

Equipment package included w/ ASB&F Teen Enrollment or Zhen Ren Chuan Junior Enrollment (\$140 value)

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Latest Notices

COVID-19 Covid-19 cases jump 229 since Dec. 31, 626 since Dec. 1; deaths rise 2

TOWN MEETING Warrant for 2021 annual Town Meeting open until Jan. 29

Family Film Festival 18th Belmont World Family Film Festival through Sunday

ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS Zoning board Jan. 12: Thorndike Place traffic study heard

Wright-Locke Wright-Locke raises \$3.5M for all-seasons barn

Old Schwamb Mill: Still-life photos underway

Collaborative founded by residents to present virtual creations; tickets on sale

More

Your Businesses

Chamber update: New guidance on Paycheck Protection Program

Town program aims to help businesses gripped by effects of pandemic

Jewelry pop-up held at Roasted Granola

Resident recognized among top female attorneys

Heights retail block refinanced for \$12.28M

Contact the editor
Letters, tips, corrections? Email preferred (Facebook and Facebook Messenger are not): sprague.bob@gmail.com or call 781-641-4490.

Your Arts



DEADLINE TODAY to register for ACA members' show
This is a late-arriving call for artists for the Arlington Center for the Arts' members show, "You..."



Aardvark 'Souls' CD rated among tops for large jazz ensembles
Aardvark Jazz Orchestra, with Mark Harvey of Arlington, first row center. The New York City Jazz...

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News: Biden inaugurated, targets Trump's legacy with first-day executive actions

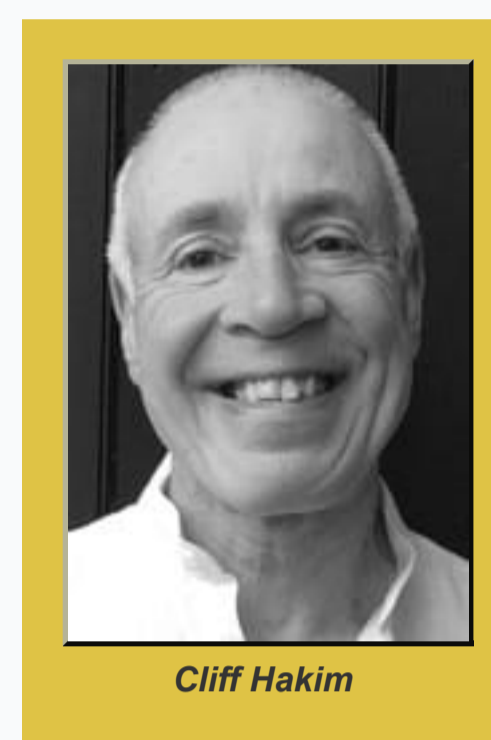
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Advertise: 113+ displays | December traffic | Donate

January 20, 2021 15:08:22

STORIES UNSET IN STONE: Guiding people in life and memory

Published: 21 November 2020 | Written by Marjorie Howard | Hits: 1128



Cliff Hakim

Cliff Hakim motions to a forklift driver who is angling a piece of pink granite onto two wide uprights already in the ground. It is a delicate operation and takes some gentle coaching from Hakim as well as careful maneuvers from the driver. Slowly, the granite is set in place. The result is a memorial stone bench that is as much sculpture as it is a place to rest.

INSIDE ARLINGTON:
Among our many-faceted residents

Hakim, 69, has been guiding people throughout his career, working first with those having learning disabilities and later with those struggling to find their vocation. Now he is an artisan making objects out of stone, sometimes as a memorial, such as the bench installed on the Minuteman Bikeway to remember Cary Coovert, who died in an accident there in 2019.

What connects these seemingly disparate careers is Hakim's willingness to listen and his belief that we all have a story to tell.

"I built my career," says the Arlington resident, "on listening to people's stories, whether they were in the form of counseling and consulting about their career or about what kind of memorial they wanted to represent their loved one. It boils down to listening and interpreting their stories."

'People need to take charge'

As a special-education teacher, Hakim lived and worked in Oakland, Calif., where he helped Vietnam veterans and people with learning disabilities, aiming to get them back into the workforce. Raised in Shrewsbury, he eventually decided he wanted to come back to Massachusetts and realized he could continue to help people find work and became a consultant and writer in the world of business. He advised and counseled people searching for jobs, ultimately coming to the conclusion that people need to take charge of their work life in ways they may not have realized.

"I really believed, and this was unpopular at the time, that you would lose your job no matter what, either because companies were getting rid of people or because you were getting tired of your work and had to remake yourself," he said.

His work and thinking led him to write several books about careers and unemployment. His first, in 1995, was *When You Lose Your Job: Laid off, Fired, Early Retired, Relocated, Demoted, Unchallenged*. Later, he wrote, *We Are All Self-Employed*.

He believes that whether you work for yourself or for someone else, you are your own boss. In an article he wrote for the First Parish of Arlington, Unitarian Universalist, newsletter, he described watching a young man at a supermarket making a display of yogurt, carefully placing each container so that the label was facing front, creating an orderly and eye-catching display.

