



# ACACIA CREEK JOURNAL

WRITTEN BY RESIDENTS, FOR RESIDENTS

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## Acacia Creek Celebrates 10 years!



The Acacia Creek 10th Anniversary party happened on March 12, 2020. It started in front of the ice sculpture commemorating the importance of this occasion. Servers circulated with champagne cocktails and terrific appetizers which put everyone in a celebratory mood. The Dining Room was decorated with large balloons spelling out the

number "10". The grand entrance began with a staff parade around the Dining Room singing "We are Family".

Following the invocation by resident Jim McLeod, Chuck Major welcomed the residents and introduced the Master of Ceremonies for the evening, Jeffrey Dillon. He then announced that the band had cancelled earlier in the day due to the threat of the Coronavirus.



Jeffrey, the good sport that he is, explained how he too was going to have to make up the program as he went along. He brought in a local DJ to provide the music and play musical requests. Since Jeffrey was part of the original staff 10 years ago, he was able to share funny stories about the move-in experience for those early residents.

Residents enjoyed a lovely dinner of filet mignon and a yummy chocolate dessert with touches of gold leaf to celebrate the occasion. The food service went off like clockwork, and everyone was served very quickly. Kudos to Madelane's team of servers and our terrific kitchen staff led by Chef Fernando.

Jeffrey introduced the mystery guest of the evening, "Cher", a terrific female impersonator who amused everyone with her dancing style and lip-syncing to Cher's



songs. Cher appeared to be very tall (she was actually, 6'2" with 6" heels), as was confirmed later when she posed with several of our tallest residents and towered over them by several inches. The dance floor was very popular as residents, staff and Cher danced. Martin Herter brought the evening to a close acknowledging where we are today. "Cheers to 10 years and may your future be full of good health and friendship."

By Sophie Hudnut

(see pages 7-8 for additional photos of the event)



As required by the United States Constitution, the U.S. Census has been conducted every 10 years since 1790. It is used to count every person in the 50 states, Washington D.C. and the United States' five territories, regardless whether you're a United States citizen or undocumented immigrant. The results of the 2020 census will determine the number of seats for each state in the House of Representatives, which mirrors the number of delegates for each state in the Electoral College, for elections in 2022 to 2030.

The 2020 census is the first in which most people are being encouraged to answer the questions online at [2020census.gov](https://2020census.gov), though people can still answer the questionnaire by telephone or by mail. If you choose to answer over the phone, the number to answer in English is 844-330-2020.

According to the Census Bureau about 80% of the households receiving mailings will get notices about how to answer the questions online and about 20% of

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# United States Census 2020

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households will automatically receive a paper ballot, especially if there are large numbers of seniors in their neighborhood or levels of

internet connectivity are low. Officials are monitoring the spread of the Coronavirus. If the pandemic continues, census workers can drop off the questionnaires at homes, hoping that people will respond on their own.

There are 7 questions:

1. The number of people living or staying at your home on April 1, 2020.
2. Whether the home is owned or rented.
3. The sex of each person in the household
4. The age of each person in the household
5. The race of each person in the household,
7. The relationship of each person in the household to each other.

Do my questions get shared? No. Your answers are legally protected from being shared and are not given to any other federal agency or law enforcement.

The results of the census are used for a variety of reasons, including helping to determine how federal funding is used. As the census website explains: "The results will show where communities need new schools, new clinics, new roads, and more services for families, older adults and children. The results will also inform how hundreds of billions of dollars in federal funding are allocated to more than 100 programs such as Medicaid, Head Start, block grants for community mental health services, and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, also known as SNAP."

**Update on Census questions:** I called Martha Alston in Marketing to double-check how to answer "Whether your home is owned or rented". Martha's response was "Since residents do not own real estate at Acacia Creek - they will select the 'Rent' answer". The resident monthly fee and the "one-time security deposit" entrance fee allows residents the right to reside in their apartment home for as long as they can at the independent or assisted level with one CNA caregiver.

Some Acacia Creek residents have received two envelopes with two different Census IDs. This appears to be due to small address variations. If this happens to you, and you want to respond online, simply choose the Census ID associated with the preferred address. If you need help completing the Census form, Nancy Nguyen will be available to provide assistance.

