

# Our American Liberty Stories



As part of Liberty Amendments Month, we are presenting stories of individuals and families who were ***native to this country*** or ***who journeyed here***, whether ***willingly or not***, and ***how they came to enjoy the rights as Americans guaranteed by the Liberty Amendments.***

These American Liberty Stories describe where people came from and how they got here, and/or how their American journey fits into the ***move from an imperfect republic towards our more perfect union.*** The Stories express triumphs, struggles, failures and successes. And how Vienna relates to the Stories.

The ***Stories*** can be viewed at the **Freeman Store and Museum**, the **Community Center**, and **various Vienna Businesses.**



Use the QR code above to view them online through Historic Vienna's website.

Use this QR code if you would like to submit a story for display next year.



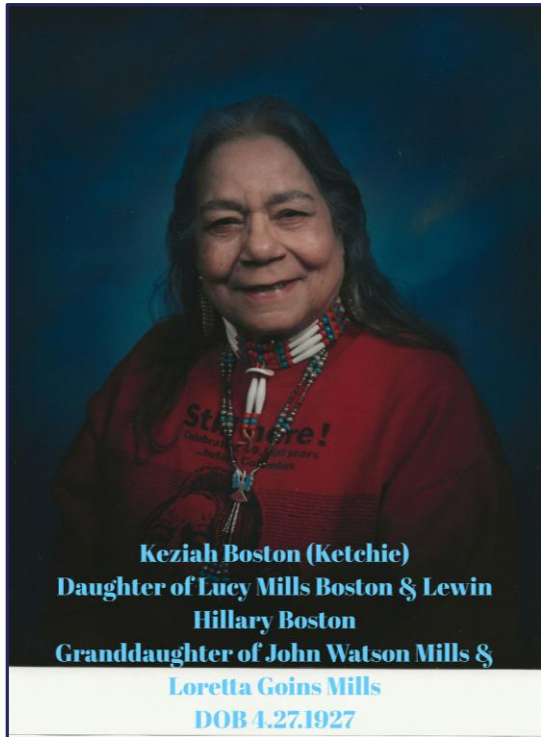
***Our American Liberty Stories*** is sponsored by the *Town of Vienna, VA*, *Historic Vienna, Inc.*, *Belong!* and the *Vienna Business Association.*

# My American Liberty Story

## Rose A Powhatan

### *Descendent of local Indigenous Tribes*

***We Are Still Here!*** I'm a seventy-six year old Indigenous Virginia woman of ***Pamunkey and Tauxenent descent, whose ancestors met Europeans from both Spain and England in the 16th and 17th centuries.*** My maternal Pamunkey ancestors interacted with the Spanish in 1570. They established a mission near the James River that they called Ajacan. The English arrived in 1585, led by Sir Walter Raleigh. A very important member of his team was an artist named John White. He rendered visually accurate artwork of the "flora and fauna" of the land (which included people).



When Jamestowne was established in 1607, the Powhatan Paramountcy, headed by Paramount Chief Wahunsenacawh (the English called him "Powhatan") was composed of 32 Indian nations. ***My paternal ancestry is Tauxenent (also called "Doeg" or "Dogue") who continue to live in today's Fairfax County, Virginia, Washington, DC and Maryland.*** Vienna, Virginia is very important to both our history and contemporary presence. The Fairfax County band of the Tauxenents was once headed by our most revered family heroine, ***18<sup>th</sup> Century Chief Keziah Powhatan. She led her warriors in trying to reclaim ancestral land stolen from her people.*** A DAR plaque near Courthouse Road at Tyson's Corner, VA, stands as a testimony to the tenacity of the Tauxenent people of Fairfax County.

Additional reminders of the ***Tauxenent presence can be found at Freedom Hill Park, in Vienna.*** The Fairfax County Park Authority oversaw the installation of commemorative signs there, to honor the achievements of Chief Keziah Powhatan's descendants. Tauxenent Chief Keziah A. Boston (her father was Tauxenent, her mother was Pamunkey), was eulogized on June 3, 2023. She was survived by her 5 children, 26 grandchildren, 40 great-grandchildren, and 17 great-great-grandchildren. I dedicate this family tribute as a memorial to her.



Use the QR Code or visit the Freeman Store and Museum or the Community Center to view all of the stories.



## My American Liberty Story

### Asya Keyes



Asya Keyes was born in Russia to Ukrainian parents, in a region located across the water from Alaska. Her family later moved back to Ukraine, where her parents hoped to build a home and create a stable future. Her father served as a pilot during the Soviet era, flying bombers as part of his military career. Years later, Asya's partner, who worked for Boeing, helped ensure that her father's accomplishments were recognized and displayed in the Boeing Museum in Washington State.

During the collapse of the Soviet Union, Asya worked as a tour guide in Ukraine. At the time, very few people spoke English, and international organizations coming into the country relied heavily on local guides and translators to communicate with residents. American companies, including AT&T and later Lucent Technologies, hired her to assist with communication and technology projects as Ukraine transitioned from analog systems to newer forms of communication technology.

With the help of a friend living in Pennsylvania, Asya applied for the United States Green Card lottery. Out of thousands of applicants, she was selected. She recalls that she almost missed the acceptance letter because mail had been stolen from her apartment mailbox in Ukraine. After transferring her mail to a post office box, she unexpectedly decided to check it one morning while running late for work. Inside was the letter informing her that she had won the lottery — a life-changing moment she never expected.



# My American Liberty Story

## Asya Keyes continues (p2 of 2)

In 1998, Asya moved to Seattle with her 19-year-old son, starting a completely new life in America. She chose Seattle because she had a friend living nearby in Vancouver. Her first job in the United States was with the American Red Cross, which later helped her secure a long career as a medical interpreter in public health. She worked for Public Health in King County, Washington State, serving immigrant and local communities for more than a decade.

Asya's son adapted quickly to life in America because he had attended an English-language school in Ukraine. He later graduated from the University of Washington and now works in the Washington, DC area with the US-Ukraine Business Council alongside his wife.

After moving to the United States, Asya married and took the last name Keyes. Her husband, a Navy veteran, owned a home in Bellevue. Following his passing, she faced financial hardship and eventually lost the home, an experience she remembers as deeply painful. A former coworker later helped her by renting her a home at an affordable rate in the same community.

Asya eventually moved from Marysville to Vienna to be closer to her children after her partner developed dementia. She remembers difficult moments when he became disoriented, including forgetting her at a grocery store and later forgetting how to drive home. Concerned for her safety and well-being, her children encouraged her to relocate to Virginia. Since Thanksgiving 2025, she has been living at Sunrise Senior Living, surrounded by family and supported by a new community.



Asya's story reflects resilience, courage, and the determination to build a new life in America while carrying forward memories of family, sacrifice, and opportunity across generations.



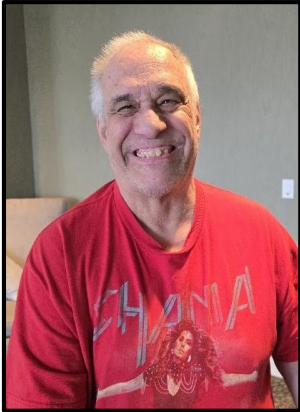
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# My American Liberty Story

## Michael Mcknew

### *Some of My Favorite Memories Growing up in Vienna*



In 1958 I met Glenn Cunningham. His nickname was Choo Choo Cunningham because he was the engineer of the train. At that time the W&OD train still ran through Vienna.

Glen owned Cunningham Farm, which is now Cunningham Park Elementary School. I would visit his farm and help feed the cows. He provided fresh milk in glass bottles to all of the residents who had milk boxes.

During ***trick or treating*** he would give kids apples that he grew in his back yard.

We would walk the trail to Glen's Farm in the snow and they would give the kids cookies and hot cocoa and hot coffee for the grown-ups.

We would play basketball at Cunningham Park and at my house when my parents added a basketball net in the back of my house.

There was a local bus that would drive you around Vienna. My grandmother would take us all over town on the weekend on the bus.

My parents would take me to Chesapeake Bay Seafood House and we would eat all you can eat and my parents would always finish way before me.

Everyone had a bike. I was the first one in my family to learn to ride a bike without training wheels.



# My American Liberty Story

## Michael Mcknew Continues (p2 of 2)

### *Some of My Favorite Memories Growing up in Vienna*

My dad used to play in a jazz band, he taught himself how to play. The guys in the band would come to our house and have jam sessions, and my mom would make lots of food.

As a matter of fact, it was one of my dad's band mates that talked us into moving to Vienna. It was a great place to grow up. At that time, Maple Ave was a 2-lane dirt road and there was only one light.

I would go to the 4th of July celebration at the community center. There was a community picnic during the day, then my family would go to Waters Field to watch the fireworks.

I couldn't go to the Vienna Inn because they didn't allow kids or women at that time. My brother-in-law, Marcus, put in the bushes at the Vienna Inn.

We belonged to Vienna Woods Pool, and they would have parties for teenagers and for parties for the grownups.

There was a wonderful theater that we could walk to (where the Town Green now is). If it was full, they would let the kids sit in the aisles.



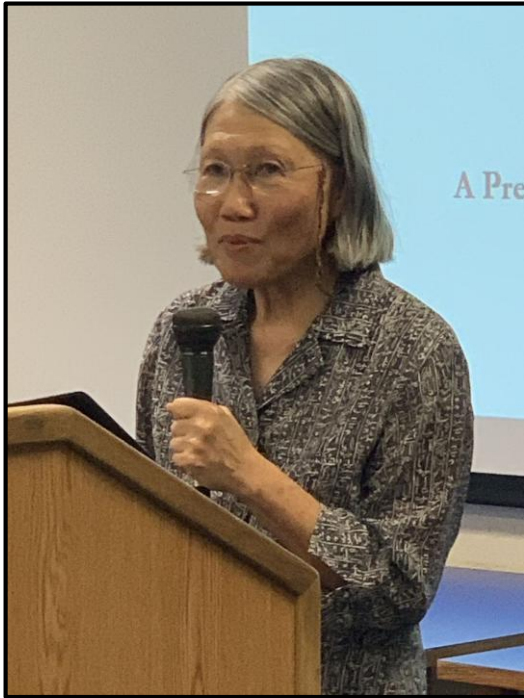
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# My American Liberty Story

## Veronica Li

### *Where I Came From*



My mother was a fabulous storyteller. She didn't just tell a story but play-acted it, mimicking the voices of the different characters. Here's her account of the family's immigration to the US.

It began one Saturday in 1965, in the then British colony of Hong Kong. My mother went to a special mass to celebrate Saint Teresa, her patron saint. As she was filing out of the church after mass, someone tapped her on the shoulder. It was a former university classmate, a man by the last name of Chung.

"I'm about to emigrate to America," he said to Mom once they were outside.

"How did you manage that?" she said with surprise. "I heard it's very hard to get approval."

"It's much easier these days since the US passed a new immigration law. Come up to my home for a cup of tea, and I'll tell you about it. I live just around the corner."

Over tea and cakes, Chung told Mom, "They're giving out many more visas now. All you need is a sponsor who is an American citizen and an immediate relative. The other conditions are good health and no criminal record. My sponsor is my sister, who went to America many years ago. My application took only a few months to get approved."

What Chung was referring to was the **1965 Immigration and Naturalization Act**. It abolished the national-origin quota system, which favored those from northern and western Europe. The new law emphasized family reunification regardless of race or nationality.

This was most significant for the Chinese, as they were the first nation to be banned from entering the US. The **1882 Chinese Exclusion Act** prohibited the entry of Chinese laborers, both skilled and unskilled, a wide net that caught even doctors and engineers. The Act expired after ten years, only to give rise to a series of new Chinese exclusion acts, each one harsher than the last.



# My American Liberty Story

**Veronica Li** continues (p2 of 3)

Even American citizens were not safe. Wong Kim Ark, a Chinese born in the U.S. and thus a *US citizen under the 14th Amendment*, was denied entry in 1895 upon his return from a trip abroad. He sued, took his case all the way to the Supreme Court, and won. When President Johnson signed the 1965 Act, he ended eight decades of discrimination against the Chinese.

“I’m emigrating for the children,” Chung explained. “They’re getting to college age. You know how hard it is to get them into university here. We can’t afford to send them overseas either, so the only way is to all go together.”

“I know exactly what you mean,” Mom said with feeling. She was one of the first female university graduates in Hong Kong. She’d vowed that all her children would go to college. However, in Hong Kong, only the cream of the crop could make it to higher education. As a high school teacher, she knew not all of her five children would qualify.

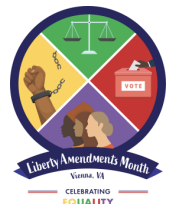
That night, my parents discussed the family’s future. They agreed to ask Father’s younger brother to sponsor them. This brother had gone to work for the New York office of a Chinese company in 1947, right after the Second World War. He’d stayed, raised a family, and become a US citizen.

Father wrote to his brother in California. Uncle was happy to sponsor us and submitted a petition on our behalf. On our end, we completed a large volume of paperwork. Two months later, the embassy sent us instructions on where to go for physical checkups. The seven of us trooped into the doctor’s office. We had our vitals checked, our blood drawn, and our chests X-rayed. Then we were told to go home and wait.

We waited and waited. Days merged into weeks and months. The envelope bearing the American eagle emblem failed to arrive. Mom confided her frustrations to a close friend, a fellow teacher and Catholic named Mary.

“I know somebody who can help you,” Mary said. “I do secretarial work for an American priest on Saturdays. He knows everyone at the embassy.”

Mom had forgotten about the priest when Mary pulled her aside during a class break. According to Mary, the priest had gone to the embassy and rummaged through the stack of pending files. He found ours buried at the very bottom.



# My American Liberty Story

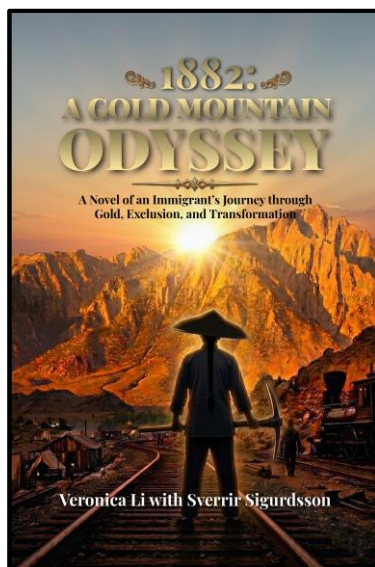
## Veronica Li continues (p3 of 3)

The priest pulled it out and put it on top. “This family was cleared a year ago. Why haven’t they received their visas yet?” he asked the officers present. One of them replied, “Oh, their records must have been lost in the pile.”

A few months later, our family arrived in San Francisco. We rented a home in the Bay Area, close to Uncle, our sponsor. I enrolled in the tenth grade, survived the jungles of an American public high school, and went on to the University of California at Berkeley. Since then, I’ve lived the American dream, the best part being the ability to retire early and pursue writing as a new career.

Unfortunately, COVID-19 jolted me from my dream. Chinese Americans became punching bags for angry Americans who blamed the pandemic on China. Verbal and physical attacks on Asians became rampant. The cry, “Go back to where you came from!” was no stranger to me, but coming at a time of so much diversity, it was disturbing. Vienna, VA, had been my home for forty-some years. I’d seen my neighborhood grow from mostly white to a colorful mélange. Were we backpedaling to the past?

To educate myself, I delved into American immigration history, focusing on the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act. What were the forces that propelled this law? Then I put myself in the shoes of a Chinese American worker in the 1800’s and wrote a historical novel about his journey. My hope is to educate others as well.



On May 6, the anniversary of the first *Chinese Exclusion Act*, I released my novel, called **1882: A Gold Mountain Odyssey**.

<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B0GX3131T7>



Use the QR Code or visit the Freeman Store and Museum or the Community Center to view all of the stories.





## My American Liberty Story

### Donald Gray Krause

#### Our American Heritage – Liberty

(a college paper written circa 1950)

I often wonder how many of us truthfully can say *“I have done my best to make my country a free country. Not just a free country for one race, but for men of every race, creed, color or religion; men from the slums to Fifth Avenue, men from solitary ranches to penthouse, men of every walk of life.”*

There are few people who have not heard other people or themselves say *“Look at the Cat-licker”, “He’s a dotty Wop”, “Let’s go, here comes Jose, he’s a Mex.”* Exactly what is the difference? They are all Americans whether of Jew, Gentile, Negro, or Mexican parents or descent.

