



### **Thank you to FHS students**

In April, students from the new Civic Project Club at Falmouth High School assisted two of our members with spring yard clean up and planting of a wild flower garden. The club's advisor is Susannah Cronin. The group's generous offer to reach out into their community to help our members is very much appreciated.

### **Falmouth Academy Work Day**

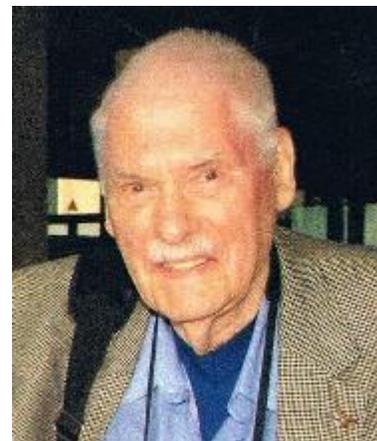
Members: Here is another opportunity for you to receive assistance from Falmouth youth this spring. Friday afternoon, June 1<sup>st</sup>, students from the senior class at FA are volunteering once again to help members of NF with spring chores, either indoors or outside. We still have a few open slots so if you'd like to take advantage of this offer, please call the NF office as soon as possible.

### **Do You Like to Sing?**

Join Judy at the piano at the Falmouth Senior Center on Monday, May 21<sup>st</sup>, from 1 to 2 p.m. It's just for fun and no experience is necessary. Light refreshments will be available. Donation is \$1.00.

### **Upcoming Health Fair**

Sponsored by the Falmouth Council on Aging and the Town of Falmouth through the VNA of Cape Cod, a Health Fair will be held on Monday, June 4<sup>th</sup>, from 12:30 to 3:30 p.m. at the Falmouth Senior Center. A variety of screenings will be included as well as health educational materials.



### **Les Wilkinson, Member, Volunteer, and Board Member**

*by Mavise Crocker*

For those of us born before 1930, as Les Wilkinson was, it has been a century of constant U.S. involvement in wars. It has also been a century of amazing changes in both electronic innovation and

ethical and moral values. Les has seen it all, and has had a foot in both old and new worlds. He has flown across the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans many times and lived in many European and Pacific countries.

Imagine a time when people traveled by automobile, train and steamship — but never by commercial airplane, for flying was still too new. That's where he began, yet Les made a career of flying planes for U.S. forces starting with World War II, then the Korean War, the Cold War (yes, it was an undeclared war), and the Viet Nam war.

He has seen it all, yet has deep nostalgia for the era he grew up in — the respect for elders; a work ethic where you began at the bottom and worked your way up; for the teachings of the Great Depression of stretching your resources or going without. And even for the joy of singing popular songs and dancing to the big bands of the time (he was taught to dance by John Travolta's mother in 1942).

But Les's childhood was not easy. His mother died when he was only four. His TV actor father later remarried — and family friction finally caused him to leave home when he was eleven. He was taken in by a family friend and by the age of 17 was ready to leave home again. This time he enlisted in the Navy — the V-12 Program at Bucknell University in 1944 during World War II, training to become a Navy Air pilot. Thus began his long career in the services of the U.S. Navy and later the U.S. Air Force.

Les was recalled into the service in 1951 but because he had married Mary, his college sweetheart, he was no longer eligible for flight training. He had to be a commissioned officer in order to go into flight training as a married man, so he enlisted in the USAF. He was selected to go to Officer Candidate School, and upon graduation was chosen to go to flight school. He received his wings in 1954 and was assigned to a B-26 attack bomber squadron in Germany for three years. On his return to the States he transitioned to jet aircraft and trained to fly a B-57.

During the Cold War, when all the United States services were on strategic alert (remember the Cuban missile crisis?), Les and his family were stationed in Japan and South Korea from 1959 to 1963. After a two-year return to the States, he vol-

unteered to go to Viet Nam, where the B-57s were the first jets to go into battle. In December of 1966 his plane was shot down, but he ejected, managed to escape sniper fire while descending, was picked up by a Navy rescue boat, and then returned to his unit.

Enemy fire was not the only danger our servicemen encountered during the wars. During his tour in Viet Nam Les suffered a hiatal hernia in 1969. What started as a simple half-hour operation turned out to take six hours instead, as the surgeon by mistake dropped the scalpel on his spleen, which then had to be removed as well.

