



# Heritage Happenings

December 2024

The monthly newsletter published by residents of  
Heritage on the Marina, San Francisco CA, USA

## El Salvador



The country of the month for December is El Salvador. The colors of the flag are cobalt blue and white and thus give us a color theme for this issue. The masthead cameo this month is unusual for us. Instead of a drawing created using artificial intelligence, it is a photograph of a young person probably from El Salvador wearing indigo makeup in the style of his Mayan ancestors.

## Holiday Season Approaches

I write this text just after Thanksgiving. The first holiday is over. Two more to come. I am looking at the photo you see above in the masthead. I see the face of a concerned and perhaps anxious youth. The issue is that the news is full of mayhem and destruction, unhappiness and misery. The face in that photo reflects that concern.

Turning and looking in the mirror, I see the reflection of a happy and contented old man. And I think

"This is not fair. This is not what I hoped for. This is not good."

The question is: How can you justify being merry and cheery in a world so full of evil? The tension between personal happiness and the world's suffering is universal.

My reply: contentment isn't denial. It's a testament to resilience.

- Gratitude allows you to find strength. Joy fuels action, inspires empathy and generosity.
- Modeling hope is vital. While the anxious youth in the photo reflects concern, your content shows that peace is possible.
- Acknowledging the darkness doesn't diminish the light; both coexist, and your cheer can be a tool against despair.

Embrace the season as a chance to share your joy through small acts of kindness and generosity. Happiness isn't selfish—it's a way to inspire hope and resilience.

Happy holidays!

*Theo Armour*

## Message from Mary Linde, our CEO

As we look ahead to 2025, there are several exciting initiatives we're continuing to work on, including:

- Moving forward with our Land Use Permit process, which we hope to secure by the end of the first quarter
- Celebrating the 100-Year Anniversary of the Julia Morgan building on March 25, 2025
- Pursuing Landmark Designation for the Julia Morgan building, with the hope of achieving this by the first quarter of 2025
- Collaborating with the Board of Directors in the process of exploring a potential affiliation

I'm also excited about the continued growth of our Aging in Place program, which currently supports at least 11 residents, allowing them to remain in their independent living homes. We've made great strides in building our team and are proud to be fully staffed for the first time in at least four years. While we continue to use registry staff for sick and vacation leaves, all our full-time positions are currently filled. As we continue to improve our operations, we are introducing a Maintenance Tech position to enhance maintenance coverage during evenings and weekends, as well as a Ward Clerk position at Henderson Clinic to ensure timely

phone support in the evenings. We are also implementing 24/7 Security to enhance the safety of our Residents, Team Members, and the broader Community.

There are new regulations coming into effect on January 1, 2025, which will allow for the care of individuals with dementia in their apartments, without requiring them to move to a higher level of care. Thanks to our Aging in Place model, we are already well-positioned to meet these changes, and we are proud to be leaders in this area. I'm also working alongside a dedicated team at the state level through LeadingAge California, as part of the Assisted Living Cabinet. We will collaborate with the Department of Social Services (DSS) to help refine these regulations to better support communities like ours, which are staffed with healthcare providers around the clock. Our goal is to shape the future of "enhanced assisted living," allowing us to offer more comprehensive care within the Aging in Place framework.

Above all, I'm excited to continue fostering a community that is both healthy and compassionate, where every team member is committed to serving each other and our Residents. We are incredibly fortunate to have such a caring and dedicated staff across all departments, and I am deeply grateful for each of them.

**Heritage Happenings**

The monthly publication  
published by residents of  
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## Julia Morgan Building Centenary

In March of 1925, the San Francisco Ladies Protection and Relief Society convened its first Board of Directors meeting in the newly constructed Julia Morgan building. Fast forward to 2025, the Board will gather on the same premises for its 400th quarterly meeting. To mark this milestone, the Board is hosting a gala event for local dignitaries, including our esteemed residents. ;-)

Beyond celebration, the centenary may spark new opportunities: fostering stronger connections with the neighborhood, civic organizations, and beyond.

NEXT Village SF, a nonprofit supporting seniors to live independently, is exploring the idea of tours of the building, which in turn could lead to neighborhood elders attending lectures and performances on our campus.

San Francisco Heritage, the architecture preservation nonprofit, has also expressed interest in collaborating on an article about Julia Morgan's architectural vision for the building. Additionally, this occasion opens doors for innovative fundraising and sponsorship opportunities aligned with the campus's strategic plan.