Freedom of religion was the reason why many Englishmen came to America. The Puritans were persecuted in England although upon arriving in the New World they would only allow members of certain churches to enjoy the rights of citizens. Now most American citizens enjoy the rights of freedom on religion, which are freedom to worship in the way you wish or not to worship at all.

*“Gentiles only”, “Jews Restricted”, “No Negroes”,* are familiar signs in large cities.

Many hotels won’t permit negroes to stay at them no matter what their standards are. This certainly shows racial prejudice. When trains cross the Mason-Dixon Line Negroes go to the rear of the train and sit in day coaches even if they have Pullman tickets. In the southeastern part of the United States the negroes, although full fledged American citizens, are denied the right to vote.

The people wield the ruling hand in the United States and why don’t they do something about this vital problem? The United States is not, in the words of Francis Scott Key, *“the land of the free”*.

It is up to us, the citizens and future citizens of the United States to make it a land where the Star-Spangled Banner flies *‘o’ver the land of the free’*. Where you’re not Hoolahan Irish, Van Schmitt German, Jose Spanish, but Hoolahan, Van Schmitt, and Jose Americans.



# My American Liberty Story

## Donald Gray Krause continues (p2 of 2)

Two important freedoms are the freedoms of speech and the freedom of the press. It is through these two freedoms that the American people learn what our government is doing and the way they do it. We can listen to other people's opinions, read what the papers say, and then form our own opinions.

It is the privilege of any natural-born citizen, man or woman, to strive to become the President of the United States.

A person should not be thought of as was his father or his grandfather unless he has followed in his footsteps, but as he has made himself.

We are free to hold any lawful occupation that our talents permit, and any undetected unlawful occupation the we may desire.

This is **Our American Heritage**.



*Colonel Krause was a command pilot with more than 6000 flying hours. His military decorations and awards include the Distinguished Flying Cross, the Legion of Merit, Air Medal with nine Oak Leaf Clusters,*

*Meritorious Service Medal, Air Force Commendation Medal, Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry with Star Device, Vietnamese Service Medal—Honor Class, and the Vietnamese Air Service Medal.*

*He flew Air Force One and was proud of delivering the President on time, every time.*



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*This story was submitted by his niece, Leigh Kitcher.*



# My American Liberty Story

## Stacey Seay

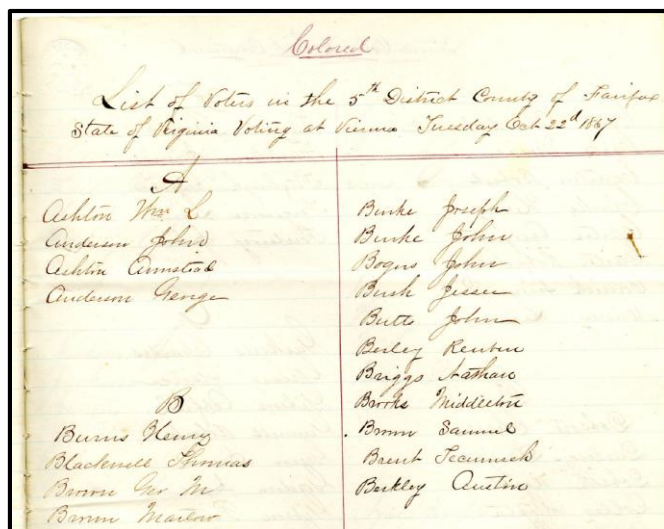
I was bitten by the genealogy bug at an early age. One summer day, probably around the 6th or 7th grade, I rode my bike to the Patrick Henry library to check out some books. I didn't know until I learned from a cousin decades later that the mere act of checking out books from this particular library was significant. My mom, Sharon Honesty, was the first African American to check out a book there.

I don't remember all the books I chose that day, but one changed my life: *Who Do You Think You Are?* by Emily Croom. It introduced me to what would become a lifelong labor of love, genealogy.

My genealogy adventures have led me to the Fairfax County Historic Courthouse numerous times. I've made great discoveries there. I am fortunate enough to be able to document my free African American ancestors through several family lines in Fairfax County records, and more specifically, in Vienna.

For a long time, I thought my most significant discovery was an 1856 deed bearing the mark of my fourth great-grandmother, Keziah Carter, proving she owned land outright. That mattered deeply. But I was wrong about it being the most significant.

There is another document that exists. It is fragile with age and ordinary in purpose, but it changed how I understand myself and my place in this country. It is titled: ***List of Voters in the 5th District, County of Fairfax, State of Virginia, at Vienna, Tuesday, October 22, 1867.*** And within its pages, on the "colored poll list," are the names of my ancestors.



The first time I read through the names on that list, it took my breath away. There among the list of names were my family names: Brown, Carter, Honesty, Neal. I saw the names of grandfathers and uncles, all neatly listed under the corresponding first letter of their surname. Today, I have read those names more times than I can count, but each time, something still catches in my chest.



# My American Liberty Story

## Stacey Seay continues (p2 of 3)

To understand why, you have to know what that moment actually was and who those men actually were. My ancestors were not newly freed. They were free before the Civil War ended, but they lived in a community that enslaved their neighbors and maybe even their kin. They were men who lived with the paradox of legal freedom in an unfree world. They did not need October 22, 1867, to tell them they were free. They already knew.

***What they had been denied was recognition as citizens.*** That is what makes this document more than a voting record—it is a record of agency.

The requirements to appear on that list were clear: a man had to be at least 21 years old, a Virginia resident for one year, and free of convictions for rebellion or felony. Many former Confederates were barred. My ancestors were not. They qualified, and they showed up.

*On the very first day Black men were permitted to vote in Virginia, my family was there. Not swept up in the moment, but present by choice, by will, and by a belief in belonging to a country that had not yet fully claimed them.*

The stakes were enormous, but more than 100,000 Black men registered to vote across the commonwealth. My ancestors were part of that number. They weren't just choosing delegates; they were shaping whether Virginia would have a future that included them.

I think about what it must have felt like to walk to that polling place in Vienna. The Reconstruction Acts made it possible, but not safe. The men who showed up that Tuesday knew there could be consequences. History tells us what came next: poll taxes, literacy tests, grandfather clauses, gerrymandering—systematic attempts to suppress the Black vote. Much of it lay ahead of them. Some may have sensed it.

And they voted anyway.

What did they feel in that moment? I don't think it was simple joy. I think it was the weight of crossing a threshold history had placed before them and deciding: I am not going around this. I am going through. They were not asking for a seat at the table. They were taking one. For themselves, for their children, for people like me who would come long after and need to know that this was always our country, too.



# My American Liberty Story

## Stacey Seay continues (p3 of 3)

This is my American liberty story. Not a sanitized version taught from safe distances, but a real one, made of ordinary men doing something extraordinary on a Tuesday in October. They did not wait for America to become what it promised. They showed up and forced the promise to begin. They went on to build, raising money to build Vienna's first church and school and a thriving Black community that is my legacy.

Every election cycle, when the noise grows loud and cynicism creeps in, when people say their vote doesn't matter, and when participation feels pointless, I remember that list of colored voters from October 1867.

I think about what it cost my ancestors to be on that list. I think about those who spent the next century trying to erase them from it. I think about the Voting Rights Act of 1965 and the long architecture of exclusion that stood between those two moments and was designed to silence exactly what my ancestors began.

They failed.

Their names are still there. Written in ink. Fairfax County, Virginia. October 22, 1867.

***Voting is not a preference for me. It is an inheritance. It is what my ancestors were willing to risk uncertainty to do, when the cost was real, and the outcome was not guaranteed.***

***The least I can do, the very least, is show up.***

Their names are on a list.

***And so is mine.***



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# My American Liberty Story

## Leigh Kitcher

My mom, she's bending over in white, is putting the finishing touches on the Snoopy For President float she made for my small town's annual 4<sup>th</sup> of July parade.

It's 1969, I can tell because I'm on the left in a patriotic striped shirt with my Twiggy haircut – which lasted less than 6 months. I'm tasked with leading the cheering in the parade with a megaphone shouting: ***"Snoopy For President!"***

The float was the local League of Women Voters entry in the parade. The previous year she created a float of a similarly sized chicken. The catch phrase was: ***"Don't be a Chicken! Vote!"***

As we celebrate our nation's 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary, I am reminded that we have much to be joyful about. Our constitution provided us with freedoms and rights unheard of before our founding. And we have the ability to make changes to our constitution as we evolve together.



I'm following in my mother's steps, inspiring my community to joyfully celebrate our nation's founding. I have made over 100 patriotic Vienna250 bows to be displayed around town at various events and locations. Hopefully it will bring lots of smiles and pride in our community and our country.



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# My American Liberty Story

## Max Antonio Allen Jacobs

My name contains the contested and overlapping meaning of American citizenship.



**Jacobs** (anglicized from Jakubowicz) signifies the ambivalent embrace of Jewish immigrants into the United States during the early-to-mid twentieth century. My paternal grandfather, William Jay Jacobs, was so thoroughly Americanized as a son of Hungarian Jewish immigrants that he went on to *author several textbooks on American history and biographical children's books* on American historical figures like George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, and Eleanor Roosevelt. With titles like *Search for Freedom: America and its People* and *Women in American History* (co-authored with my grandmother, Phoebe Llyod), my grandfather--in word and deed--embodied the progressive American idealism that championed democratic opportunism no matter creed or origin.

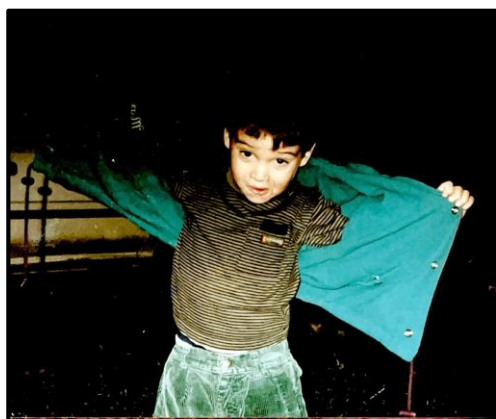
**Allen** recalls my paternal grandmother's lineage, which stretches back to the early Welsh and Scottish settlers who left their homeland in search of new beginnings (albeit at the expense of Indigenous peoples already inhabiting the continent). Phoebe, like my grandfather, also had a fascination with American history, publishing extensively on early American art and artists like Raphaelle Peale and Winslow Homer.



## My American Liberty Story

### Max Antonio Allen Jacobs continues (p2 of 2)

**Antonio** recalls my maternal grandparents, Jose Rodriguez and Clara De la Carrera, who were political exiles from the Cuban Revolution. As the only immigrant group to be granted a path towards American citizenship (via the Cuban Adjustment Act of 1966) without authorization from their county of birth, my grandparents escaped to New York City also in search of new beginnings. Antonio comes from my great-uncle, Antonio De la Carrera, who was a member of the socialist party in Cuba, serving as the Political Officer of the July 26th movement as well as Chief of Staff for Cuba's president, Manuel Urrutia, who preceded the Castro regime.



**Max** signifies a legal compromise between my parents, Clara Rodriguez and Adam Jacobs (both lawyers), who took opposing positions on *Maximo* versus *Maxamillian*.

My name has now been conjoined with another, **Larissa Victoria Rindosh**, who also carries the contested and overlapping meaning of American citizenship. Her maternal and paternal grandfathers, with Greek and Slovakian roots, served in World War II. Her maternal grandmother taught and housed newly arrived Greek immigrants in Jersey City, New Jersey, while her paternal grandmother, after fleeing Slovakia during the interwar period, was awarded as citizen of the year (at 100 years old) in Carteret, New Jersey.

***As these familial connections attest, the nature of American citizenship is both circuitously expansive and beautifully diverse.***



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# My American Liberty Story

## Ingrid Revis

### *My Mother Ruth - the Adventurer*



My mother, Ruth Ottilia Nyman, was born in 1928. In her early 20's she came over to the United States from Sweden. She was a maid and chauffeur for a family in Massachusetts. After that, she went to Wisconsin, where she worked at a country club as a cigarette/cigar girl. When she got tired of that, she rented a car and drove all the way out to California, with stops in between and her money stuffed in her bra. She did not like Los Angeles, so she boarded a bus to San Francisco, where she met my dad in a boarding house. They were married 6 months later.

After starting their family in California, they moved to a lot of places, including Alaska and Indonesia. Eventually, they settled in Herndon. My mother was a brave adventurer, at a time when it was unusual for a woman to do so – love a Viking!



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# My American Liberty Story

## Anonymous

I moved to Vienna in 1980. At the time my wife and I had one kid, my son was an infant when we moved here. The day that we were moving in, we had all the boxes and containers and accoutrement of moving. The house was at 1005 Frederick Street. Aaron was my son's name.

The neighborhood that we lived in was called Vienna Woods. There were two pools then, Vienna Woods tennis and swim club and the other side there was a swim club on Marshall Road. We joined the Vienna Woods swim and tennis club. Prior to doing that we had to unpack our boxes and move in with an infant. It was exciting. As we were cleaning out boxes and dealing with an infant at the same time we got a knock on the door. A tall guy and shorter woman were standing on the front porch of the house, we opened the door and they started talking to us, asking 'how are you doing?' We said we just moved in. It was the last day in March. They were very nice, but we wondered why they had come to the front door and who they were.

It turned out after we'd had all the niceties and talked about our move we learned that the man was the former Mayor Robinson and the wife was Maud Robinson. We were stunned that the Mayor of the Town and his wife would come to see us and welcome us on our first full day in the neighborhood.

Finally, we figured out what was going on, they were greeting us as new residents, but they were also there to ask us to support Mayor Robinson in his re-election campaign. In those days the elections for Town Council were held the first Tuesday in May. At this time there was a rule in Town you couldn't have lawn signs up more than 30 days before the election and that just happened to be the first day that the signs could go up so they were out campaigning. It made us think it was going to be a great Town experience.



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# My American Liberty Story

## Bill Anderson and “Chuck”

*“The struggle of today is not altogether for today – it is for a vast future also.”*

*Abraham Lincoln*



This is a picture of my dad, William Burton Anderson, or “Bill,” born on October 3, or 9, 1929, depending on which parent you asked. The Army-issue baseball cap he wears in the picture is a clue to a conflict that affected his life journey. Born in rural West Virginia, Bill was drafted right out of high school. Fearing the uncertainty of a war-time relationship, my mother, Emma Gene, pleaded with her mom to allow her to marry Bill before he went off to boot camp. Her mom agreed, and so Bill, 18, and Gene, 16, were married. Gene spent two years after high school in Washington, D.C. working for the Army Map Service, drawing the topographies of the towns and cities of Germany. She may well have mapped out the streets of Schweinfurt in Upper Franconia, the home of the Army base where my dad was stationed.

The hazy finish of the photo is a clue that my dad’s story did not end well. In those days, the full sepia treatment typically was sold by professional photography studios only for memorial pictures.

Dad returned home from the Army in 1953, Mom came back to West Virginia, and they started a family. Dad built their first house, even though he had no formal training in the building trades. Dad loved the outdoors and was good with his hands. His dream was to be a forester. Not long after he returned, he planted hundreds of pine tree saplings for later harvest and sale as Christmas trees. But one evening, while burning trash, my mom accidentally set fire to his young forest.



## My American Liberty Story

### Bill Anderson and “Chuck” continues (p2 of 3)

The focus of the couple’s lives was their rapidly growing family. In 1954, Robin was born, followed two years later by Tim, and then me a year later. That is me in the picture, being spoon-fed by my dad. The photo shows a father in a moment of tender parenting – a quite unusual subject, in its time, of a formal male portrait. It clearly shows what was important to my father.

Dad and Mom had a big disagreement over my name. My mom wanted to call me “Charles,” after her favorite brother. For some reason, my dad did not like the name “Charles” and wanted to name me after his best friend “Len.” The compromise was “Charles Len,” but on the day I was born my dad called me “Chuck,” and I have been “Chuck” ever since.

The only occupation available to Dad in 1950s rural West Virginia was coal mining. So Dad joined his brother-in-law Harry Fletcher at the Richwood Sewell Coal Company mine in Burton. He worked as a “bratticeman,” one of the most dangerous underground roles. His job was to be the first to enter a newly-created shaft and set the posts that would keep the roof from caving in.

His mining career was brief. On October 28, 1958, only 16 months after I was born, management ordered Dad, Harry, and the rest of the day shift down the shaft to rescue equipment in a section of the mine that had become unstable overnight. Not long after they reached the mine face, there was a ceiling collapse, a release of methane, a spark, and an explosion. Dad and Harry, along with 12 other members of the crew, lost their lives that day.

