Kenneth Stroop of Radiology with Stella.

Pets of Vanderbilt 2011
My trendy grandparents

No landline? check.
Free range chickens? check.

BY WAYNE WOOD

My grandparents were the trendiest people I’ve ever known.

As I read about hot new trends in how to live, I’m amazed at how many of these my Dad’s parents, whom I called Mamaw and Papaw, practiced decades ago.

• Trend #1: Not having a landline phone.

“Cutting the cord” and not having a landline phone is so common now as to be almost assumed among twentysomethings. But Mamaw and Papaw were WAY ahead of this trend. They were so far ahead they didn’t even have a cord to cut. They just didn’t have a phone. They didn’t see the need for one, and were uninterested in having one.

Whenever it was absolutely necessary to get a message to them, this was accomplished by calling their next door neighbor, Mrs. Jones, and asking her to go yell over the hedgerow that somebody needed to talk to them on the phone.

Otherwise, they were perfectly content to live their lives talking to people who came by to see them in person. This was easy to do because they spent a pretty large amount of time on the front porch. Neighbors could stop by, pull up a chair or have a seat in the porch swing and visit for a few minutes. One of their sons, my Uncle Boyd, along with my Aunt Louise and their daughter, my cousin Vicki, lived down the block. People were in and out of the house all the time. It was a real social network. Trendy!

• Trend #2: Living car-free.

Neither Mamaw nor Papaw drove a car. By the time I was growing up, Papaw was retired, but when he was still working his employer was the Southern Railroad and his...continued on page 12

Pets of Vanderbilt 2011

Every year we ask for your favorite pictures of your dogs, cats and other assorted beasts. This year we had more than 1,000 pictures, so the selecting was very hard.

Go to the House Organ website at http://www.mc.vanderbilt.edu/houseorgan/ to vote for your favorites in the Dog, Cat, and Friends categories, and also see a lot more photos of pets that we didn’t have room for in the print edition.

Post-Transplant baby a “Miracle” to his Mother

Kerrie Upchurch, who got a kidney transplant in her mid-20s, was more upset about the idea that she might not be able to become a mother than she was about the transplant. But, VUMC’s Heidi Schaefer, M.D., says, people who have had transplants can still become mothers. For proof, meet Kerrie Upchurch’s son, Gavin.

Writing Contest, 2011: Call for Entries

Are you a poet or writer walking around disguised as a regular person? Enter the House Organ Writing Contest and come one day next summer you can be forwarding the link to your story or poem around to all your envious friends.

House Organ is the magazine for the staff, faculty, volunteers, and students of Vanderbilt University Medical Center. It is published monthly, with a combined December/January issue, by the Office of News and Public Affairs of VMC. News stories, ideas, and suggestions are welcome, and should be sent to House Organ, CCC-3312 Medical Center North, Nashville, Tenn., 37232-2390. E-mail: Wayne.Wood@Vanderbilt.Edu.

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More than 1,000 pictures were submitted by Vanderbilt staff and faculty for House Organ’s annual Pets of Vanderbilt feature. Fifteen solo dogs, 15 solo cats, and 15 group or duo shots are published in the following pages.

Many, many more pictures, and a few links to YouTube videos, are featured on the House Organ website, www.mc.vanderbilt.edu/houseorgan. That is where you will also find the 2011 pet poll, which allows readers to vote for their favorites, one vote per category. The categories and pets in the poll are the same as those in the print version—15 dogs, 15 cats, and 15 groups or pairs.

Unfortunately, we have to also say this: those attempting to circumvent the voting process by automatic votes or other means will be disqualified.

Voting begins at 10 a.m. on Friday, Feb. 4, and concludes at 10 a.m. on Thursday, Feb. 17. Top vote getters in each category will be announced on the House Organ site, and will also be featured in the March 2011 issue.

Those who missed the deadline for this year’s pet contest should look for the call for entries in the September 2011 issue of House Organ.
VOTE for your favorite DOG

Stéphane A. Braün, Plastic Surgery. "Rascal is a Goldendoodle. He is 3.5 months old."

Vonda Overstreet, Cancer Biology. Lil Angel.

Ashley N. Staniewski, Surgical Intensive Care Unit. Otis.

Jennifer Fosnot, Transplant Center. Turner.

Corey Slovis, Emergency Medicine. "Holle is 4 months old, and is studying to become bilingual in English and German."

Terry B. Walker, School of Nursing. "This is my dachshund Dixie in one her favorite poses. Dixie is 16 years old and blind."

Bridget Swindell, Vanderbilt Coordinating Center. Bean.

Wendy Ashe, NICU. Duke, an 18-month-old European doberman.
Linda Harris, Graduate School. Preston.

Debbie Trostel, Vanderbilt Heart and Vascular Institute. Buster, a white miniature dachshund.

Brenda W. White, Cardiovascular Medicine. Daisy.

Vote online at
www.mc.vanderbilt.edu/houseorgan
VOTE for your favorite CAT

ReAnna Whitten, Bone and Joint Surgery Center. “Old Tom is a scrapper, but he has become quite fond of cuddling up.”

