

Malibu East Dialogue

December 2013

Your Communication and Information Resource

A special Thanksgiving for special neighbors: Ewert-Gray wedding makes history in Illinois

By Tracy Poyser

Unless you turned off your radio and TV and didn't read any local or national papers in the days surrounding this year's Thanksgiving, you won't have missed the exciting news about two very special Malibu East neighbors. By court order, long-time Chicago activist Vernita Gray married Pat Ewert, her partner of five years, on Nov. 27, making them the first same-sex couple in the state's history to be legally married within Illinois. Their touching and joyous ceremony was performed in their Malibu East apartment by Judge Patricia Logue, former head of Lambda Legal Midwest and a longtime lesbian activist, in front of about 25 family members and friends.

Some background: Lambda Legal is a national organization committed to achieving full recognition of the civil rights of lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, transgender people and those with HIV through impact litigation, education and public policy work. Lambda Legal and the ACLU of Illinois filed the case Nov. 22, seeking immediate action in light of Vernita's terminal cancer with limited life expectancy. Judge Thomas



Durkin issued the decision on Nov. 25, and Cook County Clerk David Orr's marriage license was hand-delivered to the couple. Being the trailblazers they are, Pat and Vernita allowed a video of the ceremony to be posted on the Windy City Times' website. You can check it out at:

www.windycitymediagroup.com/lgbt/Gray-and-Ewert-make-history-as-first-Illinois-same-sex-marriage/45349.html

So, with so much media noise and public attention surrounding their wedding, I wanted to share with you what Pat and Vernita told me about themselves, their love for our condo community and neighborhood, and their lifelong commitment to social justice and kindness for everyone. What struck me most during my interview with them two days before their one-week anniversary was their grace, grit and humor in the face of daunting odds, and their willingness to step out and give up privacy so that others would gain hope.



Pat grew up in Kansas City and moved to Chicago in 1980. She's been involved in social justice and women's causes ever since. Professionally, she made a career in business development, HR and management consulting in several major companies, and as a partner in her own consulting firm. Ten months ago, she became community outreach coordinator for state Rep. Kelly Cassidy, specializing in relationship development and support of nonprofits, constituents with issues, and social service groups. After coming

out about seven years ago, she sold her Lincoln Park home near DePaul in favor of living close to the lake in a vibrant, diverse community – and happily landed in Edgewater at Malibu East in 2008.

Vernita was born and raised on Chicago's South Side and still has a condo there. Like Pat, she had a professional life full of variety and commitment. Vernita has been active in advancing LGBT rights for more than 40 years. She owned a restaurant for about eight years and spent a year at the ecumenical community of Taizé in France. For almost a decade prior to retiring two years ago due to her cancer diagnosis, she worked in the office of Cook County State's Attorney Anita Alvarez. Her primary focus was on anti-violence programs including LGBT victims of hate crimes, families of homicides, bullying victims, and other targets of criminal bias. When she started working there in 1993, Vernita was stunned by the number of hate crimes in Chicago and other major cities. She believes that, although progress has been made since then, there is still so much to do until people can live peacefully and free of bias and hatred. Like Pat, she sees Edgewater and especially Malibu East as a mini United Nations where diverse people live in greater harmony than elsewhere in the city.

Vernita's boss, Anita Alvarez, met Pat at a Chicago Foundation for Women fundraiser. She encouraged Vernita to contact Pat. That led to Vernita's inviting Pat to march with the state's attorney's group in the Gay Pride Parade, and Pat inviting Vernita to a LAMDA event – and the rest is happy

(Continued on page 8)

Malibu East events and meetings

Board meeting

Tuesday, Dec. 17

7:30 p.m. - Windjammer Room

Holiday party

Wednesday, Dec. 18

6 p.m. - Malibu East Lobby

Residents may bring finger food for party.

Leave event and meeting notices at the desk for the *Dialogue*.



Board meeting notes

By Neil Warner

Tuesday, Nov. 26, 2013

Attendance: Ten Board members, one management representative and 13 residents
Presiding: 2nd Vice President Tom Vaughan

REVISIONS TO AGENDA

- 1) "Elevator consultant," "Winter landscaping" and "Architectural drawings for lower level" were added to New Business.