My mom, not wanting her children to end up as coal miners, followed two of her sisters and other relatives to rural Michigan. Their family journey was part of a much larger economic migration that started during the Great Depression – thousands of Appalachians, displaced by poverty, relocating to the industrial Midwest, driven by hopes for jobs in the auto industry.



## My American Liberty Story

### Bill Anderson and “Chuck” continues (p3 of 3)

So, I, a coal miner’s son, was raised in Michigan, in a small rural town with solid schools and supportive neighbors. Dad’s death and Mom’s subsequent move increased the odds that her children would live the American dream. She remarried, had two more children with my stepfather, and with him, adopted a sixth. All were raised, educated, and had successful adult lives.

A few years ago, on a business trip, I found myself in on the streets of Schweinfurt, Germany. My travel path had crossed Dad’s earlier journey from the hills of West Virginia to an army base in Upper Franconia, Germany. Very likely, I was walking the same streets in that far-away land that he had walked so many years before. That day, we were separated only by time.

Many, maybe most, American journeys involve war, or natural or man-made disaster, or economic dislocation. It is important that we document the journeys of those who came before us and remember the struggles they endured so that we might have a better future.

*The author is Chuck Anderson. He was born in West Virginia, grew up in Michigan, and, after college and graduate school, settled in the DMV area. He has been a resident of Vienna since 1995.*

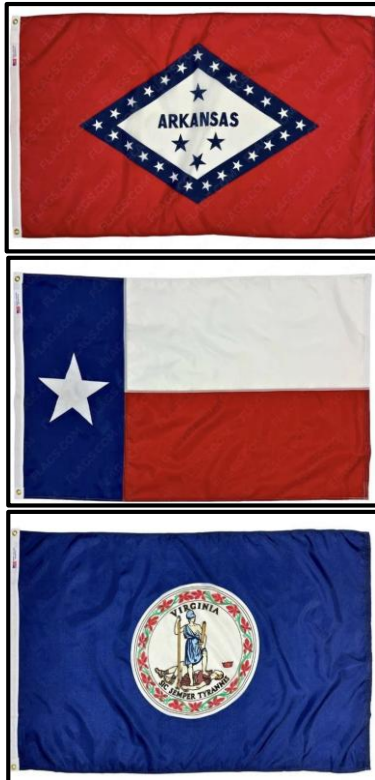


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## My American Liberty Story

### Mary McGee Osborne Cox



Although Mary McGee Osborne Cox is now a resident at Sunrise in Vienna, she lived in Arkansas, Texas, and Louisiana most of her life. Mary has been very interested in learning about her genealogy. After reviewing the history of her parents and grandparents some things became more obvious. Mary's grandfather (Francis Brooks Adams Osborne) was a Presbyterian whose family settled in Dobyville, Arkansas in the late 1800s founded by Presbyterians who migrated from South Carolina. There was a migration wave from South Carolina right before the beginning of the Civil War. William Doby and his wife, Altona, lived in the area with their three children by 1860. Sources indicate that other members of the extended family lived nearby, including Joseph and Margaret Doby.

The Carolina Presbyterian Church began operations in the community in Arkadelphia (Clark County) in 1861 including Baptists and Methodists, who attended the church because it was closer than their own churches. Members of the church helped found the Presbyterian Church in Gurdon in the 1890s, and in 1915, the Carolina Presbyterian Church became the Dobyville Presbyterian Church to better represent the area the congregation served. Arkadelphia, Arkansas Mary's great grandfather and great-grandfather were buried in the cemetery, and her father was a member of the same church in Dobyville, AK 1907.

As Dobyville grew, generations of families remained there, such as Mary's descendants, the Osborne family. Mary's mother (maiden name was McGee) was a teacher who passed away from breast cancer when Mary was only three years old. Mary had 3 sisters – Frances Elizabeth Osborne was the oldest and the last to have passed away in December 2012. Barbara Adams Osborne, Helen Eugenia Osborne are deceased.



## My American Liberty Story

### Mary McGee Osborne Cox continues (p2 of 2)

(Mary's grandmother also died of breast cancer at an early age. Her grandfather (an Osborne born in Tupelo, MS in the 1800s and was an engineer. Mary's father, Robert Walter Osborne, studied engineering at Arkansas A & M Monticello (the name change occurred in 1971) University of Arkansas and the campus Robert Walter Osborne attended was located in Fayetteville.

Mary was born in nearby Arkadelphia on May 12, 1943 and lived there for years until she married her husband and both decided to move to College Station and attend Texas A & M for their degrees. Her husband, Riley Cox obtained a degree in forestry and had a career in forestry for years. Mary received her undergraduate at Arkansas A & M Monticello and her master's degree and PhD in Educational Psychology. Mary and Riley settled in College Station as the family expanded. They had two sons and a daughter: Riley Cox, Jr., Patrick Riley Cox, and Cynthia Jane Cox. Cynthia Jane was born in Louisiana where Riley first studied forestry at Southeastern Louisiana University (Springfield, LA) and completed the degree at Texas A & M.

Mary's main interest has always been and continues to be her children. She was a psychologist and practiced therapy, helping families and individuals in the Arkansas A & AM area. She was also an English teacher for five years. Her home was her office, and she was the "only PhD in town."

Mary moved to Vienna, VA two years ago at her daughter's request when Mary retired at 82. Cynthia lives in Virginia so that she can be close to her mother. The two sons reside in Arkansas.

**"THERE ARE ALL KINDS OF PEOPLE IN THE WORLD"** says Dr. Mary McGee Osborne Cox  
*(and her dear mother, Mary McGee).*



Use the QR Code or visit the Freeman Store and Museum or the Community Center to view all of the stories.



# My American Liberty Story

## Joann Ruffin

Joann Ruffin was raised in Ambler and often visited her cousins in Vienna. Her cousins would also travel to Pennsylvania to spend time with her family. During those visits, Joann's cousins were surprised to see Black and white children attending the same school together in Pennsylvania. Joann, in turn, was surprised to learn that her cousins in Vienna attended a separate Black school known as Louise Archer Elementary School, often referred to as LAES.

Joann's father shared a close friendship with her cousins' father in Vienna, strengthening the bond between the two families. Her cousin's family used to live in a small house on Orchard Street in Vienna. Later, they built another home farther up the hill and rented out. Joann also remembers that her uncle is buried in the cemetery located near Orchard Street, a place that continues to connect her family's history to Vienna.

Before recently moving to Sunrise Senior Living, Joann lived in a third-floor condominium in Virginia. She moved to Sunrise, carrying with her memories of family, community, and the changing experiences of education and daily life across generations.



Use the QR Code or visit the Freeman Store and Museum or the Community Center to view all of the stories.



# My American Liberty Story

## Marcia Taylor

### *My Family's American Journey: from Enslaved to Voracious Public Service*

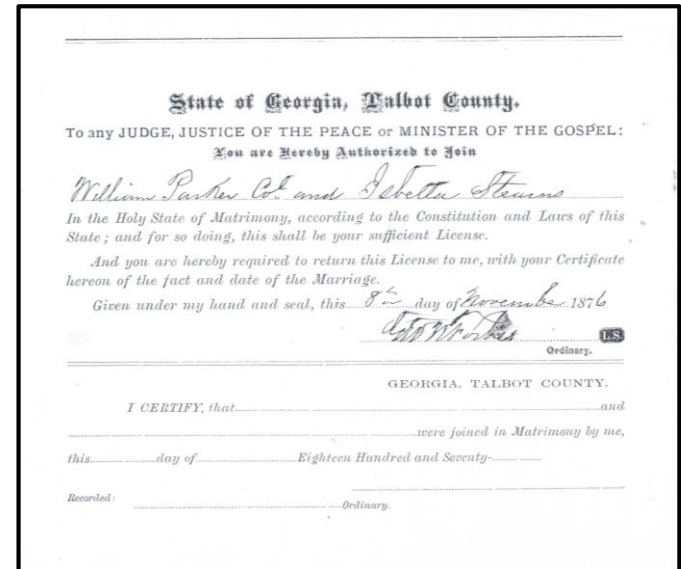
I have heard the story of “*Billy and Belle*” all my life. It is a romantic story... and a true story. Isbella Stearns (commonly known as Belle), a gentle and refined lady, was favored by Billy (adopted formal name William), a rough, outspoken transient worker. They were married in 1876. However, their story is more than romance. It is one of love, faith, hard work and determination.

Billy began his life as an enslaved person and was used for farm labor from an early age. Not much else is known about the demographics of it. However, he rebelled against the inhumane working conditions and

harsh treatment. He ran away from that life in the early 1860s. He used his knowledge of living and moving in tune with nature, subsistence farming, and sheer determination to survive life in the woods and life on the run for two to three years. He survived by scalping food from meat-curing barns, root cellars, and spring houses, and eating wild vegetables, fruits, and berries. Billy was estimated to be 15 years old when he was persuaded to leave a forest encampment after news of the Emancipation Proclamation saturated southern Georgia in 1865.

Billy settled around Prattsburg, Georgia, and found work as a farm laborer and a pulpwood logger. He was also proficient in hunting, trapping, and gardening. He took the last name of Parker from the first person he worked for after coming out of the woods. The 1874 Talbot County, Georgia Tax Records show that Billy was registered as owing a poll tax, which means he was at least 21 years old and more importantly, he was ELIGIBLE TO VOTE! The tax record also indicated that he owned \$75 of personal property, which indicates he was industrious and building a homestead.

Belle was the daughter of Daniel and Martha Stearnes, a formerly enslaved and eventual sharecropping family from Talbot County Georgia. Family legend is that Isbella was a bright and observant person from childhood. She was kind and engaged all people, and life in general, with a gentle spirit. Although she was a farm worker,



# My American Liberty Story

## Marcia Taylor continues (p2 of 3)

she likely also spent time in the favor of the owner's family. It was noted, as a young lady, she knew basic reading and writing.

Billy and Belle were married on November 8, 1876, in Prattsburg and over the next 14 years, they raised four girls and two boys. The 1890 Census records the family in Prattsburg. According to family history, Billy was asked to leave Talbot County for reasons unknown. Based on the Census records of 1890 and 1910, we know that he left Prattsburg and moved to Poulan, Georgia, where he was listed in the 1910 Census.

Once in Poulan, Billy and Belle quickly settled and re-established themselves and their family as pillars of the community. Their six children flourished in knowledge of subsistence farming, fruit and vegetable gardening, and land management in general.

The youngest son, Freeman Parker (my paternal grandfather) was born January 8, 1892. He was a bright and curious boy and worked hard to learn all that he could from both his father and mother. As he grew, he became proficient in farming and hunting, but he excelled in fruit and vegetable gardening. He began farm work at eight years old, aiding the family's effort to build a homestead. As a teenager, he took pleasure in seeing the fruit of his hands literally and began growing peaches.

After marrying in 1915, Freeman and his new wife took on extra work to substantiate their growing family. They started "peddling" vegetables from a mule-driven wagon. Little by little, they expanded the vegetable gardens and planted fruit trees. After being forced to move from their thriving homestead, Freeman began dreaming of owning his own land.

An opportunity opened that would allow Freeman to realize that dream. Another landowner went bankrupt and, on November 2, 1937, he was able to purchase a 178-acre farm for \$3,700. Money earned from years of vegetable and fruit sales secured the loan.

*Freeman Parker was the first African American farm owner in the Sumner, Georgia area.* He expanded his vegetable gardens, planted fruit and nut orchards, and began teaching other young men his land stewardship practices and farming techniques.



## My American Liberty Story

### Marcia Taylor continues (p3 of 3)

His family flourished despite the hard work and stressful social pressures. Freeman credited his faith as undergirding his success. He was a founding member and deacon of Mount Olive Baptist Church and remained a faithful member until his death.

The origins of the Freeman Parker Elementary School date to a January 1950 formal petition from Negroes in Worth County demanding equal educational facilities. In February 1953, Georgia created the State School Building Authority which provided funds to build schools under control of any county in the state. Notably, this was before the 1954 Brown v. Board of Education ruling declaring separate-but-equal schools unconstitutional. In 1957, the Worth County Board of Education named the new school for Negroes after my grandfather. In 1995, the road bordering the family's property was renamed Parker Road. My family still owns and operates the farm.

My family has a long history of contributions and service to this nation and public institutions. We have contributed more than 214 years of active-duty military service to the United States Army, Navy, Marines, and Air Force, supporting armed conflicts from World War II, the Korean War, Vietnam, the Persian Gulf War, the War in Afghanistan, and the Global War on Terrorism.

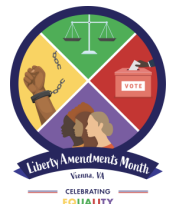
The Parker family has also amassed more than 500 years of public service, mostly in the field of education and medical service.

Family members have more than 240 years as educators in public schools and 120 years as nurses and medical administrators.

Additionally, family members have served for more than 154 years in various federal agencies, including the Departments of Justice and Defense.



Use the QR Code or visit the Freeman Store and Museum or the Community Center to view all of the stories.



# My American Liberty Story

## Mary Pat (Grant) Boron



### *The “Grant Girls” go “Down” the Jersey Shore*

My mom was Patty McCaffrey and my dad was Bill Grant. I am the oldest of 7 children – 5 girls followed by 2 boys. The Grant Girls are pictured here: Mary Pat, Kathy, Susie, Tina, and Beth the youngest of the girls). Our brothers Bill and Matt arrived later.

Every summer, my dad took off work for two weeks to go “down” to the Jersey Shore in Stone Harbor. We all piled into a white station wagon (it was always white) and went down the Garden State Parkway. We were all in the back loose – no seatbelts, no car seats, no car bed. My mom and dad were in the front seat.

We went “down the shore” every summer and it didn’t matter if you were traveling north, south, east, or west, you were always just going “down the shore.” It was wonderful!



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# My American Liberty Story

## Rick Taylor

### *From Kansas to Virginia with Stops in Between*

My name is Richard J. Taylor Jr., known as “Rick” to friends and family. I’m a resident of Fairfax City who attends First Baptist Church of Vienna and who has made multiple cross-country moves for my career and a better life. Turns out, it’s in my genes.

My great-grandparents, Johnson Taylor and Ella Saunders Taylor, migrated from Sedalia, Missouri, to Leavenworth, Kansas, in the mid-1800s, looking for a more-accepting community for African Americans. Papa Johnson was a laborer and a minister, and his wife was a homemaker. They raised 10 children and my grandfather, Clarence Genoa Taylor, was their eighth child.

Johnson and Ella passed away in the early 1900s, and the children had to find work to sustain the family. William, an elder son, worked as a waiter in the resort town of Excelsior Springs, Missouri. Clarence and his brother George became train porters to help the family, particularly their youngest sibling, Viola, attend Howard University. Pullman Company porters were African American men employed on luxury railroad sleeping cars. They became one of the most important groups in Black labor history in the United States.

Clarence’s travels as a Pullman porter took him through Denver, where he met Edna Pauline Bell. They married in 1915 and settled initially in Leavenworth, Kansas where they were blessed with three boys. Later, as reliable employment became difficult, the family migrated to Minneapolis/St. Paul following economic opportunities along the rail lines. They were again blessed with a son. The rise of the automobile industry in Detroit caught Clarence’s attention. My grandfather said Henry Ford’s guarantee of \$5 a day was too good to pass up and the growing family relocated to the Motor City in 1924. Those factory jobs offered regular wages and the possibility of upward mobility. For many African Americans, Detroit represented not just a job, but a chance to build a more secure future.

The family settled in Detroit’s North End neighborhood and quickly became a pillar of the working-class community. The family grew by leaps and bounds over the next eight years welcoming three girls and three more boys. My father, Richard J. Taylor, was the youngest of Clarence and Edna’s 10 children. The Taylor family quickly adapted



# My American Liberty Story

**Rick Taylor** continues (p2 of 3)

to the more urban lifestyle and enjoyed modern conveniences. My grandfather took a second job part time so his large family could have middle-class luxuries. My aunts focused on school, choir, and sewing; while my father and his brothers engaged in debate, Latin club, and sports.

As people from different regions and backgrounds converged in Detroit, they brought with them diverse traditions, values, and experiences. This contributed to the development of vibrant communities and neighborhoods. Churches, social clubs, and mutual aid societies played an important role in helping migrants adapt to urban life. These institutions provided not only spiritual and emotional support but also practical assistance, such as job referrals and financial aid. In this way, migrants helped to build strong community networks that eased the transition from rural to urban living.

