

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, JANE ELEEY



Dear Members and Friends

Even in the best of times, it is easy to understand why social isolation has been identified as an important threat to the well-being of older individuals. After retirement, our time becomes less structured. Adult children may move away. Some of us may not be as mobile as we once were, making it difficult to get out as often as we would like. A move to an

apartment may take us out of our old, familiar neighborhood. Old, established friendships may begin to dwindle and become more difficult to sustain.

As the Covid-19 pandemic persists, we at Penn's Village know that trying to stay connected has become even more important for maintaining the physical and mental well-being of our members, but at the same time, it has become a goal more difficult to achieve safely. With the threat of breakthrough infections among the vaccinated, the emergence of new variants, and the continuing resistance to getting vaccinated, many of us are not yet feeling comfortable rushing out and "pretending we're back to normal." The big problem is that social isolation is also pervasive, but unlike with the coronavirus, there isn't a vaccine to ease the burden for these emotional/mental health challenges.

The PV Mission is to "assist older neighbors to live independently... by providing caring services and programs that increase social engagement through a network of volunteers." But, actually, there is much more—flourishing new friendships are often formed as a result of these many different types of encounters, be they via Zoom or in person, member to member, volunteer to member, or volunteer to volunteer. There are so many opportunities! The PV interest groups, including a Chat group, an Intergenerational Book group, a Men's group, a Spanish group, and a Writers group. And think about the volunteer activities that range from coordinating service provision, to office support, to providing transportation, to being a companion, to serving as a Health Pal, to grocery shopping, to hanging a picture or fixing a lamp, and much more. Don't forget all the members who work with others on committees to help plan PV special occasions, develop interesting programs, promote PV and our programs to our members and the community, help us work towards inclusiveness and diversity, welcome and support new and existing members, and ensure our financial sustainability.

Every couple of weeks, it seems I hear a story of how a new friendship has burgeoned from one these connections. And every time I hear one of these stories, it bolsters my conviction that, together, we are achieving our Mission, pandemic or no pandemic.

With deep gratitude,



The Date Is Set! February 25



Penn's Village Annual Town Hall Meeting

For meeting time and additional information, please watch for emails from Penn's Village.

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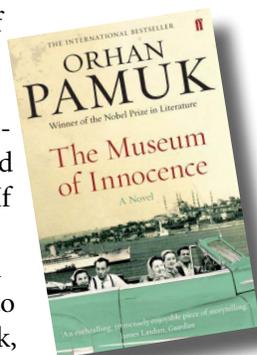
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BOOK REVIEW

The Museum of Innocence by Orhan Pamuk

Reviewed by Dick Levinson

As the dark days of winter descend on us, you may be in the mood for an escape into a new and unfamiliar world. If so, the great Turkish novelist, Orhan Pamuk, has come to your rescue. Pamuk, who won the Nobel Prize for literature in 2006, takes one of the oldest stories in the human story and manages to turn it into a masterpiece.



Welcome to the world of Istanbul, Turkey, as it was in 1975. Kemal, the scion of an old merchant family, is engaged to marry Sibel, a charming and well-educated young woman who is his equal in every respect. This sounds like a recipe for happiness, except that Kemal is involved in a passionate romance with Fusan, a lovely shop girl who becomes an obsession that Kemal is determined not to give up.

These three lives are overshadowed by a dark and disturbing truth. The Turkey of almost fifty years ago is a conservative, Muslim society in which a woman is expected to be a virgin on her wedding day. Should it become known that a particular woman is not a virgin, she may lose the opportunity to become a wife and a mother. The radical idea that women are inherently sexual beings with the right to pursue happiness on their own terms is simply too dangerous to contemplate.

As the date for Kemal's wedding comes closer, his behavior becomes ever stranger and harder for the intelligent and sensitive Sibel to understand. Sensing that their time together is short, Fusan becomes increasingly embittered and angry. Kemal responds in an unexpected way. He creates a shrine to both Fusan and their relationship by collecting as many items associated with her as possible. These cherished items are stored carefully and methodically in an old apartment that Kemal's family owns, but never uses. Kemal creates what he describes as his own Museum of Innocence.