PURCHASE OF UNIT 33L

Following the approval of a resolution for a similar purpose at a special meeting of unit owners immediately preceding this Board meeting, the directors voted to exercise their right of first refusal and purchase unit 33L at a cost of \$109,000 plus or minus prorations.

TREASURER'S REPORT - Joan Scholl

1) Financial statement

Operating and reserve cash
\$2,890,152

2) Delinquencies

Approx. \$346,000

3) Audit

Printed booklets will soon be mailed to owners.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

1) Aesthetics & Building Services - Carl Chadek

New bookcases have been ordered for the Community Room.

2) Employee recognition and holiday fund - Sandy Chaet & Neil Warner

Fliers are being distributed to residents regarding the annual holiday fund, which distributes cash gifts to all employees based on length of service and salary. In addition, several longtime staff members will be honored at the employees' holiday party.

3) Garage - Martina Molins

Standard Parking report as of Oct. 31 - Ali Saeed, Mgr.

Claims

Approved:	0
Denied:	1
Pending:	0
Total:	1

Waiting lists

Single self-park:	0
Tandem self-park:	0
Second car:	0

Monthly parkers

Single:	161
Tandem:	18
Valet:	260
Preferred:	1
Motorcycle:	1
Nonresident:	34
Engineer:	NC
Total:	475

Garage capacity

Single:	161
Tandem:	42
Valet stalls:	284
Valet aisles:	20

Motorcycles: 3

Total: 510

(Under capacity) 35

Changes

New monthlies: 4

Cancellations: 10

Upgrades: 4

Downgrades: 1

4) Security & Life Safety - Sandy Chaet

See manager's report, page 3.

5) Sports & Entertainment - Neil Warner

A new yoga class begins the first Monday of each month, at 7 p.m. in the Windjammer Room.

6) Social - Sandy Chaet

The Malibu East holiday party will be held in the Lobby at 6 p.m. Wednesday, Dec. 18; finger food donations from residents are welcome. The Fitness Through Belly Dance class will end Dec. 12 and resume Jan. 9. Zumba class ends Dec. 15 but will resume Jan. 5 from 7 to 8 p.m. Sundays in the Racquetball Court.

7) Public & Community Affairs - Sandy Chaet

The City's new bedbug ordinance went into effect Dec. 2. Each condo association must be in compliance by March 2. Mariano's Fresh Market has bought the Dominick's grocery store at Foster and Sheridan.

MANAGEMENT REPORT - Violette

Deschamps

Items requiring immediate Board action

1) 2014 budget

The Board unanimously approved the 2014 budget.

2) 2014 meeting calendar

The Board reviewed the proposed dates for the 2014 Board meetings and annual owners meeting.

3) SEIU door/receiving staff pension fund

The Board voted to terminate its participation in the National Industry Pension Fund for door and Receiving Room staff immediately, subject to a determination of the Association's final liability. The Association will transition to a defined contribution plan.

4) 23K remodeling

The Board approved a vendor's bid to renovate Association-owned unit 23K for the purpose of selling or renting it.

5) 22.1 disclosure form

Approved with a change.

Old business

1) Bedbug policy

A policy will be formulated for consideration by the Board.

2) Laundry Room

See article, page 6.

3) Voice communication

See manager's report, page 3.

4) Penthouse project

The Executive Committee is reviewing bids.

Please keep in mind that the meeting notes are not the official record of the Malibu East Condominium Board of Directors meetings. The official minutes are generally approved during the next meeting and may be viewed or copied in the management office.

5) Boat dock stairwell project

Preliminary drawings were received today.

6) Façade work

Completed for this year.

7) Captain's Walk restaurant project

Nothing new.

8) Captain's Walk HVAC

Management is reviewing what needs to be done.

9) Painting of small balconies

Nothing new.

New business

1) Home-run wiring modification

The Cable Committee is investigating our options with cable/satellite TV providers.

2) 9K sale

Directors chose not to exercise their right of first refusal on the sale of unit 9K.

3) Elevator consultant

Interviews will be arranged with three consultants.

4) Winter landscaping

Management has chosen a vendor.

5) Architectural drawings for lower level

The Board approved a vendor's bid to provide architectural drawings for the north end of the lower level.