My father thrived in Detroit and, after high school, joined the Army in 1952. He was honorably discharged two years later and enrolled at Wayne State, where he met my mother, Barbara Underwood. They married in 1956 and I was born one year later. Dad worked on the assembly line at the Dodge Main plant for two years and became a union steward, fighting for better working conditions. Detroit unions in the 1960s had a big network—Dad left Dodge and went to a grocery supply warehouse, where he became assistant manager in 1971. The warehouse closed four years later, but that didn't stop my father. He became a custodian for Detroit Public Schools and was a regional supervisor until retiring in 1998.

I, myself, have worked in five states—each move a search for better opportunities, self-improvement, or the result of changing economic conditions. My first job out of college was a communications specialist with Aetna Life & Casualty in Hartford, Connecticut. Aetna downsized in 1982, and I got my dream job a few months later as a reporter in Springfield, Massachusetts. I had reporting and editing stints in Ann Arbor and Detroit before heading west in 1988 to the San Jose Mercury News as a copy editor. The highlight of my career was receiving a **Pulitzer Prize** for editing and reporting about the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake.



# My American Liberty Story

## Rick Taylor continues (p3 of 3)

A better opportunity arose in the Washington metropolitan area one year later in 1990. USA TODAY needed editors for its expanding Olympics and election coverage. I worked there for 20 years before the newspaper downsized because of the growth of electronic media. The Department of Defense was my final employer, where I was a writer and editor until retiring in 2024.

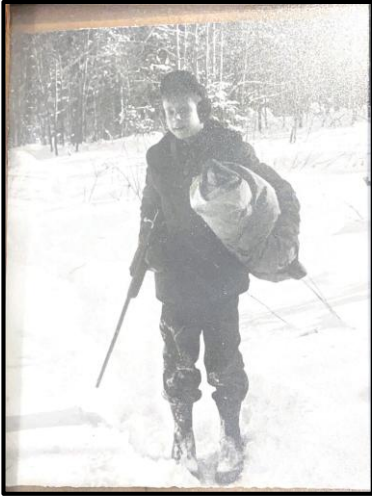
My Papa Johnson nor Grandpa Clarence likely would never have imagined that “internal Taylor quest” for opportunity and improvement would run some-four generations strong from Kansas to Virginia with stops in between. In 2016, I had the opportunity to visit Leavenworth, Kansas and see my family’s ancestral home and Bethel African Methodist Episcopal church and museum, which they co-founded. I have also connected with cousins who are de facto family historians. We continue to discover the Taylor history and heritage.

My career, as well my forefathers’ adventures, reflect both the challenges and the possibilities that define the American experience.



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## My American Liberty Story

### Thomas E. Sloan



I was born and raised in Marquette, Michigan. The town of Marquette, Michigan is 400 miles North of Chicago. Michigan is divided into two sections. The Northern part, which is where Marquette is. This part of the state has 30% of the land mass of the state with 3% of the population. It is known as the Upper Peninsula. If you are from there you are a 'youpper.'

The Upper Peninsula large has large deposits of iron ore, and copper. These are mostly gone now but iron ore is still being mined. This year Marquette has received over 300 inches of snow.

I first came to Vienna around 1970 and lived on Clovelly court which is behind the golf course on the East side of Vienna. I moved to Vienna to work for the US Customs Service. During my time with the U.S. Customs Service I was stationed in different locations. I was a criminal investigator looking into customs fraud.

When I moved to Vienna, I noticed it was typically much warmer and more crowded than Northern Michigan. I do remember a snowstorm in the 1970s when work was closed for a few days because they didn't have the snow removal equipment they had in Michigan.

I chose Vienna because it was quiet and it was close to Washington D.C. This was before the Metro and I drove to work. We raised three boys here in Vienna and when I retired, we moved back to Michigan, and then moved back to Vienna again, as our sons were still here. The change in Vienna is amazing, from a town of small houses to very big houses, more crowded, but still very nice.



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## My American Liberty Story

### Reflections of the Monroe Family of Vienna, VA *From Slavery to Freedom*



In the early 1800's, *a 14-year-old male child*, from the Gold Coast of Africa (Ghana), *was captured and sold into slavery*. It has been said that this young man was from a family of kings, and his parents must have planned that he too would become a king. However, at the hands of men of greed, he found himself on a strange ship, sailing a strange sea, on his way to a strange land.

This ship pulled into port in Charlottesville, VA. The young man was again sold to the Monroes of the Monroe Plantation of Fauquier County, Virginia. This became his enslavement home. As was true of all such human property, *the slave master chose a name for his slave*, thus, the alias Reuben. Reuben, *being from a good blood line, was chosen to "mate,"* and so, in 1844, to a slave woman Hannah, a son was born. *To this beautiful black son, the name John R. was given.* The surname, Monroe was also affixed, because he too was the property of the Monroe's of the Monroe Plantation.

For twenty-one years, John R. Monroe was enslaved. *In 1865, with the abolition of slavery, John found himself a free man, but, free in word only; for John remained a slave to the white man's will,* and therefore worked as an indentured servant, for small wages, in their fields and around their plantations.

*John never learned to read or write.* God, in His infinite wisdom, saw fit that John meet a young woman, who, like many young female slaves, served as a house slave nurturing their children, cooking meals, cleaning house, and in many cases, serving at the will of the slave master. We believe, however; because of God's loving favor, *this young woman was taught to read and write.* She was from the Snowden Plantation, in Fauquier County, Virginia, and was given the name, Sarah Jane Snowden.



# My American Liberty Story

## The Monroe Story continues...

**On July 24, 1868, John 24, and Sarah, 18, were joined in holy matrimony in Fauquier County** by the Rev. Henry H. Carroll, a Methodist pastor who was also Sarah's pastor. To this marriage **sixteen children were conceived** (one still birth). John Jr., Amanda, and Hannah died at an early age. They reared to adulthood, William, Winfield, Marshall, Rose, Elvoid, Morgan, Benjamin, George, Clory, Clara, Junius, and Sarah. William, Winfield, and Benjamin married and moved to New Jersey where they settled with their families and George, with his family, moved to Pennsylvania. The remainder of **the Monroe children married and remained in the Fairfax County, Vienna area.**

19.15

**MARRIAGE LICENSE.**

VIRGINIA, *Fauquier County* to wit:

To any Person fitly joined to Celebrate Matrimony:

You are hereby authorized to join together in the Holy State of Matrimony, according to the rites and ceremonies of your Church, or religious denomination, and the laws of the Commonwealth of Virginia, *John Monroe, cc2* and *Sarah Snowden, cc2*

Given under my hand, as Clerk of the County, *Fauquier* this *24* day of *July* 186*8* Court of *Wafaming* CLERK.

**CERTIFICATE TO OBTAIN A MARRIAGE LICENSE.**  
To be annexed to the License, required by Act passed 15th March, 1861.

Time of Marriage *July 24th 1868.*  
Place of Marriage *Fauquier County Va*  
Full names of Parties Married, *John Monroe, cc2 & Sarah Snowden, cc2*  
Age of Husband *24 years*  
Age of Wife *18 years*  
Condition of Husband, (widowed or single) *single*  
Condition of Wife, (widowed or single) *single*  
Place of Husband's Birth *Fauquier Co. Va*  
Place of Wife's Birth *Fauquier Co. Va*  
Place of Husband's Residence *Fauquier Co. Va*  
Place of Wife's Residence *Fauquier Co. Va*  
Names of Husband's Parents  
Names of Wife's Parents  
Occupation of Husband, *Soldier*  
Given under my hand this *24* day of *July* 186*8* *Wafaming* CLERK.

**MINISTER'S RETURN OF MARRIAGE.**  
I certify, that on the *24* day of *July* 186*8* at *Wafaming*, I united in marriage the above named and described parties, under authority of the annexed License. *Mr. Henry H. Carroll*

NOTE: The Minister celebrating a Marriage is required, within ten days thereafter to return the License to the Office of the Clerk who issued the same, with an endorsement thereon of the date of such marriage, and of the time and place of celebrating the same.

A Copy Teste: *H. P. Mason* Clerk  
By *Caroline A. Miller, Deputy Clerk*  
Circuit Court Fauquier County, Virginia

**John and Sarah purchased a parcel of land for the sum of five dollars** and lived in Fauquier County for several years. John, an ambitious young man, was constantly in search of jobs and housing to better care for his family as it increased in size. He moved his family from Fauquier County to Fairfax County, Virginia. They moved several times after coming to Fairfax County, first to Chantilly; **then to Ordricks Corner (McLean); and then they purchased land and built a home (the big house on the hill), on Nutley Street in Vienna, Virginia. They settled in Vienna with their family and remained until their deaths.**

In 1880, John R. Monroe helped **found the Chantilly Baptist Church** and was one of the first Deacons. For many years, he traveled by horse and buggy from Vienna to Chantilly on Saturdays to his board meetings, and with his family each Sunday, to services. After much thought and prayer, he united with the First Baptist Church of Vienna.

John and Sarah, both slaves, were the second generation of African descent. They too knew the pains that suffering slavery brought. However, they survived this awful pain and worked hard to rear fifteen children, in whom they instilled pride, love, and Godly principles.



## My American Liberty Story – The Monroe Story continues...

As we reflect upon the rich history of which we are a part, ***we stand proud in the knowledge that we are the lineage of a family of noble men and women.*** They survived when survival seemed impossible; smiled, when crying should have been the answer; stood tall, when a stupor should have been the order of the day; sang a hymn, when they should have screamed; prayed, because they knew God was their deliverer. Yes, we of the Monroe bloodline pay humble tribute to our ancestors who nurtured us and passed from generation to generation that noble pride which has led us through the years.

In reflection, we know that Reuben, given the surname Monroe, was “mated” with Hannah. We were unable to find the history of whether Hannah was allowed to nurture her son; however, John was given the surname Monroe, thus beginning the generations of Monroes. John, who was born into slavery, became the second generation and was later freed with the abolition of slavery. John married Sarah and reared their fifteen children (the third generation). Both John and Sarah died in the late 1930s. The third generation is also deceased. However, there remains a remnant of the fourth generation, Milton Monroe, the son of Junius and Deloris Taylor Washington, the daughter of Sarah.

We glory in the assurance that the memories of our loved ones are forever engraved in our hearts and minds and that the Monroe name will carry on through the grandsons, great grandsons, and great, great grandsons of those of the past generations. We, the remnant, challenge these, as well as all those who are of the Monroe bloodline to borrow from the strength and determination of our ancestors and in the words of the great poet, Paul Laurence Dunbar: ***“Go on and up! Be proud in mind and soul, for out the blood of conflict of slavery, out of the dust and dimness of death, burst into blossom of glory eternal, flowers that sweeten the world with their breath.”***

The Family, in honor and memory of those who survived the worst that we might enjoy the best in a time such as this.

*Researched and compiled by: Rev. Deloris Taylor Washington, PhD*

*Precious memory contributions by: The late Sarah Monroe Taylor (daughter of John & Sarah Monroe) and the late Beatrice Carr (daughter of Winfield, and granddaughter of John and Sarah Monroe)*



Use the QR Code or visit the Freeman Store and Museum or the Community Center to view all of the stories.





## My American Liberty Story

**My name is Ali Suhel,  
I come from Syria.  
And this is my story.**



My name is Ali and I moved to the US in 2022, coming from Bulgaria, but originally I am from Syria. I was born and raised in Latakia, Syria. During the recent war, I had to leave the country because it was a very bad situation. I don't want to go into that side, I just want to describe how I came here. I went to Bulgaria, and when I was there, I was a refugee. I got humanitarian status and I tried to live my life peacefully. It was very hard to get a job, because the impression was that the Syrians are bad. I felt people were afraid of us. I mean, I saw so many people who are very good, who are very hospitable. I learned my current career there. But it was always missing fairness, I always felt that I am less of a man than the locals. Because basically, I'm not up to their standards, according to them. But it was nevertheless better than my own country. However, ***I won the green card lottery, and I moved to the US, October 15 2021.***

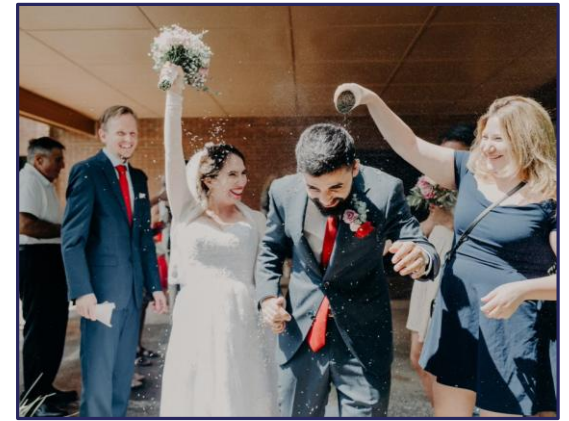
***I came here alone, single, no family with me.*** And I wanted to pursue my career, my life. And I immediately when I arrived, got my Social Security and my green card, valid for 10 years. And I was able to find a job right away. I started working as a cashier at Panera just to get the hang of it, see how people work here to get insurance. And to get connected. And ***I worked in Vienna, Maple Avenue, I had the best experience living with people, I was connected with Vienna Presbyterian Church, who helped me and supported me during my transition to the US.*** Through these people, I found a job as a financial advisor in Merrill Lynch, and decided to do it independently. But the point is that, in the US, I am able to do that, because of the amount of freedom that I was given by the government, all of these rights that I didn't even know about before. Basically, ***I can do anything that any American citizen was able to do, maybe not voting. But I mean, I wasn't able to vote in my own country, so nothing has changed.***





## My American Liberty Story

### Ali's Story continues...



I am living the dream life because ***I found my wife here***. And even this I got married within six months from my arrival to the US. Even the fact that ***there is fairness and equality everywhere***. My wife was able to talk to me because I wasn't able to do so back in Bulgaria because people look down at us as refugees or as Syrian, who are not local. So ***when I came here, I'm not refugee anymore, because I already feel home***.

Everything has changed ever since I left my own country and Bulgaria and I don't feel that I need anything anymore because I feel home. I have my family. We were living in Maryland and recently moved to Florida. We hope to be able to buy a house. This has all happened in a very, very short time. Imagine, I lived for 29 years out of the US and I wasn't able to achieve half of what I achieved so far. In 1.5 years, I have gotten married and gotten a dog (I wasn't able to have a dog back there). It is much more difficult to have a job there. There is no insurance. There are no such things as this kind of tools that we use. Let me put it this way, insurance and life standards. Even a car I was not able to get in the same way that I have it here. It's just different because the US is the best country in the world, and people here don't recognize or appreciate that. ***I feel like this is the only place that a person can live a decent life, and is able to follow his/her dreams and pursue any career that they would love to do.***

I would like to thank Vienna Presbyterian Church for helping me arrive here, arranging for housing and even the work that I managed to get was because of this connection. And I'm thankful for everything that I have so far. ***I hope that I can be able to help others the way that Americans helped me get my feet on the ground.***



Use the QR Code or visit the Freeman Store and Museum or the Community Center to view all of the stories.





## My American Liberty Story

### Jackie Herde

#### College Scholarship led to Citizenship



Born a Buddhist in Shanghai, China, during WWII, Jacqueline Yung Tao attended third grade in a private Catholic school run by Franciscan nuns in a French section of the city. Shanghai was under Japanese occupation, where sirens and possible air attacks kept everyone on alert. Three years after the war ended in 1945, there was a period of peace before the eventual takeover by the communists. This was the deciding factor for **her father to send his family of six to safety in Taiwan**. They left him and their possessions behind, **taking only two suitcases filled with photographs and pictures**. December 1948 was the last time Jacqueline saw her father. She was eleven years old.

Her education and religion would be the guiding factors for her future. Her high school in Taiwan was near a Catholic church, where she spent a lot of time and met several Sisters from Kentucky. She converted to Catholicism and was baptized. **Jacqueline was chosen by the Ursuline Sisters of Louisville to receive a full four-year scholarship to attend Ursuline College in Louisville, Kentucky**, where several Asian students were enrolled or had graduated.

Jacqueline said, **“It was extremely hard for a high schooler to get a Taiwan passport, much less a visa to the United States**. Sister Raymond Carter, academic dean of Ursuline College at that time, intervened and wrote many letters on my behalf so I could attend the college, beginning in 1957. Plans materialized to get me to Louisville, but with limited English and traveling alone, it wasn't an easy journey. I purchased a big leather suitcase to pack for America. My first stop was Hong Kong.

