



The

Lodger

October/
November
2017
Issue 25

NEWSLETTER FOR RESIDENTS AND FRIENDS OF THE LODGE AT OLD TRAIL

Amazon Dot is a Hot Seller, Should You Get One?

To hear the local weather forecast or latest news headlines, listen to what is on your to-do list, look up facts, play an audio book, or stream your favorite music, just ask Alexa. She is even capable of turning smart home devices on and off at your request. She is constantly alert for your inquiries, that is if she lives with you.

Alexa is moving into millions of homes by way of Dot 2, Amazon's voice activated speaker. Alexa can hear you from anywhere within earshot through an array of far-field microphones built into the Dot.

Making her even more tempting is her affordable cost. Available as the second generation Dot from Amazon and other sellers for \$50, and even less during sales events, some may opt for her higher priced big sister which has larger speakers and more bass tones. Audiophiles can even hook up the smaller pint-sized gadget to an external speaker using Bluetooth or to a sound system using a wired connection. But the Dot has surprising clarity and little resemblance to computerized speech.

The setup is relatively simple. After unpacking it and plugging it into a wall socket, it requires a one-time setup with the free Alexa app that you must install on your phone or tablet. After that, Alexa communicates through wi-fi. By simply saying "Alexa," the speaker lights up and waits for your question or command.

Cont'd back pg.



Measuring only 1.5 inches high by 1.5 inches wide, the Amazon Dot is about the size of a hockey puck. One of the buttons on top will disable the microphones and turn the circular light from blue to red to remind you Alexa is not listening.

RESIDENT FOCUS

Don Gaines would still be fly fishing for trout and bass if it were not for the warning he got from his doctor that wading fast rivers was dangerous at his age. Although almost unaware of having become an octogenarian, he noted that his devotion to cooking, housekeeping, and maintaining several acres of lawn was waning. That is when he started exploring continuing care options that ended with a cross-country move in August from his home in the state of Washington to his new residency at The Lodge. None of that has lessened his interest in music.

He was also feeling the effects of the loss of his wife of 60 years who died in 2016 from multiple myeloma, a treatable but generally incurable cancer of plasma blood cells. His wife Sammie endured some 10 years of the increasingly severe bone pain and kidney damage that the disease causes.

Reminiscing about her still amuses him to think that they dated to "commiserate about being dumpees." Although they had earlier double dated, it was not until both he and Sammie were both broken off by their steadies that they became interested in one another. "I realized then that I should have been dating Sammie all along," exclaims Don. They were married in 1955 when Don was in his fifth year at Oregon State University. "A crackerjack secretary," says Don. She typed his senior thesis.



Don stretched his college education into five years instead of the normal four to earn his degree in chemical engineering. He wanted to continue being a college cheer leader and member of a campus talent show. His engineering counselor sold him on extending his college curriculum. "It will help to enrich your life and be more maturing," he remembers being told.

Hired by Reynolds Metals after graduation, Don began his 35-year career with the

Cont'd next page

Resident Focus (cont'd)

company in aluminum smelting operations at its reduction plant in Troutdale, Oregon, a city 12 miles east of Portland.

Within months of being hired, he was drafted into the U.S. Army. He and Sammie moved to Huntsville, Alabama where he was posted, working with other high tech trained draftees developing the nation's rocket technology. Sammie was named secretary to the president of the Huntsville engineering company where she had been hired as a switchboard operator just three months earlier.

After discharge from the army, Don returned to work at the Troutdale smelter. A couple years (and one new son) later, the company moved him to its plant in Louisville, Kentucky where they manufactured aluminum powder and paste for paints and explosives. After six years (and a new daughter), he was transferred to the Reynolds plastic films plant at Grottoes in the Shenandoah Valley where he spent most of his time with the company.

He transferred back to the Pacific Northwest in 1990 to be close to his ailing father, returning to the Troutdale smelter. A spike in the cost of electrical power caused Reynolds to sharply curtail production a little over a year after Don returned when he opted for early retirement. (Reynolds was bought out by Alcoa in 1996.)