RATIFICATION OF ACTION TAKEN

DURING CLOSED SESSION

1) The Board accepted a settlement and payment plan with a former owner over an outstanding delinquency.

2) The Board postponed action regarding balcony repairs for a unit pending further review.

3) The Board denied an owner's request to reverse a number of late charges.

4) In response to a letter from a resident, the Board reaffirmed its policy of holding the annual holiday party in the Lobby.

5) The Board authorized the allocation of an additional portion of the decorating allowance provided by Family Pride Laundries for upgraded flooring tile in the Laundry Room.

6) The Board approved an expenditure for replacing the drains and drain pipes in the Laundry Room and for redoing the piping to the machines.

7) The Board approved a payment for the installation of a circuit breaker panel, and pipes and wires from the panel to the new washing machines, as well as the allocation of a portion of the decorating allowance for the installation of pipe and wire to the water heaters serving the Laundry Room.

8) The Board authorized the replacement of the HVAC equipment in the Laundry Room.

9) The Board authorized the replacement of a water heater serving the Laundry Room.

The meeting ended at 9:20 p.m. and went into closed session.

What's happening around the building

By *Violette Deschamps, Malibu East Manager*

Assessments are due the first of the month. The Management Office cannot accept assessment payments.

Life safety: The overall project is experiencing a slight delay. However, all the hallway walls were repaired and painted by Thanksgiving; Sievert Electric completed the installation of the main conduits, and 90% of the wires are pulled through. The final phase is the installation of the main panel in the Lobby and the installation of the electronic devices controlling the system. The majority of the installation will be completed by the end of the year; after a few weeks for start-up and preliminary testing, the system should be ready for final acceptance testing toward the end of January, followed by the City of Chicago's inspection. We are anticipating the project to be fully operational in early 2014, which is almost one year ahead of the deadline imposed by the City to complete this life safety project.

Elevator modernization: The Board of Directors has been discussing the modernization of the elevators. This project is now in the early stages as the Board initiated the hiring process of the elevator consultant. The elevator consultant is essential in undertaking this type of complex project; the consultant will be responsible to assess the existing technical and mechanical conditions of all five elevators (do not confuse this with the aesthetics of the elevator cabs), make recommendations to the Board, prepare specifications for bids and supervise the modernization work.

The Board recently interviewed three elevator consultants and is currently doing its due diligence by verifying their references. We anticipate the hiring of the elevator consultant either by the end of this year or early in 2014. The next step for the Board will be to initiate the hiring process of a cab design consultant in order to synchronize both mechanical and aesthetic aspects of the project.

To minimize the inconvenience to

residents, no more than one elevator will be taken out of service at a time. Each elevator will take from 12 to 17 weeks to be mechanically and aesthetically refurbished. The overall project for all five elevators may exceed three years from the date the elevator consultant is hired to the completion of the modernization.

Database: We recently mailed out a blank contact sheet to all unit owners in order to update Malibu East's records. The same contact sheet was distributed door-to-door in the last week of October.

We have received thus far a 36% response to our request. We are grateful to all of you who took the time to fill out the sheet and return it to the Management Office. We hope that the remaining 64% will accommodate management and return the form before the end of December.

Please remember that besides the necessity of updating the Association's database (by law), the information collected from these forms is critical to help you in case of emergencies, welfare checks and general communications.

Water heaters: An old water heater reaching the end of its life expectancy represents a substantial risk for your unit and the units below you, besides the potential inconvenience of a lack of hot water. The life expectancy of a water heater is about 15 years. This means that water leaks – or worse, floods – may result from your aging water heater. You may want to check the age of your heater and any signs of corrosion on the pipes at the top of the water heater, as well as signs of peeling paint or rust/mineral deposits at the bottom, in the catch basin. In case of doubt, we advise you to contact a licensed plumber to have your water heater assessed.

Kitchen drain clogs: The Board of Directors authorized the installation of clean-outs on the H and J kitchen sink tiers earlier this year. This allows a thorough rodding and purging of the

drain lines from the top to the bottom of the building. In the 2014 budget the Board approved the installation of such clean-outs of four to six additional kitchen drain tiers.