Like all great novelists before him, Pamuk succeeds in delivering not just a handful of memorable characters, but an entire world that is new—and unfamiliar to most of us. If the Turkish Republic is just the latest incarnation of an ancient civilization and a once powerful empire, the people we meet are covetous of all things American and eager to escape to Paris, a place where both Turkish men and women are free to live out their fantasies, at least for a while.

Eventually, Kemal is so elusive and unreachable that Sibel is forced to break their engagement just to salvage her self-respect. Fusan quickly marries for the exact same reason. However, Kemal is determined to have Fusan for himself. It seems that his collection, housed safely in the Museum of Innocence, is simply in its infancy.

Penn's Village welcomes and actively encourages an inclusive and diverse community of members, staff, Board of Directors and volunteers. Inclusiveness and diversity mean welcoming all and excluding no one because of age, race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, physical abilities, religious beliefs or political beliefs.

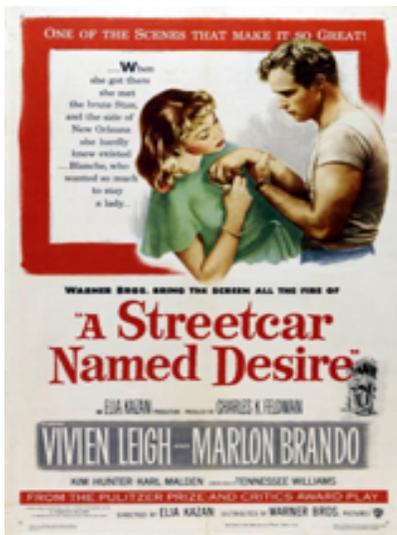
A very sincere thank you to The First Presbyterian Church for generously providing space to Penn's Village and for always being there for us.

ALL AROUND TOWN

Let's take a deep breath as we welcome the New Year and fill it with hope for a safe passage through the continuing pandemic and for a year touched by many good times and much joy. We all could use a little (or a lot) of that!

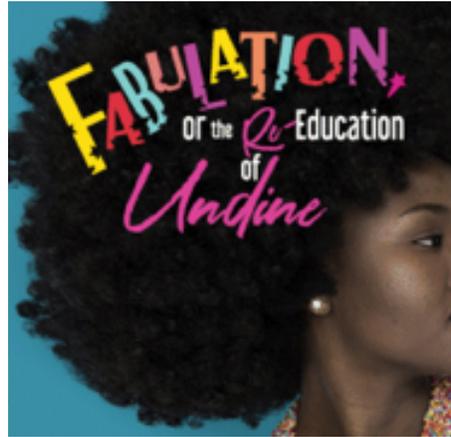
Happy
New
Year

Safety protocols remain in place as we deal with yet another Covid-19 variant, and it would be prudent to check with each venue before making plans. Compliance has resulted in excellent results over the past several months, and although it may be annoying to wear a mask to indoor events, it undoubtedly adds to our safety and security.



The Arden Theatre Company has announced their 2022 season—four shows, opening with *A Streetcar Named Desire*, from January 13 to February 13, and concluding with *Into the Woods* by the late, great Stephen Sondheim, from June 2 to July 3. From February 17 to March 27 is a world premiere play called *Backing Track*. On May 5, *School Girls; Or, The African Mean Girls Play* opens. [Home - Arden Theatre Company.](#)

At **Lantern Theater Company**, a Lynn Nottage play, *Fabulation, or the Re-Education of Undine*, runs from January 20 to February 20. Later shows include two classics, *A Man for all Seasons* (opening March 10) and *Travesties* (opening May 19). [Lantern Theater Company | Philadelphia, Pennsylvania](#)