Tying his own flies, Don continued to fly fish during his retirement years until his doctor advised turning to something else. It was not an easy decision. "Its like golf," says Don, "you can't give it up." His older cousin, who still fishes, got him into the sport when he was a boy.

Until Sammie's illness interfered, they both enjoyed attending operas, ballets, and symphony orchestra performances.



Don fishing Lewis River, Washington, circa 2000.



Sammie, circa 1962



Don and Sammie, circa 2008

They lived in Brush Prairie, Washington for 26 years, an unincorporated place across the Columbia River from Portland, Oregon where Don grew up. (As insignificant as Brush Prairie may seem to us, it is the home town of two former major league baseball players, first baseman Richie Sexson and pitcher Gerry Staley.)

Don continued singing in his church choir, producing his own sheet music to separately print the bass score notes and lyrics from multi-part anthems and hymns, using the software he has accumulated for his computer. Shortly after moving to The Lodge, he discovered the Episcopal Church in Greenwood on a tour of the area and, already, he is singing in the church choir.

Don's son Steve and his family live in Charlottesville. His daughter Natalie and her family are residents of San Francisco. He has five grandchildren, including three step grandchildren.

Don is glad to have chosen The Lodge instead of the senior living facility he was considering in Vancouver, Washington. He is thankful for the friend who urged him to settle closer to either his son or daughter.

"I am still desperately in love," he admits, but his ready smile makes it clear that he thoroughly enjoys the comradery of everyone he meets.

You might wonder whether Sammie was Don's wife's real name. In fact, Sammie was her real name, but not the name she was born with. On her first day of work at age 19 at a jewelry store in Oregon, her employer, a lively prankster, told her he disliked her given name, Dora, and insisted she had to change her name to Sammie and spell it with an i-e. She was not fond of her given name, anyway, so she accepted the recommendation and proceeded with the necessary documentation to make the name change official. From then on, Dora was Sammie.

A Senior Citizen Test

The good-natured Shendandoah Valley British Car Club conducts an annual senior citizen test reproduced here. It's important to stay mentally alert, they remind their members, with the admonition that if you don't use your brain, you will lose it! The test will help determine if you are losing it or not. The answers to the four test questions are on the last page. Don't look until after you have answered them. Relax, clear your mind, and begin.

Question One. What do you put in a toaster?

Question Two. Say "silk" ten times. Now spell "silk."
What do cows drink?

Question Three. If a red house is made from red bricks, a blue house is made from blue bricks, and a pink house is made from pink bricks, what is a greenhouse made from?

Question Four. You are driving a bus from New York City to Philadelphia. In Staten Island, 17 people got on the bus. In New Brunswick, six people got off and nine people got on. In Windsor, two people got off and four people got on. In Trenton, 11 people got off and 16 people got on. You then arrive at Philadelphia station. How old is the bus driver?

The Lodger

Issued every other month
for residents and friends
of The Lodge at Old Trail.

Jim Clark, editor

Advisory Committee

Sue Clark

Jean Sellers

See color edition at
lodgeatoldtrail.com →
about →
news & press

Lodge Family Singers Embraced With Joy

“Oh, we’re never going to perform. We just get together and sing to have fun.” That was Gerry Baer’s reply when asked over two years ago whether the singers in her apartment were rehearsing for a concert. Today that no-name, informal choral group has expanded from around six to some 20 vocalists, with approximately equal numbers of men and women. With a handful of concerts behind them, they are now known as The Lodge Family Singers.

The music began with Gerry Baer and Sue Renard’s shared vision of an informal group that would meet to sing well-loved, familiar songs. After their call went out, a half-dozen aspiring singers showed up—no auditions, no sheet music, and no lyrics. Soon the hallway became a weekly listening post for passers-by, who let it be known they were hoping for a “real” concert.

In time the songfest, having outgrown the apartment, moved into the Lobby for weekly rehearsals. The group’s evolution has not been without growing pains. At first they searched the internet and “asked around” for free scores and lyrics. As their numbers grew so too did their repertoire. More voices meant not only more capability for including solos and for harmonizing, but also a more urgent need for scores and lyrics. They filled that need by compiling a book of favorite songs and purchasing a book of music for each vocalist. A setback in musical plans occurred with the departure of the original pianist. Finding a replacement proved to be a lengthy process, but ended joyfully with the arrival of the Bishops; both Ed and Janice joined the chorus, and Janice agreed to become the long-sought accompanist.