Except for the A and B units, the clean-outs are installed by accessing the pipe from the hallway side, at every fifth floor, starting from the top. The plumber then inserts a circular cutter into the clean-out openings to shave off rust, scaling and other organic compounds crusted onto the wall of the pipes. This rodding does not reach the branch line to individual sinks, which is the responsibility of each individual unit owner. The installation of clean-outs and flushing work will reduce the risk of kitchen sink clogs and extend the life expectancy of the drain pipes.

Please contact either management or the front desk if you are experiencing any slowdown in the drainage of your kitchen sink. This is a clear sign that the pipe is getting clogged and that your sink may regurgitate water onto your floor.

Questions or concerns? Email me at MECAmgr@SudlerChicago.com or telephone 773-271-1732.



Does it come in red?

'Town Crier' announcements by Caitlin Gilman

We welcome all new residents to our building, including:

If you have information concerning talented or famous Malibu East residents, please contact the *Dialogue*.



Community Calendar

By Betty Mayian

COMMUNITY AFFAIRS

BROADWAY ARMORY

Indoor park, six gym floors, trapeze classes, senior activities, athletic equipment, meeting room, computer center, dancing floor, shuffleboard, weights, arts and crafts, aerobics, ping pong, after-school activities and more.

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EDGEWATER HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Celebrating 25 years as a historical society. Current exhibit: "Treasures of Edgewater"

Regular museum hours:

Saturday and Sunday 1-4 p.m.

5358 N. Ashland Ave.

773-506-4849

www.EdgewaterHistory.org

WHITE CRANE WELLNESS CENTER

Adult day wellness programs for persons 60 and over. Gentle yoga, tai chi, music, exercise, lunch and snacks. Transportation provided within boundary area.

1355 W. Foster Ave.

773-271-9001

www.whitecranewellness.org

THEATER / SHOWINGS

CITY LIT THEATRE

"Two by Wodehouse - The Man Upstairs and Ahead of Schedule" by P.G. Wodehouse

Dec. 28, 7 p.m. - One night only

1020 W. Bryn Mawr

773-293-3682

citylit.org

RAVEN THEATRE

"Sherlock Holmes and the Case of the Christmas Goose" by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle

A holiday mystery for all ages.

Dec. 12 thru Dec. 29

6157 N. Clark

Restaurant review

En Lai Asian Grill

By Betty Mayian

You're going out and you want Chinese food (but Cantonese, Szechuan or Hunan?). Someone else wants Thai; another person craves Korean; a fourth wants Japanese (maybe curry?). What do you do to satisfy everyone? You go to En Lai Asian Grill and look at its menu. When it says Asian, it means a little of everything.

When we went there the first time, I thought I would try Szechuan beef and hot-and-sour soup. I learned a big lesson. The Szechuan food I had been used to at other restaurants was spiced up so much here that we had to abandon it. The waitress said we could ask for a little less spice next time. Find out how much heat is in each dish and how much you can stand. The hot-and-sour soup was also too hot but not sour enough. This is all a part of the deal - learn what you like at every restaurant you go to. My husband, Ara, had shrimp with cashew nuts and he liked it very much. The menu has a small hot pepper mark to indicate that a dish is spicy (look at this carefully). Our waitress had some sympathy for us and brought us a dish of banana ice cream. This really hit the spot.

The second time we went, we brought our friends Annie, a Taiwanese, and Dee Dee, who loves spicy food. For drinks, we had hot jasmine tea (for Annie and me); lemonade (for Ara); and Thai iced tea for (Dee Dee). Our friends both ordered curry dishes, a beef curry and a shrimp curry. I ordered pad Thai beef, which was fresh and good but could have used some peanut sauce for

extra flavor. Ara had shrimp lo mein, and that was the best dish of the bunch. This time our waiter had given us some good advice, and we took it. We all wondered if the cook was Chinese, Thai or a different nationality. We think Chinese, but our waiter was Thai. I asked Annie if they were speaking anything she understood. She said she could understand them and that they all seemed to speak Mandarin in order to get along and not have to translate for one another. The end of the meal required something cooling, and I was about to ask about desserts, when the waiter brought us a dish of vanilla ice cream and four spoons - on the house.

