

# The villa Voice

Villa Serena

November, 2019

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Number 2

Three things began on the first of November this year. The month, of course, but also Winter and the Christmas season. It was on that day that cars had to be cleared of snow for the first time, and on the 11<sup>th</sup> we woke up to three inches of white, cold, global warming, and commentary by the TV weathermen, on seeing record low temperatures everywhere east of the Rockies, that this kind of weather just doesn't happen so early in the year. That afternoon the TV ads were announcing *Pre-Black Friday* sales. All this, and we hadn't even begun to think about Thanksgiving yet. One could be forgiven for thinking that they're just after your money.

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We made it through our first issue and nobody complained about our efforts. We'd like to think that indicates satisfaction, but we can't help wondering if it just might mean apathy. Ah well, let's think positively.

Last month, we devoted some space to a review of the history of this newsletter; this month, Tom Pitrone, the President of the Saint Francis Foundation, the Villa Serena's sponsoring group, has responded to our request for more information concerning how our home came to be the fine place that it is. Coming here in 1996,

we noticed that this area had everything but department stores, (we were happy to be in a location with easy access to an Interstate highway), and within a short while they built a Target and a Wal-Mart. Tom's excellent, concise memoir answered many of the questions we had about this place of ours, and our thanks to him for that. We suppose that the majority of our residents have never met Tom, but at least now you will know some of what he has gone through to keep this place running smoothly and to maintain and modernize it. If you don't know what we mean, ask some of the old-timers how winter winds used to affect us before the new windows were installed.

We also have an article by Linton Sharpnack, St. Francis' Executive Director, about his oral history project. Most of us have seen him in the big office off the Dining Room, talking to folks and recording interviews; now you'll know what that's all about, and what he is trying to achieve.

So now we look forward to the holidays, relatives that we see so seldom, overeating, and returning gifts. We still want to hear from you if you have any of these C's; Comments, Corrections, Contributing submissions, or Criticisms (be gentle, our feelings are easily hurt). *Can you believe it's almost 2020?*

The Villa Voice  
Of the  
St. Francis Founda-  
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and Villa Serena  
Senior Citizens Cen-  
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*November*



## *How did we get here?*

### **Tom Tells The Villa Serena Story**

In 1957, Frank Alesci, an immigrant, entrepreneur, and man of Faith, joined with friends to form the St. Francis Foundation (SFF). Their purpose was to “promote and encourage aid to the distressed and helpless.” A centerpiece of their vision was to create a retirement home for low-income seniors. And it *was* a “vision.” In his pamphlet, “The Spiritual Dream of the St. Francis Foundation and the Villa Serena,” Mr. Alesci describes being visited by Jesus. Mr. Alesci was instructed to build a home for the elderly indigent people of Cleveland. SFF struggled to realize the vision until they met Howard Chesler. With his help in 1963, they received a \$3 million loan through the Housing and Home Financing Agency (HHFA) Section 202 Program to build a high-rise apartment building. They formed a new corporation, Villa Serena, Inc., to be the real estate arm of the organization. They acquired the land, drafted plans, and retained developers. Before the opening, HHFA contacted SFF to say there was a problem. The SFF Board was only 12 people. HHFA was reticent to make a 50-year, \$3 million loan to a group of twelve.; they required SFF to find a co-signer with perpetuity. Frank Pitrone, then president of SFF, contacted Micky Rini, then regional vice president of the Order of the Italian Sons and Daughters of America (ISDA). Mr. Rini agreed to the ISDA becoming the co-sponsor of Villa Serena. The building opened in February of 1965. Since then, The Villa has provided remarkably affordable housing for a community in a great location to seniors of every background, and the ample shopping, easy access, nearby medical resources, and great views have made the Villa an fine example of what can be accomplished for them.

The Villa Serena Corporation was to serve as the real estate arm of the SFF. It was the hope of the Board to develop additional buildings in other cities with large Italian immigrant populations, but that never happened. As a result, many of the members lost interest in the

project. After Mr. Alesci’s death, only Frank Pitrone and Howard Chesler remained actively involved in keeping the Villa alive.

Mr. Pitrone died in 1991, and Mr. Chesler died a few years later. Mr. Pitrone’s son, Tom, took over the leadership of the SFF. Mr. Rini’s son, Bob, acted as the Treasurer. Together, they kept the vision alive.