By Marilyn Kromrey



Dear Residents,

Happy Spring! Many areas around the campus have sprung to life and most flowers are blooming nicely, and the boy turkeys are getting frisky... I know that many of us are ready for sunnier and warmer days.

We appreciate your cooperation during these trying times. Please continue to practice "Social Distancing" to keep yourself and others safe and help promoting the spread of the COVID-19 virus. With that in mind, enjoy a walk or hike around the campus. If you have a friend or neighbor joining you, we practice 6 feet distance outside as well. Please keep reading memos that are sent out and watch the news for local updates. **Happy Easter and Passover!**

Cheers,  
Martin Herter

## Staff Spotlight



Charanjiv Singh

Charanjiv Singh, known to us as Charan, began work at Acacia Creek 5 years ago. She was a caregiver then, and two years later, a concierge. Charan is again a caregiver, but she will be leaving us soon.

Charan will study at University of Buffalo to earn her

Master of Public Health, Administration (MPH Adm)! She recently graduated from San Jose State University (SJSU) with a Bachelor of Science (BS), Public Health option.

Her family is so proud of her as she is the first in the family to earn a college degree, and now to study for a master's degree! She will join her sister who lives in Buffalo now.

We at Acacia Creek are happy and proud to know Charan and of all her achievements  
Congratulations Charan!

By Clarice Hill

## Ants and Orchids

Remember the endless war against the ants when you were a homeowner? Those ants are at Acacia Creek. They almost ran Penny Vittoria out of her office near the gym. In the Bay Area, the Argentine, or honey ants, are part of a super organism that extends from Oregon to Mexico. When they arrived, they ruthlessly wiped out the native ants in the vicinity. They are one of the most successful species in the animal kingdom.



My first contact with these ants occurred in our side yard where we had composted a peach pit that turned into a peach tree. The honey ants set up shop near the base of the tree. As

spring approached, they brought black-bean aphids up into the tree that they had cared for during the winter. They use aphids to obtain sap from the greening tips of the peach tree.

I decided to trap the ants in the tree by smearing grease around the trunk. I screwed together a pair of picture frames, filling the space between with dirt. It was an ant treehouse.



The ants made an attempt to use it by mining a ventilation tunnel just below the surface with side vents going up to the surface. Below that was the beginning of a living area. It didn't work; it was too hot. Other ants were taking the challenge head on. They marched into the grease making themselves into a bridge for their fellow workers to cross.

Paleoanthropologists have found ants that were encased in amber 140 million years ago. They have barely changed their DNA since then. With brains smaller than a pin head it is their social mind that has

secured their survival through great climatic changes, not their DNA.

Honey ants have been found up as far the 3rd floor. They have been attracted to a dwarf cymbidium on Bill and Audrey Cutler's porch. While ants represent an epitome of animal adaptation, family Orchidaceae is their green counterpart. They are the largest family of flowering plants in the world. Approximately twenty thousand species and nine hundred genera of orchids are known including cymbidiums which do well here. Orchids can reproduce by offsets and cuttings, but they also reproduce sexually. Orchid seeds are minute; they have no yolk. An orchid seed cannot germinate until a fungus has colonized it. It is the orchid that controls the fungus, becoming its connection to sap of another plant. Ants use aphids; orchids use fungus. The fungus recolonizes itself to benefit the orchid while it gets nothing in return. Orchids have also attracted us with no return long before we invented anthill-like civilizations with orchid gardens.



The dark-red markings on the lip of the labellum petal that surrounds the pistil and stamen of the cymbidium flower are intriguing. Could they be a signal to honey ants that they are among friends worshipping at the altar? Possibly. But it is only the perfume leading to the nectar that gets the ants attention, and that is all they need. This could be a staging area for evolution,

however, where DNA can be sorted out or redirected behaviorally.

