

Opposites Attract at Vista del Monte

Friends Ed and Gary Find Much in Common Despite Differences

After first meeting residents Ed Grat and Gary Janka, you may not think the two would have much in common. Ed loves the theatre and Gary prefers quiet meditation. Gary is a Buddhist minister and Ed was raised Catholic. Gary has lived at Vista del Monte for a little over a year as opposed to Ed's 13 years at Vista.



But a funny thing happened when the two met at Vista after Gary moved in – they became fast friends and have not only enjoyed embracing each other's differences but have come to realize they have much in common.

Ed served in the Air Force during the Cold War with the Soviet Union in the 1950s and Gary was a Marine a few years later. While strolling Vista's beautiful grounds together, they discovered their shared love of the flora. "We point things out to each other all of the time," Ed said. "If one of us does not know the name of a particular tree or plant, the other one more than likely will."

Their biggest discovery was their mutual love of history. Ed introduced Gary to the Ken Burns PBS documentary, *The Roosevelts: An Intimate History*. They often watched the seven-part miniseries together. "I can count on a call from Ed anytime there is an interesting show about history on TV," Gary said.

Although raised Catholic, Ed has always been interested in world religions – the perfect subject to discuss with Gary who has a bachelor's degree in sociology and a Ph.D. in human and organizational behavior. Of course, Ed and Gary do not do everything together. Gary attends a thrice-weekly meditation Zoom call with interested residents that Ed has yet to join. He would rather meet virtually with his play reading group. Gary isn't much into plays but looks forward to watching and discussing classic movies with Ed, like his favorite, *Casablanca*.

"Gary is just an easy person to talk to," Ed said. "It's as simple as that."

"I wanted to get to know Ed better when I found out he was a navigator on a B-36 bomber. You don't meet many people with that experience anymore," Gary said with a laugh.

Because of the pandemic, the friends don't visit much face-to-face right now but you will see them waving to each other across campus, sharing a laugh or embroiled in a deep conversation about history, all while maintaining a safe distance and wearing masks. "The pandemic may have slowed us down a bit but it has not affected or infected our friendship," Ed said.