



DIALOG

Dresden sets Luther Crest resident on spiritual journey

“I WAS BAPTIZED TWICE,” writes the Rev. Dr. Manfred Bahmann, a resident of Luther Crest in Allentown, Pennsylvania. “The first time was with water, the second time with fire. Both events left a profound impact on my life.”

Thus begins the “faith journey” that Bahmann, a retired Lutheran pastor, describes with brutal honesty and heartbreaking detail in his recently published autobiography, *When All Hell Breaks Loose: From the Ashes of Dresden to Existential Grace*.

The firebombing of Dresden, Germany, in February 1945 by American and British forces virtually incinerated the city, killing tens of thousands of civilians. Bahmann was 15 at the time, an “enthusiastic Hitler youth” who’d been seduced by the “fierce sense of patriotism” and promises of “joy and vitality” that the Nazi party preached. His own beloved father had been a minor local official in the party before dying of a stroke in 1941, and Bahmann, against the wishes of his devoutly Christian, Hitler-hating mother, had hoped to join the German Navy when he was old enough.

His plans were dashed, however, when he found himself taking shelter in his family’s basement with dozens of terrified friends and neighbors as the city—a non-military cultural center thought unlikely to be attacked—burned to the ground.

“This was how my conversion began,” writes Bahmann in his book. “First I uttered the agonized prayer, ‘Lord, have mercy!’ as the bombs fell. Then I felt the reality of Armageddon as described so vividly in John’s Revelation.” It was “the first heartfelt prayer of my life,” he says.

Soon after, with “fire and destruction” surrounding them, Bahmann’s family joined thousands of refugees who had escaped eastern Germany ahead of the Russian Army’s advance in the last months of the war. “We lost everything except what we carried.”

Eventually settling in a small village in northwestern Germany, the teen found the post-war years deeply troubling.

“When the full extent of Nazi brutalities was revealed after World War II, my entire spiritual universe came crashing down on me,” he explains.

“The shattering realization that unspeakable crimes had indeed been perpetrated by my own people” prompted “a profound feeling of shame.”

With Germany’s “collective guilt” hanging over their heads, Bahmann and a friend started a Bible study group for their high school classmates. They were “looking to our faith for an answer,” he says; for Bahmann, that ultimately meant going on to study theology in college and later attending seminary in Ohio. He gradually emerged from his “mental fog” eager to “serve the Lutheran church in which I had been baptized and raised as a child.”

Bahmann writes in great detail about his wandering ministerial career, which took him and his wife, Marianne, from U.S. military bases in Germany to a “rundown railroad town” in West Virginia; from the Stanford University campus in California to a church building literally adjacent to the Berlin Wall; and, later, from a German-speaking congregation in Manhattan to substitute preaching as a retired pastor in Pennsylvania.

Throughout the book, Bahmann reflects on his life experiences as well as his faith, both of which came together time after time to guide his service to others. Such was the case in September 2001 when he found himself present once again for a horrific attack from the air. Like many other New Yorkers, Bahmann made his way to Ground Zero to offer his help. The next day he made the short walk to New York University, where he’d been a part-time campus pastor, and addressed a large group of students who were trying to process what had happened.

“It is good that we are here together,” he told them. “I myself am a survivor of the firebombing of my hometown Dresden in Germany in World War II . . . Be assured that we have the whole world on our side right now, ready to support and help us.”

As for the present, Bahmann calls the Luther Crest apartment he shares with Marianne “our princely residence.”

“We are very happy with our choice.”

Our Mission

In response to God's love in Jesus Christ, Diakon will demonstrate God's command to love the neighbor through acts of service.

Diakon: Many Hands, guided by One Heart, transforming the lives of children, families, and older adults. With programs ranging from adoption, foster care and at-risk youth services to counseling and comprehensive senior living services, Diakon annually helps thousands of people of all faiths through compassionate service, gracious hospitality, and charitable care.

