

Gary Ditto's Newsletter

Spring 2010

Memories of Ninety Years: Talking with Mr. Peter Stathes

By Antoinette Kranenburg

In his long and active life, Kensington's Peter Stathes has first-hand experience of the Washington area's development from a world of horse and wagon, to a large metropolis with cars, buses, and the subway. A keen observer, Mr. Stathes generously shared some of his memories.

A friend of his in college dated a beautiful girl in Kensington, then a remote town at the end of a winding dirt road. They took the streetcar that ran to the Chevy Chase Lake, where there was a dance hall and rowboats. From there, the trolley took you to Kensington.

That winding road was Connecticut Avenue. It was widened and extended in 1957 to become the busy thoroughfare we know now.

Mr. Stathes moved his family and his residential and commercial real estate business to Kensington from the District of Columbia in 1959. He remembers meeting ladies at the time, who had been born in Kensington in the 1880s and 1890s and did not think much of the new shopping centers.

He fondly recalls Dr. Chapman, "a good doctor," then in her eighties. She had her doctor's office in the kitchen of her home a few houses over from his house on Detrick Avenue. Sometime around 1965, he recalls, he had something in his eye, so he went over to have Dr. Chapman look at it. She met him wearing an apron, socks, and tennis shoes. She had him lie on the kitchen table so she could examine him. She was his family doctor for the next five years, until she retired.

His parents both came from the village of Isari in Arcadia, Greece. His father came to the United States in 1900. He shortened his name from Stathopoulos to Stathes ('Stathus'). He moved from New York City to Washington, DC, in 1913.

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Peter Stathes — *continued*

In Washington, DC, his father roomed with two others — a cousin, and his mother's brother. To marry, a dowry (a "prika") was a must. Money for "bread" was a priority.

In 1920 he went back to the village in Greece to marry. His roommate had told him, "I have a sister. Go see her."

The young woman hadn't known him, but she liked him. Her first question to him: "You are not a farmer, are you?" While the young couple was living in DC, he was a waiter in Washington's big hotels. He also opened small restaurants.

Peter Stathes was born at his parents' home in 1915 at Ninth and G streets N.W. in Washington, DC. All five children were born at home with the help of a midwife. His actual birthday is December 2. However, his birth certificate says December 3, because the doctor came the next day.

As a boy, for a fifty-cent lunch and a haircut, he herded cattle at the Soldier's Home. His boyhood home on Park Place NW faced the grounds of Soldier's Home. It was a basically poor and lower-middle-class neighborhood of Jews, Italians, and Greeks, many of whom couldn't speak English.

Four families on his street kept a horse and wagon for recreation, and had a barn in the back. There were a lot of horses in the city then, and twenty-five working farms within the District of Columbia.

The family was living at 1807 Irving Street N.W. when his baby sister Iona was born. He was in morning Kindergarten half a day at Monroe School on Columbia Road, and came home from school.

His mother, 5 feet 2 inches tall, and stout, told him, in no uncertain terms, "Go get Yaya, I need her right away!" Yaya was the midwife, elderly and heavy. He got her to come over and was told, "Go out and play and don't come back till five and dinner time!"

"The best part of my life is working," he says. At age seven, he delivered newspapers. He started caddying at nine. Now, at age 94, he plays golf most afternoons when the weather is good.

He went to college on a football scholarship and paid his own way. This was during the severe Depression of the 1930s. To earn money, he worked as a common laborer with a construction company. The company made him construction boss. In 1936, he was a salesman for Shannon and Luchs. He graduated in 1938 from George Washington University in accounting.

Before World War II, he built six houses, two in the District and four in Silver Spring, but business was bad because of the Depression. In our conversation, he commented that seventy-five percent of houses in the District were built after 1920.



Back from the war in 1945, he wanted to get settled. He met his future wife, Martha Cole, at a dance. Folks would go out for dinner and dancing around Ninth and F streets. There was dancing everywhere in all the hotels.

They both loved to dance. They "danced the night away at the National Press Club." Afterward, they went around the corner to Thompson's Restaurant on Pennsylvania Avenue. It was crowded and a long wait.