They faced some challenges that were difficult to overcome. The Villa had no rent subsidy, which meant that the tenants had to pay the full amount of the rent. Mr. Chesler had kept the rents remarkably low, but the result of that policy was that there was little money for upkeep. Problems arose:

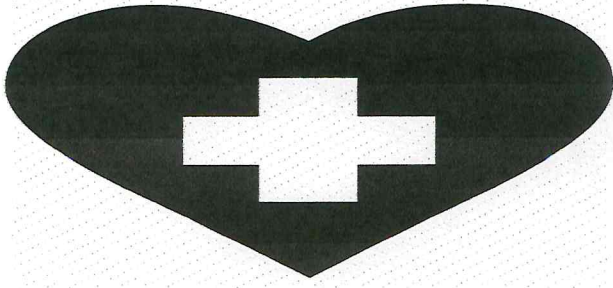
+ In the 1990’s, faults in the brickwork appeared. Bricks started falling off the building. Tom and Bob, with the cooperation of the ISDA, secured a loan from the county to make the necessary repairs.

+ In 2009, the cost of natural gas was at its peak. The Villa still had the original boilers. Heating costs were tens of thousands of dollars that winter, but Tom and Bob were able to qualify everyone in the building for a state heating subsidy, and to get a grant through the county to acquire new boilers. To maximize the effect of the new boilers, new windows and a new roof were added as an additional part of the package.

+ At fifty years of operation and the maturity of the mortgage, the Villa needed many repairs and updates. The SFF began a search for a partner to renew and revitalize Mr. Alesci’s vision. In 2014, Vesta Corporation, a national real estate management company was made a partner in achieving our goals.

While Villa Serena will continue to be the primary focus of the SFF, the Board is determined to expand its work. Intergenerational service projects and scholarship programs are on the agenda for this Board with its fifty-plus year record of community service. *We hope our future will be part of yours.*

Tom Pitrone, President



From The American Heart Association

## ***Heart Attack and Stroke Warnings***

As we get older, it's realistic to face facts about this subject, so here are the Heart Association's warning signs for these emergency conditions.

### Heart Attack Warning Signs

Some heart attacks are sudden and intense, but most of them start slowly, with mild pain or discomfort. Look for these signs:

- Chest Discomfort. Most heart attacks involve discomfort in the center of the chest that lasts more than a few minutes, or that goes away and comes back. It can feel like uncomfortable pressure, squeezing, fullness, or pain.
- Discomfort in other areas of the upper body. Symptoms can include pain or discomfort in one or both arms, the back, neck, jaw, or stomach.
- Shortness of breath. This feeling often comes along with chest discomfort.
- Other signs may include breaking out in a cold sweat, nausea, or lightheadedness.

If you or someone you are with has one or more of these signs, call 9-1-1 at once. Get to the hospital right away. If it is you, and you can't access emergency medical services (EMS), have someone drive you to the hospital. Don't drive yourself unless there is no other option.

### Stroke Warning Signs

Stroke is a medical emergency. Every second counts, because time lost is brain lost! Know these stroke warnings and share them with others:

- Sudden numbness or weakness of the face, arm, or leg, especially on one side of the body.
- Sudden confusion, or trouble speaking or understanding.
- Sudden trouble seeing in one or both eyes.
- Sudden trouble walking, dizziness, or loss of balance or coordination.
- Sudden, severe headache for no known cause.

If you or someone with you has one or more of these signs, *do not delay!* Call 9-1-1 EMS immediately so that an ambulance, ideally one with advanced life support, can come. Also, check the time so you'll know when the first symptoms appeared. It's important to take immediate action. If given within three hours of the start of symptoms, a clot-busting drug can reduce long term disability for the most common type of stroke.

For more information, contact your nearest American Heart Association office or call

1-800-242-8721

or go online at [www.heart.org](http://www.heart.org)





### *Linton Listens... to you!*

It's good to be able to greet you through The Villa Voice. For those of you who have been here for a few years, you know we have been on a three year break. I would like to thank Mike Ward for his continued support as editor. We will be encouraging suggestions as to how to improve our communications. I am planning on placing an article in most editions of the Voice so that you are up to speed on the direction taken by the Saint Francis Foundation.

You might have wondered what the heck I was doing in my office by the Dining Room, talking to people and using a video recorder. Because of the incredible people who are our residents, and their unique experiences, the Foundation is focusing on your oral histories. Oral histories are the systematic collection of the living testimonies of an individual's own experiences. In other words, it is you telling your accounts of your experiences as you remember them. This could be a story about your past, something you saw or did, a lesson for the next generation to learn, or a testimony about what you did or accomplished; there is no wrong approach to an oral history.

**LEAVE SOMETHING OF WHO YOU ARE FOR THE FUTURE!**

We are a member of the Oral History

Association. This Association is the largest, most reputable, program of its type, and sets policies and guidelines throughout the world. The Saint Francis Foundation participates in cooperation with the Oral History Association to ensure the highest quality in our program. We urge you, as strongly as we can, to participate in this program; please see me to discuss what is involved, and why you might want to commit the time to become a part of history. You might discover that you will enjoy the program.