**“While there, I was able to contact my father for the first time since fleeing China eight years earlier**. It was the last time I ever spoke with him.

**“With my one large suitcase and a big itinerary, it took me multiple days to reach my destination in Kentucky**. From Tokyo, I zigzagged to Fairbanks, Alaska; then to Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada; to Seattle; to Los Angeles; to Chicago; and finally to Louisville, where I met Sister Raymond for the first time.



# My American Liberty Story

## Jackie's Story continues...

"Initially, I came to the United States to attend Ursuline College as a special trainee in religion, under the sponsorship of Archbishop A. Riberi, Internuncio of Free China, who worked with converts in his religious program in Taiwan. Plans changed course during my four years of studies. ***I majored in liberal arts and home economics.***



"After graduation, ***I went to New York City, and eventually became a junior accountant.*** In New York, I met my husband, John Herde. We were married in 1965 and will celebrate our 57th anniversary this fall. We have two wonderful daughters, Jennifer and Juliana, and four grandchildren. ***We have traveled worldwide and are now retired in Virginia to be with our family.***"

Jacqueline stayed in contact with several Asian classmates after she graduated from Ursuline College in 1961, but ***most important was her connection to Sister Raymond Carter, who championed her journey to Louisville from Taiwan and her college enrollment in Kentucky, and who gave her guidance and advice over the years.*** "Sister kept me up to date with everything going on at Ursuline College. ***She helped me stay in America.***"

Recently, her daughter, Juliana, sent a donation that was originally intended to be her mother's planned gift in memory of Sister Raymond and for the Chapel Preservation Fund. Sending it now, rather than later, assured the family that her gift would be used as intended, and more importantly, while her mother was still alive. Jacqueline added, "It is rewarding to do so, and makes me feel good to be able to give back to the school that did so much for me.



***Because of the Ursuline community, I was able to come and stay in the U.S. and live a wonderful 60-plus years as a citizen.***



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# My American Liberty Story



## Bracha Laster

### ***Appreciates Vienna's support for religious freedom***



Our house in Vienna Woods blends in. And so do we. In the winter, our front window has bright decorations like others on our block, even though we are not Christian. People on the street can see our menorah's colorful electric lights. In the fall, for eight days we invite friends for meals in our backyard sukkah. For most of the year (before the pandemic) we have had a monthly Shabbat minyan/prayer gathering in our living room.

In 1986 when we purchased and first moved into our rambler, ***I was wondering if we would fit in.*** I read about the nativity scene in front of the Vienna Community Center. Someone brought a First Amendment lawsuit, and the crèche had to move; it was more appropriately set up in front of a church. That incident seems a long time ago, and ***I am hopeful that Vienna has made great strides to be welcoming to a range of folks.***

There were a few bumps along the way, but mostly we have blended in. The sixth grade trip at Louise Archer was planned during Yom Kippur; my child had to miss most of it. The daughter who was on Madison's Color Guard team was almost kicked off of it because she couldn't attend a mandatory practice that was held during Rosh Hashanah. In these cases, I had to be an outspoken parent, advocating for religious pluralism in the face of ignorance, or narrowness (or anti-semitism).

I was a teacher at Thoreau Middle School from 1986 until 1992, and before that three other Fairfax County schools. My kids came through Louise Archer, Thoreau, and Madison High School. They were ***involved in a variety of clubs and activities (e.g., marching band, theatre), and they certainly took advantage of all of the academic prowess FCPS has to offer.***





## My American Liberty Story

### Bracha's Story continues...

Probably as surprising to Town of Vienna friends as it is to me: Two of my children ended up becoming ordained rabbis, and the third one married a rabbi. Being Jewish is central to our family in the past as well as in the present.

I am the ***daughter of a Holocaust survivor***. All four of ***my grandparents left their familial homes during the 20th century to escape religious persecution***. I hope that the trials that they went through will never re-surface; part of my professional work has concerned cross-cultural understanding.

For almost 40 years our home has been here in Vienna, and I think we fit in well. This is my Town. ***May the town and the country continue to be a good place to live for all of us no matter what race, religion, sexual orientation, gender, ability, or belief.***



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# My American Liberty Story

## ***Loving Stories of a trip lead to prosperous lives as Americans***

***My great grandfather immigrated to the United States and loved America.***

When he went back to his home country to marry his sweetheart, she did not want to leave her familiar surroundings and refused to marry him if he wanted to return to the US.  
*So, he chose not to return.*

Instead, while raising his large family of 14, ***he told them stories about his time in the US.***

***This encouraged four of his sons, including my grandfather, to immigrate to the US;*** my grandfather and his new wife, my grandmother, emigrated in 1904 on a ship of the Red Star Line, passing through Ellis Island, and settling in central Wisconsin.

***They became prosperous farmers.***

Of the other brothers who came to the US, two settled in Michigan and one lived in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

*Neither my grandfather nor my grandmother ever returned to their home country to visit;* they learned English, worked hard, raised a family of six and successfully farmed until their early 70s when they moved into town (Wisconsin Rapids, WI).



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## My American Liberty Story

### Honorable Steve Shannon

*Discusses his Grandfather:*

### Peter Michael Shannon

My paternal grandfather, Peter Michael Shannon, was born in Ireland in 1899 and died in LaGrange, Illinois in 1993. He and his wife (Marian Burke Shannon) had seven children and, at the time of his passing, 36 grandchildren and 36 great-grandchildren.

In 1920, ***my grandfather left Ireland at age 20 due to economic conditions.*** He had two relatives in the United States at the time who encouraged him to move to the United States. He arrived at Ellis Island on a boat named the Baltic.

In Ireland, ***my grandfather's formal education stopped at age 12.*** He worked as a shoemaker's assistant for most of his teenage years before leaving for the United States.

After Ellis Island, my grandfather briefly stayed in Binghamton, New York with a family member. He moved to Detroit looking for work and was hired at a Ford Motor Company plant. In a 1984 interview, my grandfather ***recalled waiting in an employment line outside of the plant with about two thousand other applicants and the variety of languages spoken within the crowd.***

***A consistent theme in my grandfather's life was acquiring an education.*** While at Ford Motor Company, he took an apprentice class at night. After the plant shut down, he moved back to Binghamton, New York, obtained employment with a shoe company, and ***enrolled in a business college—where he took classes in arithmetic, penmanship and bookkeeping.*** (A high school education was not a pre-requisite for attending this type of business school.) After Binghamton, he moved to Chicago, where he met his wife. He worked as a bookkeeper for a canned goods company (the Steele-Wedeles Company) for the next 20 years.



# My American Liberty Story

## Honorable Steve Shannon

*Discusses his Grandfather:*

**Peter Michael Shannon** continues...

### ***Used Education to improve his life and that of others***

***At night, he studied at the former Watson Business College*** and also took correspondence courses at night. The correspondence courses included studying under the tutelage of a certified public accountant. ***My grandfather received his CPA certification in 1936.***

Upon leaving the Steele-Wedeles Company, ***he founded the accounting firm of Peter Shannon & Co.*** He started the accounting firm with one client and worked out of his basement. The firm eventually moved to a one-story office building, and my grandfather added a second-floor addition to house the ***Shannon School of Commerce, which he founded to teach accounting, typing and stenography.*** Among the firm's clients was the City of Chicago, and the firm conducted the annual audit of city funds. My grandfather retired in 1969. Peter Shannon & Co. exists to this day.

When interviewed in 1984 about his business accomplishments, my grandfather stated:

***“There’s nothing like hard work and industry and doing your best.  
Because good is bound to come of it.”***

This is a nice description of the opportunities that can arise in the United States ***due to the freedoms afforded to its citizens.***



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# My American Liberty Story

## Sharon Gower Miller

*Ciao...*

My Italian Great Grandparents Raffaele and Lucia (Barone) Ucciferri represents ***one family in the wave of millions of Southern Italians who traveled to America for a better life and raised children who considered themselves Americans... enduring hardship, maintaining love of family, and practicing a strong Catholic Faith.***

Immigrating in the early 1880's they arrived separately by ship from Naples Italy to New York and then settled in Wilmington Delaware. Working as a greengrocer and seamstress they resettled in Southern Philadelphia where they lived out their lives in a small row house that still stands today in "Little Italy". Raffaele worked on the docks of the Philadelphia Naval Shipyard, the oldest naval base in the U.S. laboring as a stevedore.

This family would go on to have nine children; seven living into adulthood. I am blessed to be a descendant of their fifth child Peter James, whose love of family and enduring faith bless my life every day. My grandfather said ***"the day he lost his mother is the day he lost his best friend."***



The ***entire Italian community endured discrimination*** but Raffaele and Lucia ***lived quiet unassuming lives***, and their prodigy contributed to the great American Melting Pot as laborers, professionals, and artists.

***Saluti!!!***



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# My American Liberty Story

## Thomas Zataweski – A Miner's Story

### *Sveiki!!!*

In the late 1800's, throughout Eastern Europe, **agents from the Pennsylvania mines and railroads were recruiting laborers**. My great grandfather Thomas Zataweckas/Zatawesky along with his brothers Michael, John and Adam would eventually leave their homeland of Lithuania to **live, work and die in those coal regions**. No firsthand accounts are available to tell us of their journey west. Yet history tells us that **30,000 men from those areas would travel from the ports of Bremen and Hamburg, Germany via ship to the United States of America**.



Photo: L to R Anna (Petokas), Peter, Bernetta and John Zataweski (1907)



## My American Liberty Story

### Thomas Zataweski – A Miner’s Story continues...

It is well documented that the ***conditions in the mines were perilous***. Prior to electrification of mines the only light down in the “dark pit” was from a flame on the miner’s helmet. Known as the “miner’s friend” the ***flame could alert the miners of dangerous gases*** as the tip of the flame would turn blue in the presence of methane. Nevertheless, oxygen deprivation due to the depths of the shafts along with the breathing of methane, carbon dioxide and coal dust resulted in respiratory difficulties and ongoing poor health. ***It was common for a miner to have black lung from breathing coal dust by the age of forty***. Miners worked in wet and cold conditions as water dripped from the walls underground and accumulated to depths that it was constantly walked through, temperatures 60 degrees Fahrenheit or lower year-round. ***With hundreds of men and mules working in the mines, human and animal waste and rats were everywhere***. In anthracite mines the veins of coal lie at a 90-degree angle where men were forced to stoop and crawl to extract the coal from the coal face. ***Men would often leave their workday barely ever having stood up straight the entire shift***. Men had to walk miles into the tunnels of the mines carrying caps, powder, picks, shovels, axes, and lumber. As miners drilled holes and handled explosives to blow the coal from the rock, accidents resulted in loss of limbs and life. Drilling, blasting, and loading was the routine of the miners and laborers. And of course, there were mine collapses as tons of coal and earth entombed the miners. ***Three men died every two days in the anthracite mines of Pennsylvania***.

My great grandfather Thomas would die by an explosion in the Pancoast Mine in March of 1912. His brother John would live until 1949 but not without serious health consequences. Both Thomas’s and John’s great granddaughters became interested in genealogy and found themselves sharing family history online. Becoming friends, ***these third cousins discovered they both lived in Vienna Virginia***.



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# My American Liberty Story

## Values Being an American Citizen

I came to this country at the age of 23 years old. I was born and raised in Mexico.

After completing my bachelor degree, I had an opportunity to work at a US based company here in Northern Virginia. After a few years of working here and getting to know the culture, ***I decided to apply to become a resident.*** Although I had a work visa, ***obtaining the residency gave me peace and a certainty that I couldn't be deported.*** It may sound irrational, but there was this feeling that even with a legal visa you don't belong and therefore easily you could be cast out.

I obtained my permanent residency status after 2 years and the next step in the journey was to apply for citizenship. ***As I reflected on what it meant to become a citizen, I knew that along with the rights it confers it also means more responsibilities.*** It meant to take on the history of this country with the good and not so good aspects. ***It meant to uphold the constitution and the rights that were won with so much effort.***

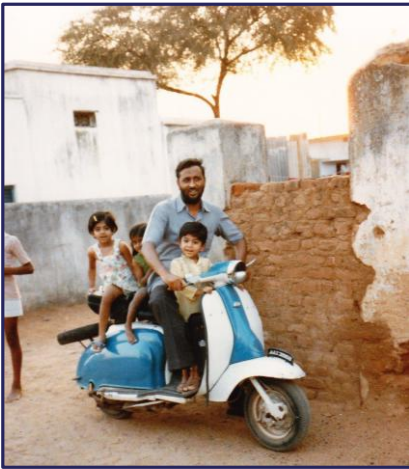
After much consideration I applied for citizenship and had my naturalization ceremony a few months before the 2008 presidential election. It was going to be ***my first time voting!*** I became more involved in ***learning about the issues and positions of the candidates as it is important to cast an informed vote.*** It was exhilarating to vote for the first time. I felt proud of being able to participate in the building of this country and shaping the future. In addition, finally I felt like I belonged and a certainty that this country was now my home.

Since then, I got married and formed a family here in the town of Vienna. At home we speak Spanish and make sure our daughters know Mexican culture too as that is part of what makes this country special – the diversity and blending of cultures. The fact that they are ***learning from the history of 2 countries gives them an understanding on how precious the rights we enjoy are.***



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## My American Liberty Story

### Honorable Dipti Pidikiti-Smith

*Nannu aswera dinchadanaki, vachina  
athiduluki, swagatam, suswagatam.*

*(Welcome. Thank you for coming to  
celebrate with us).*



On December 7, 2022, these Telugu words were said in a Fairfax County courtroom at a celebration to honor the ***appointment of the first Asian American to the Fairfax General District Court.*** What are the chances that an Indian immigrant, a woman, born approximately 8347 miles away, who grew up in India and Nigeria and who was diagnosed with epilepsy would become a Judge on the General District Court of Fairfax County? It seems lucky and improbable.

***My father came to America in search of better career opportunities*** which meant providing for his family, having a good job, and helping people along the way. This is what I understood as his American dream. I believe it was difficult for him to reconcile these perceptions that everyone had the opportunity for success if they work hard, and with the realities of a place that judged his intelligence based on his thick accent. Despite many setbacks, he kept pushing forward.

Since my appointment to the bench, ***I've had many immigrants, including strangers tell me they were proud of me and that seeing me as a judge fulfilled their dreams of knowing that someone like them could become a judge.*** When henna was being applied on my hands before the investiture, the formal ceremony where the Constitutional Oath is administered to me, the manager spoke to me about struggles she faced as a woman in her native country and as a woman and an immigrant in America. She said seeing me as a judge was a proud moment for her because it meant despite the difficulties she faced, the next generation of children would have a chance to be successful in America.