These are just ideas—much like how, a century ago, the Society transitioned from an orphanage to a retirement community. That too began as a bold idea.

A centenary celebration calls for us to honor the past. May it also inspire ideas that shape an even brighter future.

*Theo Armour*

## Welcome Val Szigeti and Tom King

*By Martha Nell Beatty*



On December 15, 1956, teenage Val and her parents walked for four hours in the middle of the night from repressive Communist Hungary to

Austria—and freedom. They had joined a ten-person group of emigres (including a ten-day-old baby). Their journey started with a train ride from Budapest to the border. The small group hid while everyone else disembarked the



train. Finally, they got off surreptitiously and, in the dark of night, met their guide.

Upon arriving in Austria, they were taken to a refugee camp outside Vienna.

It was at the American Embassy in Vienna that Val's mother sorted out her American citizenship which she had forfeited by being forced to vote in Hungary. When it was restored, Val was granted American citizenship. Her

Hungarian father would have to wait a few more years to obtain his. Finally on February 1, 1957, they flew from Munich to La Guardia on a US Air Force prop plane. After a stay in army barracks at Camp Kilmer, New Jersey, Val and her father (both non-English speaking) were allowed to leave for her grandparents' house in Carteret, New Jersey. Her mother wasn't able to join them until May 1 because of ill health.

Val attended Tufts University, where she majored in physics. After graduating, she worked for the Smithsonian Astrophysical Observatory, tracking man-made objects in space using Control Data Corporation computers. Later, Val worked on establishing a computer network between three universities: Michigan State, Michigan, and Wayne State. That is where she met Tom, who was the project manager for the company providing the hardware.

Tom was born in Indiana but moved to Michigan and then DC, where his father was in the State Department. When Tom was eight, his father was assigned to Bogotá, Colombia for two years, which was followed by another two years in Costa Rica. Tom's father left the State Department and became head of the Modern Languages Department at Cornell in Ithaca, New York before moving back to



the University of Michigan as a professor of linguistics.

Tom attended the University of Michigan in an honors program and earned a BA and MA in mathematics simultaneously. While going to school, he also had a job as an engineer at a start-up company. During this time, Tom went to Vietnam as a civilian defense contractor to work on a helicopter problem. Upon his return, Tom decided to use his scholarship money to buy a race car. He started winning a fair number of races, which led Chrysler to ask him to join their factory team as a professional. At first, he was a co-driver for SCCA national rally champion Scott Harvey. They won a big international event their first year, and then Chrysler sent them all over the world to compete.

After three years of Tom racing and being an engineer, Tom and Val decided to move to California, where their first home was in Los Gatos. They later built a house in Saratoga. Tom became active in Silicon Valley tech companies including Measurex for over 15 years (mostly as VP Engineering) as it became a New York Stock Exchange company. He then joined a company in Livermore that was threatened with a hostile takeover attempt by Michael Milken, who later became a neighbor of the company when he was

incarcerated in the Federal Correctional Institution in Dublin, CA. After the company performed a leveraged re-capitalization, Tom went on to a number of start-ups in Silicon Valley and later he became a consultant.

When Tom and Val arrived in Silicon Valley, Control Data Corporation was eager to offer Val a job, and she eventually became head of network design. With two young sons, Val found it difficult to work full time so she converted to part time. When she and Tom moved to the East Bay, Val obtained a teaching certificate. With that in hand, she started her own tutoring company, tutored high school and college students in math and science and developed software for teaching math. Val also volunteered at a homeless center in Walnut Creek and tutored ESL.

After their sons were in college, Tom got back into racing—but no longer as a professional. He became a three-time national Open Road racing champion and still holds some road racing records. He competed in four Special Stage events in Mexico on paved roads. The longest race started in Chihuahua, Mexico. It was 1,000 miles over a three-day period in the mountains. Val was in charge of Tom's support car for the event.

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Tom has written articles about race car driving for national publications, but he has also found writing fiction fun. As he says, "You can just make stuff up." For Tom, fiction writing is a "voyage of discovery." His first book was *Rewards for Justice*, which Val says is his best. His three-book Death Series includes *Death Ray*, *Death Warrant* and *Death Trap*, copies of which have been donated to the Stucky Library.

Before writing a book, he develops an extensive back story for every character. When he starts to write a scene, he puts these characters into a situation and lets them interact with each other and react to the circumstances. At the end of the scene, Tom sometimes says,

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"Wow. I didn't know that was going to happen."