To date, I have interviewed six people and have found their stories to be fascinating. The topics have been varied and reflect the life experiences of our participants as they have remembered them.

My door is always open when I am here, which is during the day on Mondays, Tuesdays, and Thursdays. I hope we can get to know each other soon.

— Linton Sharpnack  
Executive Director

### *Plastic Bag Update*

The County Council passed a law some while ago that will forbid plastic bags in all stores after the end of the year. This will affect the stores we shop in unless the city takes action to opt out of compliance.



When we called City Hall to see what was happening, we couldn't get a response either way. We'll keep trying, but be aware fact that you may have to provide the bags if you want them.

## ***Consumer Reports Magazine on Automobile Insurance***

While there are places in the U.S. where car insurance rates have stayed about the same, the average annual premium nationwide has risen about 23% since 2011. It's now at its highest: \$1,470 per year. Consumer Reports did a survey and found that 22% of respondents had changed insurers within the last five years, 62% said they had found a better price, and 77% of those who switched were highly satisfied with their new insurance carrier.

A number of forces are behind surges in car insurance prices. Severe weather that causes more accidents and car damage, more vehicle thefts, and high-tech car features which are costly to repair are some. Distracted driving is up, and getting caught texting may raise your premium. Low gas prices have led to more drivers logging more miles and having more accidents. Also, people whose rates have increased may have added a new vehicle, put a teen driver on the policy, or had an accident or two. For those who saw a rate rise, the average increase was a whopping 44%.

Still, most people stay with the same carrier. An expert at the Consumer Federation of America says that it is critical to shop frequently for auto insurance. How to be a smart shopper? Shop annually. Focus on claims-settlement experience and price. Look beyond the big national carriers. A number of insurers who are top rated are medium-sized or regional, or are directed toward professional or membership groups. If you decide to stay put, ask your carrier for a discount based on your car's depreciation.

Don't skimp on insurance in these four important areas:

### **Liability Insurance**

Most states require a minimum level of liability coverage, which protect your financial assets in case of a lawsuit after a car crash. But experts say it's smart to go beyond those minimums if you can afford to do so. A more protective amount of coverage is \$100,000 per person, \$300,000 per accident, and \$100,000 for property damage.

### **Uninsured Motorist Coverage**

Inn some states, this coverage is optional. But with 1 in 8 drivers on the road without insurance, which has been a constant statistic for more than two decades, it's a worthwhile spend. It pays medical bills for you and your passengers after an accident caused by an uninsured, at-fault driver. Why get it in a no-fault state? Because it reimburses for lost wages after a crash. It also covers you and your household as pedestrians, and in hit-and-run accidents.

### **Underinsured Coverage**

This indemnifies you after a crash with a driver who has only the state's minimum required liability coverage.

### **Full Glass Coverage**

Auto glass that integrates advanced driver assist systems is more costly to replace. A mounted lane departure warning camera, for instance, can add \$350 to a windshield's price, plus \$300 for recalibration. This non-deductible coverage is useful when insurance won't fully cover the cost to replace glass. In states where it's offered, it can cost as little as \$10 per year.

## ***Words and Music***



Some multitalented artists have had the capacity to compose terrific music *and* write their own lyrics. In opera, the prime example of that was Richard Wagner, and on Broadway, George M. Cohan, Irving Berlin, and Stephen Sondheim come to mind. But our favorite has always been Cole Porter, whose scores, with their far-fetched rhymes and innuendos are always very amusing. Here's an example from *Kiss Me Kate* (which made a very entertaining movie in case you run across it on TCM.)

### ***Always True to You in My Fashion***

If a custom-tailored vet  
Asks me out for something wet,  
When the vet begins to pet, I cry "Hooray!"  
But I'm always true to you, darlin', in my fashion,  
Yes, I'm always true to you, darlin', in my way.  
I enjoy a tender pass  
By the boss of Boston, Mass.,  
Though his pass is middle-class and not Back Bay.  
But I'm always true to you, darlin', in my fashion,  
Yes I'm always true to you darlin', in my way.  
There's a madman known as Mack  
Who is planning to attack,  
If his mad attack means a Cadillac, okay!  
But I'm always true to you darlin', in my fashion,  
Yes I'm always true to you darlin', in my way.  
  
I've been asked to have a meal  
With a big tycoon in steel,  
If the meal includes a deal, accept I may.  
But I'm always true to you darlin', in my fashion,  
Yes I'm always true to you darlin', in my way.  
I could never curl my lip

To a dazzling' diamond clip,  
Though the clip meant "let 'er rip," I'd not say "Nay!"  
But I'm always true to you darlin', in my fashion ,  
Yes I'm always true to you darlin', in my way.