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Mark T. Pile

The President's **DIALOG**

Celebrating an amazing mix of residents

I FIND the lead article in this issue of Dialog—about the experiences of Dr. Manfred Bahmann, a resident of Luther Crest—to be simply amazing when you consider the fact the Lutheran pastor and leader was present for both the fire-bombing of Dresden and the attack on New York City on 9/11.

His reflections on a life spent in service, prompted initially by events in his youth beyond the ability of most of us even to imagine—and captured in his recently published book—are thought-provoking and, ultimately, life-affirming.

Beyond that, the recent educational panel, during which Dr. Bahmann's book and career were discussed, gives lie to that tired stereotype that senior living communities are boring, sterile places in which people play bingo and congregate early for the evening meal.

Beyond the two articles on Dr. Bahmann, this issue of Dialog tells of the 87-year-old Frey Village resident who teaches tai chi; the volunteer work of Paul Fenstermacher; another Luther Crest resident, the recent wedding-vow renewal ceremony at The Lutheran Home at Topton; and the exciting life of a former volunteer firefighter and firefighting instructor at Buffalo Valley Lutheran Village.

What an amazing group of diverse and vibrant residents!

And those profiled here are just a few of the many, many older adults who make our Diakon Senior Living Services communities the wonderful, inspiring, and "youthful" places they are.

People often tell me they waited too long to enjoy the many benefits of communities such as these we offer. I believe the stories in this issue of Dialog underscore that point all too well.

Mark T. Pile

Mark T. Pile, MSHA, MSW
President/CEO

Diakon expresses its condolences

to the family of Robert Reitzel, chair of the Diakon Lutheran Fund Board of Directors, who passed away in late February.

"Bob joined the Diakon Lutheran Fund board because he believed in the purpose and mission of the Diakon Child, Family & Community Ministries programs it supports," says Richard Barger, Diakon executive vice president and treasurer.

"As chair of the board, he was an excellent leader and for me, personally, a mentor and friend. He was always gracious and put his concern for others first. Despite recent health issues, he always ended each phone call the same: 'I appreciate your call and the conversation, please stay in touch.' That focus and the faith he demonstrated were uplifting."

Reitzel joined the Diakon Lutheran Fund board in 2012 and served as vice-chair in 2013 and chair in 2014.

A Pennsylvania State University graduate and Carlisle resident, Reitzel was a retired bank and trust executive. In addition to his service with Diakon, he was an Investment Advisory Board Member for the state Supreme Court, a member of Rotary International, a board member and treasurer of the Pennsylvania Lawyers Fund for Client Security, a board member for Keystone Partnership, and a member of the Finance and Investment Committee for the United Way of Central Pennsylvania.

He also was a member and treasurer of First Lutheran Church, Carlisle, and served on boards with such community organizations as the Central Pennsylvania Youth Ballet, the Carlisle YMCA, the American Lung Association, and several rugby clubs.



Taking part in the panel discussion were, left to right, the Rev. Dr. Manfred Bahmann, Mrs. Marianne Bahmann, Dr. Peter Pettit, and Dr. William Jennings.



Bahmann present for both Dresden fire-bombing, 9/11

LUTHER CREST RESIDENT, Dr. Manfred Bahmann may be the only living person present at both the fire-bombing of Dresden, Germany, in February 1945 and the attack on the World Trade Center in Manhattan Sept. 11, 2001.

That fact, which drew gasps from a standing-room-only crowd in Luther Crest's auditorium, was revealed during a January panel discussion on Bahmann's life as a Lutheran pastor and scholar, as well as celebration of publication of his autobiography: *When All Hell Breaks Loose: From the Ashes of Dresden to Existential Grace*.

Joining Bahmann on the panel were his wife of 56 years, Marianne; Dr. Peter Pettit, associate professor of Religion Studies at Muhlenberg College; and Dr. William Jennings, Luther Crest resident and former chair of the Muhlenberg College Religion Department.