For those who prefer musical performances, the **Kimmel Cultural Campus** offers concerts from **The Chamber Orchestra of Philadelphia**, *Schubert & Britten*, on January 23; **The Chamber Music Society**, *Musicians from Marlboro II*, on January 25 and 26; **Alvin Ailey Dance Theater**, January 29 and 30. *Pretty Woman: The Musical* comes to **The Academy's Broadway Series** from January 4 through January 16, and jazz returns to the **Merriam Theater** with Dianne Reeves on January 20. For those who like to reminisce, there's **Jerry Blavat & Friends**, on January 22. [Events and Tickets | Kimmel Cultural Campus | Philadelphia.](#)

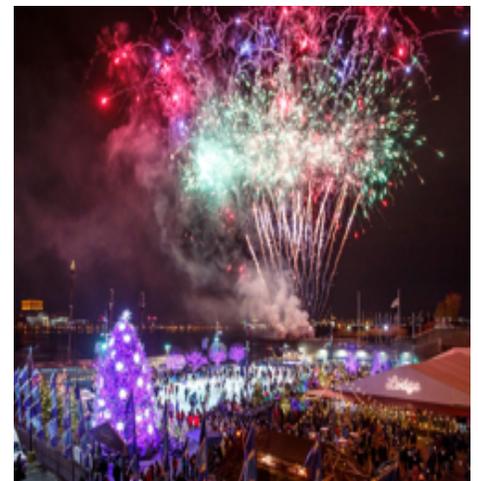


TV Alert

A very moving and inspiring documentary called *Not Going Quietly* will be shown on PBS, Channel 12, on POV, January 24, at 9:00 pm. The film follows Ady Barkan, a lawyer and rising star in the world of progressive activism, who's diagnosed with ALS at age 32. After a chance encounter with a senator on an airline, Ady assembles a motley crew of activists to travel across the country and campaign for a once-in-a-generation movement for universal healthcare access for all Americans. This film was the highlight of many film festivals during the year, winning several awards along the way.

Spotlight on the Penn's Village Community Blog—New Year's Resolutions and Health

Penn's Village member, Jay M. Pomerantz, MD, provides us with a way to plan for a better 2022 and ponder our own New Year's Resolutions. Learn about implementing "self-contracting" to improve your chances of success with your resolutions. [New Year's Resolutions and Health - Penn's Village \(pennsvillage.org\)](#)



INTRODUCING

Barry George

by Karen Orman



After graduating from Duke Law School, Barry George clerked for a Bucks County Commons Pleas Court judge and a federal judge.

He then practiced law in Doylestown for seven years. Given the beginning of his professional life, you may be surprised to learn that Barry has been a dedicated teacher and distinguished poet for decades.

As a child, Barry liked poetry, law, and politics. He acted a bit and learned about haiku in elementary school. In college he majored in government, but switched to English. Then in law school, he started acting and writing. He had the lead in the first play for which he auditioned and produced a play during his last year.

Barry later acted with the Town and Country Players in Bucks County. He recalls in particular playing Chartier in Maxwell Anderson's *Joan of Lorraine*. The role of a poet must have had a particular appeal to someone who was to become a renowned haiku

writer, now very well-recognized in the international community of English-language haiku. His many publications, including his latest book, *Sirens and Rain*, (available from accents-publishing.com and Amazon) have garnered many well-deserved honors and awards.

Barry describes haiku's short verses as one-breath poems that evoke moments of insight and emotion and are often playful, humorous, and surprising. He is a keen observer of nature and human nature and finds inspiration for his poetry while doing habitual activities or when awakening in the middle of the night. His daily meditation and yoga keep him in the moment.

At the end of this semester, Barry plans to retire from his career as an English teacher at Community College of Philadelphia. Penn's Village will benefit from his decision, because he would like to offer a haiku class, do a reading, or form a haiku group. Both Barry and his wife, Heidi, were attracted to Penn's Village's concept of seniors meeting seniors. We look forward to welcoming them into our family.

COMMITTEE CORNER

Marketing & Communications

Weekly Health and Wellness Posts

Penn's Village is planning weekly posts to our Health and Wellness Blog during January. Watch for articles on creating healthy habits and activities to support brain health, plus two additional articles to be announced.

