

## Short and Sweet

Why is February Haiku Writing Month? The answer is length. The shortest month has been dedicated to the shortest form of poetry. Haiku's alternating pattern of 5-7-5 syllables, over three lines, has made this form of Japanese poetry both easily recognizable and often practiced. Each day during the month of February, you are encouraged to compose a haiku.



The Japanese poet Basho, born in the 1600s, the son of a samurai, is credited with establishing and popularizing the haiku form. Basho learned that the best way to capture life through poetry was with humble and unpretentious images of everyday life. He honed his observations and techniques by living a largely solitary life filled with spiritual suffering and restless wandering. Simple and poignant imagery became the hallmark of Basho's style and is today central to writing haiku.

Most know haiku for its three lines and syllable pattern. Basho himself did not always follow this structure. It is important not to put too much emphasis on syllables and miss the true essence of haiku. Here is perhaps Basho's most famous haiku. Notice how it does not conform to the 5-7-5 syllable pattern:

*An ancient pond,  
the frog leaps:  
the silver plop and gurgle of water.*

The poem is void of simile and metaphor. It has no fancy adjectives or adverbs. It describes a simple act of nature in a straightforward way that engages the senses. We see and hear the frog in the water of a pond. If you would like to write haiku, perhaps the best way to begin is to find a quiet spot to sit and notice the world around you. What does it look, sound, feel, smell, or taste like? Record these observations with simple language in three lines. Even try following the 5-7-5 syllable pattern. The world may come into focus as more simple and beautiful than before.

## February Birthdays

### Residents Birthdays

February 1	Marth Knopf
February 4	Laura Haggerty
February 12	Lois Pauchey
February 24	Frances Abell
February 24	Doris Croudy
February 25	Erma Medeiros
February 29	Mary Taves

### Team Member Birthdays

February 9	Jacqui Matali
February 25	Sarah Kargbo
February 20	Cecilia Anum



# Potomac Place

Assisted Living and Memory Care 2133 Montgomery Avenue, Woodbridge, VA 22191  
(703) 494-3817 www.potomacplace.com www.facebook.com/potomacplace



### Our Team At Your Service

#### Executive Director

Jamie Houston  
jhouston@potomacplace.com

#### Director of Nursing

Ruby Parkzes, RN  
rparkzes@potomacplace.com

#### Director of Marketing & Admissions

Jennifer Harrison  
jharrison@potomacplace.com

#### Director of Community Relations and Marketing

Heather Gentry  
hgentry@potomacplace.com

#### Director of Maintenance

Kashif Coleman  
maintenancedirector@potomacplace.com

#### Activities Director

Jacquelyn Ayeni  
activitiesdirector@potomacplace.com

#### Activity Director

Scherry Watters  
swatters@potomacplace.com

#### Food Service Director

Unisa Sankoh  
usankoh@potomacplace.com

#### Business Office Manager

Denie Robinson  
officemanager@potomacplace.com

#### Additional Services:

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Rent Box is now located outside of the front Office door.

## A Season of Fasting and Forgiveness

February is an important month in the religious calendar. February 12 brings Septuagesima Sunday, the start of the pre-Lenten season. The word *Septuagesima* derives from the Latin word meaning “seventieth,” which marks the 70 days before Easter. In many countries around the world, this day heralds the start of modern-day Carnival. Yet before the wild and costumed revelry of Carnival became commonplace, this long period leading up to Lent and Easter was called Shrovetide.

The term *Shrovetide* comes from the term *shrive*, which means “to hear confessions.” During the days of Lent leading up to Easter, people are supposed to go to confession, where the priests shrive—or listen to—the confessors, forgive them their sins, and offer penance. In many ways, it makes sense that Carnival grew from the Shrovetide traditions. After all, Carnival is a time of wild and reckless merrymaking, with many revelers accumulating sins. Revelers could then confess their accumulated sins and be forgiven in time for Lent.

The Lenten season not only focuses on confession but it is also a period of fasting. The term *Carnival* derives from the words *carne levare*, meaning “to remove meat,” signaling this traditional Lenten dietary prohibition. Most people are familiar with the term *Mardi Gras*, meaning “Fat Tuesday,” which falls the day before Ash Wednesday, the first day of Lent. Few are familiar with the other name of this day, Shrove Tuesday, or with the other name of this day, Pancake Tuesday. As the last day before the fasting season of Lent, Shrove Tuesday is the traditional day to gorge oneself on the rich and fatty foods forbidden during Lent, such as pancakes. Spain calls this day the *dia de la tortilla*, or omelet day, and many celebrate by eating omelets made with sausage and pork fat. Of course, all indulgences come to an end on Ash Wednesday, when Lent, fasting, and penance begin in earnest.



## To Pluto and Beyond

Even though Pluto has been snubbed as the ninth planet of our solar system, let us not snub Pluto Day on February 18. On this day in 1930, astronomer Clyde Tombaugh first glimpsed the distant planet body through the telescope at the Lowell Observatory in Flagstaff, Arizona.