These stories describe a part of ***my American dream – hope – hope that children have opportunities to succeed, be their authentic self, and become part of the American community.***



# My American Liberty Story

## Honorable Dipti Pidikiti-Smith continues...

I was nine years old when I immigrated to the United States. The move was a big change ranging from the people, the food, to the roads. In school, I was described as quiet. ***I was quiet because I was learning about my new home and reconciling my identity with a new culture.*** There were comments by classmates and strangers – “***go back to your country***”, “***you smell like curry***” – reminders that I did not belong and that my characteristics were not welcome. At the same time, I had friends, neighbors, and teachers who enjoyed listening to me talk about my childhood growing up on a farm in India, who enjoyed eating the curries made by my mom, and who recognized creativity in my thinking. ***That support of the whole me – Indian, woman, immigrant, a person living with epilepsy - was important to the development of my American identity.*** I believe that ***our differences are strengths that can unite us to make a better community for all.***

I recognize that our world is constantly changing and that ***the rights I enjoy today, such as my right to become a citizen or my right to marry the person I love are a result of generations of people who fought to be recognized as human and to be treated as equals for all generations.***

While becoming a judge seems lucky and improbable, equally unlikely, and unexpected is my meeting and marrying my husband, Amos. Almost twenty-five years ago, I encountered a superhero who ***had extraordinary abilities to bring to light the best in people.*** It should come as no surprise that Amos spent his career as a teacher and now as an assistant principal in Fairfax County, including a few years at Westbriar Elementary School in Vienna. As college students, Amos and I tutored children at an afterschool homework club in Philadelphia. Our dedication for service allowed us to connect as people and allowed us to connect with our community. During every phase of my life, Amos has been present to encourage me, share experiences with me such as volunteering, and starting a family. He is key to why I became a judge, why I am a better person every day, and why I am fulfilling my American dream. My nine-year old self could never have imagined being married to a Pittsburgh-raised marathon runner who knows I prefer nachos over flowers on our anniversary and can always make me laugh. ***Our differences made us better, stronger, and we created two incredible humans who inspire us to continue to serve the community to make it a place where people’s dreams can become a reality.***



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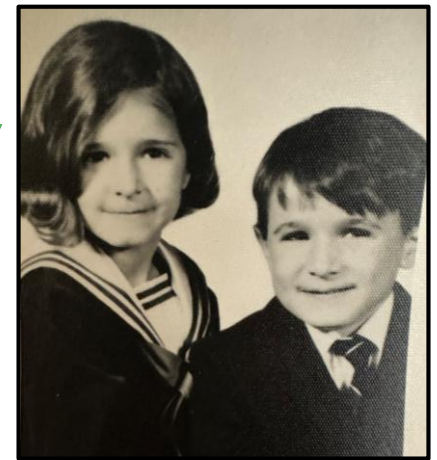




## My American Liberty Story

### Cathy Hardman

#### From the Mayflower to Ellis Island

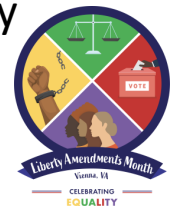


Since I was very young, my family told me and my brother (Adam Eleazar) ***how lucky we were to be in this country and never take our rights and our freedom for granted.***

As we grew up, the stories became more detailed and the reasons for the statement started to take shape. ***In current America, blended families and mixed-race families are the majority over the percentage of nuclear families. When my father met my mother in 1956, that was not true at all – not only for race, but also for religion.***

My mother, Phoebe Alice Lloyd, was ***an Episcopalian Protestant whose roots can be documented back to the Mayflower.*** Her ancestors are well known figures in American history: *Anne Hutchinson, George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Ulysses S. Grant.* My grandfather, Allen Huber Lloyd, was Scottish, English, Irish, French, German and Iroquois (unverified), reflecting a ***restlessness for opportunity and adventure.*** His family (***men and women***) were ***painters, engineers and inventors,*** building dams like the Hoover Dam and creating Ball canning jars, milk and egg cartons ***to improve people's way of life.***

My great-grandfather, one of the first lawyers in the family, ***didn't believe women were equal and refused to teach my grandmother to drive.*** However, he was proud of his daughter ***graduating Phi Beta Kappa from Smith College*** during the early years of the Great Depression. My mother earned her PhD in Art History in 1978, and became a renowned researcher and writer.



## My American Liberty Story – Cathy’s Story continues...

My Jewish grandfather came to America through Ellis Island from Budapest, Hungary. My Jewish grandmother arrived at Ellis Island around 1911 when she was 11, leaving her home of Ottynia Austria (now Ukraine) fleeing the constant threat of pogroms. In America, she learned to read and write. My grandparents ***divorced (a right hard won by women’s rights advocates)*** soon after my father, William Jay Jacobs, was born having satisfied the Jewish family’s desire for a male heir who could become a lawyer or doctor. Instead, my father became a history professor and author.

My parents moved to New York City to ***share ideas and principles and make the most of the freedoms they enjoyed in America.*** They constantly ***dealt with antisemitism and were shunned by their own families because of their choice to marry outside of their religions.*** Their backgrounds couldn’t be more different, but their passions were so similar, and the shared determination was passed down to me and my brother.

My brother Adam and I learned to deeply respect democracy, but never be afraid to ***improve it when needed and always, always vote!*** He is a judge in New Jersey, and I am an Information Specialist making sure people always can get the information resources they need. ***Because of our ancestors beliefs in inclusion and democracy,*** we added to the “melted pot” of America through marriages and children, ***proudly representing Argentina, Cuba, India, Greece, and Tulsa, OK where we adopted our African American daughter, Ella.***

My father wrote a book about the immigrants who passed through Ellis Island. His dedication, “To my mother and father, a land of hope and freedom...” with a note for me under, “and this book for Cathy, inheritor of the dream.” I have every intention of ***making the most of that dream every day and helping others achieve the American Dream to come to America.***



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# My American Liberty Story – Mary Dolson

## Valuing Citizenship

We are a nation of immigrants, is what I always believed. I was lucky enough to arrive in New York City, **at age four, with my parents on the USS Taylor, leaving from Bremerhaven Harbor, Germany, escaping Communist Czechoslovakia in 1952.** I remember the Green Alien Cards my parents had, and we were known as displaced persons, pejoratively called DPs. My friends were Czech or Polish, and we eventually **all became United States citizens.**

I remember that the road to citizenship in my family took interesting twists and turns. My parents adopted their New World with fervor. In New York City, my parents were immediately employed: Daddy, worked at the commercial Fink Baking, and he also worked as janitor in an apartment building, which gave us free rent. My mother worked in a Czech restaurant, which was advertised “Let’s Eat Out,” in Gourmet magazine. I sometimes had to wait for her there after school.

So, in two years, my parents with their relatives **bought a corner delicatessen in Chicago, and later started a very prosperous bakery business that grew into another store** with bread and bakery deliveries to restaurants, stores, and Czech events. Their decorated cakes, especially wedding cakes, were spectacular. While my parents worked so hard on their business, and of course, the whole family was involved, they still made time to study **How to Become an American Citizen**, a green 64-page handbook, Seventh Edition, 1955. “It is based upon the new Immigration and Nationality Act designated Public Law No. 414, known as the McCarran Act of 1952.

As expressed in the green handbook: *The applicant must be of at least age 18, a lawfully admitted permanent resident, able to understand English enough to read, write and speak words in ordinary use, have lived in the United States for 5 years in the state where the applicant Petitions for Naturalization. The applicant must be a person of good moral character. The applicant “must be attached to the principles of the Constitution of the United States and well-disposed to the good order and happiness of the United States. Each applicant will be required to demonstrate a knowledge and understanding of the principles and form of government of this country.”*

This is what I remember about those years of preparation for citizenship: Mother would reach for that green handbook, and everyone would suddenly disappear. They knew **she would keep them hostage for unending quizzing.** That was sad, but it made her more determined to study the handbook and quiz whoever was in earshot. On vacation at Sokol Camp on Lake Michigan ( a Czech establishment), she took the handbook with her, and there she was surrounded by a throng of dedicated citizens, relentlessly going over the “Questions Asked on National Matters” and “Questions Asked on State Matters,” to “Questions Asked on City Matters.” She was like a dog with its bone, determined to get answers to her quizzing.

**And she and Dad answered questions correctly for the examiner and became American citizens.**



# My American Liberty Story – Mary Dolson continues...

## Valuing Citizenship

I was too young to witness their attendance at the Bureau of Naturalization ceremony, but I do remember it as ***a day of celebratory joy for them to be welcomed into the American family.*** New citizens must take and sign the oath of allegiance:

*“I entirely renounce and abjure all allegiance and fidelity to any foreign prince, potentate, state or sovereignty of whom or which I have heretofore been a subject or citizen;  
that I will support and defend the Constitution and the laws of the United States of America against all enemies, foreign and domestic;  
that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same: that I will perform work of national importance under civilian direction when required by the law;  
and that I take this obligation freely without any mental reservation or purpose of evasion.  
SO HELP ME GOD.”*

They became citizens on November 28, 1961, and ***I became a derivative citizen: One who derives citizenship through the naturalization of a parent when under age 18.*** My naturalization ceremony was perfunctory in comparison, just a signed document with my photo in 1967 at age 19.

My parents continued to assimilate by enrolling in English classes; however, they spoke in broken English. I still have the English workbooks that they worked on in retirement. Mother, boss sales lady in their Czech bakery store, honored the rule that her employees spoke English while serving customers. She was an active member in a businesswomen’s organization. She favored and stayed loyal to the Republican Party because that was the party that gave her and our family admission to America, (thank you President Eisenhower). Daddy hired the president of the Baker’s Union as the bakery shop’s specialized cake decorator, and Daddy upheld the rules as a bakery union shop. The Chicago Tribune was delivered daily, and we all discussed world events, opining on stories read. Of course, the Chicago- Czech language newspaper the Denni Hlasatel was delivered and read, as well. My parents owned another bakery on Cermak Road, 22nd Street- with significant Czech populations- eponymously named after Mayor Anton Cermak (mayor of Chicago) who was killed by an assassin, whose likely target was President Franklin Roosevelt.

As new citizens, my parents had taken an oath renouncing all allegiances to foreign powers, and they promised to support and defend the Constitution against all enemies. ***They took their citizenship journey very seriously and supported the fundamental right of voting as United States citizens. I adopted their ideals and values of citizenship, and I am honored to be included in the American family.***



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## My American Liberty Story

### Anne Stuntz

#### Why my family came to Vienna

My granddad, Stephen Conrad Stuntz (1875-1918) moved to Vienna by 1905 because ***he loved it here – an easy commute to his job in DC thanks to the streetcar line, great people, beautiful countryside.***

His own great granddad, Konrad Stuntz, had come to this country from Germany in 1776 as a Hessian soldier brought over by the British. Konrad and his brother, ***inspired by the freedoms the colonists were fighting for***, soon escaped from the British to join General Washington's army. After the war they were rewarded for their service with land and ***become voting citizens of their new country.***

My granddad grew up in Madison, Wisconsin, graduating in 1899 from the University there. He moved to Washington DC in 1902, and soon discovered the delights of Northern Virginia. He settled in Vienna and married a young lady from Culpeper, Lena Fitzhugh and they built a house for their hoped-for dozen children just outside of town on what's now Chain Bridge Road. Sadly he died in 1918, and he and Lena only had five kids, but those children, including my dad Mayo, all grew up in that house.



My husband and I live there now and I still love Vienna as much as everyone else in my family who came before me!



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# My American Liberty Story

## Dr. Karolyn Kabir

Someone I love once told me, “Virginia will always be your home.” I was in Denver at the time but those 6 words, sending a jolt of electricity through me, deeply resonated. Now 2 years since returning to my hometown, I couldn’t agree more.

I grew up in Vienna, Virginia, raised by my Persian father, a physician, who was born in Tehran and my Dutch-Irish mother, a nurse, who grew up a farmer’s daughter in a small town called Strawberry Point, Iowa. He was an only child dreaming of crossing the ocean one day. She, the youngest of six, wanted to experience more than her small town life. They met at the University of Chicago in 1964 and were married there a year later. They then relocated to Maryland, where my father resumed employment at Howard University (where he had trained for two years previously) and where soon thereafter, I was born at Prince George’s County Hospital.

When I was 5 months old, they moved to Northern Virginia, where my two sisters and I grew up. First attending Mantua Elementary when we lived in Fairfax, just off Prosperity Avenue, then for the remainder of my childhood, in Vienna, where we attended Wolftrap Elementary, Kilmer Middle School, and Marshall High School. My father passed away 24 years ago and is buried at National Memorial Park. I visit him often and when I do, ***I reflect on his big dreams, the reason we are all here.***

My father was open-minded, wise, and discerning. He had a natural talent for music, playing the violin, piano, organ, and accordion, all by ear. When he was 14, he was featured on Radio Tehran as a child musician, a special memory he was fond of sharing with us. He loved history and politics, spoke three languages, and his keen perception, visual and otherwise, aided him as both physician and father. He also possessed strong problem-solving skills, which in concert with his open mind and curious nature, helped him navigate sensitive situations in a diplomatic manner. These skills perhaps inherited from our ancestor and his great-great-great-grandfather, Mirza Abul Hassan Khan Shirazi Ilchi-Kabir, appointed by the Shah in the early 1800’s, as Persian ambassador to both England & Russia.



# My American Liberty Story

**Dr. Karolyn Kabir** continues (p2 of 3)



Ilchi-Kabir, a name bestowed by the Shah, means “Great Ambassador.” I’ve also seen it translated as “messenger of peace.” Our great grandfather’s black and white picture hung above our piano, in the living room where my father taught us both French and piano each morning before we scooted off to school.

But before he’d let us leave, he would often point to this framed print and test our memorization of our ancestor’s full name, ceremoniously adding, “don’t forget, you are the great grandchildren of an ambassador!”

My father had a global mindset. He spoke Farsi, French and English fluently and knew American history at a depth greater than many natural born citizens—this piece of information shared with him by an impressed Immigration Officer who’d administered his oral test for US citizenship, a story my father proudly recounted often.

He wanted to be a musician and could have been a professional one. Instead he chose to serve as physician, a sign on his office door in Annandale, in the 1970’s, offering his care at no charge should a patient have no means to pay. My father always said, “I believe in Moses, Jesus & Mohammed.” He welcomed my mother into his family without asking her to change her religion. “Why would I ask her to change something that makes her so happy?” he told his family at the time.



# My American Liberty Story

## Dr. Karolyn Kabir continues (p3 of 3)

He also valued hard work and education, insisting his three daughters pursue their studies seriously to become independent and self-sufficient. He did not want us to depend on someone else for our financial stability. He wanted us to create our own destinies.



*My father, far right, in 1958, celebrating on the ship SS America, on the last night of his journey from Tehran to France (by train) then by ship to Baltimore.*

*He immigrated to complete his residency training in the US at a time when our country needed physicians and was actively recruiting them from other countries.*

When I visit my father's gravesite, I am filled with gratitude for his courage. It was his bravery that led him, at 23 years of age, to board a ship in 1958 and head across a large body of water toward a land that called to him, but that he'd never seen. A man who had the courage to follow his heart and hold open his hands, his dreams in one, his hopes in the other. I am proud to be the now grown child of an immigrant and I am so proud of my father.

***His upbringing, his voyage, and his dreams, like the colorful Persian carpets he grew up with, inextricably weaved into the rich beautiful tapestry that is our Country's heritage.***

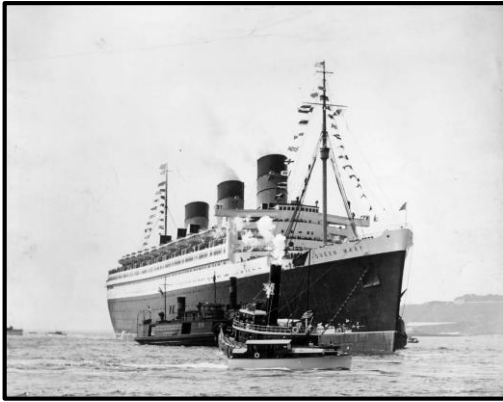


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# My American Liberty Story

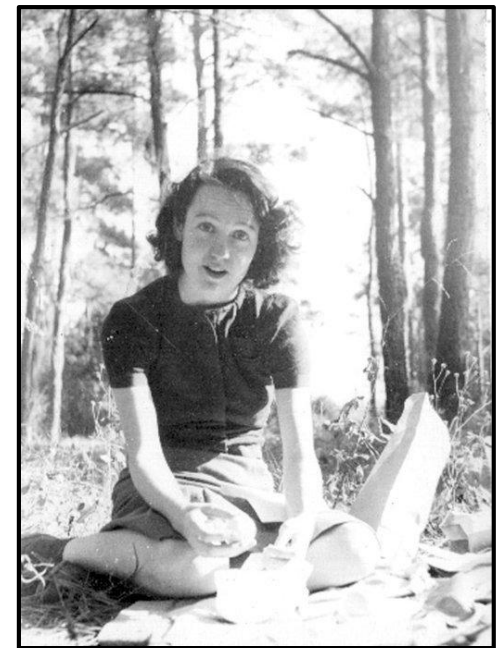
## Lily Dunning Widman



*RMS Queen Mary*

On March 18, 1939, Beryl Smith boarded the RMS Queen Mary in Southampton England. The British passenger ship was headed for New York City; the voyage would make one stop in Cherbourg France, and take about 5 days to complete. The ship was large, holding more than 2,000 passengers, and was only about three years old at the time of my grandmother's journey. At 18 years old, she travelled alone, with her Uncle Cecil and Aunt Tino waiting for her in New York City.

Grannie's story of her maiden voyage to America was a fanciful one. Her parents, Horace and Mabel Smith, sent her to New York City to live with her Aunt and Uncle because they did not approve her boyfriend at the time. Things were getting too serious between the two of them. The boyfriend (who's name is not recalled in family retellings of this story) was utterly devastated and broken hearted when she left her childhood home in Surrey, on the South Coast of England. On the journey to New York Beryl met and was courted by an English Duke. The Duke faded into the background of the story as my grandmother learned the culture of a new country and got accustomed to the fast pace of life in New York City.