Calling Bahmann "a considerable force in the life of the Lutheran Church," Bishop Samuel Zeiser, a Diakon Lutheran Social Ministries board member, noted that the blinding light that the Apostle Paul witnessed upon his conversion was not unlike the moment of Bahmann's own spiritual birth as firebombs rained down on his home city.

The despair Bahmann felt as a teenager after World War II, Zeiser added, drove him to become "a person of deep faith." He described visiting Dresden with Bahmann, standing on the city block where Bahmann had lived and hearing him describe his experience: "Seeing where your life was transformed was one of the most powerful spiritual experiences in my life," said Zeiser.

Pettit, who also directs the Institute for Jewish-Christian Understanding at Muhlenberg College, joked that Bahmann is "the Forrest Gump of the religious world," reflecting the fact that Bahmann has been present at a number of important moments in modern church history, among them the Second Assembly of the World Council of Churches in Evanston, Illinois, in 1954, which Pettit described as "the high point of the protestant ecumenical movement," and the birth of "Latin American liberation theology" during

a conference of Roman Catholic bishops in Medellín, Columbia, in 1968.

Pettit credited Bahmann with "remarkable openness and generosity of spirit," noting that his book demonstrates the "confident faith and self-assurance that Manfred took with him throughout his life and his ministry. It's a wonderful memoir and reflection," he added. "I'm profoundly inspired by the courage and the commitment of your ministry in so many places down through the years."

Jennings said he was particularly moved by the section of Bahmann's book in which he describes speaking to a group of New York University students gathered in Washington Square Park the day after the 9/11 attacks.

"He comforted them by pointing out that he'd been in that situation before—during the bombing of Dresden," said Jennings. "It had been a pivotal event in Manfred's life. For a boy of 15, it was truly an apocalypse. So he was able to talk to the students who were in great despair and discuss the situation with them."

Marianne Bahmann described how her husband had "rejected values, family and culture because he saw how they can be destroyed by war. But he was very bright and curious, and people saw something in him. Reading the Bible and opening his heart to the Holy Spirit" turned him around, she explained, "and they've been guiding him ever since. It's been fascinating to be on this journey with him."

"The bombing of Dresden obviously had an enormous impact on me, no question about it," noted Dr. Bahmann. "But my 'conversion' was rooted not just in the destruction of Dresden and the senseless killing of all those defenseless civilians, but in the collapse of what I thought were our values. When the truth about the Nazis came out, I was thrown into complete despair and despondency."

What saved him, he says, were the "teachers and pastors who pointed me in the right direction and helped me to find the Living Christ."

Adoption, wilderness center team for ‘matching event’

DIAKON ADOPTION & FOSTER CARE hosts matching events designed to bring foster and prospective adoptive families together with waiting children and youths. Recently, staff within the Wendy’s Wonderful Kids component of Diakon Adoption & Foster Care chose an unusual event location—the Diakon Wilderness Center near Boiling Springs, Pennsylvania.