The name Pluto was offered by eleven-year-old Venetia Burney. She named the cold and distant planet—with temperatures of  $-360^{\circ}$  Fahrenheit and located four billion miles from the sun—after the Roman god of the harsh and cold underworld. Astronomers liked the name because it included the letters *P* and *L*, the initials of astronomer Percival Lowell, both the namesake of Flagstaff's observatory and the scientist who originally guessed the planet even existed.

Fans of Pluto were famously disappointed in August of 2006, when the International Astronomical Union redefined what constitutes a planet and consequently stripped Pluto of its planet status. Because Pluto does not stand alone as a planetary mass—it is merely the largest object in the Kuiper Belt, a grouping of many objects that swirl beyond Neptune—it was demoted to the rank of dwarf planet.

But fans may have reason to cheer. Observations conducted from high atop Hawaii's Mauna Kea mountain suggest that Pluto isn't alone in the nether reaches of our solar system. Another dwarf planet in the Kuiper Belt was discovered in February 2016. Known as 2015 RR245, this planet is smaller than Pluto and makes a much wider orbit. Where it takes Pluto 248 Earth-years to orbit the sun, 2015 RR245 takes 700 to make its orbit. Researchers also speculate that there is yet another true planet, dubbed "Planet X" or "Planet Nine," perhaps the size of Neptune, far beyond Pluto, possibly taking up to 20,000 Earth-years to orbit the sun. Discoveries such as these continue to prove that there are far more exciting surprises out there in the universe than disappointments.



*Happy 60<sup>th</sup> Wedding Anniversary!  
Helena and Chuck Voccio*



We are excited to welcome **Jamie Houston**, our new Executive Director. Welcome on board!

**Sunshine is a welcome thing.**

**It brings a lot of brightness.**

## Life Lived to Its Fullest

Jeanne Louise Calment was born in Arles, in the south of France, on February 21, 1875. Her life was fairly unremarkable and unnoticed, except for her birth date, which was recorded in the Arles birth register. When Calment died in 1997 at 122 years old, she had officially lived longer than any other human.



Theories abound about Calment's extraordinary longevity. Did she live so long because she ate two pounds of chocolate a week, started fencing lessons when she was 85, rode a bicycle until she was 100, drank a daily glass of port wine, or had a great sense of humor? It certainly wasn't because she gave up smoking at age 120. Calment didn't even kick the habit for health reasons—it was because she could not see well enough to light her own cigarettes! Jean-Marie Rabine, public health researcher and author of a book about Calment, credits her long life to her "immunity to stress." Calment, after all, married into money and did not have to work. She spent much of her time playing tennis, roller-skating, cycling, swimming, and joining her husband's hunting parties. But will any of us be so lucky as to live such long, full lives?

While there is much press about ever-increasing human longevity, scientists believe that humans have largely reached the upper limits of our life span, and that limit is 115 years. Calment's 122 years, researchers say, is an anomaly. While the improvements of modern life increase our chances of living longer, no matter how many health advancements and breakthroughs humankind uncovers, we cannot live forever. And scientists are quick to remind us that we do not want to. After all, a full life is better than a long life. A social network, trading white bread for whole grains, moderate exercise, being conscientious, getting enough sleep, and having a sense of a higher purpose—these are the hallmarks of long, full lives. And don't forget a sense of humor. As Calment said, "I will die laughing."

## Sweeping the Nation

It is one of the world's oldest team sports and has been featured in the winter Olympics since 1998. And although it garners its fair share of guffaws by those unfamiliar with this sport, it has its own holiday, Curling Is Cool Day, on February 23. Like golf, curling was invented in Scotland. It is much like shuffleboard on ice. A large polished granite stone, quarried from either Scotland or Wales, is sent sliding across an ice "sheet" to a target "house." Once "the rock" is let loose, "sweepers" holding brooms furiously brush the ice in front of the stone, slightly melting the surface and thereby guiding and hastening the rock along its path to the house. In its earliest days, the game was played on frozen ponds using flat-bottomed river stones. Records dating back to 1541 detail curling matches, and paintings from the 1800s depict women on the ice wielding stones and brooms. The name *curling* comes from the spin applied to a stone as it slides, causing it to turn. Teams alternate turns, sliding stones to the house, blocking pathways, and knocking opponents out of the way, which is a pretty cool competition to witness.

## Eternal Peace



The peace symbol is universally recognized today, but it was a shocking new design when Gerald Herbert Holtom first presented it on February 21, 1958. Holtom was a member of the Direct Action Committee

Against Nuclear War and wished to use his symbol in his crusade for peace. Holtom's design, he explained, was modeled on himself. He drew himself as a long thin line within a circle, with his arms stretched outward and downward, with palms up, in despair. Later in life, Holtom expressed regret that his symbol came from despair. He wanted the symbol to be turned upside down, with the arms lifted to the sky in joy. Holtom continued to draw his peace sign this way up until he finally found eternal peace.