To Hakim, the man brought meaning to his job by taking responsibility for his work. He had, wrote Hakim, "the attributes of what I call a 'self-employed attitude.'" To Hakim, this meant that in a sense he was running his own business within a business. "We are," said Hakim, "responsible for our own employment and are, in a sense, self-employed."

'I was always an artisan'

Hakim himself continues to alter his career, taking the responsibility to find what he feels is meaningful and useful. "I was always an artisan," he said. "I was always someone who asked creative questions, always someone who cared about people's spirits and their souls. I loved stone all my life and really wanted to make the transition to working more with material objects. One day I asked myself, 'What do I really love in that world,' and it was stone."

He grew up in an artistic family: His mother was a part-time sculptor, painter and writer, and his father was a wood craftsman. "I always had a creative streak in me, and it wasn't until I got older that I summoned the courage to harness the frustrated part of me, which was to express myself in the arts."

Hakim began building benches and tables in his backyards. He built a stone wall out of reclaimed granite from the foundation of a farmhouse. He began selling artifacts, and then people asked him whether he could fashion a memorial out of stone that was more creative than celebratory.

Again, he began listening to stories, this time about the loved ones who were lost: "I interpreted their lives in stone in a simple way; it became clear to me that's what people really wanted."

Started publishing company

Now he has a new venture. He has started his own publishing company, WIMS (Walk In My Shoes), and its first book will be one he is writing and illustrating. The book, he says, focuses on kindness and shows a path to empathy and compassion. He interviewed 35 people and in his book tells how they cared for others and how others cared for them.

Among the stories he tells is that of the son of an Israeli general whose niece was killed by Palestinians but who became an activist supporting Palestinians after listening and understanding their plight. Another is of a young man who lost his mother to cancer and was supported by others, teaching him to reach out to others in turn.

"The notion of the book is that by being kind to one another, we can change the planet. Empathy is understanding of another and compassion is helping another."

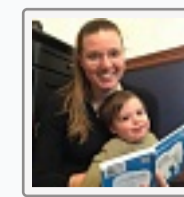
And he still listens to stories. When he was asked to design the stone bench on the Minuteman Bikeway, it was important to him to find out about the person who was being remembered. Again, he listened to stories. The result, both a bench and a piece of sculpture, represents a meaningful life well lived.



Sept. 9, 2020: Local bicyclist honored with Minuteman Bikeway memorial

This news feature was published Tuesday, Nov. 10, 2020. The writer is Marjorie Howard, YourArlington co-publisher.

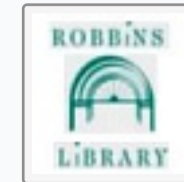
Your Libraries



Robbins Library: This week's events
UPDATED, Jan. 19: Looking for something fun to do with...



Arlington Reads Together selection available
'All Black Kids' author coming in March In March, Robbins...



January programs for children, teens, families
Holiday closings The library is closed on Jan. 18 in...

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Your People



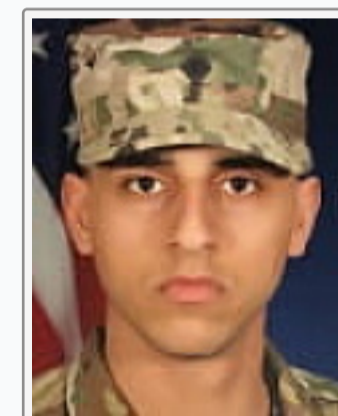
Norine T. Casey, 92: Operated Bartlett School
Norine T. Casey In the new year, let's look back at a notable Arlington resident whose passing...



Eldest resident spurs recognition, chuckles
Diamond Chamallas The complexities of Town Meeting, virtual or not, have fallen silent as a special...



What are the apples of Adam's eye?
Adam Auster Their names are like poetry: Blushing Golden, Celestia, Flower of Kent, Scarlet...



Procession held for AHS grad who died in Army copter crash
NBC 10: Images of Arlington's salute I More photos >>
UPDATED, Nov. 20: An Army officer who in 2010...



Town entrepreneur gives back to veterans' children
Larry Bohn \$1M gift endows fund by UMass grad Arlington entrepreneur Larry Bohn has established an...



Resident receives top faculty award from MGH institute
Vallila Rohter Arlington resident Dr. Sofia Vallila Rohter has received the highest faculty honor...

Town Election



Town election '21: Potential candidates for housing, assessor



Helmut, in first Select Board run, eyes change via listening



Susse calls housing her focus in Select Board run

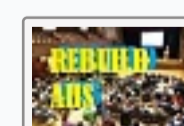


Curro declines to seek reelection to Select Board

Your Schools



School Committee chat set for Saturday



Sitework for construction of new AHS: Through week of Jan. 18



NEW SUPER: Homan's contract, transition working with Bodie approved

Your Fund-raisers



NEAT: Bright spot for a pandemic Thanksgiving



Donate to AYCC's '50K for 50 Years' fund-raiser