



Age does not diminish the extreme disappointment of having a scoop of ice cream fall from the cone. – Jim Feibig

Colleen Checks In

Report on BAH's Second Annual Meeting

By Colleen Harper

BAH Program Manager

The Squalicum Boathouse was a lovely setting for the Annual Members meeting June 20th. Steve Morris, treasurer and current acting chair of the Leadership Council, gave a report on the state of the organization to 33 members in attendance.

Between June 1st 2017 and June 1st 2018, Bellingham At Home fulfilled 600 member requests for assistance. Our volunteers drove members to doctor appointments, shopping and social outings. Members got help at home with leaky toilets, household chores, respite care, and companionship while recovering from surgery.

Members were able to take home contact sheets for their clusters. Call or email the office if you would like a copy sent to you.



Try Longevity Stick for exercise! BAH meeting attendees get the hang of it with trainer Bonnie Goss.

We closed the meeting with a Longevity Stick workshop hosted by Bonnie Goss. All who participated enjoyed the light exercises, and several agreed they would be attending more classes with Bonnie, Tuesday and Thursday mornings at BSAC from 8:15am-9:15am. The workshops are always free and taught in a spirit of healthfulness for all.

I look forward to watching Bellingham At Home grow over the next year as we introduce new leadership members Lynn DeFehr and Angela Mercy.

Together we are building something very exciting, and I am honored to be a part of it.

Volunteer of the Year

Kudos to Cat McIntyre, BAH's Outstanding Volunteer of the Year. LC member Lynn DeFehr presented the award, sponsored by the Whatcom Council on Aging, at the volunteer celebration dinner in May, first describing Cat without naming her. Cat sat there, nodding her head and thinking to herself how wonderful this person must be and how great all the BAH volunteers are, and then she heard her name.

"I was dumbfounded. I just stood up and blushed."

Cat works the Friday morning shift in the BAH office and, in between, makes herself useful to members who need a little help with everything from rides to hanging curtains to providing respite care to installing a new toilet seat.

"I live alone and I know it's not that you can't do most of these things yourself, it's just that sometimes it takes two pairs of hands."

Thanks, Cat, for lending yours.



Cat with her wall and her plaque.



Heads up!

**The next Volunteer Social has been scheduled for August 15
from 2-4 pm in Room 16.
Please plan to join us for an afternoon of fun with your fellow
volunteers – and, of course, treats.**

Information Fair

What's Next: Planning Ahead – Making Choices for Your Legacy & Health Care

Can we talk? Planning ahead for your future before something untoward or unexpected happens can provide peace of mind for not only you but your loved ones as well. The Bellingham Senior Activity Center will host this informative fair, which is free and open to the entire community, on Wednesday, August 22 from 9 am to 3 pm at BSAC.

You can expect:

- Presentations on palliative care, advance directives, family conversations, wills and legal issues, and end of life choices
- A workshop for those who want help completing their advance directive
- Tabling by various organizations and services in the community that assist with end of life planning

This event is one of four in the Whatcom Council on Aging's Health and Wellness Program, along with Housing Options as We Age, Medicare Awareness, and A Healthier You. For more information, visit www.wccoa.org or call 360-733-4030.

Hang on: We're Going from *Service* to *Help*. Here's Why

By Janet Simpson

You may have noticed a shift at BAH from talking about providing services to offering help. At the May Member Forum, there was quite a discussion about this. So what's going on? Your Leadership Council has made a conscious decision to reframe what we do.

Often when people talk about service, it's in the context of something you pay for—something you order, something you're entitled to, something you passively receive. And then you evaluate how good the service was. Organizations on a “fee for service” contract are paid a specific amount for each unit of service.

Once, when I had a professional electrician come to my home, I kept telling him how happy it made me to get the job done. He looked at me as if I were odd, as if that isn't the kind of thing you share with your electrician; he was just performing the service.

This approach is not what Bellingham At Home is striving for. We are a community of people helping other people; our volunteers help our members. We value that, and each other, but we don't attach a specific amount to any specific act of assistance. In the same way, we pay membership fees to support the entire organization. Members ask for what they need, and others try to meet that need: Each gives what they are able to and both benefit.

The members who request help have to assert themselves and say what they want. That isn't as easy as calling a company and hiring someone but the result can be far more rewarding. It's their task to set specifics such as dates and times and to be as clear as possible about what needs to be done. And when a volunteer comes to help, they do whatever they can to take part in the activity. Maybe that just means showing the volunteer what the work is, or being ready to be picked up at the stated time and having the address handy. Maybe it means working with the person—handing them tools or keeping track of instructions. It might mean being a full partner in the project. They pay the volunteer with appreciation, not money—and that volunteer considers him or herself well-paid. It's a mutually respectful interaction.