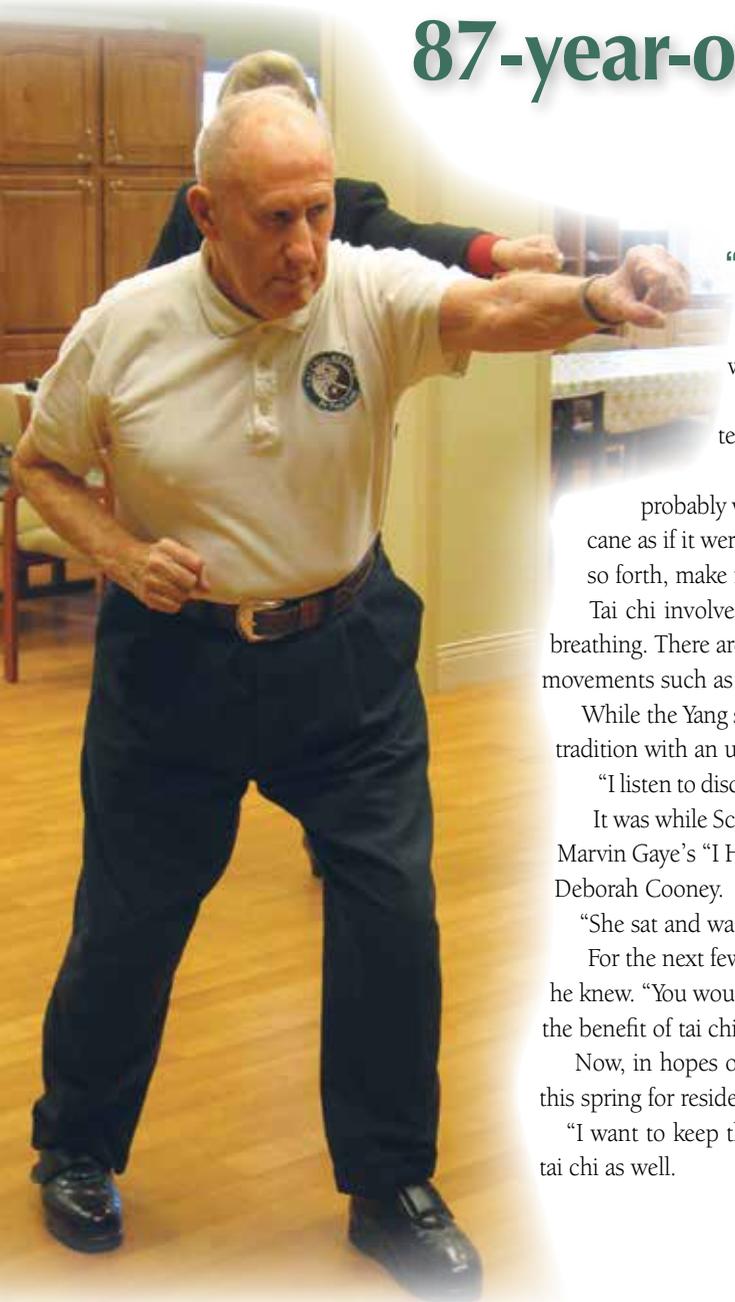
“The wilderness center was selected as a matching event venue for its unique resources, including creative team-building exercises and specially trained staff to facilitate them,” says Katie Julianna of the Diakon Adoption & Foster Care staff at Mechanicsburg.

“Team-building activities were used to produce a stress-free setting for older youths and families to interact in a structured, but flexible environment. After group members had the chance to get to know one another through working to complete the team-building activities, the event culminated in the completion of a high-ropes challenge.”

Such tasks, she adds, require effective communication, team work and problem-solving, all qualities youths and families need to build successful relationships, she says. “The youths were awesome,” noted one family. “I think today was the most fun we have had all year.” Even better—a match occurred as a result of the event.



87-year-old resident lauds benefits of tai chi, teaches others



“THE FIRST TIME I SAW TAI CHI, I was amazed,” says Sam Schwalm. “It was something I wanted to learn. It was different and intriguing.”

That exposure to the graceful form of exercise came 20 years ago—when Schwalm was a mere 67 years of age.

Now, at 87, the resident of Diakon’s Frey Village continues to enjoy tai chi. In fact, he’s teaching its benefits to others.

“If I wouldn’t be doing tai chi after having had three strokes, plus a lot of surgeries, I probably wouldn’t be here,” says Schwalm, who notes that after an hour’s practice he can twirl his cane as if it were a baton. “It improves the circulation in my legs, and the movement, the stretching and so forth, make me feel like a teenager.”

Tai chi involves a series of movements performed in a slow, focused manner accompanied by deep breathing. There are many styles of tai chi, however Schwalm prefers the popular Yang style, which includes movements such as “Needle at Sea Bottom” and “Grasping the Sparrow’s Tail.”

