

MERIFIELD ACRES NEWSLETTER
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A Note from the President. As your new Association President for the coming year, I want to introduce myself and give you a little insight into my background as well as my vision for our Association. Dottie (wife of 46 years) and I moved to Merifield in 1994 having come from Clifton, VA in western Fairfax County. We have 6 children (all out of the nest) and almost 11 grandchildren. I enlisted in the Navy in 1946, graduated from the U.S. Naval Academy in 1951 and altogether spent 39 years in school, at sea in surface ships and staffs, and ashore, mostly in Washington. My shore assignments were usually in the planning, programming, and budgeting areas. I retired from active service in 1985 and worked for the next 10 years in industry and as a consultant in naval logistics and command and control.

I've been a member of the MALA Board of Directors for the past 2 years and although I didn't actively seek the MALA presidency, I do look forward to the opportunity to contribute to this superb community. During this next year we must get our road maintenance funding problem in hand and I'm sure we will achieve this although the ultimate solution to the problem is not yet certain. The Association is really running out of options with respect to road maintenance funding. We're no longer able to levy "special assessments" and those in sections that require a regular assessment are already contributing at the maximum rate allowed by their covenants.

The other goal I've set out for myself is to broaden the involvement of the MALA membership in the activities of the Association. All of us have unique talents and abilities that can, and should, be available to our community. The collective wisdom of our community does not reside solely in the Board of Directors. I welcome any suggestions you might have to help achieve wider, active participation in Merifield. I can be reached by phone at 804-374-0148 and by E-Mail at palau@kerrlake.com.

Covenants. Since becoming involved with the MALA Board of Directors I've heard a lot about the Merifield covenants and how they constrain us in managing our community. I know it's a complicated (and sometimes emotional) subject but it is also an important one for all of us. Covenants, by their very nature, represent restrictions on our personal freedom and none of us, having grown up in this wonderful land where freedom is our most prized possession, want limitations placed on our actions.

However, because we co-exist in a community, we must accept limitations for the sake of everyone living in that community. In future newsletters I intend to discuss our covenants with the view of everyone achieving a more complete understanding of the subject.

To begin with, as portions of Merifield Acres were developed by different developers over time, the rules governing a particular section were spelled out and made a part of the purchase agreement and in a few instances, the covenant provisions have been incorporated into the property deed. While there are certain similarities in the several covenants, there are also significant differences. These differences notwithstanding, and while the original authors of these covenants were well-intentioned, with the wisdom of hindsight, one might conclude that they did not have perfect foresight. One's view of the needs of a mature community is certain to be different from the communities needs when the development was being created. None of the covenants are ideal documents from today's perspective and I daresay that were we to draft a set of guidelines for a new Merifield development, we'd try very hard to remedy some of the shortcomings that we recognize in our covenants today. Perhaps at some time in the future we can develop a set of community guidelines that all can agree on. More on this in future newsletters.

Roads. We have walkers, joggers, bikers, an occasional baby stroller (accompanied by a walker or a jogger), motor scooters and autos all using our roads. It's easy to forget that a safe (and lawful) speed on the roads leading into Merifield is simply too fast for our relatively narrow roads. Recently we've seen an increasing number of autos greatly exceeding the 30 MPH posted speed limit and endangering other road users in the process. Please remind all the drivers in your households that there really is a sound basis for the posted speed limits and aside from observing the 30 MPH limit, we need to be especially vigilant for other road users, particularly as the hours of daylight become shorter.

Board of Directors. As a result of the elections at the Annual Meeting we have some new faces on your Board of Directors. We also lost a couple people from the Board who, for more than 22 years, have played a major and defining role in making Merifield Acres what it is today, Margaret White and Frank Clippinger. Fortunately for all of us, they will continue to be involved in community affairs. You who were unable to attend the Annual Meeting, will be pleased to know that we had significantly more candidates standing for election to the board than we had openings. We think that this is good and want it to continue in future elections. The individuals on the board are there to represent you and to serve as your spokesperson at their regular board meetings. Use them and

ensure that they understand the issues of concern to the MALA community. The Board meets at 7 PM on the 2nd Tuesday every other month in the Clarksville Public Library (use the back entrance). The next meeting is on December 14th. The meetings are open to Association members and we want you to come and observe these sessions.