Visit the [PV Health and Wellness Blog at New Year's Resolutions and Health - Penn's Village \(pennsvillage.org\)](http://pennsvillage.org). To receive notification when new articles are posted, consider subscribing via the link at the top-left of the page.

The Not-So-Virtual 2021 Holiday Party

by Kristin Davidson

As Penn's Village celebrated its second virtual Holiday Party, there was no sign of Zoom fatigue. There were cookies, bubbles, cider, singing, storytelling, and laughter. And—it wasn't all virtual, after all! This year, a tribe of volunteers arranged for the pre-celebratory distribution of 'real' cookies and either splits of prosecco or cider.

The celebration was organized with style by Margherita Abe, Patricia Nemirovsky Alsina, Molly Clifford, Sherrill Cresdee, Kathy McMaster, Mindy Mozenter, Donna Murphy, and Mark Raymond, all of whom, in the words of one attendee, "planned, plotted, and performed to provide this treat!"



From the opening moments featuring four holiday favorites of Marian Anderson, sung by Jill Pirtle (Executive Director of the Marian Anderson House & Museum), to the closing message of peace and joy from the Reverend Jesse Garner (former minister of the First Presbyterian Church), the program focused on the many ways we celebrate. We enjoyed listening to readings about several holiday traditions by Uda Braithwaite-Bartholomew, Lois Evans, Harriette Mishkin, and Patricia Nemirovsky-Alsina. And attendees enjoyed lively discussions with each other in the small group break-out sessions.

While we all hope to meet in person next year, there was a gratifying sense of community and camaraderie in this year's not entirely virtual party.

JANUARY PROGRAMS

The Program Committee, under the leadership of Mario Oropeza, announces the schedule of programs for January. Registration is required, and you can register on the Penn's Village website or by emailing info@pennsvillage.org or telephoning 215-925-7333. Check the PV website and your email for updated information and/or newly scheduled program additions. All programs are offered as Zoom Teleconferences (with the exception of *Tea, Scones, and Phones*); members who register will be sent Zoom login information a day or so before the event



Tuesday, January 4, 2:00 pm. *Small World Seafood: The Fish, The Man, The Supply Chain.* This is a follow-up to a seafood program held last August, with a more in-depth discussion about what makes certain fish more desirable and available in Philly. Included will be an explanation on how to cook these fish and other locally-sourced foods such as cheese and meats that the presenter, Small World Seafood Proprietor, Robert Amar, is able to obtain. The Small World Foods website is <https://smallworldseafood.com/>. It contains ordering information and recipes.

Thursday, January 8, at Noon. *A Penn's Village Virtual Preview!* Do you have questions about how Penn's Village operates? What services and programs are offered? What is the role of a volunteer and how to become one? The different levels of membership? This is an introduction to Penn's Village for non-members, so please join us and invite your friends and neighbors, too.



Tuesday, January 11, 10:00 am. *Common Eye and Vision Issues in Older Adults.* Lecture and discussion of age-related common changes in vision and the eye, including macular degeneration and cataracts. The speaker, César A. Briceño, MD, is an Associate Professor of Clinical Ophthalmology at Penn Medicine. He specializes in ophthalmic plastic and reconstructive surgery, and in treating thyroid eye disease.

Wednesday, January 19, 2:00 pm. *Tea, Scones and Phones.* In-Person at Society Hill Towers Community Room, 261 St. James Place. This program will provide help to users of the following devices: Google/Android phones and tablets, iOS (Apple iPhone and iPad), macOS (Apple laptop computers). Those requesting technical assistance will be asked to schedule a specific 15-minute timeslot. Registrants should have their device out and unlocked and ready for use by their appointed time. All participants will be required to wear a mask.



Friday, January 21, 2:00 pm. *TED Talks, with Group Discussions.* Starting on this date and continuing for one year on each third Friday of the month, join in watching a TED video presentation, followed by a Penn's Village-facilitated discussion. Topic to be determined. Check your emails for further details.

Penn's Village Interest Groups

Several groups formed around common interests are currently active within our Village. At this time, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, most groups are still meeting via Zoom. If you are interested in learning more, please email info@pennsvillage.org or telephone 215-925-7333.