Since En Lai is so close to the house, I will have to try this again and go with something new to find out about their extensive array of dishes. I think perhaps a hot, sizzling plate of teriyaki, with a choice of steak, chicken, shrimp, salmon, scallops or short ribs. Sounds good. There is another dish I want to try - salt & pepper shrimp. You do have many options here. Make sure you do your homework before ordering. Ask the waiter about the dish and how hot or mild you'd like to have it made. They have a nice luncheon special, too. Good prices. Close to home - and they deliver. They want to accommodate people, offering brown rice and tofu for extra healthy eating. Try it.

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Loyola's Institute of Environmental Sustainability

By Tracy Poyser



A wonderful Sept. 6 street party and open-house festivities marked the grand opening of the latest addition to Loyola University Chicago's high-performance and eco-friendly facilities: the spiffy, state-of-the-art Institute of Environmental Sustainability at 6327 N. Kenmore. It's on the block which Loyola plans to convert to a pedestrian greenway now that a new City of Chicago ordinance has cleared the way for the university to do so.

Neil Warner, my brother-in-law Bob Whaley and I had a chance to take a tour, with numerous proud students, docents and scientists on hand to explain the facility's many features.



The mission of Loyola's Institute of Environmental Sustainability is to engage students in understanding and responding to local and global environmental issues. The new facility includes classrooms, faculty offices, research and teaching labs, a clean-energy lab and an urban agricultural greenhouse. It shares common spaces with San Francisco Hall, a new residence hall that will house the green learning community - freshmen and sophomores who share classes and co-curricular activities and engage in Loyola's initiatives to develop a more sustainable campus.

Other intriguing features include:

- The largest geothermal complex in Chicago, with 90 geothermal wells, 500 feet deep, providing over 700 tons of cooling energy;
- Rainwater collection and reuse for greenhouse irrigation;

- Natural ventilation systems;
- Three-story-high vertical farming element and an aquaponics system showcase;
- Sustainable food systems and urban agriculture research projects and production labs;
- State-of-the-art laboratory spaces for anthropology, environmental science and ecotoxicology;
- A clean-energy lab that will allow the biodiesel program to increase fuel production by up to 100,000 gallons per year;
- A green café, Engrained, featuring seasonal, local and organic produce.

To find out whether the student-run café matches the excitement of the Institute, Ara and Betty Mayian joined Neil and Debbie Warner for a recent lunch at Engrained and declared it a winner also. A beautiful beet salad on baby spinach leaves with radishes, asparagus and goat cheese with a balsamic dressing was a big hit, as was the "adult" grilled cheese with two cheeses, bacon and tomato on sour-dough bread. There are soups, a good selection of coffees and teas, great apple chips accompanying many orders, salads and a variety of baked goods. Engrained's breakfast options include omelets, breakfast pockets and quiche. The student staff is enthusiastic, knowledgeable and well-trained. The café is open daily for breakfast and lunch (not dinner), 7 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday through Friday and 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday and Sunday. It's a great value, with all items under \$10.

So, walk on over and check it out for yourself. You can learn much more at the Institute's website, www.luc.edu/sustainability/

Betty Mayian and Neil Warner contributed to this article.

TV issues?

To add optional TV programming to your account, phone DirecTV at 800-531-5000.

For customer service regarding equipment repair, installation or technical support, call USA Wireless at 800-433-4558 or email them at orders@usadishtv.com

Share your customs

The Dialogue likes to explore the diversity of people living at Malibu East. To that end, we'd like to hear about customs that you may have brought here from a different country.

You can either write an article about your customs, or contact the Dialogue and we may assign a reporter to speak with you about the customs and write the article.

You can leave a note with the doorman or the Management Office, to the attention of the Dialogue editor, providing your name, unit number, telephone number and/or email address.