There's an oilman known as Tex  
Who is keen to give me checks,  
And his checks, I fear, mean that sex is here to stay!  
But I'm always true to you darlin', in my fashion,  
Yes, I'm always true to you darlin', in my way.  
There's a lush from Portland, Ore.,  
Who is rich but sich a bore,  
When the bore falls on the floor, I let him lay.  
But I'm always true to you darlin', in my fashion,  
Yes, I'm always true to you darlin', in my way.  
Mister Harris, plutocrat,  
Wants to give my cheek a pat,  
If the Harris pat  
Means a Paris hat,  
Bébé, Oo-la-la!  
Mais je suis toujours fidèle, darlin', in my fashion,  
Oui, je suis toujours fidèle, darlin', in my way.

From Ohio Mister Thorne,  
Calls me up from night 'til morn,  
Mr. Thorne once cornered corn and that ain't hay,  
But I'm always true to you darlin', in my fashion,  
Yes, I'm always true to you darlin', in my way.  
From Milwaukee Mister Fritz,  
Often moves me to the Ritz,  
Mister Fritz is full of Schlitz and full of play,  
But I'm always true to you darlin', in my fashion,  
Yes I'm always true to you darlin', in my way.  
Mister Gable, I mean Clark,  
Wants me on his boat to park,  
If the Gable boat  
Means a sable coat,  
Anchors aweigh!  
But I'm always true to you darlin', in my fashion,  
Yes, I'm always true to you darlin', in my way.

**Hillcrest Hospital Is  
Highly Ranked by  
National Magazine**



Our next door neighbor is thought of quite highly by *U.S. News & World Report*, which ranks hospitals nationally. They put Hillcrest 4<sup>th</sup> in the Cleveland area, and 5<sup>th</sup> in the state in quality care, with high performance ratings in adult specialties. So, God forbid you or anyone you know end up there, but you'll be well treated if so.

**Free Men's  
Haircuts**

LaBarberia Institute of Hair, at Golden Gate Shopping Center will give you a free haircut from one of their students. Just let them know you live here and they will oblige.



For details, call  
**216-258-2588**

**Christmas Tree Trimming Party**



**Wednesday,  
December 4<sup>th</sup>  
1:00 P.M.**

Come join the fun and contribute your artistic talents.

*Refreshments, music, 50/50 raffle  
with multiple prizes*

**See you there!**

# BINGO

**November & December Schedule**

Join us on Tuesdays. No Saturday games until the New Year

Doors open at 5:30

Early-Bird Special (fast games) at 5:45

10 games begin at 6:30

Note: 50/50 raffle — \$1 for 3 tickets

2 Fill-ups (games 5 and 10)

Cost: 1 singles book of 10 games, \$2.50

1 doubles book of 10 games, \$5.00

*All are welcome! Come and join your friends and neighbors. You might be the next winner!*

— Thanks to Sandi for this update

**Villa Serena's Weekly Art Classes**

Cat McB's classes covering various aspects of art work continue on Thursdays from 2 to 4 P.M., at the tables outside the Dining Room. These popular classes are attracting residents who appreciate the wide diversity of subjects and the pleasure which comes from a sense of accomplishment.

Come join Cat and your friends in this fun activity.





***Superfoods --  
Better Health  
Through A  
Better Diet***

**Celery:** Good for high blood pressure, boosts digestion and lowers inflammation.

**Cucumbers:** Help the digestive tract, cleans pores, draws toxins out of the skin.

**Kale:** Rich source of anti-cancer chemicals, high in iron and calcium, builds bones good for the eyes and skin.

**Spinach:** Lowers blood pressure, best anti-cancer veggie, loaded with protein.

**Carrots:** Reduce risk of stroke, helps eyes,

boosts immune system.

**Apples:** lower cholesterol and risk of cancer, aids regularity.

**Lemons:** Boost immune system, help wounds heal, aids digestion, purifies blood.

**Ginger:** used to treat nausea, vomiting, headaches, colds, chest congestion, stomach ache.

**Garlic:** Antibiotic, combats bacteria, intestinal parasites, viruses, lowers blood pressure and cholesterol, calming effect.

**Cayenne Pepper:** Opens sinuses, breaks up mucus in lungs, speeds up metabolism, alleviates headaches.

**Beets:** Immunity booster, high in iron.

**Wheatgrass:** Detoxifier.

*Let us know what you're thinking: how would you like to see this newsletter improved? Have you any suggestions, or questions you would like to have answered? Would you like to submit an item that we could consider for publication? Should we look into a different area from those we have mentioned? Give us your comments or criticisms (you won't hurt our feelings). Make it anonymous if you prefer.*

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Your Name \_\_\_\_\_ Apt.# \_\_\_\_\_ Birthday \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_ (\_\_\_\_)