Along with getting the job done, there is a personal connection, a sense of community, maybe a new friend. Recently, for example, I needed people to be with me for a while after having anesthesia. I knew some of the people who helped me; some I was meeting for the first time. But in all cases, I felt safe, cared for, and nourished. That's not something you can pay for. Another time when I needed someone to help with a leaking faucet, it was fun to be able to problem solve, and feel success, together.

I'm so glad to be able to get help and assistance from the wonderful, warm volunteers from Bellingham At Home.

Go Paperless with Medicare

By Kate Birr

Are you tired of being deluged by mailings from Medicare, the kind that say "THIS IS NOT A BILL," or the annual “Medicare and You” handbook? I'm not saying that the information is not important, but I for one could do without all the paper. With a bit of digging, I discovered you can opt out of receiving hard copies. Although there's nothing on the Medicare Summary Notices that indicates it's possible to go paperless, I'm here to tell you that it *is*. You can also get the handbook electronically.

All of the information they send you is available on the Medicare website, but if you want to get out from under that raft of paper, you'll need to have an email account and an online account with Medicare. To set up the latter, have your Medicare card handy, go to <https://mymedicare.gov>, and click Create an Account. Once that's done, log in. On the home page you'll see a list of your current claims; you can refer to this at any time.

To stop the paper claim notices, go to **Account Services**, click **My Account** and then click **Email and Correspondence Settings**. There you can edit the Electronic Medicare Summary Notices. You'll be warned that it may take the bureaucracy a while to process your request to stop the paper, but eventually you'll start getting notices electronically. In the same section, you can also opt to receive the annual Medicare & You handbook as a PDF.

You can always request to go back to paper notices if this doesn't work for you.

As the government tells you on the My Medicare.gov Help page, "By getting the handbook electronically, you will help save millions of tax dollars in paper, printing and postage costs. You will have links to the most recent information to help you compare plans in your area. You can bookmark your electronic Handbook as a 'Favorite' for easy access."

On the secondary insurance front, the rules are different, but I managed to get them to stop the paper flow, too.

One of these days the only mail I'll get will be junk mail. Anyone know how to stop that?

Recommendations—Another Way to Contribute to BAH

Volunteering, donating money, taking on a leadership role, coming to events, calling in with ideas... These are all wonderful ways to contribute to the BAH community. But there's another way to take ownership of the organization that has your back: Recommending commercial service providers.

We've all suffered through second-rate services we've selected from ads online or in the yellow pages: the plumber who does shoddy work, the electrician who comes late, the pet groomer who left Fluffy looking so not. You wouldn't wish that on, well, a dog.

Much better to call the BAH office and ask for names of the stellar service providers your fellow members have recommended. Even better, help us maintain and expand that useful list so it's there when you need it—call in and share the names of people and companies that you know first-hand do first-rate work.

And when you do use a recommended service provider, remember to mention that you got their name from Bellingham At Home.

Book Report

***Varina*, by Charles Frazier**

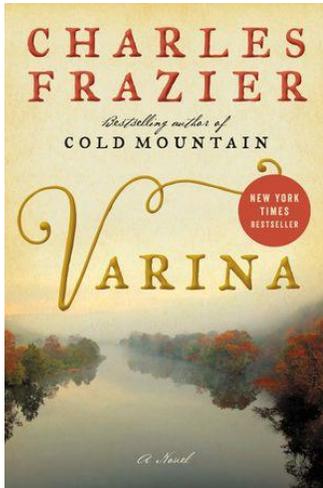
By Sandy Stanton

BAH Member

I might not have read *Varina*, the latest historical novel by Charles Frazier (*Cold Mountain*, 1997), had I not read Mary Ann Gwinn's "An Untold Story of the South" (Special to The Seattle Times, April 8, 2018). Although both my parents were born in Mississippi, neither they nor my siblings and I considered the Confederacy as part of our heritage. But, in every war there are good and not so good people on both sides. When I read that Confederate president Jefferson Davis's wife Varina had said (I assume after her husband's death) that the "right side had won the Civil War," and that she had found a friend in Julia Grant, widow of Union General Ulysses S. Grant, I wanted to know more.

Frazier's story of this amazing woman and her family is related by Varina herself—then 80 years old and living in Saratoga Springs, New York—to a man named James Blake, who appears at her hotel one Sunday in 1906, bringing with him a book titled *First Days amongst the Contrabands*.^{*} In it, the author mentions that a young boy named Jimmie Limber came to live with the Davis family in Richmond near the end of the Civil War and fled south with them just before the Union forces took the Confederate capital. Blake is hoping Varina can confirm his belief that he is that boy. He tells her about his life and some vague early-childhood memories and she realizes that he is, indeed, Jimmie Limber.