After the Vietnam War, when he had completed 167-1/2 combat missions, Les returned to the States and was eventually retired as a Lt. Colonel at Otis Air Force Base on the Cape — a place that both he and Mary grew to love. In 1971, after 28 years of service, fighting in several different wars and being stationed in locations all around the world, Les decided to leave the Air Force and return to civilian life. His subsequent careers turned out to be as interesting as his first.

While Mary entered the real estate business in Falmouth, Les owned a boatyard for three years and was sales manager for a large boat builder. Later, he sold real estate, worked in securities, insurance, and other businesses, and finally worked for H & R Block for almost fifteen years, doing tax returns. He and Mary were both very active in many Falmouth organizations — Samaritans of Cape Cod, the Falmouth Artists Guild, and the Mason's to name a few.

After 49 years of a happy marriage, Mary died of cancer in 1998. A people-oriented person who enjoys companionship, a warm and empathetic friend, Les was lonely. He later married Phyllis, a close friend he and Mary had known for years. They greatly enjoyed traveling. One year on a trip to Russia they became good friends with an English couple and agreed to help finance the building of a school in Nepal. Les later set up a fund for teaching the parents as well. Unfortunately Phyllis did not live to see the completion of the school, for she also died of cancer.

Since then, Les has remained active in his volunteer work and is now on the Board of Neighborhood Falmouth. The one constant in his life for the past few years has been Gigi, a middle-aged,

white-haired miniature French poodle — just as friendly, and people-oriented as Les. She greets you warmly, eager to make a new friend, and loves to sit on your lap. At this stage in his career, she is a great companion to a very energetic and busy person who once loved flying, and still loves to dance.

### HOW I'VE USED NF SERVICES

*One of our NF volunteers explored for me the possibility of connecting some esoteric equipment to my TV. No way I could have done that! He figured out that my system didn't have what was needed. Later two other volunteers carried the old TV upstairs, after I replaced it with a new HDTV. Brains and muscles, both supplied by NF!*

Kay Paine

### "SILVER THREADS"

NF recently started a new monthly column in the *Falmouth Enterprise*, designed especially for Falmouth senior citizens. We'll have articles on subjects as varied as tips on entertaining visiting grandchildren to advice on what agencies and services are available to provide needed help. If you like to write, we invite you to join us in our new venture. Call the NF Directors for more information. Also, if there's a special topic you'd like us to explore in our column, please let us know.

### DATES TO REMEMBER

#### Meet for Breakfast/Coffee: May 7<sup>th</sup>

We have reserved a table at Friendly's for Monday, May 7<sup>th</sup>, at 9 a.m. Please join us for a cup of coffee if you can.

#### Meet for Lunch: May 16<sup>th</sup>

We are reserving tables at the Coonamessett Inn for 11:45 a.m., Wednesday, May 16<sup>th</sup>. All members, volunteers, and guests are welcome. Last month, people enjoyed a very nice lunch with old and new friends. Please call the office to reserve a seat.

#### NF Board Meeting: May 17<sup>th</sup>

The May Board Meeting will be held at 2:00 p.m., Thursday, May 17<sup>th</sup> at Highfield Hall.

#### NF Book Club: June 7<sup>th</sup>

The next meeting of the book club will be on Thursday, June 7<sup>th</sup> at 2:30 p.m. We'll be reading *The Tiger's Wife* by Téa Obreht. Please call the office for the location.

### SENIOR DISCOUNTS

Falmouth Taxi Company: 25% discount to Falmouth Seniors. Be sure to ask for the discount if you use their service.

Eastman/Ace Hardware: 10% discount to members of NF on most full priced items and available every day.

Windfall Market: 5% Senior discount every Wednesday.

Family Foods: 10% Senior discount every Wednesday (no deli items or alcohol).

Mahoney's Garden Center: 10% Senior discount every Wednesday.

Dunkin' Donuts: 10% any time—you have to ask.

We gratefully acknowledge support from the following merchants who responded to our recent business appeal letter:

Four Guys in Tuxes  
Dr. Edward H. Fitch, Optometrist  
Hamilton Tree & Landscape  
Falmouth Elks Club  
Stone L'Oven Pizza Co.  
Chapman, Cole and Gleason  
Lawrence & Lynch  
Uncle Bill's Country Store Florist  
Paint's On Us – David Ward