Chat Group Every other Thursday 11:00 am – Noon

History Book Group 3rd Wednesdays 1:00 – 2:00 pm

Intergenerational Book Group 4th Wednesdays 3:00 – 4:00 pm

Men's Group Mondays 10:30 am – Noon

Spanish Conversation Group Mondays 4:00 – 5:30 pm

Support Group 1st Mondays 11:00 am – 12:30 pm

Writers' Group 3rd Wednesdays 11:00 am – 12:30 pm

JANUARY 2022

SUNDAY MONDAY TUESDAY WEDNESDAY THURSDAY FRIDAY SATURDAY

						1 Happy New Year Sunrise: 7:20: am Sunset: 4:47 pm
2	3	4 2:00 pm Small World Seafood Zoom	5	6 12:00 noon Penn's Village Previews! Zoom	7	8
9	10	11 10:00 am Eye & Vision Issues Zoom	12	13	14	15
16	17 Martin Luther King Jr. Day	18	19 1:00 pm Tea, Scones & Phones Society Hill Towers (in-person)	20	21 2:00 pm TED Talk Zoom	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31 Sunrise 6:41 am Sunset 5:20 pm					

VOICES FROM THE VILLAGE

Ted Robb Memoir Available This Month

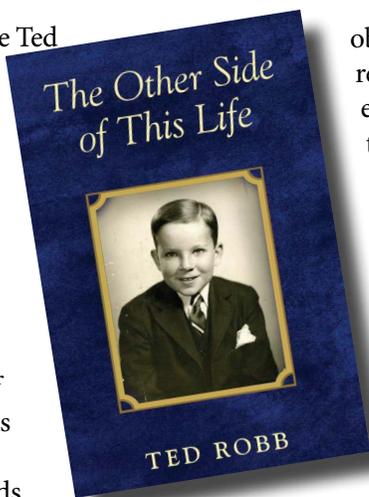
by Sandra Sokol

First, to introduce Ted

Robb and his new book to you, I need to share a Jefferson Airplane song. Maybe you remember the band and one of their hit tunes, *The Other Side of This Life*. Ted feels a special connection to these words and thinks this song

provides insight into his life. Videos of the band performing the song, as well as the lyrics, are readily available online; just search for the title, *The Other Side of This Life*.

Ted's life journey has taken him through so many exciting and often challenging experiences. His accomplishments are phenomenal! However, the road has been bumpy, as he serendipitously turned problems into opportunities, swerved around



obstacles and took detours before reaching his destination. From every experience and stop along the road, Ted gained something new to incorporate into whatever unknown next step he would take. (Ask him about his Fuller Brush Man stint and how it helped him with his foray into political campaigning!)

Ted Robb is a truly special, charismatic, and interesting man. He graciously shared so much of his history with me as we recently became acquainted. His early life in New York City, interrupted by health issues that first sent him to The Desert School in Tucson, Arizona, and followed by Pomfret Finishing School in Connecticut, then onto Yale and, finally, to the American Institute in Foreign Trade seem to have set him on a different track than his family expected. Following his education, he began his career in the Navy, then naval intelligence, around

the world and in Washington, then to Heinz Overseas Division, onwards into government positions and then as Secretary of Labor and Industry for Pennsylvania. His amazing contributions to Inglis House, to the development of low-income housing and, more recently, to Penn's Village as a board member and so much more are remarkable. His story is fascinating, and his storytelling is compelling!

Ted told me he wants to leave behind a record of the tracks he has made on earth throughout his life. He has recorded his experiences in a memoir that is due to be released in early January. The title of his book, *The Other Side of My Life*, is inspired by Jefferson Airplane. It is certain to be an interesting read, full of his colorful memories of a life well lived.

The website for *The Other Side of My Life* is <https://ted-robb.mailchimpsites.com/>

Prescription Drug Savings May Reduce Medication Costs

by Dick Levinson

Because many older adults take multiple medications, I thought that a personal experience might be worthy of mention/discussion. Recently, I consulted a dermatologist, who prescribed several medications for me. However, since the medications in question are designed to improve one's appearance rather than to save or extend life, my health insurance company refused to cover them.