Susan Morris, Microbiology. Eddie.

Amy Nunnally, Surgical Research. Malcolm.

Melissa Hade, VMG Training and Organizational Development. “Sherbert is extremely affectionate and purrs really loud.”

Donna Vallance, Radiation Oncology. “Divi is a Scottish fold, and this picture captures the sweet nature of the breed and especially her.”

Melanie Fleming, VHRPP (IRB) Rusty.

Elizabeth Campos Pearce, Otolaryngology. Tahoe.
Vote online at www.mc.vanderbilt.edu/houseorgan
VOTE DUO
for your favorite

Scott Dupree, Dermatology. Ayden with Rudy the ball python.


Louise Warren, 11 North Myelosuppression. Iroha, 2, with Saku.

Janet L. Hardison, Cardiothoracic Anesthesia. Porter with his buddy Millie.

Carlene Greer, Vanderbilt Heart and Vascular Institute. Lorelai, my granddaughter, with Sya.

Terrell Smith, Patient and Family Centered Care. Caleb and Bella.

Lisa Gauld Southall, Internal Medicine at One Hundred Oaks. Charles and Dixie.
Khrisitina S. Prince, Hematology/Oncology.

Emily and Whiskers.

Joan T. Garrett, Hematology/Oncology.

“Oliver hanging out with beagle Jake.”

Mende Pattee, Grants and Contracts Management.

“Lana blowing bubbles with Chesney Pearl, our 11-year-old Jack Russell terrier.”

Khristina S. Prince, Hematology/Oncology. Emily and Whiskers.

Vote online at www.mc.vanderbilt.edu/houseorgan

January 2011
Traditionally, women who have undergone transplants are not encouraged to have children because of the associated risks to the mother and baby during the pregnancy. But Heidi Schaefer, M.D., a Vanderbilt nephrologist, said it is time to rethink the possibility of childbirth after transplant.

“Many times women who want to get pregnant post transplant are told it is too risky,” said Schaefer, assistant professor of Medicine. “I think it is important to recognize that in the right situation, pregnancy can be successful and women should not be discouraged from wanting to have a family post transplant.

“As long as my patient is in general good health with stable kidney function, I support their desire to become pregnant,” continued Schaefer. “I make her aware that we may need to adjust her anti-rejection medications prior to conception and that once pregnant, she will require close follow up with a team of doctors including a high-risk obstetrician. But more often than not, outcomes are good for both mother and baby.”

Hearing that information was a breath of fresh air to Kerrie Upchurch, 28. Diagnosed with systemic lupus at age 14, Upchurch’s condition led to end-stage kidney failure due to lupus nephritis. She knew she would need a kidney transplant someday. What she was uncertain of was her chances to become a mother.

“It wasn’t until right before I was getting married that my doctor at the time told me that I may not be able to have children and that he thought it would be a good idea to discuss that with my fiancé,” said Upchurch. “After I got married, I was getting closer and closer to needing a transplant. My needing a transplant didn’t bother me as much as the prospect of not having children.

“I had it in my mind that there was a big chance I would not be able to have children,” she said. “It was really hard hearing that, so I felt so much better after being told that there actually was a chance, that it was a possibility.”
Fertility help needed
Upchurch received her new kidney from her younger sister, Jennifer Meeks, on Feb. 19, 2008. After she recovered, she began researching her options for pregnancy.

Medications were the biggest concern and as she began the road to pregnancy, doctors closely monitored her and made adjustments to her required medications. It wasn’t an easy process, she recalled. Initially she had trouble getting pregnant and was referred to a fertility specialist.

“We decided that we would at least try the fertility route at least once and see what happened. I was really nervous about it because I had so many health problems and I wasn’t getting pregnant on my own. I wondered if it was a sign that I didn’t need to try this.

“But three months after going to the fertility clinic, I was pregnant,” she said.

Upchurch is among a growing number of women who have chosen to pursue pregnancy after undergoing a life-saving transplant.

A national transplantation registry has been created to document the cases. There have been more than 1,300 successful pregnancies post-kidney transplant since the registry was started in 1991.

“What more could you ask for?”
Upchurch is Schaefer’s third patient to get pregnant after transplant, and all have done well.

The major risks for mothers during pregnancy include hypertension, infections and risk of preeclampsia, which is characterized by high blood pressure proteinuria (protein in the urine), and worsening kidney function. Schaefer said the risk of rejection of the transplanted kidney, if monitored closely and shows stable function, is very low. Prematurity and low birthweight are the two main risks to the newborn, she added.

Mothers are cautioned against breast-feeding because of the medications they are required to take post transplant, but Schaefer said that doesn’t seem to be a big issue. All of her patients who went on to give birth are having the “normal mom experience” and moving forward in their lives.

Upchurch is no exception.

Her son Gavin was born June 3, 2010, at 37 weeks. He weighed 4 pounds and 9 ounces and was 18 inches long.