She and a friend lived in a basement apartment, so she said "Come around to our place and I'll fix you something to eat." She was "good looking, had a real southern accent, and besides all her natural good qualities she was a very good cook."

His wife was from Aberdeen, Mississippi, born the fifth of six children in 1920. "At twenty, she was working ten hours a day at J.C. Penney's for \$1 per day and an hour lunch. So in 1941, she moved to Washington, DC, for a job with the Army, where she made \$1,404 per year, \$27 per week."

They married and had three sons. And her friend married his friend. His wife died in 1998.

Mr. Stathes and his wife visited Isari in 1955. They rode a donkey from the train station to the village.

Mr. Stathes built his dream house on Detrick Avenue in 1965 with his brother, the project architect. He still enjoys living in his spacious, modern, brick home. He appreciates the beauty of historic Kensington and points out that the original historical homes, through the early 1900s, had no bathrooms, no closets, and pumps in their kitchens.

"Neighborhoods are different today. We move around a lot. We used to walk around more."

And then, following our pleasant chat, Peter Stathes heads off to White Oak for his morning game of bowling.

Yard Sale

Sponsored by the United Methodist Men

Friday, April 23 from 8 a.m. to 7 p.m.

Saturday, April 24 from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m.

At St. Paul's United Methodist Church, 10401 Armory Avenue, Heavener Hall at the Corner of Mitchell & Fawcett Streets, Old Town Kensington. Donations of sellable items are welcome (no computer equipment, exercise equipment, or heavy upholstered furniture, please) and should be brought to the church on Thursday, April 22nd. Use the entrance at the corner of Mitchell and Fawcett Streets. Info: 301-933-7933.

Woman's Club of Chevy Chase Book Sale – April 17-21, 2010

The Woman's Club of Chevy Chase will hold its annual Book Sale from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. on April 17 - 21, 2010, at the clubhouse at 7931 Connecticut Avenue, Chevy Chase. There will be books of all kinds, DVD's, CD's, and tapes priced from 50 cents and up. This year's sale includes a "Treasure Trove" of white elephant items and collectibles. Wednesday, April 21, is "Bag Day" — fill a bag of books for only \$2.00. There is plenty of free parking behind the building. For information: (301) 652-6480.

Wishing Success to Holy Redeemer School's Annual Shamrock-n-Roll Event

Saturday, March 20th at 6:30 p.m.

The event is the major fundraiser for Holy Redeemer School, a parochial Catholic school with 400 boys and girls in kindergarten through eighth grade, located at 9715 Summit Avenue in Kensington, Maryland. Tickets include admission for two to the dinner, dance and a raffle drawing for the chance to win \$5000 or one student tuition at Holy Redeemer. Tickets are \$160 after March 15th. For tickets contact Coley Beggy at 301-949-0627.



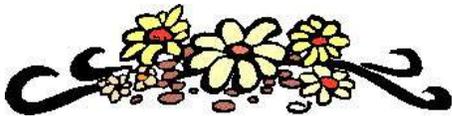
Spring Zing

Brookside Gardens Conservatory

Saturday, January 23 - Sunday, April 11, 2010
10 a.m. - 5 p.m. daily, FREE

Visit a place apart and enjoy a world of color and fragrance in the Spring Conservatory. Many tropical plants flower early in the season, like the Birds of Paradise, Strelitzia nicolai, S. reginae, Indian Hawthorn, Rhapsiolepis indica, Begonias, Bromeliads, and orchids. Lush tropical foliage and flowers complement and contrast with the changing assortment of cool season flowers in the seasonal display beds. Snapdragons and violets join fragrant florists' stock, freesia, and sweet peas in a display reminiscent of an early spring garden. Enjoy the lush and lovely plantings and be reminded that winter will melt into spring. Brookside Gardens, 1800 Glenallan Avenue, Silver Spring, MD. Phone: (301) 962-1400

Website: www.brooksidegardens.org



For dates and news of more events, be sure to visit the *Community Activities Calendar* on the web site:

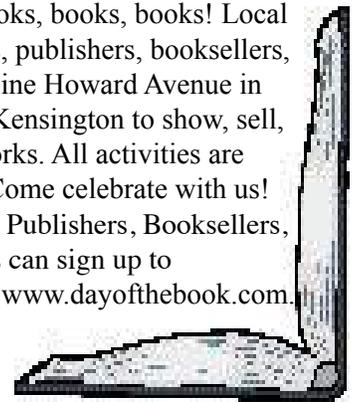
www.garyditto.com

Gary Ditto's Newsletter welcomes ideas and news items from community members. The editor for this issue is Antoinette Kraneburg of Kensington, assisted by Cherry Wunderlich.

Kensington Day of the Book

Sunday, April 25, 2010, 11 a.m.-4 p.m.

The 2010 Kensington Day of the Book Festival will be held on Sunday, April 25, from 11 a.m. – 4 p.m. The afternoon street festival celebrates the International Day of the Book with live music, author readings, open mike, activities for children and adults, storytellers...and books, books, books! Local authors, book artists, publishers, booksellers, and literary groups line Howard Avenue in Historic Old Town Kensington to show, sell, and discuss their works. All activities are free, rain or shine. Come celebrate with us! Authors and Artists, Publishers, Booksellers, and Literary Groups can sign up to participate. More at www.dayofthebook.com.



Why Don't My Kids Listen to Me?

Free talk at PEP, Saturday, April 10, 3:00-4:30 p.m.

The Parent Encouragement Program (PEP) is offering a free talk on "Why Don't My Kids Listen to Me?" on Saturday, April 10, 3:00-4:30 p.m., at the PEP office at 10100 Connecticut Avenue, Kensington. The talk is for parents of children age 2 to 18 who have not taken a PEP course yet. Receive tips and techniques you can take home and use to gain more cooperation from your children, without repeating, reminding, nagging, or yelling. Space is limited, so pre-registration is required. Call PEP at 301-929-8824.

PEP's spring classes and workshops begin the week of April 12, and include programs for parents of toddlers and preschoolers, elementary through middle school-age children, and teens. Take advantage of the early-registration discount – sign up by March 31 for any 8-week or 10-week course at 20 percent off the regular fee. For more information, visit www.PEPparent.org or call PEP.

New E-Mail Updates from Gary Ditto—

Sign up for either or both of these updates:

- Our Monthly Sold Reports for 20895, sent via e-mail
- Our weekly "Open House" e-mail

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Gary & Diana Ditto Recent Activity



9716 Carriage Road, Kensington
FOR SALE
 \$999,000



10415 Hebard Street
FOR SALE
 \$815,000



9305 W. Parkhill Drive, Bethesda
FOR SALE
 \$759,000



4105 Byeforde Crt, Kensington
UNDER CONTRACT
 List Price: \$ 759,000



4201 Culver Street, Kensington
FOR SALE
 \$729,000



11222 Orleans Way, Kensington
FOR SALE
 \$659,000



10007 Connecticut Ave., Kensington
FOR SALE
 \$649,000



9304 Chanute Drive, Bethesda
FOR SALE
 \$625,000



2127 Clark Place, Silver Spring
FOR SALE
 \$515,000



11120 Woodson Ave., Kensington
FOR SALE
 \$469,000



13531 Spinning Wheel Drive, Germantown
FOR SALE
 \$355,000



9900 Capitol View Ave., Silver Spring
UNDER CONTRACT
 List Price: \$315,000



9902 Capitol View Ave., Silver Spring
SOLD - Feb. 12, 2010
 \$255,000



2105 Qunton Road, Silver Spring
RENTED
 \$1,995/month



4211 Brookfield Drive, Kensington
RENTED
 \$1,450/month

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 COMMUNITY ITEM IN OUR NEXT
 NEWSLETTER, BLOG OR
 CALENDAR?**
 Email us (gd@garyditto.com) by May 3,
 2010 to include an item in our next
 newsletter (anticipated mail date is May
 14), or email anytime to submit items
 for our blog and community calendar.