Some solitary bees and wasps are attracted by orchids that produce a perfume that mimics the smell of a fertile female. While intoxicated males stumble around looking for the origin of that special aroma, fertilization may occur. By a prolonged process of bait and switch, some orchids produce pistils and stamens joined into a single hermaphroditic reproductive organ called the column. It resembles a female insect reproductive organ. While older males come to recognize this deception, it does enhance the interest of young males. This is one of many environmental influences that can help compensate for inbreeding depression in an orchid with a hermaphroditic column. Another thing that improves an orchid's breeding success is the controlled environment of a greenhouse. Help from friendly fungi and intoxicated insect gardeners has enabled orchids to live in many ecological niches including greenhouse-raised boutonnières worn for the wedding of human couples.

By CJ Becker

# Resident Spotlight



Carole Silva

Carole Silva's life has included an amazing variety with a love of music, literature, and working with students. Born in Oakland, there was music in her family, including a grandfather who was a concert violinist. Carole took piano lessons and then later began to play the violin, her special love. In the 1940s when elementary schools had orchestras, she played the violin. Then in junior high she was also in the orchestra where she played the bass viol. In high school, the concert orchestra and concert band became her endeavor. In the marching band, Carole played the Glockenspiel, as the bass could not be carried when marching! When her high school band played in San Jose in the State Band Competition, they won first place. This band also played during half-time at a Berkeley football game, when the opposing team band was not able to attend.

Although Carole wanted to major in music at Mills College, her father wanted her to choose a practical field, resulting in her choice of a degree in business but with a minor in music. Following this, she obtained an MA in Education and then a PhD in Educational Leadership, at the University of Southern California. In her career, Carole first taught music in elementary school but then moved on to leadership roles. As a member of the Los Angeles Council of the Freedom Foundation of Philadelphia, her role was to take inner city AP history students to Washington D.C and to Philadelphia to help them understand the Constitution and history of our country. She later served as its Vice

president for eight years.

Realizing that music has an effect on the development of the brain as well as lifting one's spirit, Carole became part of Los Angeles Music Center Association where she was invited to do research on this topic. She studied how music will help 4<sup>th</sup> graders to learn to read. It has also been demonstrated that music helps those with Autism.

As a reading specialist, Carole became involved with the International Literacy Association (ILA) and traveled to six of the seven continents. During these trips she became involved in a program called "People to People Ambassadors". In this program the Ambassadors visited professors and students of other countries to share ideas with them. Carole is still involved in the American Literacy Corporation where she served on the Board of Directors for ten years and presently serves on their advisory board.

After moving into the Masonic Home, Carole became involved in organizing a joint Bell Choir on the campus. In September 2016, the first Bell Choir practice started under her direction. They played twice at the lighting of the Masonic Home Christmas Tree, and play at our Lorber Nursing Home several times each year. The joint choir has also given concerts for the Rotary Club, Masonic Auditorium and at Acacia Creek.

Masons have been an important part of Carole's life, with her father and husband both Masons. Her husband had the privilege of conducting the ceremony for her father's reception of his 53 year membership pin. Carole has lived five years in the Masonic Home, with the most recent 1½ years of those here at Acacia Creek. She enjoys working in the Masonic Home garden outside of the Adams building and also enjoys serving as a bartender at our own Turkey Roost and the MH gift shop. As you can see, there is no boredom in Carole's life, a life of giving to others.

By Sharon Pickering



# Meal Changes due to Coronavirus

As everyone is aware, the Coronavirus pandemic reached Acacia Creek in the form of “shelter-in-place” and “social distancing” guidelines starting March 15, 2020. In order to accommodate this mandate by the governor of California, the Dining Room is now closed, and meals must be delivered to each resident’s apartment. While the kitchen was used to preparing food 3 times per day for about 190 residents at dinner and plus another 50-75 breakfasts, now the food must be cooked, packaged and bagged for each meal according to each individual resident request. Fortunately for residents, with the exception of the salad bar and ice cream selections, residents can continue to order breakfast, lunch and dinner from the existing menus. The burden of delivering food daily has fallen primarily on Dining Room servers. Manager Madelane Ramos has adapted her existing “to go” system to support the substantially increased volume of deliveries.