While the Yang style is widely practiced, Schwalm likes to personalize his practice of the ancient Chinese tradition with an unexpected choice of musical accompaniment.

“I listen to disco music of the 70s,” he says with a smile. “I even do it to ‘Disco Inferno’ by The Trammps.”

It was while Schwalm was practicing on the retirement community’s front lawn last fall to the sounds of Marvin Gaye’s “I Heard it Through the Grapevine,” that he caught the attention of then-Director of Nursing Deborah Cooney.

“She sat and watched me for 15 minutes,” he says. “She told me, ‘I’ve got to learn that.’”

For the next few months, Schwalm shared his passion for tai chi with the nurse, teaching her everything he knew. “You wouldn’t believe how much she picked up,” he says. “She was having fun and understanding the benefit of tai chi.”

Now, in hopes of teaching even more people about the benefits he perceives, Schwalm will lead a class this spring for residents of Frey Village’s personal and nursing care communities.

“I want to keep this alive as much as possible,” he says, hoping others will pass along the knowledge of tai chi as well.



The Rev. Phillip Huber stands in front of one of the new homes constructed in Crisfield.

Disaster response director receives statewide award

ON ANY GIVEN DAY, you will find the Rev. Phillip Huber on the streets of Crisfield, Maryland, making certain the efforts of Lutheran Disaster Response continue to bring the small town back from the brink following the 2012 devastation wrought by “Superstorm Sandy.”

Now, he has been recognized for that service.

Diakon’s disaster preparedness and response coordinator in the Maryland-Delaware region, Huber recently received the Maryland Governor’s Citation, an award given in appreciation of the important difference an individual’s efforts have made in the lives of those in need. He was honored for his work and leadership on behalf of the Somerset County Long-Term Recovery Committee working in Crisfield.

Surge and winds from the October 2012 hurricane hit the area with devastating force, sending four feet of water from the Little Annessex



The Rev. Phil Huber, right, receives the Maryland governor’s citation, from Chas Eby, external outreach branch manager of the Maryland Emergency Management Agency.

River throughout town streets. About half of the houses in Crisfield were damaged. Huber worked alongside local community leaders, other faith-based disaster response organizations, and volunteers to rebuild and repair more than 200 houses.

“It’s gratifying to say the least,” says Huber of the award. “For me, it is always

an extreme compliment for colleagues, who are equally qualified to receive this award, to nominate me.” The award came as a surprise because he was unaware he had been recommended by his peers.

The Rev. Cindy Camp, Diakon’s director of disaster response, says the award would not surprise anyone familiar with Huber’s work. “His ability to rally and organize the Somerset County community, form strong partnerships with those who have wanted to help, and move the community toward healthy recovery and a more promising future have made our ministry there a model for long-term recovery.

“Pastor Huber is a real blessing to Diakon’s disaster response ministry—and to those of Crisfield.”

In his work Huber has represented Diakon, the national Lutheran Disaster Response, and the local Lutheran Partners in Disaster Response—or LPDR, a cooperative ministry among the Southeastern District, Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod; the Delaware-Maryland Synod of the ELCA; Diakon; and Lutheran Mission Society, an LCMS-affiliated organization.

Huber is confident that when his and his committee’s work ends in Crisfield in September, everything that could be done will have been done.

“We will have gotten the community to recovery by then,” he says. “All the people we know of will have been taken care of.”

Diakon serves as the national Lutheran Disaster Response affiliate in three synods of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America: Delaware-Maryland, Upper Susquehanna, and Lower Susquehanna. The work within the Lower Susquehanna Synod represents a newer responsibility and “we look forward to working with new partners as we expand our ministry into that synod,” says the Rev. Cindy G. Camp, director of Disaster Response Ministries for Diakon.

Scholarship helps fund engineering career



For four years while they were in foster care, Sam Marsh and his siblings benefited from regular visits with representatives of Diakon Adoption & Foster Care.

“Diakon was there to talk to us, to see how we would cope with foster care and then helped with placement,” Marsh remembers. “When our aunt and uncle adopted us, they also helped with the finalization process.”