Currently Tom designs and builds race computers. He sells them to people who used to be his competitors and now they are his customers. He solves programming problems and tries to make the computers better.

You won't see Tom in his racing car (except in the video link below), but you might catch Val on her tricycle on an early morning ride.

Following is a link to an in-car video of one of the special stages in Tom's Chihuahua event about 12 years ago. Join Tom as he drives faster than you may have ever experienced but less than his car's top speed of 200 miles per hour.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=COsaLHtmFJI>



## The Heritage Live Oak

By Margaret Missiaen



The large tree with gray bark in the parking lot is a coast live oak (*Quercus agrifolia*). As the unofficial Heritage on the

Marina tree hugger, I am asked to identify nearby trees. I wrote about the London plane trees on Francisco Street in the August 2023 issue of the *Heritage Happenings*. However, this oak was more of a challenge because there are dozens of oak species, and I am more familiar with the deciduous oaks of the East. A few weeks ago, I noticed acorns lying on the ground. As any good arborist knows, once you have an acorn, identification is easy. (With a little help from Google images.)

The coast live oak is a drought-resistant evergreen that can grow to 80 feet. It is a native species, mostly appearing to the coast side of California's Coast Range, and along streams draining into the Central Valley. The range runs from Mendocino County in the

north to Mexico's Baja California. The bark of young trees is smooth, but with age the thick bark develops deep furrows and ridges. The acorn is brown, narrowly egg-shaped, 1-2 inches long, with a thin cap.

## You, too, Pal

By Tucker Ingham

*Tucker was asked to consider the problem of happiness in a suffering world. His whimsical reply:*

"Merry Christmas!" What? Oh yeah, I almost forgot. Same to you, buddy. Whatever. Like, happy, right?

The Dalai Lama claims happiness to be the sole purpose of life. But Aldous Huxley countered that "the pursuit of happiness is but the pursuit of distractions." Meanwhile, novelist Edith Wharton asserts that if you make up your mind to be unhappy, then you ought to have a pretty good time.

In other words, Edith, author of *The House of Mirth*, seems to believe it would be best, perhaps, to slow down our pursuits, to maybe stop chasing rainbows and their magic leprechauns of bliss. Because, let's face it, one who expects nothing is rarely disappointed.

So, okay, buddy, yeah, Merry Christmas to you, too, whoever you are.



## Paris to London with fellow travelers on the Eurostar train

*By Patrick Alexander*

This is a look at a fascinating group of fellow citizens of this planet traveling back to London from Paris on the Eurostar train.

Firstly, a comment. The sills of the doors on the Eurostar train are not at the same level as the platform the train is stationed at. So, you have to lift yourself and your suitcase up and over the sill to get onto the train and then get yourself and your suitcase off the train on arrival — not easy. I can only presume that the original engineering types who designed the trains and the platforms forgot to meet and agree on the same heights. It would be so much easier if they had.

Secondly, those who make the journey seem to fit into various categories, so from the point of view of a person watcher it is interesting to fit them into their imagined slots, especially if you have some time to spare before the train leaves. Although I paid the higher fare and travelled in Eurostar Premium, the whole group of riders assembled on the platform and it was then possible to have a good look at all the travelling personages. This is what

I saw and then mentally imagined putting them into various groups.

The well-dressed techies. One of whom was seated just across from where I was sitting. He was a very well-dressed techie. He had obviously booked himself 2 seats so he could spread out. He had two laptops open, a cell phone and ear buds. All this was connected by various cables he produced from a small black purse. His luggage consisted only of a small very shiny metal suitcase and a black bag designed to hold laptops and assorted cables. He worked during the entire train trip using both laptops and probably took a taxi to the office when he arrived in London.

The other techies consisted of the not so well dressed. They had long hair, ponytails, glasses, and beards of course. They mostly fiddled around with their phones or brought out laptops which had stickers on them. There were a number of Asian techies as well. They were generally well dressed and almost all of them went to sleep after getting on the train. Probably because they had worked all the previous night on some project.

The smart set consisted of both men and women. They are all well dressed in designer clothes, form fitting in black with some white accents. Usually carrying the absolute minimum amount of luggage. They know exactly where



they are going. They don't talk to anyone or even each other unless someone calls them on their cell phone, which seems to happen quite frequently.

The shoppers included several categories. The gay people who went to Paris to see the latest collections, who couldn't wait to buy the latest creation their friends had just made.

