three of us walked the local barricades. A few more doctors (from the Danbury area) had arrived on another Blackhawk. Since there was literally nothing useful for us to do, we reboarded our helicopter at 7:30, after donating our fire-department grade filter masks to some policemen who had to man the barricades and be exposed to the ash. Our pilot flew us over the Statue of Liberty and over the smoldering ruins and back to Sikorsky. On our drive home, for some reason, the three of us did not want to turn on the radio.

After retirement in 2005, I served for a while as a Commissioner of the Office of the State Medical Examiner and as a member of Greenwich Hospital's Institutional Review Board. We purchased a "winter home" in Naples, Florida, where we have made many new friends. In Naples, our volunteer activities are taken up by the Immokalee Foundation (where we mentor school students from a disadvantaged community) and Moms Demand Action, working for sensible gun legislation. Our three children and seven grandchildren live in California and Washington State. Much of our travel involves visiting them. I have very much enjoyed being a member of the RMA, discovering new friends and playing golf with them and with the Griff Harris Men's Golf Club and with the Seniors at Westchester Country Club.

Note: When asked to enlarge on “life perspective changing experiences” Frank wrote this:

“War” is an abstract concept

It remains so, no matter how many books one reads or movies one sees. To actually be in a place where people’s intent is to kill one another is transformative. That comes to roost when one realizes that he, himself, is the object of some stranger’s desire to kill. (Thirty physicians died in Vietnam, most of them in helicopter crashes.) On my second day “in country” a Navy jet was dropping bombs on a rice paddy as my helicopter flew overhead. Although I had cared for a lot of gunshot victims in Baltimore, that was a matter of “them shooting them”. Each death certificate in Vietnam required me to sign 16 copies. Many of those body bags held the corpses of American boys of 20 years or less. In summary, the sheer wastefulness, arbitrariness and grisliness bore little resemblance to the worst ghetto violence in a large American city. Yet, one “got used to it.” And the devastation wreaked upon the Vietnamese people was beyond sad. When I returned home just before Christmas of 1970, I felt that I had landed in Paradise. And the contrast! Life in the U.S. went on as though nothing had been happening anywhere else—cocktails, leg of lamb, arugula salad and music everywhere. I silently sneered at the inattentiveness of the Comfortable Set. But I have been complicit in savoring it every day since.