Today, Diakon is helping with college.

Marsh, the oldest of seven children, is a junior mechanical engineering/mathematics major at the University of Arkansas and a multi-year recipient of scholarships from the Diakon Youth Scholarship Fund.

“I first learned about the scholarship in high school,” he says, adding that his brother and sister also are scholarship recipients. “My brother is majoring in criminal justice on a pre-law track and my sister is majoring in psychology.”

Marsh has fond memories of the Pottstown, Pennsylvania, area where he lived while in high school, but he is enjoying the slower pace of life in Fayetteville, Arkansas, where his family moved two years ago.

“I’m interning with a company where I design products for automobiles such as rims, running boards and step-pads,” he says. “The company wants it to turn into a full-time job when I graduate. I am praying about it now and waiting to see where it will go.”



Diakon offers academic scholarships to current and former participants of any Diakon Child, Family & Community Ministries program including youth services, adoption and foster care, and family life counseling services.

Funds disbursed are identified as provided through either the Charles Merritt Singer or Emma Myers Duttera memorial scholarships, combined in 2009 into the youth scholarship fund.

The Charles Merritt Singer Memorial Scholarship Fund was originally given as a bequest to the Tressler Lutheran Home for Children—whose heritage Diakon continues—by Vinnie B. Singer in memory of her late son, Charles Merritt Singer, to support scholarships to schools of higher learning for children served by the home. Similarly, Emma Myers Duttera created a charitable trust in her 1957 will, with income payable to the home to be used to assist students in “obtaining educational advantages.”

The current youth scholarship program thus maintains donors’ original charitable intent and Diakon’s nearly 150-year ministry to children and youths.

Couples recommit to wedding vows made decades ago

“WE SAY ‘I LOVE YOU’ EVERY DAY AND MEAN IT.”

With those words, Ruth Kemp revealed what she says is the secret to how she and her husband of 63 years, Harry, have stayed happily married that long.

Just before Valentine’s Day, the Kemps joined five other couples at The Lutheran Home at Topton in a vow renewal ceremony complete with flowers, decorations, cake and refreshments. The event celebrated a combined more than 350 years of marriage.

“It is really nice to recognize that they’ve stayed together so long,” the Rev. Dr. Colleen Kristula, Topton chaplain, says of the couples. “Especially when you get to this age and the ‘in sickness and health’ part of their vows kick in. You have to go through some harder times and to recommit to each other in the midst of that is really special.”

The ceremony began with the chaplain sharing a message of committed love and reminding the couples that their hearts and minds are joined more deeply now than when they first took their vows 50, 60 and even 70 years ago.

“You are two, yet you are one,” she said. “You can finish each other’s

sentences and anticipate the other’s needs. It is a privilege to be here today to see that there is a passion that continues in you.”

After a group statement of their intent to recommit, each couple made their way to a decorated pergola under which they repeated their marriage vows one by one. Like most of the couples, the ceremony not the first time The Rev. Carl and Muriel Schmoyer had renewed their vows. But for Schmoyer, whose wife lives in the Topton health care center while he resides in an independent living cottage, it was a way to show her how much he continues to care for her.

“We’ve had 55 wonderful years together, but the last seven have been hard for the both of us to be separated,” says Schmoyer, who serves as pastor for the campus congregation of Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church.

“I think when you love somebody and you have enjoyed life together, you constantly want to let each other know that you still love each other, as much as you did the first time you met.”



The Rev. Charles and Linda Eiss

Muriel and Carl Schmoyer, married 55 years

Ruth and Harry Kemp, married 63 years

Alice and Bill Ketterer, married 62 years

Dee and Basil Fabbioni, married 57 years

First two photos on left courtesy Lisa Mitchell of The Kutztown Area Patriot.

The Rev. Colleen Kristula, chaplain of The Lutheran Home at Topton, officiated.