The food lovers-coming home with large paper bags with the names of the stores where they made their purchases. Lots of cakes, chocolates, jams, and other exotic food creations. They probably should not have bought some of those things because they tended to be somewhat overweight. The chronic shopper types- probably spent just a few days in Paris but were coming home with a suitcase the size of a small closet. Where on the train that type of suitcase could possibly be stored is interesting to think about. I had problems in storing my own suitcase which was only about one third the size of the ones I saw.

The frazzled parents of small children, burdened with strollers and large bags of baby stuff. The mothers are all universally frazzled. The husbands come in two varieties. The absolutely bored ones are uninterested in their children. You could see from their expressions that they were wishing they were home having a beer and watching a football game on TV.

Then the really involved ones are taking care of everything and driving their wives crazy by doing that. The traveling children who are all mostly under ten. They screech at high levels and then suddenly run off somewhere and then have to be pursued by one or another parent.

The older generation includes the retired school teacher and university professor types. Beards, glasses, and sensible non-iron clothes are their standard uniforms. They probably went over to Paris to study some obscure subject in science or history and then will write a paper that fewer than twenty people will ever read. Their wives are also dressed in a similar fashion to their husbands. They are grey-haired ladies with no make-up. They are serious-minded, interested in gardening, sustainable agriculture, and recycling.

The retired military/police/political/business types are dressed in clothes that can be up to 40 or 50 years old. They wear their hair short and some of the men have moustaches or well-trimmed beards. The suitcases they use are the ones they inherited from their parents or used when they went off to school many years ago. They have been to Paris many, many times for conferences and meetings and usually stay in the same hotel every time. Their wives, if they still have them, look

the same as their husbands but without the beards and moustaches.

The younger generation backpack types. They are traveling the world on limited budgets and stay in youth hostels with shared rooms and bathrooms. They have enormous backpacks holding the types clothing to be used for their next adventure, be it climbing mountains or jumping off cliffs with a parachute. I remember seeing one lady of this generation in the Metro in Paris. She had an enormous backpack. She also had a dog and a bicycle. How she managed to climb the Metro stairs with all that stuff is hard to imagine. Maybe the dog helped.

The hooligan type arrived late, unshaved with tousled hair and bloodshot eyes. Probably still hung over even at one o'clock in the afternoon. Generally speaking, these are young men under the age of 30. All they have had for breakfast is a can of beer. They are rabid fans of some football club traveling on some cheap promotional ticket. Fortunately, they are not included in Eurostar Premium seating.

I have categorized my fellow passengers as I saw them. It passes the time, and one can apply one's imagination as to who they are and what they do.

### Movies You Like?

*By Tom King*

Yvonne, the Movie Maven of Heritage, has some additional aficionados: Val and me. We're interested in your favorite movie, and we'd love to give a list to Yvonne and the Movie Committee to see what they think. The initial informal poll finds these favorites:

- *Gone with the Wind*
- *Whiskey Galore*
- *Psycho*
- *Searching for Sugarman*
- *Waking Ned Devine*

Send us your own "Best Movie Ever!" We'll keep the list going!

### Visual Humor

*By Tom King*

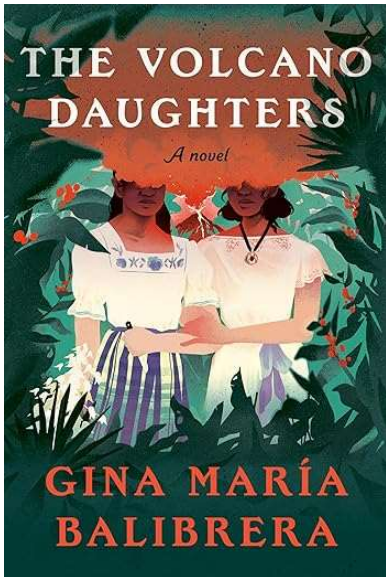
I like visual humor, do you? Here are a couple of examples: "I used to be able to raise my arm this high," says a man, raising his arm above his head. "But now I can only raise it this high" — raising his arm halfway.

A ventriloquist on stage with his dummy gets a random volunteer from the audience to stand up. The dummy is able to describe the standing person in precise detail, even though the dummy is blindfolded!