✂ Clip & Save ✂

IMPORTANT NUMBERS

- Doorman's Station..... 773-271-1769
- Garage Office..... 773-271-5193
- Management Office..... 773-271-1732
- Receiving Room..... 773-271-2608

CAPTAIN'S WALK MALL

- Dr. Ahmad Bastani..... 773-506-9600
- Drs. Jack & Kerstin Horbal.. 773-275-0110
- First Commercial Bank..... 773-564-4122
- Sheridan Hair & Body Studio 773-561-6595
- Malibu Cleaners..... 773-728-6023
- Malibu Convenient Store..... 773-769-5440
- H. M. Wagner Realty..... 773-334-0200

CITY SERVICES/UTILITIES

- Aging & Disability..... 312-744-4016
- Alderman Harry Osterman ... 773-784-5277
- Assessor's Office..... 312-443-7550
- AT&T..... 800-288-2020
- AWB..... 312-951-9600
- Chicago Transit Authority.... 312-664-7200
- Chicago Park District..... 312-747-2200
- City Hall Inquiry & Info..... 312-744-5000
- Com Ed..... 800-334-7661
- Consumer Services..... 312-744-4006
- Edgewater Branch library..... 312-744-0718
- Family Pride Laundries..... 630-620-4700
- 48th Ward Streets & San..... 312-744-2130
- Police (24th Dist.)..... 312-744-5907
- Police/Fire Emergency Only..... 911
- Police/Fire Non-emergency..... 311
- RTA Travel Information..... 312-836-7000
- USA Wireless..... 800-433-4558

New Laundry Room a big upgrade

By Carl Chadek

Our terrific new Laundry Room. Was it worth the wait? Absolutely, but when dealing with a building that's over 40 years old, it is impossible to tell what may come up once a major project has started. Our project was delayed a week by the failure of our plumber to obtain a building permit. Another delay, much more serious, occurred when it was discovered that the underground drain pipes servicing the washers were in need of replacement, which meant tearing up the concrete floor. Along with that, the water supply plumbing and electrical wires, which were also in a condition that warranted some level of replacement, now had to be removed to complete the work on the drains. Of course, we had all hoped that some of these things would not need such intensive care, but it is important to do things right rather than fast.

Since Family Pride has supplied us with new state-of-the-art equipment – washers, dryers, card payment system – here are some important points to take into consideration when using our new Laundry Room:

Detergent – You may have noticed a new symbol on detergent containers –  HE – which stands for “high efficiency.” These detergents are formulated to be used in high-efficiency washers, which our new front-loading machines are. HE detergents are low-sudsing and quick-dispersing for use in low-water-volume washers. HE detergents are developed to hold soil in suspension in water so it

is not re-deposited onto clean clothes. It's important for all of us to use HE detergents in our new washers. Because we now have low-water-volume washers, less detergent is required. HE detergents are priced similarly to other detergents and, since we will be using less, we will all save money. Not to mention the savings on the Malibu East water bill because of the low-water-volume washers, savings that will help to hold down future assessment increases.

Dryers – Except for being far superior equipment, the new dryers won't operate any differently from our old dryers. They will, however, perform significantly better. The new dryers (and washers) are simply better equipment than what we have had in the past. The upgrades in our electric and ventilation services mean that our new dryers will perform more efficiently, potentially reducing the drying times. These drying times will be reduced further because the new washers spin out more of the water from the fabrics of our laundry.

Payment options – No more quarters! No more jammed coin slots! No more empty change machine! Each Malibu East unit is entitled to one free Money Card, which has been preloaded with \$5 for immediate use. Money Cards can be loaded using cash or a credit card in the Laundry Room. Credit cards may also be used



Photos by Tracy Poyser

right at the machines. Money Cards should be treated like cash. Replacement Money Cards can be purchased in the Laundry Room – \$5 will get you a new card with \$2 of preloaded value. Also, soon you will be able to monitor machines online – available machines, time left, completion alerts – so that you never make an unnecessary trip downstairs.

Pricing – Prices have increased, but we are still well below the going rates on Sheridan Road and significantly below commercial laundries, as many of you discovered in recent weeks. A regular wash is \$.75, medium wash \$2, large wash \$2.25. A regular dryer's cycle of 60 minutes costs \$.75; a large-dryer cycle of 15 minutes costs \$.50. These are bargain prices with the state-of-the-art equipment that will be in place for all of us to use. It is worth repeating that the Laundry Room is not a profit-making venture for Malibu East and that its revenue does not cover all of its expenses.

We are a Class A building, and now we have a Class A Laundry Room!

Carl Chadek is the chair of the Aesthetics & Building Services Committee, which developed the plan for renovating the Laundry Room.