Buffalo Valley resident remembers careers in firefighting, post office and Navy

ONE NIGHT YEARS AGO, Bob Stackhouse had just wrapped up a firefighting class when he found himself responding to a fully involved house fire. A woman on the second floor was trapped, he was told, so he climbed a ladder, managed to find the woman, and then tried to get her out the window.

Only she wouldn't budge.

"She was very afraid and just froze," Stackhouse, now a resident of Buffalo Valley Lutheran Village, Lewisburg, Pennsylvania, explains. "So I told her, 'You have to come out now, or you're not gonna make it.' Of course I was in danger, too. I'd been a firefighting instructor for many years and trained people by the thousands, but by the time I carried that lady down through all that smoke and got to the bottom of the ladder I was a nervous wreck."

He laughs at the memory.

"I never had to do something like that again—and I was glad."

For his actions, he received a commendation from the U.S. Post Office, his employer. But it wasn't his first award for firefighting, nor would it be his last.

"I became a volunteer firefighter because my father had been one," the 87-year-old Lewisburg native says. "He really inspired me, and I always felt that it was my calling."

As a young man, however, he had another task to attend to first.

"I enlisted in the Navy when I was 17 because I wanted to get into the war. I still had to finish high school, so after I graduated in 1945 I went off to boot camp, but then the war ended while I was home on leave. It didn't matter, though, because I still had to ship out from California with a huge flotilla that was being sent over to Japan in case we had to invade."

Stackhouse was assigned to the fleet oiler USS Ashtabula soon after, and for the rest of his two-year hitch did administrative and supply work, manned an anti-aircraft gun and relayed messages from the bridge to the engine room. He later joined the Navy Reserve and served for another seven years.

Back home in Lewisburg, Stackhouse began his 35-year career with the postal service, doing everything from handling and delivering the mail to driving a vehicle and staffing the counter. He also joined the William Cameron Engine Company, gradually rising through the ranks to become chief of the now-combination paid/volunteer fire company.

Perhaps more notably, he "took every class they offered" at the State Fire Academy in Lewistown and became an instructor, a part-time post that allowed him to teach firefighters all over Pennsylvania for more than three decades (editor's personal note: I once trained under Mr. Stackhouse).

"My wife, Angie, and I spent many weekends driving to other towns so I could teach," Stackhouse says. "It was a lot of fun."

Among his many accomplishments: Creating a fire brigade at the U.S. Penitentiary in Lewisburg that would "come into town and fight fires alongside us"; creating a program at Bucknell University that allowed students to serve with the local fire department; and fighting major flooding during Hurricane Agnes in 1972, "one of the worst experiences of my life."

In 2010, he received what he calls one of the greatest honors of his life when the Chief Robert E. Stackhouse Training Center in Lewisburg was named for him.

"I was very humbled by that," he says. "The fire service has always meant so much to me. It was quite stressful at times, but I enjoyed my career and had a lot of help and support."

These days, Stackhouse serves as curator of the Liddick-Stephens Fire Museum in Lewisburg, occasionally speaks at local schools about his experiences, and remains active with American Legion Post 182, where he serves as chaplain, and VFW Post 7715, where he's a charter member.

As for life at Buffalo Valley, he and his Angie couldn't be happier:

"We lived on 7th Street in Lewisburg for 47 years and then lived in Danville for nine, but we finally came here in 2003 and we just love it," he says. "It's quiet, the neighbors are wonderful, and we frequently go out to eat with the friends that we've made."

"The best thing I can tell people about Buffalo Valley is, 'Don't wait.' They should make the decision early so they can come here and enjoy themselves while they still can. For instance, I reached a point where I couldn't shovel snow anymore, but we still wanted to have our independence. The maintenance-free lifestyle that Buffalo Valley offers is very important to us, so this is the perfect place."



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Dresden fire-bombing prompts spiritual journey for resident



**TO LEARN
MORE ABOUT
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BAHMANN'S
AMAZING LIFE, OPEN!**