Reluctant at first to dredge up sad memories, Varina finally begins to talk. She fills in the blanks for James, events that he couldn't have remembered in any detail or even known about. She also tells him of her life as Davis' wife, of their family before Jimmie's stay and after he was taken away by Union soldiers. When she grows tired that day, she invites him to return the next Sunday, and then the next, as she continues her tale, speaking with intelligence, verve, and wit.



Not until the sixth Sunday does Varina stop. She has decided to return to New York City and invites Jimmie to visit her there for another, seventh, Sunday, in October. It is too late. He arrives just in time to join her funeral cortege. "She was in and out of his life so fast. Again."

Please don't rush through this book. To quote from The Denver Post about Frazier's Thirteen Moons (2007), "Reading a Frazier novel is like listening to a fine symphony. Take time to savor [it] ... to relish the turn of phrase and imagery of a craftsman." This is certainly true of Varina, even though the symphony reflects the dissonance of war.

* Published in 1893 by Elizabeth Hyde Botume, a northern abolitionist and teacher of ex-slaves after the Civil War. Still available in used book stores, Amazon, and on line at

<https://ia802705.us.archive.org/2/items/firstdaysamongst00botu/firstdaysamongst00botu.pdf>.

Do you have a book you'd like to share in the newsletter? Please call Lauren Phillips, 360-714-0054

You Are Not Alone

By Nanette Davis

Chair, Health Advocacy Program, LC Member

If you've been thinking that you had to go through those trying medical tests and scary surgical procedures by yourself, think again. Through its Health Advocacy program, Bellingham At Home offers you companionship and an extra pair of eyes and ears to assist in any medical situation.

June 15 was the opening bell for an entirely new array of services. Along with note taking in the doctor's office—a big help for our members who have hearing deficits or who just want someone there with them to keep track of what's being said—we have extended our assistance to members going through surgery, hospitalization, rehabilitation, palliative care and end-of-life care. BAH health advocates have been trained by registered community nurses, who also serve as back-up as we move into this new phase.

Just give us a call when you'd like that extra support. The office will get in touch with the Health Advocacy Coordinator. It's as easy as that to feel better about your medical encounters—no longer alone.

Redefining Community: What Does It Mean to You?

By Lorraine Barnes

LC Member, Cluster Coordinator

There have been two attempts to form clusters in two areas of our virtual village, based on research into successful programs elsewhere. Perhaps it is the wrong time of year, or could it be that enthusiasm has dwindled?

We have done our best to facilitate bringing together members living in the same area. Despite the fact that this initiative originated as a result of members voicing their desire to get to know their neighbors, the response has been minimal. So it is back to the drawing board.

The next few months will be spent rethinking what community might mean to Bellingham At Home members. I invite you to submit your thoughts and ideas; any suggestions will be appreciated. Community is key to the ongoing success of Bellingham At Home. What would this look like in your mind? How can you help make it happen?

Please contact me at lorrainehbarnes@gmail.com.

July Birthdays

Ali Erickson
Mary Carlson
Lauren Phillips
Barbara Machtey
Kay Mason
Elaine Cress
Patricia Duhnkrack
Jerry Rozensky
Merrily Lawson
Edwina Norton



Legacy Donations: Giving Even after You're Gone

BAH members responded to the LC's fundraising challenge match. So far in 2018, thanks to the generosity of the LC, donations total \$6,020. Well done!

Now that the challenge is over, we hope you will continue to consider BAH in your charitable giving plans for the remainder of the year—and even after that. As in 2019 and 2020...and in your will.

Most people leave the bulk of their property through wills and living trusts. Both are easy to create (although you will certainly want to do this in consultation with your lawyer). In order to name a charity among your beneficiaries, you simply state the full legal name and location of the nonprofit and the specific nature of the gift (e.g., cash, property, or valuables). It's even simpler to name the organization as the beneficiary of a bank account, life insurance policy, or retirement plan. In that case, the bank or other company usually provides a form for you to use.

Keep in mind that, unlike a spouse, child, or other individual, if you name a charity as beneficiary of your IRA, it will not have to pay any income tax on distributions from the IRA after your death.

You can also specify how you would like your bequest to be spent, such as toward a particular project, but in that case it is always best to talk with the charity first. For one thing, because you are not going to die right away (we hope), an organization's policies and programs may change in the interim; it may be necessary to include a statement acknowledging that and giving the organization's leaders the right to direct the funds as they see fit.

Call the office and talk with our program manager, Colleen Harper, if you are considering such a gift to Bellingham At Home.

Please note: Your Village Voice will be taking its annual vacation in August (Machu Picchu, we think), back in September.

Bellingham At Home Contact Information

Location: Bellingham Senior Activity Center, Room 14, 315 Halleck Street, Bellingham, WA 98225

Phone: 360 746-3462 E-mail: info@bellinghamathome.org

Website: <http://BellinghamAtHome.org>

Bellingham At Home is a program of the Whatcom Council on Aging, which is a 501(c)(3) organization, and a member of the Village to Village Network.