Chestnut Organizing & Cleaning Service

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- We are a home and office cleaning service.
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No Job Is Too Small
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A special Thanksgiving (Continued from page 1)

and bittersweet history. Their happiness was both challenged and strengthened when Pat, too, was diagnosed with aggressive Stage 1 breast cancer three years ago – fortunately she’s cancer-free now.

When civil unions for same-sex couples became legal in Illinois in 2011, Pat and Vernita were among the first 29 couples to tie that knot. Although that status still provided only limited rights compared to legal marriage, at least Pat was able to take on full responsibility for Vernita’s healthcare decisions when bone and then brain cancer rendered Vernita temporarily unable to speak for herself. Both women have nothing but praise for the progressive philosophy and caring staff of NorthShore University HealthSystem’s Evanston Hospital.

All the congratulations from their Malibu East neighbors, from cards under their door to hugs in the elevator, have been just amazing to them. They both cherish their lives moment-to-moment, with humor and a bit of irreverence. “All the media make it sound as if I’m about to drop dead, but I’m not quite ready yet,” is how Vernita puts it with a grin. If anything, the reality of Vernita’s illness seems to make their joy of being newlyweds even stronger.

I asked the two women what straight people could do to best support gay-rights causes so our society can get to the point where gay marriage is no longer newsworthy in itself. “Talk about your gay friends and family with people you know. We are your sons and daughters, brothers and sisters, neighbors and friends. Let people know that you support the rights of ALL people, and open your wallets and contribute to gay causes” says Vernita.

“Vote for the right people, of course,” adds Pat.

At the end of her emails, Pat provides the following: “Zen thought for those who don’t take life too seriously: Life is too short to waste time hating anyone.” That says it all, and I hope you’re as honored and delighted as I am to have these two remarkable women as neighbors.

Christian Advent: Challenge, message

By **Leo D. Harkins**

Advent (of Latin origin, meaning “to come to”), the four-week prelude to Christmas, began Dec. 1 and attributes its date to the prevalent Gregorian calendar introduced in 1582. Most Western Christians and some Eastern Christians follow these dates. However, millions of Eastern Christians and Middle Eastern Christians, such as the Egyptian Copts, follow its predecessor, the Julian calendar, and celebrate Christmas on either Jan. 6 or 7. The arbitrary date for Christmas was chosen to displace Saturnalia, a Roman fete.

Adherents of Advent are reminded of its strong spiritual dimension, with a longing for deliverance from evil through helping the needy and even fasting – hence the name “little Lent” used by Eastern Christians. Invocations for peace and good will solemnize the weeks before the Nativity date celebrated by those who maintain these beliefs.

A chief Advent symbol, one of indeterminate origin, is the circular wreath holding four candles. The circle is a symbol of eternity and the evergreen of life. The wreath was popularized in 16th

century Germany where many symbols of this holiday originated.

The month of December has migrated to an end-of-the-year extravaganza of celebration. A welcome respite for the spirit in the midst of the frenzy is the Loyola University Museum of Art, 820 N. Michigan Ave. (free Tuesdays), a virtual jewel box housing the permanent D’Arcy Collection of exquisite works of Medieval and Renaissance art highlighting sculpture, paintings, objets d’art and furnishings. Of particular note is the small Limoges enamel entitled “Adoration of the Magi,” painted on copper, a medium that baffles art historians even now. The crèche was advocated by Francis of Assisi in 1223, thus replacing icons in some instances. From Nov. 23 to Jan. 12, an exhibition of crèches representing about 55 countries displays unique inventive creativity reflecting diverse heritages.

However, the apex of design for the crèche (presepio in Italian) is that of the Neapolitan school of the 17th to 19th centuries, which created an entire anachronistic village surrounded by figures chiefly made of papier-mâché, terra-cotta and wood. The Art Institute unveils its new acquisition, a large 200-figure Neapolitan crèche, this season.

The Dialogue

The Malibu East Condominium *Dialogue* is published by resident volunteers to promote communication among owners, residents, the Board of Directors, management and staff of Malibu East Condominium, 6033 North Sheridan Road, Chicago, IL 60660.

Articles written by and opinions of the Malibu East Condominium *Dialogue* staff and contributors are their personal views and do not necessarily represent the views of Malibu East Condominium or its Board of Directors and management.

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