“What more could you ask for?” said Upchurch. “I think of him as a miracle baby. I have been through so much. And it wasn’t just me and Keith [her husband] who made this happen. It was a team of people. Without my sister, he would not be here. Without the doctors he would not be here. It took all of us. “And he is just so wonderful.”

“I always had hope that I would someday have a family,” said Upchurch. “In the back of my mind, I always thought that anything was possible. And now, see, anything is possible.”

(below) Kerri Upchurch holds her son Gavin, who was born after she received a kidney transplant from her sister Jennifer Meeks, who is expecting as well. Heidi Schaefer, M.D., is all smiles.

(below)
workplace was about three miles from home. For decades he walked to and from work.

They would get a ride to the store or bank or wherever else they needed to go with somebody else, or one of them would walk to a neighborhood grocery (not a convenience store, a real grocery, just small and all locally owned) a few blocks away. My Dad even remembers that when he was growing up it was common to just have groceries delivered, so in those days there was no real need to have a car to get supplies.

My grandparents weren’t anti-car; they would ride with other people on Sunday drives to visit relatives in the country, or even on vacations. They just never felt the need to drive, and they lived perfectly fulfilled lives anyway. Imagine.

• Trend #3: Having a smaller carbon footprint.
Mamaw and Papaw had a fairly small house, and it was not air conditioned. This meant that in summer it could get pretty hot inside, even with the window fan in the bedroom humming. The only even remotely comfortable place on a hot summer day was the porch, and sometimes even that was no relief.

But this meant that for most of the year, their carbon footprint was only a small fraction of what most of ours is now, with our central air units cranking away. Don’t get me wrong, I like being comfortable. But if, as most experts say, in the future we’re going to have to figure out ways to reduce our carbon footprints, Mamaw and Papaw were there, way ahead of us.

• Trend #4: Eating eggs from free range chickens. And ducks.
Although they lived in town, in the West Haven section of Knoxville, Papaw enjoyed keeping bantam chickens. He called them his babies. He would call out to them and they would flock around him and he would throw them dried corn kernels to eat. There were other varieties of chickens and even ducks roaming the premises (they had a big yard). It was in their yard that I was first pecked by a chicken. It was in their kitchen that I first tasted duck eggs. I can’t recall that I’ve ever particularly had a desire for duck eggs since.

Local dogs, such as my Uncle Boyd’s mutt Petey and the neighbor’s basset hound Snuffy, did not bother the chickens and ducks. They wouldn’t dare.

Now, of course, it is a major trend for people to buy local eggs from free range chickens. But there, decades ago, were Mamaw and Papaw, trendsetters.

I’ll bet there are all kinds of hard-core enviro-hipsters who would endlessly brag to their friends about living this kind of sustainable life, with a small carbon footprint and free range chickens.

Mamaw and Papaw did not brag about living this way. They pretty much just viewed this as daily life, and wouldn’t have known what you were talking about if you talked about a carbon footprint or a sustainable lifestyle. I don’t even think they ever would have thought they had a “lifestyle.”

The truth is, to our eyes, and probably to them, the way they lived was sometimes hard and sometimes inconvenient. But it was, also in many ways, a rich and rewarding life. They may not have had a lifestyle, but they had a life.

And, if you’ll allow their proud grandson to say so, style.

Call for Entries: House Organ Writing Contest

27th Annual House Organ Writing Contest Deadline May 9

For the 27th year, the July House Organ will be the Summer Reading Issue, filled with the winners of the House Organ Writing Contest—poems, short stories and nonfiction pieces contributed by Vanderbilt staff, faculty and students.

Every year demonstrates that Vanderbilt has a lot of people with literary talent walking around disguised as regular people, and the House Organ Writing Contest is a chance to show everybody what you can do.

Three categories
There are three categories: poetry, fiction and nonfiction.

There are no length restrictions in the poetry category.

The fiction category is limited to 4,000 words.

The nonfiction category, which encompasses journalistic writing, memoirs, feature stories, historical pieces, profiles of interesting people, or anything else that’s true, also has a 4,000-word limit.

Please indicate the category of your entry; sometimes it’s a little hard for the judges to figure out what is fiction and what is nonfiction.

All Vanderbilt staff and faculty, except those who work in News and Communications, are eligible. Medical, nursing and graduate students are also eligible.

Submissions are limited to three per category. Each entry must be submitted online as an attachment in Microsoft Word (or other compatible format), and have the author’s name, place of employment or school, and a phone number at the top of the first page. Entries may be sent to wayne.wood@vanderbilt.edu. Please put “writing contest entry” in the subject line.

Entries may be edited for space, clarity or style before publication.

Deadline for entry is Monday, May 9. Please push the send button before midnight on that day.

The winners will be published in House Organ. In past years, it has also been possible to publish some honorable mentions, either in the print edition or online.

Address any questions to the editor, Wayne Wood, at 322-4747, or at the e-mail address above.

Checklist for entries

Author information: Name, department or school, address and phone number on first page.

Entry information: Category—fiction, nonfiction or poetry. Check to be sure your work is within the length requirement.

Entries must be sent as an attachment in Microsoft Word (or other compatible format).

Deadline is May 9.