Vocalists come to the chorus with musical backgrounds and experience ranging from school and church singing groups, to various levels of musical training, to professional performances. A number of the singers play musical instruments, as well. New members are still welcomed without auditions. The only requirement remains the desire to sing.

These days programs at the Lodge often include music by the Lodge Family Singers, whether on the Fourth of July, Memorial Day, or last year’s Variety Show.

As for the future, Gerry and Sue revealed that plans are now afoot for a fall concert based on Broadway show tunes from “South Pacific” and “The Sound of Music.” December will find them bringing

Christmas carols—including sing-a-longs around the piano—in celebration of the season. The Broadway theme continues in the spring of 2018, when songs from “My Fair Lady” and “Oklahoma” will be featured. As Sue describes the musical journey of the Lodge Family Singers, “We love singing together and just grew from there—and we are still growing.” And fellow residents greet their every engagement with enthusiasm for the joy their music brings.

—Jean Sellers



Marjorie Hanawalt

(Above) Gerry Baer and Sue Renard, Lodge Family Singers founders, and (below) the singers in concert with Gerry Baer directing.



The Lodge staff

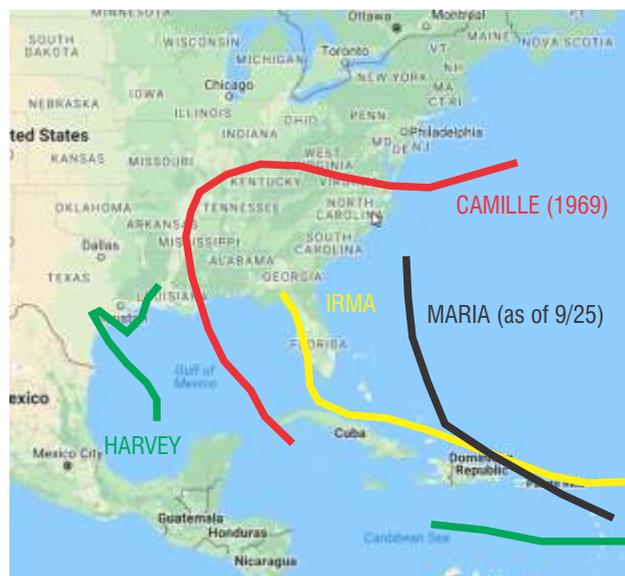
Learning from Hurricanes

Hurricane Maria struck its devastating blow to Puerto Rico as this was being written. The hurricane season was just beginning and already there were four Category 4 or stronger storms by the middle of September. That has only happened four other times since storms have been recorded. Three of them have ravaged the US mainland and its territories, killing at least 200 people and amassing hundreds of billions of dollars of private and public destruction.

Harvey was the first to make landfall on the Texas coast as a Category 4 storm, soon followed by Category 4 Irma striking the Florida Keys and plowing north over the Florida peninsula. Just days later, Maria tracked across Puerto Rico on a northerly path projected to remain in the Atlantic, but with a grazing of the Carolina coast still a possibility.

What have we learned and why this sudden increase? For one thing, hurricane forecasting is markedly improved since 1969 when Hurricane Camille remnants launched a night time deadly deluge, surprising everyone including weather experts by abruptly changing course and creating central Virginia’s worst natural disaster. Direction changes are

Cont’d next pg.



Hurricanes (cont'd)

now routinely forecasted. The turns by Harvey and Irma were expected nearly a week before the storms made their turns.

Specialists at the National Hurricane Center use an ensemble of computer models to project the strength and direction of major storms, but they caution that projected tracks are only estimates. Projected storm centers are always shown within a cone of possibility that is hundreds of miles wide for five-day forecasts. Shorter term forecasts are more accurate. Experts say that forecasting has improved so much that when hurricane specialists say people in the path need to get out, they need to get out.