I was so eager to get started on the treatment plan that my doctor had prescribed that I told the pharmacist that I would pay for one of these drugs out of my own pocket. She explained to

me that the drug in question would cost \$300.00 if I were to shoulder the burden alone!

When I complained to my doctor about the cost of the medication, she suggested that I go to GoodRx.com. On the website, I entered the name of the medicine I needed and my zip code in order to find discount prices being charged by pharmacies in my area. And then, I elected to print a discount coupon that would allow me to purchase the drug at the discount price.

In the end, I paid \$63 for a drug that would have cost me \$300 without the

coupon! This led me to wonder at the injustice of huge numbers of people paying full price while a lucky minority are able to benefit from such generous discounts. I am hoping that by sharing my story I can spread the word so that more people know about GoodRx.

Another Penn's Village member reports that one pill that she takes weekly costs \$12, versus \$75 using her insurance. Another prescription costs her \$20 instead of \$160. She points out that there is also another organization, SingleCare, that works the same way as GoodRx and that it is a good idea to check both for the best price.

ACTIVE AGING

New Year's Resolutions and Health

by Jay M. Pomerantz, MD

I would like to suggest some possible New Year's Resolutions regarding health and an action plan. For example, for those of you who still smoke, the beginning of January is a good time to stop. The public advertising campaigns are correct about the enormous risk of heart disease, bronchitis, emphysema, asthma, lung cancer, and even COVID-19 associated with smoking. Incidentally, it is far easier to stop completely than to slow down. Slowing down is a way of fooling oneself—a justification for doing the wrong thing (e.g., smoking) while trying to maintain self-esteem. For people who drink too much or take illegal drugs, the same logic applies.

Obesity, or being overweight, is another health problem. This condition increases the likelihood of high blood pressure, diabetes, coronary artery disease, stroke, gallbladder disease, arthritis, sleep apnea, and some cancers (e.g., breast, uterus, prostate, and colon). Obviously, food is a necessary item for all of us, so the new year's resolution must not be to stop eating, but instead to eat properly and exercise routinely.

Most of the above, everyone al-

ready knows. The issue is how to do the right thing. I suggest a method that I call "self-contracting." New Year's resolutions are an example of "self-contracting." What one does is to make a self-promise, not necessarily in writing, that has a contractual format. As in all contracts (and this is the important point!), there are penalties involved with not keeping to the terms of the contract. I will provide an example. Years ago, to get myself to mow the lawn regularly (a task I did not like, especially by the time autumn arrived), I contracted with myself that the mowing needed to be done on Sundays before I could sit before the television and guiltlessly watch a professional football game. The seriousness with which I personally take self-contracting is that one Sunday, it started to rain just as I was set to mow, shortly before the 1:00 pm kickoff. I mowed in the rain and remember the experience. It was not pleasant—slow going, messy, and requiring a shower and change of clothes. Of course, I missed the first half of the football game!

On subsequent weekends, I gave myself more time to mow in order to avoid having to do it in the rain. If one

values self-esteem, one will abide by self-contracts. One cannot fool oneself—there is always a witness! If one adopts self-contracting and sticks with it, not only will bad habits come under control, but self-esteem will rise. Even better than a specific New Year's Resolution, I recommend "self-contracting" for the next year and beyond. More than any specific resolution, it may change your life.

Dr. Pomerantz practiced psychiatry for more than forty-five years in Massachusetts after doing a residency at Mass Mental Health Center/Harvard Medical School. Since retiring from psychiatric practice in 2015 and returning to Philadelphia, Dr. Pomerantz has been teaching at OLLI/Temple University. Among the courses he has taught are Neuroscience of Memory, Genes and Stem Cells, The Immunological Approach to Cancer Treatment, and Aging as a Treatable Disease. He serves on Penn's Village Advisory Council.

IN MEMORIAM

March 2021

Lilly Drukker

May Her Memory Be a Blessing



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