Chef Fernando Gaeta explains that the kitchen is being faced with new and unexpected challenges each day. While he relies on his food suppliers to provide the usual food orders, deliveries can become unpredictable as in the case of a dessert supplier who has cancelled his orders. In addition, standing orders for items such as fat-free milk are no longer adequate, suggesting that some meal items are being ordered more frequently than in the past. Although basic cooking techniques remain the same, timing is now a factor, since the cooks must plan for plating food that

will not be eaten immediately. And of course, all workers dealing with food must wash their hands frequently with soap and water.

The current process for ordering meals goes something like this.

Residents call the order line the day before. Meal requests are sorted by type of food and tallied for the kitchen in preparation for cooking the next day.

The requests are attached to bags, sorted by floor, and by type of food to facilitate easy



assembly in the kitchen. One of the benefits for residents is server familiarity with resident “meal personality”. For instance, if the resident orders baked potatoes or rolls, butter and/or sour cream will be included automatically even if not specified in the order; containers of salad dressing are provided with salad orders. Finally, once the bags are filled with the appropriate orders, they are loaded onto a cart by floor,

and the delivery team of 2 servers delivers to each floor; they ring the apartment doorbell and set the bag on the floor in front of the door. While your food may not be as warm as you’d like, it does mean that you don’t have to go outside to shop for food.

Most residents are taking advantage of this takeout option. If a resident fails to call in an order before the 5pm cutoff, the folks on the order line will call to make sure you didn’t forget to place your order. This allows staff to know that you are okay or have made other plans for your meal(s) the next day.

The cooks and servers are doing a great job of keeping AC residents fed in a timely manner. Fernando and Madelane are very proud of their teams, even the newest cooks and servers, for their hard work and efficiency in this crisis. We are very fortunate to have such a great team supporting us.



By Sophie Hudnut

## Gardening at Acacia Creek

How many of you have walked by the flower boxes outside the pool or at the end of the pickle ball court and enjoyed the colorful variety of flowers and plants?

And did you ever wonder how they got started there?

Well, this is not one of the many services provided by Acacia Creek but by our own Judy Buchanan.

Before she moved here, she had a big garden and her whole front yard was filled with flowers. Judy moved here about six years ago and noticed the empty flower boxes.

She asked if she might be able to get them flourishing again and of course the answer was a resounding yes.

With the help of her husband bringing fresh soil in, she just started planting a wide variety of what she liked and it all began to thrive. The Cosmos were so happy they got so tall that they began to fall over. Her children along with Jan Winn gave her some tulip bulbs. The ones you see blooming now are the result of their gifts and her care. (She also has stored the dried-out tulip bulbs in her refrigerator.) The pickle ball boxes are filled with succulents that just need thinning/trimming and new varieties every so often.

These boxes are a constant but joyful job for Judy which she does 2 to 3 times a week to keep them watered, weeded, and thinned, plus the addition of new soil and loving hands. Thanks for your effort, Judy.



The “farm to table” program at the Masonic Home was begun by John Marshall, the dining services coordinator at the Masonic Home. The tomato garden is physically located outside the Adams Building. Carole Silva, Ken Bentley and Byron Corley, now residents at Acacia Creek, continue to participate in this great gardening project. Carole’s love for “farming,” dates back to summers spent with her uncle who raised apricots and plums in San Jose. She got to help pit, dry, and sell them at a small stand. She shared that “the joy of working in the earth is like the Miracle of the Mustard Seed”.

The tomato project starts in the hot house with an assembly line comprised of the three above-named gardeners. They gather and put soil and 4 seeds in each of the 400 + pots. The plants are left in the hot house until they are 5 to 6 inches tall, and then they are each transplanted to their own pot. When they are about 18 inches, they (about 1600 plants) are then moved to the garden where they find their permanent home. Byron waters them by hand until the tarp covering the soil and the irrigation system is installed. From then on, they are fertilized by hand and flourish from May until the end of September. John then uses the tomatoes in as many creative recipes as possible.

At the end of September, the tomato plants are taken down and the ground plowed. But it does not lay fallow—new plants are put in that will grow and then be plowed under to enrich the soil with natural nutrients. And the cycle begins again. 70 to 80 basil and chili

pepper plants are also begun from seed and then planted in the garden area. In the upper yard is the citrus orchard comprised of grapefruit, orange, tangerine and lime trees. The bounty continues.

By Martha Crowe





# Living It