MALA Skills and Talent Inventory. We are a community that is superbly endowed with talented people. We have engineers, business executives (both active and retired), financial planners, educators, those having building and contractor backgrounds, and the list goes on and on. The problem is that because we know so little about your talents, experience and expertise, we are unable to avail ourselves of this resource for counsel and advice on Association matters. We regularly confront issues relating to conservation, building construction and maintenance, road preservation, personal safety, fire prevention, and so forth. We think that collective wisdom and personnel resources can and should be available when needed. We will be asking you to tell us a little about yourself and your significant other and identify the areas of your education, experience, training, avocation and hobbies that could be useful to us as an organization and as a community. This information will be incorporated into our existing data base for reference when we find a need for a particular talent. Please don't be bashful in responding to the questionnaire. Who knows, we even may find that we have the makings of a string quartet waiting to be discovered in our midst.

Dogs. It's not clear whether we have an increase in the canine population in Merifield Acres or that the dogs have discovered bikers, walkers, and each other. Dogs on the loose have become increasingly troublesome, especially to those who have been bitten. The MALA, Inc. covenants are clear on the matter -- pets stay on the owner's premises and do not run loose. The other covenants are silent on the subject but the principles of being a good neighbor are always in force everywhere - don't do anything or allow those under your control to do anything that infringes on the rights of others. Dogs that harass walkers and bikers and dogs that run in groups (packs?) barking and chasing the area wildlife (especially at night) are infringing on the rights of others. This is not an indictment of all dogs in Merifield -- many are well trained and remain in their own yard. But *all* the others should be restrained in the spirit of good citizenship. Your active cooperation is earnestly solicited.

The Common Plastic Grocery Bag - It's like the American Express credit card - *Don't leave home without it!* We seem to have a few thoughtless persons in our midst, who, when using our roads,

distribute their trash and litter alongside the roads. This is a continuing problem. Educating ourselves, families, and our guests not to litter is the real solution, but until this happens and is effective, the next best approach is to do our own trash clean-up. When you go for your daily walk, take your plastic bag with you and pick up any trash or litter you see along the way. You'd be surprised how quickly we can improve the appearance of Merifield Acres.

Emergency Vehicle Access. We have recently completed a survey of the Merifield roads to ensure there is sufficient overhead clearance for access by fire trucks and other emergency vehicles. Dennis Hayes is in the process of cutting back those overhanging limbs that could impede emergency vehicle access.

Recreational Vehicle Storage. Recreational vehicles such as boats, trailers, mobile homes, etc., may not be parked on the roads, shoulders or other public areas, such as cul-de-sac circles. Our covenants are very specific in this respect. Our roads are simply not wide enough to permit this and still provide safe access for regular traffic and the larger emergency vehicles.

Welcome Wagon Hostess. **Nancy Hayes** has volunteered to coordinate the MALA Welcome Wagon. When a new family moves into Merifield, Nancy, or one of her helpers, will call on the new arrivals to welcome them into our community and assist them in learning what's available and where to find it. In many parts of our country it's still the custom to welcome new neighbors with a plate of cookies, a pie or a cake. It's a great way to get acquainted. We should do more of this in Merifield. When you meet your new neighbor and find that they have not yet been visited by a MALA welcomer, give Nancy a call. We have a pretty good system of tracking new home owners, but new renters sometimes slip through undetected.

Internet Home Page. We are in the process of developing a MALA Internet homepage that those having Internet service can access to learn about happenings in our Association. In this respect, we will also be asking you who have E-Mail addresses to pass those along so that we can use that media to keep you better informed.