*Beryl Smith, 1939*

The realities of my grandmother's journey to America and eventually American citizenship were a bit different. While it is likely true that there was a suitor who my great grandparents did not approve of, it's less likely this was the motivating factor for her journey to the United States. In March of 1939 Britain was 6 months away from declaring war on Nazi Germany. The possibility of a World War and the question of safety for the citizens of England was constant. When Grannie stepped aboard the RMS Queen Mary, her brother, my great-uncle Pete, had already



# My American Liberty Story

## Lily Dunning Widman continues (p2 of 3)

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**The United States was viewed by many as a safe place to escape the War.** Many of my grandmother's cousins were also sent to America around this time to be in the care of Uncle Cecil, Aunt Tino or other expatriated members of the Smith Family living in New England. Beryl's cousins Barbara and Rosemary were a few years younger than she; they stayed in the U.S. until the war was over and then returned to their homes in England.

Beryl (my grandmother) and Lloyd (my grandfather) met at a weekend gathering at Tino and Cecil Smith's house in Greenwich, Connecticut. At that time, Grandpa was working for J Walter Thompson Advertising and sharing an apartment in Manhattan with John Smith (Grannie's cousin, Cecil and Tino's son) and two other boys. Family and friends would gather at Cecil and Tino's Connecticut home on the weekends and give concerts (the Smith family was very musical and could form a string quartet at the drop of the hat, and then spend the next hour or so playing music for whoever was around), play tennis and spend time together. Beryl and Lloyd were married less than a year after they met.



# My American Liberty Story

## Lily Dunning Widman continues (p3 of 3)

Early in my grandparents' courtship my Grannie mentioned to my Grandpa that she wanted to go to Ontario to visit her brother Pete. Lloyd didn't have a car at the time, so he went to a used car lot and bought one immediately, took some time off work and they were on their way. In 2024 it would take almost 9 hours to drive from Lexington Avenue in New York City to the Royal Air Force Base where by my great Uncle Pete was stationed. In 1939, I imagine it must have taken my grandparents at least two days. They loved going on this adventure together and my grandmother treasured the time that she spent with her brother on this trip. It was the last time she saw him alive. He was killed in the War in 1941.



*Peter Hayward Dunning and Beryl Smith Dunning*

My grandparents married in New York City in 1940; my grandmother was 19. In November of 1943, my father was born. Beryl and Lloyd named him Peter Hayward Dunning after my great Uncle Pete.



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# My American Liberty Story

## Roxanne Nersesian Paul family story



The Armenians were persecuted during the Ottoman Empire, but never as badly as the first genocide of the 20th century, which started in 1915. Armenian intellectuals, leaders and clergy were rounded up in Istanbul and executed. My grandfather, General Arshag Nersesian, was an Armenian freedom fighter, who defended the local civilian populations. His nickname was Sebouh, which means noble. During World War I, Armenia was known as “the little ally” and my grandfather fought in some of those battles on the side of the allies.

With the fall of the brief Armenian Republic, the family fled to America. My dad, Mourad Sebouh Nersesian was 2 years old when they arrived in Ellis Island in 1922. The family lived in Detroit, Boston and Providence but eventually settled in New York City. My grandfather became a shopkeeper. My dad earned a scholarship from City College, but was only able to accept it, because his two older brothers supported the family after my grandfather died.

My parents met in the NYC chapter of the Armenian Youth Federation and married in 1943. Shortly thereafter, my dad was shipped overseas to fight in the Pacific Theater for 3 ½ years in World War II.

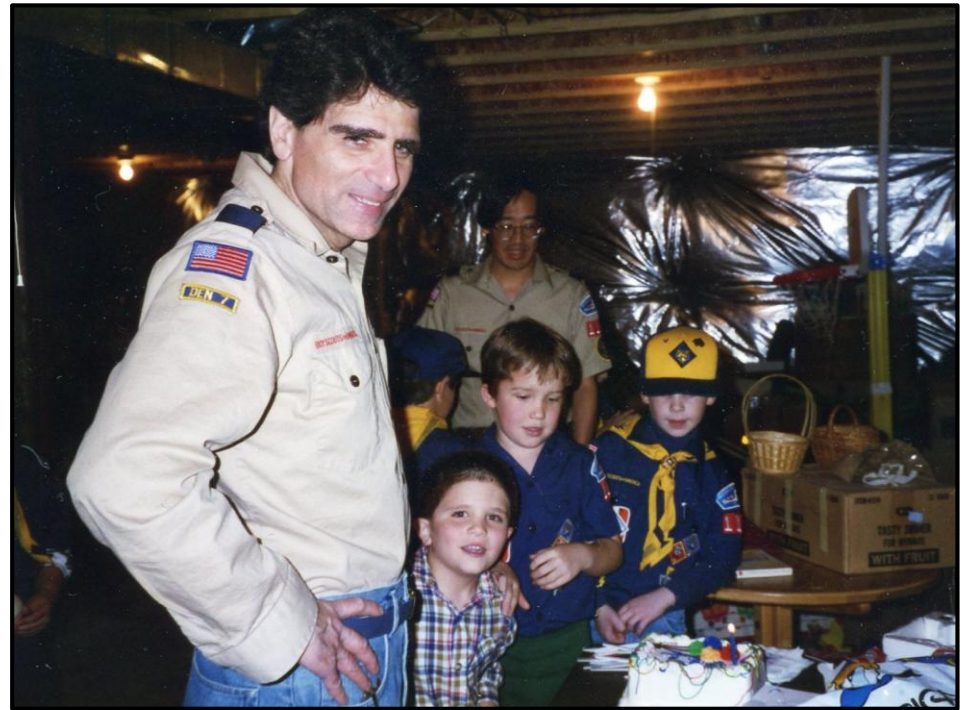
After he returned, my parents moved to Long Island, but were only able to afford their \$18,000 house because my maternal grandfather lent them the \$1000 down payment. I grew up on Long Island and was also active in the Armenian Youth Federation.



# My American Liberty Story

## Roxanne Nersesian Paul family story continues...

I met my husband, Aram Paul (also the child of Armenian immigrants) at a conference, where he represented the Washington, DC chapter. We married in 1982 and moved to Vienna in 1984. We raised three sons who all went to the Vienna schools and all earned Eagle Scout in Troop 152. But, sadly, Aram did not live to see this. He died from cancer in 2002, when the boys were 11, 14 and 16. The “boys” are all now in the 30’s, with graduate degrees and working in their respective fields. I have two precious granddaughters now.



Life is good for us, but I never take for granted that my family was able to flee Armenia before it became carved up between Turkey and the Soviet Union. We were able to come to the United States and achieve the American Dream. I know that there are other people fleeing dire circumstances and dangers now, who also dream of a better, safer life, and I wish them the same good fortune that my family has had.



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# My American Liberty Story

## Miguel Ordóñez

### *To Serve is to Succeed*

Roots: I was born American and international. I was raised “American” in both senses of the word: loyal citizen of the USA and Pan-American, with strong Guatemalan Central American roots. North, Central, and South Americans comprise the Pan American peoples.

Though not an immigrant, **my American Story is replete with immigration tales through five generations.** One great-grandfather immigrated from Hamburg, Germany to Coban, Guatemala in the late 1800s. After World War I he returned to Europe.

Both my mother’s parents were born in Acquaviva delle Fonti in South Italy’s Puglia region. Grandfather arrived June 25, 1913 aboard the SS Chicago. Grandmother arrived April 23, 1921 aboard the SS Dante Alighieri. Both were processed through New York Harbor’s Ellis Island.

My father, Carlos Rafael Ordóñez was born in Guatemala City. He arrived in New Orleans by air on May 8, 1945 to visit his father who was there in temporary political exile. At age 16 he began studying at UM Ann Arbor. He was elected president of Phi Iota Alpha fraternity at UM which to this day promotes Latin American unity and develops Latino leaders. He instilled Pan-American and leadership values into his seven children.

Our Guatemalan grandparents never immigrated to the USA. One aunt later worked in D.C., as a trilingual translator at the Pan American Health Organization as an expatriate. Another aunt married an American and lived in the New York City area. I never met another Guatemalan-American until I was 17. We visited “La Familia” several times in my childhood. Both Italian grandparents and my father became U.S. citizens before my birth.



*Wanpen Naturalization Ceremony*

I met my wife while a Peace Corps Volunteer in Thailand. Wanpen Boonma was home birthed in Mae Soon Noi village of Chiang Mai province near the Burmese border. She flew with me to Seattle on December 15, 1985 on an immigrant visa and naturalized as a U.S. citizen on July 5, 2001.



# My American Liberty Story

**Miguel Ordóñez** continues (p2 of 3)

## ***To Serve is to Succeed***

My oldest sister married an immigrant from Malaysia. My older brother married an immigrant from Trinidad. My nephew married an immigrant from Croatia. My oldest child married an “immigrant” of a different sort. And so, our two grandsons are registered Tlingit Native Alaskans with roots in southeast Alaska dating at least 120 centuries from their “immigration” to North America!



*Miguel Ordóñez swearing in*

*Service:* President Kennedy in his 1961 Inaugural Address inspired a generation with these words, **“Ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country.”** My adult life has been mainly one of federal service, spanning 31 of the 35 years prior to retirement. All this work was related to promoting international understanding, development, peace building, and shared prosperity.

I served 11 years with the Peace Corps. After leaving Peace Corps/South Pacific staff in 1996, I worked briefly as Deputy Director of the Latin America and Caribbean Regional Office for Catholic Relief Services. Then I began 20 years as a Department of State Foreign Service Officer (Diplomat).

International nomadic life took me to 44 countries. I lived as an expatriate for over 22 years, first with extended family (“La Familia”) in Guatemala, then in Thailand, Samoa, Saudi Arabia, India, Morocco, and the Federated States of Micronesia. We purchased our first home in Vienna, Virginia in 2010. Along life’s trail I studied 12 languages, including all six official UN languages. I have developed expertise in cross-cultural communication and adaptation.



# My American Liberty Story

**Miguel Ordóñez** continues (p2 of 3)

## To Serve is to Succeed

**Integrity, Prudence, Ability:** I commenced each Federal job by swearing an oath to “*support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies...*” Foreign Service Officer commissions are signed by the President and Secretary of State after our Senate confirmation. All commissions begin with the words, “**Reposing special trust and confidence in your Integrity, Prudence, and Ability...**” These three qualities, a positive attitude of gratitude for the blessings of liberty we share, along with a view that it is a privilege to serve, are keys to success.

*Integrity means to always behave ethically.*

*Prudence means to act carefully, weighing pros and cons before speaking, writing, or acting.*

*Ability means to use one’s innate and developed gifts and skills to render service unto others.*

No one can do EVERYTHING, but everyone can do SOMETHING. Excel in your special “something,” find a way to earn a living doing what you love, and watch the magic of life unfold. Doors will open as your vistas expand!

**Our great nation GIVES us all great liberty as our birthright.** These rights give us, in turn, a responsibility to give back, by rendering service to others, the greater Self.

**In the USA we all have the potential to succeed by combining the spirit of service with integrity, prudence, and ability.** Wisdom is not GIVEN. It has to be earned. Freedom without wisdom is not true freedom. Wisdom without freedom is not true wisdom. Both free and wise, you become liberated to build your own version of the American Dream!



*Miguel Ordóñez retirement*



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# My American Liberty Story

## The Traveling Sea Chest



In Antwerp Belgium, on the 8th of May, 1848, after having sold much of his property and belongings, my maternal

Great-great-grandfather, Gregorious Franciscus Maeyens and his four children – one of which would be my Great-grandfather Jacobus Bernardus Maeyens- boarded the English ship Sarah which would sail across the Atlantic to their new home in America.

Before the family set sail, Gregorious Franciscus was supplied with reference documents by the “Mayor and councilmen of the city of Yzendkye, province of Zeeland” and declared “Gregorious Franciscus, born in 1791, have lived with this county and, as far as known, of good and peaceful character”.

**Sailing with them in steerage was a wooden chest. Measuring 46 inches by 22 inches by 18 inches and carrying the family’s necessities, the chest served as 14-year-old Jacobus Maeyens’ bed during the long voyage.** That chest would eventually reside with multiple generations and cross the North American continent twice!

The family (along with their chest!) landed in New York. From there, they traveled to the Kansas City, Missouri area. Family legend has it that they purchased property where the present-day Kansas City Railroad Station is located. Unfortunately, violence from the pre-Civil War “Border War” between Kansas and Missouri made the region too dangerous as the residents fought over whether Kansas would be a slave state or a free state once it entered the Union. The family (along with their chest!) chose to move further east, settling in Osage County, Missouri.

Just west of Osage County lay Cole County Missouri. It was here that **a Koehler family settled having emigrated from Bavaria.** Their importance to my family is that my Great-Grandfather, now calling himself “Jacob Mayens” married one of the Koehler daughters, a widow whose first



husband left her a grocery store – a trade that would influence future generations. From this union, Peter Charles Mayens, my grandfather, was born. The young family (and the chest!) later chose to settle in Jefferson City, MO.



# My American Liberty Story

## The Traveling Sea Chest continues...

Peter Charles Mayens, or “Grandpa Pete” as I know him, married twice. His first marriage was to Mary Margaret Beck, daughter of N.C. Beck. In 1906, he married a second time to my grandmother, Mary Margaret Beck, daughter of Augusta and Conrad Beck (and a distant relative to Grandpa Pete’s first wife). **The Becks were some of the earliest settlers in the Jefferson City, MO area. Streets “Conrad” and “Beck” can still be found.**

Having grown up learning the grocery store trade, Grandpa Pete eventually built a large 3 level building at the corner of High and Ash streets in Jefferson City. The building had a full grocery store on the first level with full living quarters above plus an attic. It was in this attic that the sea chest was placed and, with time, fell into disrepair.

It was in the apartment living section above the grocery store, that I, June Mueller Lassman, was born. Due to the 1930’s dust storms, my parents were advised that my pregnant mother return to Missouri from western Kansas. Often, newborn babies died of “dust pneumonia”. I refer to myself as a “dust storm refugee”.

Eventually, the grocery store which Grandpa Pete, then my Aunt Celeste ran closed, and the property sold. My parents, Janet Mayens Mueller and Oscar Mueller were able to rescue the sea chest from the attic. So, after a “layover” of around 80 years, the sea chest resumed its travels across the continent. My parents took it to their home in Myrtle Point, Oregon where my father was able to restore it. After many years in Oregon, my parents’ home was sold, and the sea chest made a return trip across the continent to Vienna, Virginia. **The sea chest, which is now a family treasure, stores more family treasures such as pieced quilts made by my Grandmother Beck Mayens and Great-grandmother Augusta Beck.** The sea chest also holds a box of family papers and records including a letter from my Grandma Mayens “to my dear children, I have copied these family notes so you may not forget your honorable ancestry... It is my earnest prayer that you live to the best that is within you. That you keep your record pure, that your descendants may have nothing to be ashamed of.”

*The 10,000-mile journey of our sea chest, which started 176 years ago in Europe, is not over yet. In the not so far future, the chest is expected to travel another 41 miles to a new home in Maryland with my son, a historian.*



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## My American Liberty Story Anonymous Story



I am a second generation American: my parents and grandparents were “Naturalized” citizens. I was born in America. But for a few weeks of foreign travel I lived in America for all my 80 plus years. **I am first and foremost an American who never entertained the idea of calling another country my home.**

I am a Jew of German extraction; my parents and grandparents left Nazi Germany for America in the mid to late 1930's. My father arrived in January 1938 as one of the last Jews allowed to “willingly” leave the country. My uncle (my mother’s brother) arrived here in 1935, my mother in 1936 and my mother’s parents in 1937 (note -- families were not allowed to leave Hitler’s Germany as a unit). Other than my father’s brother, who fled Germany for Argentina in the early 1930s,

never to be heard from again, no other family members from my father’s side made it out. My paternal grandfather committed suicide as the Gestapo came to arrest him for being a Jew. My paternal grandmother died before all hell broke out for Jews and other “undesirables.” In short, I only had five relatives that made it to America. Our holiday dinners and get-togethers were small quiet affairs where talk was about something they that talked about all week (they spoke to each other daily) or, “do you remember how aunt so-and-so spilled the coffee on uncle so-and-so’s lap at the wedding of so-and-so some 30 years ago”).