*Send me your favorites, they could soon make an appearance in an issue of Heritage Happenings!*

## *The Volcano Daughters* by Gina María Balibrera ~ 2024 ~ Fiction

Book review by Doris Howard



Izalco — a volcano with a small community built on its slopes — this is the setting. This new novel follows the lives of two sisters from this community

who are separated and reunited repeatedly. The story is told by a quartet of *fantasmas*, their grandmothers — with occasional commentary that enriches the narrative. It is a complex story about the exploitation of an impoverished people, women's roles, and racism, all packaged in a colorful, beautifully-written book. It addresses old issues with different slants on transcendence, successes arising from apparent losses. The author presents complex characters in depth, their thoughts, feelings, and individual personalities. The narrative is sprinkled with Spanish words and expressions, which can be understood by their context. The story moves quickly, interspersed

with brief comments made by the *fantasmas*. At the center is the story of the adventures of the two sisters: a rich and engaging story, set in El Salvador, not to be missed.

## Good Food News Flash

By Doris Howard

Turkey is not only the featured food for Thanksgiving and Christmas dinners. The white meat of this favorite food is extremely high in protein, making it very good for us. It is also lower in caloric content than red meats so it is high in nutrition and low in fat. The dark meat is equally high in proteins but a little more oily so a little higher in calories. Now you can eat all you want at Christmas dinner!





## Pilgrimage to Petra

By Margaret Johnson

Of all the places I have seen in my travels, I think the most interesting was Petra in Jordan and St. Catherine's Monastery in the Sinai, which my son Tom and I visited in 1995. I had been fascinated since my youth with Petra, the "rose-red city half as old as time," and was glad to be able to go.



We flew from London to Aqaba, Jordan, arriving at 3 a.m. and immediately embarking on a 2-hour bus trip to our hotel outside Petra. After a short nap, breakfast, and a briefing, we were taken to Little Petra (Bedouins living in caves and tents selling trinkets), the remnants of a Neolithic



settlement at Beida, and the crusader castle of Showbak.

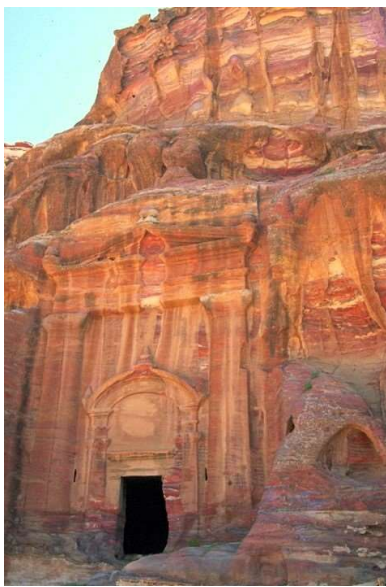
The next day we rode horses to the mouth of the Siq, the traditional entrance to Petra itself. It's a very narrow, winding slot canyon between walls of sandstone so high the sun never reaches the canyon floor. The walk through the Siq was awesome and a bit eerie, and at the end we stepped suddenly into full sunlight to face The Treasury, or Khazneh, a huge temple carved into the golden-colored sandstone. If you have seen *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade*, you have seen that view. For me, it was a jaw-



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dropping, stop-in-your-tracks experience.

A World Heritage Site, Petra includes both Nabatean and Roman structures: scores of tombs carved into wildly colored sandstone formations, temples such as the Treasury, the Palace, and the Monastery (El Deir), the Roman amphitheater, and the Roman Colonnaded Street.



One morning, wisely nixing a strenuous hike to the "High Place," I stayed on the valley floor. A beautiful, peaceful experience — cool early morning air,

a quiet bustle of camel drivers and shopkeepers, and, blessedly, no tourists. I bought a little airline bottle full of multicolored Petra sand that I still treasure, and relaxed and drank-in this exotic place.

On our way to Egypt we went to Wadi Rum, the actual site of Lawrence of Arabia's exploits in WWI and of the *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* rock formation that inspired his book's title.

Benefitting from recent treaties, we were one of the first groups to go

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from Jordan into Israel, via the famous Allenby Bridge, and then to Egypt (Israeli security made it an unpleasant experience). Our destination, St. Catherine's

Monastery, is the oldest active Christian monastery in the world. Its library contains the oldest Bible in the world, the Codex Sinaiticus. It is a Greek manuscript from the middle of the 4th century and the most famous of the manuscripts in the monastery's library, which also has the world's largest surviving collection of Byzantine bindings.