Forecasting the elements that matter to hurricane development is part of the challenge to forecast the storm itself. Data that include wind shear, cold and warm air masses, water temperature, and observations made by hurricane reconnaissance aviators are fed into the statistical models and updated several times a day. In 2017, guiding winds and a high pressure area over the central Atlantic were the specific environmental factors that steered the storms into the Caribbean and southern US.

Although the intensity of storms is forecast to increase over coming decades, scientists are reluctant to connect climate change with hurricane activity. Nevertheless, ocean temperatures are known to be rising and warm water is the fuel needed to fire up hurricanes. What's more, rising sea levels are contributing to more damaging storm surges.

The devastating effects of the storms raise the debatable question of whether there are defensive measures that should be employed. Proactive Miami-Dade County in Florida has been raising the elevation of parts of its infrastructure, with no help from either the state or federal governments.

Or should governments begin thinking about relocating shore-area populations? Maybe we should learn from the roseate spoonbill shorebird. Losing the shallow water they depend on for feeding, the long-legged wader has abandoned the Florida Keys in the last decade for higher areas on the mainland.

In the meantime, federal and state legislators are facing huge new demands on their budgets and private humanitarian agencies are helping with relief efforts that are likely to last for many months to come.



Irma was here. (Ponte Vedra Beach, Florida)

Senior Citizen Test Answers

Question One. The answer is greenhouses are made from bread.

Question Two. The answer is cows drink water.

Question Three. The answer is YOU driving the bus.

Question Four. Don't you remember your age? It was

Hope you had fun with this. By the way, the Car Club says 95% of people fail most of the questions.

Election Day Is On the Way

Registered voters in the Brownsville precinct, which includes The Lodge, get to vote in the coming General Election for the next Governor, Lieutenant Governor, and Attorney General of Virginia as well as the member of the Virginia General Assembly representing the 25th District. The election will take place at the Brownsville Elementary School on Tuesday, November 7. The polls are open from 6 a.m. to 7 p.m. The school is located at 5870 Rockfish Gap Turnpike next to Henley Middle School and across the road from Western Albemarle High School.

Voters will be asked to show proper identification, so be sure to have a government-issued photo ID with you.

The time for voting by absentee ballot is growing short. Absentee ballots must be received in the Registrar's office by October 31, but remember that application for the ballot must be completed before the ballot can be mailed to you and sent back to the Registrar. Application for an absentee ballot can be fully completed online at albermarle.org/registrar.

Although a lengthier process, the application can be requested to be sent by mail by calling the county Registrar office at 434-972-4173. The application must be submitted before the ballot can be sent for completion and returned to the Registrar.

Alexa (cont'd)

(The wake word can be changed to Amazon, Echo, or Computer.) Once you have gotten Alexa's attention, you tell her what you want.

You can add to her abilities by enabling any of her other "skills" which are listed in the Alexa app on your phone or tablet, now numbering some 10,000, many of which, of course, are throw aways.

It takes a little practice to learn the commands that Alexa understands. To listen to radio station WTJU in Charlottesville, for example, requires the command "play" before naming the station. On the other hand, asking for a fact is straight forward. "What is the width in miles of Australia" or "how many pints in a quart" will get the answers. It can blow your mind to ask what is 29 times 46 divided by 2 and get the instant answer.

A friend says she forgot to set her alarm one night, so from her bed she asked Alexa to wake her in the morning with Dot's alarm.

So does Alexa snoop? It is true that it hears everything you say, otherwise it would not hear you when you said Alexa. Chances are Amazon collects information from what you say that could be helpful in marketing new products when you order from Amazon, just like your computer tracks everything you do online through cookies.

But Amazon's privacy rules are quite strict, so sharing your information with others should not be a concern. One reviewer for fun asked Alexa where he should bury the body. (The police did not show up at his door.)

A fun little device and a handy information trove as well, the Amazon Dot is a compelling product. If you are willing to equip one or several table lamps with smart-home devices, Alexa can be a real aid when entering a dark room with your hands full and asking her to turn on your living room lights.

But it is also a work in progress. Don't be surprised if you get a "um, I don't know that." On the other hand, Alexa will keep getting smarter with a continuing stream of new skills and automatic software upgrades.