For those unfamiliar with Jewish history in Germany in the 1930s, everyday life became more difficult as the years passed. Before the mass deportations and killings began Jews were no longer permitted to congregate, they were ousted from schools, dismissed from their professions and prohibited from working with or trading with non-Jews, etc. A person with 1/32 Jewish blood (one great grandparent) was defined as being Jewish. My mother’s father, a tailor and a decorated WWI veteran, was stripped of his medals and honors -- Jews were no longer permitted to hold them even though awarded by the previous German Reich – and were no longer permitted to work with non-Jewish patrons. My maternal grandmother, a seamstress, was similarly restricted in who she could serve. My



## My American Liberty Story Anonymous Story continues (p2 of 4)

my father, a fully trained and licensed medical doctor was at first no longer allowed to treat non-Jewish patients and subsequently no longer permitted to practice medicine in any person-to-person manner. He was relegated to work as a lab technician.

This brings me to the Levys (and the Hirschs, - my mother's family name) as Americans. My mother's side of my family **left Germany because of persecution - the denial of the rights and protections of German citizenship and their physical safety.** Their entry into this country was conditioned on America's restrictive immigration policies: immigration quotas, the immigrant's medical condition (my mother was on the brink of being sent back to Germany because of poor eyesight) and a guarantee not to be on the public dole (prospective immigrants were required to obtain an affidavit from a citizen guaranteeing financial support, if necessary, and a job). My father's entry was a little more iffy. Other than the restrictive immigration laws, he was allowed to leave Germany with only one suitcase and \$10 in his pocket.

Between his arrival in NY in January 1938 and late 1939, my father learned English (then still required for American citizenship), became a male-nurse (almost unheard of in 1938-9), studied for his medical state-boards, passed the New York State medical licensing exams and married my mother on Christmas Eve 1939. As a nurse my father earned \$12 a week. My mother earned \$13 a week as an X-ray technician. Together they rented a \$100 a month apartment in upper Manhattan. They were subsidized by my maternal grandparents who had a small tailor/cleaning shop opened shortly after they immigrated.

I was born in 1943 and lived for 18 years in the apartment my parents first rented. The apartment was small, albeit it had two bedrooms and two baths. It served not only as the family's living quarters but as my father's medical office, waiting room, and recuperation facility for my maternal grandparents and fellow immigrants my parents had befriended. To make the apartment even smaller, the shower stall in the second bathroom became my father's dark room for developing X-rays. By 1949 it was financially possible for my folks to rent the one bedroom apartment next door for my father's office. The original apartment became private but remained the recuperation facility for my now one living grandparent and those fellow immigrants who either had no money or no one to look after them.



## My American Liberty Story Anonymous Story continues (p3 of 4)

The transition from having one apartment to having two was not an easy one: World War II got in the way. The United States was at war with the country that rejected my family. With a young boy at home (me) Dad volunteered for service, was inducted as a 1st Lieutenant into the Army of the United States in 1944 and was shipped to Germany. He served with distinction and returned to America shortly after the European War ended in May 1945. Before his discharge in 1946, he was issued a side-arm in contemplation of his being shipped off to the still raging war in the Pacific. When Japan fell in August, 1945 the transfer was unnecessary. Instead he served at an army medical facility on Roosevelt Island, NY.

The transition to civilian life between 1946 and 1949 also was not an easy one. Dad went into the Army at age 36 and was discharged at age 38. He then had to restart his medical practice in this country a second time. This time he was in “competition” with those doctors who didn’t go overseas (had home-front duty but could maintain a civilian practice) and those who stayed home and didn’t serve at all. By the time of his death in 1991, Dad had become a well-respected and beloved General Practitioner (now Internist) in his Washington Heights neighborhood (upper Manhattan) and the go-to Cardiologist and Diagnostician at the primary hospital in the Washington Heights/Inwood sections of Manhattan.

So why this story? My parents and grandparents came to this country because it was the “shining light on the hill.” ***They did not come to America because it was perfect, but because it held the promise of a better life.*** While they probably could have emigrated to several other countries, America was, and is, a country that still actively pursues the promises it made in its 250 year old Declaration of Independence, and the rights our forebears set forth in our almost 250 year old Constitution. Among those rights -- “Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness...” America is still not perfect, and probably will never be. But, and that's a big “but,” we among all the nations of the world, are one of the few, if any, that tries to live up to its centuries-old ideals. It is a country that millions still flock to when given a choice. Where else can a 30-year old immigrant, like my father start his adult life completely anew and start it again as a 38-year old with a family? Few in this world of some 12 billion souls enjoy the right to ***Life, Liberty and the PURSUIT of Happiness.***



# My American Liberty Story Anonymous Story continues (p4 of 4)

***The bottom line is that the freedoms and opportunities America offers its citizens make all things possible.***

The boys in the Vienna, VA boy scout troop I was associated with for 15+ years gave me the moniker “*Merit Badge Dude.*” I coordinated their merit badge achievements and awards with the troop and counseled boys on their merit badges both within the troop and for the district. Among the merit badges I counseled were the three citizenship badges required for scout rank advancement to Eagle. As a requirement for the Citizenship in the Nation merit badge, the Scout had to petition the President, a Senator or a Congressman to do something, ask for something or just plain complain. Many of the letters were not in the purview of the addressee and some were subject-wise clearly off the charts. When I asked what the purpose of the letter requirement was, the answers ranged from a shrug to serious. Regardless, a discussion followed. In the end we concluded that the purpose was to show that **it was the scout's right to petition his nation's leadership; that he could do so without fear of retribution, and expect a response.** Nine times out of 10, the scout received a response. If a scout's letter was not in the recipient's purview, a more appropriate contact, along with a name, address and telephone number was most often offered. What better proof is there that we have the right to petition our representatives and have our representatives listen to us. As a side-bar, and apropos of nothing, I recall the joke about a political conversation/argument between an American and Russian citizen during the cold war (just as applicable today.) The American said, without fear of retribution, that his President was an idiot and should be imprisoned. The Russian countered that he too, without fear of retribution, could say the American President was an idiot and should be imprisoned.

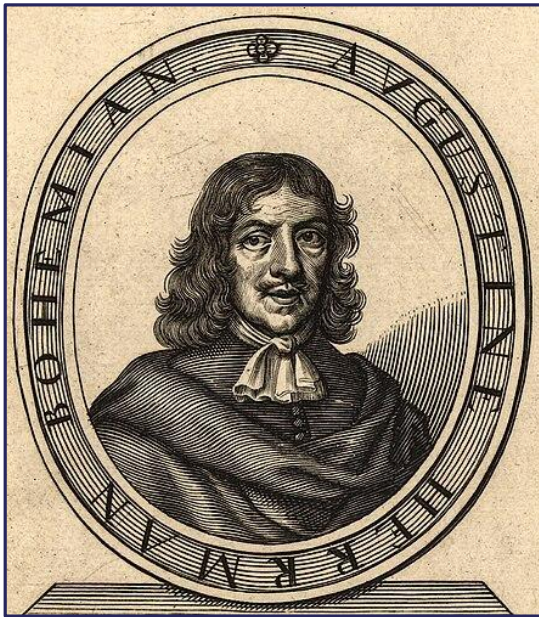
For giving safe harbor to my parents and grandparents I owe this country much. America's promise has always been to try to do better by its citizens and to always offer its citizens the opportunity to do better for themselves. Whatever the country's shortcomings, America's promise is what drives millions to seek it out. *An individual's ability to succeed is limited only by ambition and a willingness to work.* **Our rights and freedoms are limited only to the extent they impinge on the rights and freedoms of others**  
- your fist ends where another's nose begins.



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# My American Liberty Story



## Mary Smith Carson

***Descendent of Augustine Herman who arrived in Virginia in 1629 and mapped Virginia's waterways***

Who would be related to Mary Smith? Common name but uncommon ancestors! I'm lucky to be able to share my ancestor, Augustine Herman. He was a pirate who sailed the ocean over to our continent in the early 1600's with *no maritime maps*.

His pirate ship sailed down the water ways which were the Potomac, Rappahanock and James rivers as we know them today! **As he sailed he drew inlets and availability of being able to sail large vessels with deep enough water.**

Augustine Herman was born in Prague, Bohemia in the 1600s and educated in Ireland. He spoke his own language, German, Dutch, French, Spanish, English and Latin. **He left Bohemia as a result of religious persecution and went to work for the Dutch East Indian Company.** He arrived in Virginia as early as 1629 and became an owner of *pirate frigates which preyed on many Spanish Ships*. He settled on the southern tip of New York Island called New Amsterdam in 1643. He was a surveyor by profession but became an artist, merchant and diplomat.

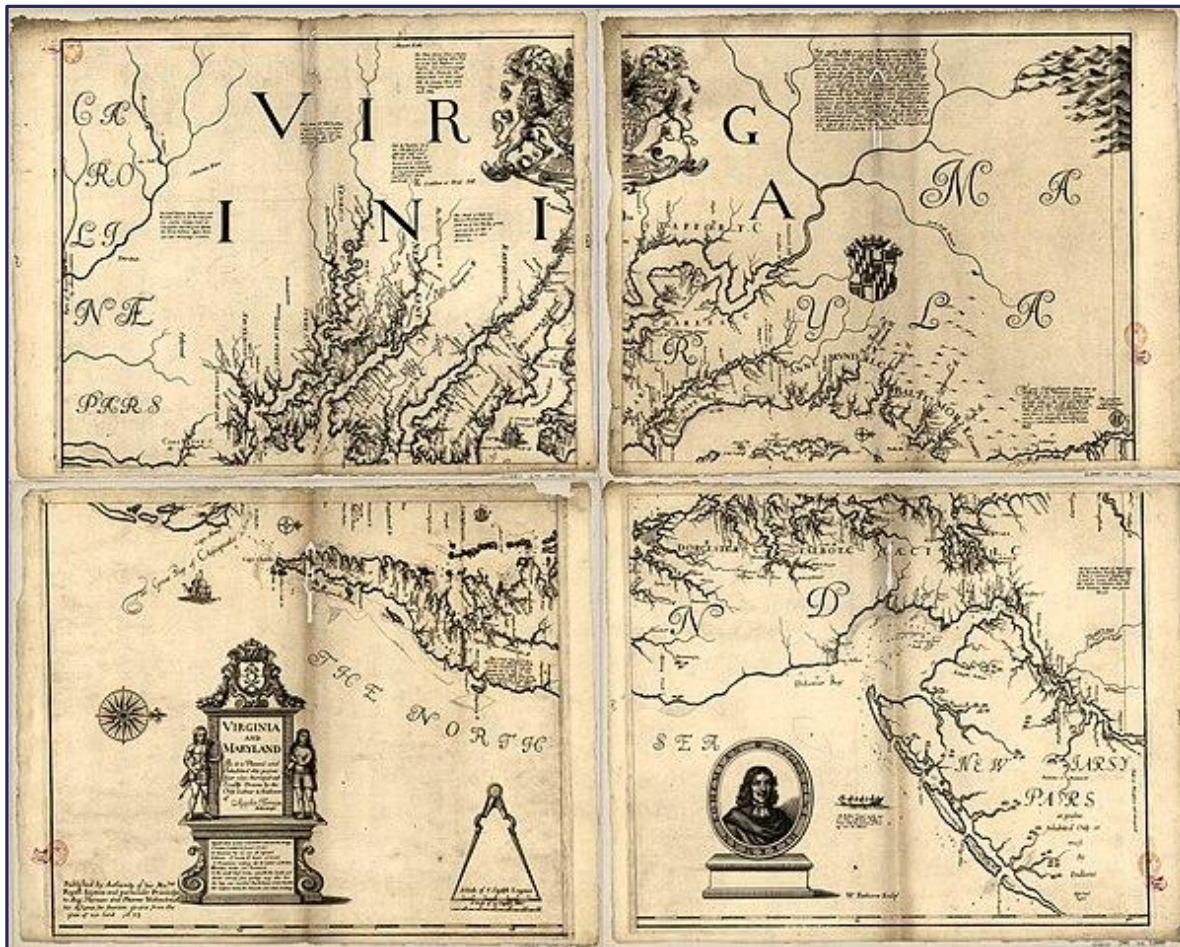


# My American Liberty Story

**Mary Smith Carson** continues...

**Descendent of Augustine Herman who arrived in Virginia in 1629 and mapped Virginia's waterways**

In 1656 he painted the first sketch of New Amsterdam which is the oldest surviving print of this area! He surveyed and mapped Maryland and surrounding territory! A copperplate was made of it and sent to London, where it was published in 1671. This map is still in existence in the files of the Maryland Historic Society!



For his work on this map he received 4000 acres called "Bohemian Manor."

He died in 1686 and is buried on that land (7 miles from Elkton, MD). A stone monument is on the grounds that reads:

***"Augustine Herman, first founder of Bohemia Manor."***

We have visited the site but no one knows where the grave is located!



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# My American Liberty Story

## Hanan Daqqa

### *'Girl, You Will Be A Woman Soon'*

I don't remember why I was so upset, but I remember my voice getting louder and louder in the plain bedroom his friends gave us to spend the first night we visited them.

We were standing face to face, my arms were shaking, and my facial expressions were volatile.

I remember feeling my blood pressure hitting hard to the top of my head, changing my hormones until I started to feel foggy and tired.

I also remember how beneath that anger, I desperately wanted him to comfort me and help me understand why I was angry, but he did not. His silence aggravated me. Is it scary to deal with a woman who does not know herself? I felt disappointed and helpless and started to question: is this love? Is this the love he talked about in the first week we met—when we got engaged so fast?

It was my first month of marriage, and the first month in America far away from the roots I built in the Middle East as a television host and as a sheltered daughter in a conservative country. I had never been that angry in the 28 years before getting married. That night I felt alone with a man I barely knew.

The feeling of helplessness deepened. I felt ashamed of my anger and for being in a relationship with a man who did not even try to comfort me. I was sure his friends heard every word I said. I wanted to hide.

I remember waking up to the call for breakfast and putting on the fancy navy sandals that keep me tall enough. I had no option but to meet their eyes. In the kitchen, first came the Iranian religious wife followed by her 4-year-old son in his red shirt, blond hair, and a sunny smile that forced me to smile and forget about last night. The conversation centered on him until his mother asked him to leave. I remember him giving me two tiny plastic red roses that I held on to passionately.

Then the conversation became between me and the wife. Somehow I reminded her of herself when she first got married: "Oh, not another one of me...I used to argue with him and ask him to look me in the eye, but then I created my own community of



# My American Liberty Story

**Hanan Daqqa** continues...

***'Girl, You Will Be A Woman Soon'***



women and I started to feel better...just get out of it...it is nonsense, believe me.” She looked at that part of herself in me with resentment, grudge, pain, and rejection...at the end of our conversation, she asked me to take off the fancy navy sandals when indoors. She wanted her carpet clean for her son. I took them off and still remember how innocently they stood there at the entrance floor. I bought them before moving to the US. It was a love at first sight.

After that trip, I still did not know why I was angry, but I realized I needed help, which scared me. I remember telling him, “I do not want a therapist to tell me what to do before I understand what is going on and have some sense of control over my feelings.” Somehow I found the strength and courage to take full responsibility for healing myself.

A week later, we were with his other friends at IHOP. The wife, a Canadian Muslim, asked me the usual question: how have you been? And I was excited to share that I feel much better after spending a week journaling my feelings every two hours. Feelings! Feelings were never allowed in the Middle East. Growing up in our household, my loving and empowering father repeated, “I don’t like it when women start crying.” So, I forced myself many times to avoid crying in public. School taught us: feelings lead to sins, follow your mind instead. So, I used to block them.

**It was the free access to books everywhere in America that helped me connect to my feelings and finally sign peace treaties with them. “They are here to help you,” I learned from the many self-help books I browsed in bookstores or borrowed from public libraries. I learned how to listen to my feelings and respond to them, embrace them. This is how I hopped into womanhood and Americanhood!**



Use the QR Code or visit the Freeman Store and Museum or the Community Center to view all of the stories.



# My American Liberty Story

## Elisabeth L. Winn

I did not know anything about America when I met my future husband who took one look at me, turned to his friends and said to them: *“this is the girl I am going to marry”*, and he did. I had lived in Vienna, the capital of Austria, since the end of World War II, and expected never to leave it. But for an American Army Officer, I was his *“little European Import”* and before long, I got to see the Statue of Liberty from the bow of a ship, and here I was! With my husband and children, we traveled the world. We saw Europe, Asia, and The United States from East to West, from North to South, from coast to coast.



For 20 years, we lived in many places, saw many states, and I loved this Army life. When the time came to choose a place for retirement, it happened that my husband’s last duty station was the Pentagon. We looked for places to buy a final home and settle into civilian life. And there was Vienna! In Virginia! There was never a doubt in our minds that this was to be our final permanent place to live. ***From Vienna to Vienna, nothing else would do....***



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