The monastery guards the Burning Bush—thriving in a corner of the courtyard – and its refectory walls are covered with graffiti carved by crusaders in the 12th Century when the monastery was a safe haven and hospital for both sides. The trip to the monastery was through the driest, bleakest desert that Tom, who has been in a bunch of deserts, has ever seen.

We ended our adventure on a ferry, from Egypt back to Aqaba, that was filled with white-clad pilgrims headed to Mecca. It was all a great trip that I have treasured ever since.

## Library Corner ~

## Acquisitions November 2024

By Martha Nell Beatty

### ***The Dark Hours ~ Renee Ballard & Harry Bosch Novel 3 ~ F ~ 2022***

Michael Connelly

A brazen killer strikes on New Year's Eve in Los Angeles.

### ***Eruption ~ F ~ 2024***

Michael Crichton

An eruption is about to destroy the island of Hawaii but there is a secret held by the US military that is far more terrifying.

### ***Six Cats a Slain' ~ A Cat in the Stacks Mystery 10 ~ F ~ 2018***

Miranda James

Just before Christmas, Charlie and his cat Diesel must turn their attention to the murder of their neighbor.

### ***The Wager: A Tale of Shipwreck, Mutiny and Murder ~ NF ~ 2023***

David Grann

Set in 1740s this is a true story of a British ship that embarked on a secret mission from England to Spain. And much went amiss.

### ***The Invisible Life of Addie LaRue ~ F ~ 2023***

V E Schwab

A young woman makes a Faustian bargain to live forever. Follow

Addie for 300 years starting in 1714.

### ***Point Deception ~ Soledad Country Series Book 1 ~ F ~ 2016***

Marcia Muller

A young woman's body washes ashore a day after her broken down car was spotted on the highway. A young female sheriff's deputy is on the case.

### ***Hour Game ~ King & Maxwell Series ~ F ~ 2023***

David Baldacchi

Two ex-secret service agents are hired to defend a man's innocence in a burglary involving an aristocratic family.

*And from resident Tom King, completing his Death Series*

### ***Death Warrant ~ Death Series ~ F ~ 2020***

Tom King

Young engineer Mark Bronson tries to find out who is targeting him, as his partner is wounded by some of her own SFPD compatriots.

### ***Death Trap ~ Death Series ~ F ~ 2021***

Tom King

From shark autopsy to creative car thefts, this tells a story of the murderous revenge of a kid separated from his family, and the pursuit by Mark Bronson and partner Darlene Edwards, an SFPD detective.

## Martin Nolan: Mightier Than the Sword

*Book review by Mia Cotton Harlock*

Not many of us can add the following to our list of achievements:

- Interviewed **twelve** US presidents
- Been on Nixon's Enemy List
- Won a Pulitzer
- Met with Yasser Arafat
- Coined the phrase "Joe Six-Pack"

But your pal Marty Nolan can.

Nolan rose to prominence as a reporter and Washington DC Bureau Chief for The Boston Globe. His career spanned four tumultuous decades when political stakes often intersected with the soul of our nation.

Marty's philosophy on writing was to "poke" people, and he did that with aplomb. For those who've read or followed his work, you know he reported not just to inform, but to illuminate. He didn't view history as a static retelling of events but as a vibrant narrative shaped by human ambition, folly, and resilience. Or as one might call it, the political three-act play (since the dawn of man).

Whether profiling political titans or dissecting the machine of Washington, his pen wielded equal parts empathy and skepticism.

In *Boys on the Bus*, a 1973 book on campaign journalism, the author, Timothy Crouse, described Martin, then in his mid-30s, as: "A witty man... with the unshaven, slack-jawed, nuts-to-you-too look of a bartender in a sailors' cafe." But Marty had more than wit, he was a compassionate American with deep respect for democratic ideals and those who pursued them.

It may come as no surprise that following Marty's storied career, the Oral History Center of The Bancroft Library at UC Berkeley approached him for a book of interviews about his life. Fortunately for all of us, that book was recently published and it's available in our very own Stucky Library. Do yourself a favor and give Marty's fascinating life a read.

*Conversations with Martin F. Nolan: Boston Globe Reporter, Washington Bureau Chief, Editorial Page Editor, 1961–2001*, conducted by Lisa Rubens in 2023.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Martin\\_Nolan\\_\(journalist\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Martin_Nolan_(journalist))



## 2025 Resident Council President

Margaret Jacobs with a chihuahua from the Muttville Cuddle Club



*Photo by Nancy Trogman*