

(fscs)

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### **PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE**

Bonjour tout le monde,

November marks the traditional Annual Meeting of FSCA when members elect the Board of Directors for the next two-year term. This year, because of continuing concerns about large in-person gatherings, our membership meeting will be conducted on Zoom on Thursday, November 18, at 6:00 p.m. All current FSCA members are invited to tune in and vote to elect the new Board of Directors for 2022-2023. Check your email for a separate mailing including details of the election, info for joining the Zoom meeting, and procedure for nominations "from the floor."

As required, the Nominating Committee (Wilbur Brown, Cathy Herndon, and Mandy Carr, Chair) has submitted its proposed slate to the Board, which has approved their nominees as follows: President - Craig Vasey; 1st VP - Jack East; 2nd VP - Nancie Lightner; Secretary - Moriah Webster; Treasurer - Wilbur Brown; Public Relations - Mandy Carr; 5 Directors - Thomas Baer, Bob Bugno, Carol Butler, Brooke Di Lauro, and Cathy Herndon. Ex-Officio: Judy Hansen - Immediate Past President; Bill Beck - Anniversary Advisor.

The usual in-person "social" meeting, always a fun affair with French food and a pertinent program, will be postponed until after the New Year, perhaps as a Mardi Gras celebration.

In addition, all Sister City members are encouraged to attend an interesting program on Thursday, November 4th, sponsored by the Fredericksburg Area Museum and featuring all five Sister City groups in town. Bill Beck will be the panelist representing our French organization. An email announcement for this program is also being sent to current members.

Please mark your calendars for November 18th. We hope to see you at the Zoom meeting!

*Judy Hansen, President*

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## A TRIBUTE TO RALPH MEINA, JR. 1927-2021

on the following pages

It has been a while since we had a visit from Ralph. Many of you never met him. But, people like Mayor Lawrence Davies, Phyllis Lamont, Buddy Chandler (our first President) and Tom Mann remember him well – especially in 1979 when, on July 3-14, he came to Fredericksburg with the Mayor of Fréjus, France, M. Francois Leotard and his wife, and visited with us. Mayor Leotard was also a member of the French National Assembly at that time. Later he became the Minister of Defense for France. Their visit came about through suggestion of the U. S. Consul General at Marseilles, Ralph Meima, Jr., of whose district includes most of the Mediterranean coast of France.



We soon learned that Fréjus was founded in 49 B.C. by Julius Caesar, and under Caesar Augustus became the chief Roman naval base of the western Mediterranean. Located near Cannes, its population swells from 30,000 in winter to 150,000 or more in the summer because of its magnificent beaches. The remaining evidences there of the power and grandeur of the Roman Empire at its peak are said to be more varied than those of any town in France.

After visiting the Fredericksburg area and meeting with the Mayor and City Council, Mayor Leotard, who was looking for an American city as a Sister City for Fréjus, was pleased with what he saw and suggested a sister city relationship for his city and ours. We had so many things in common – small town on a body of water (the Mediterranean for Fréjus, the Rappahannock for our town) – popular places for tourism – warm and friendly people.

In 1980 Ralph wrote about our “French Connection” and he concluded his documentation by writing, “In the future this interesting and rewarding relationship is sure to grow and flourish.”

And the rest is history –

We have had 42 years packed with extraordinary events we would have missed had it not been for Ralph’s initiative. Many lifelong bonds have been made between hundreds of students and adults; artists exchanges (Johnny Johnson, Retha & Stephen Gambaro, Cathy Herndon and many others from Fredericksburg – Michel Kourline and Theirry

Whinum from Fréjus); UMW faculty visits; pleasure trips. And so much more.

Ralph passed away peacefully on July 7, 2021 in Annapolis, Maryland. He was the son of Ralph Sr. and Grace Meima, in Chicago. His parents also lived in Fredericksburg for a time. He lived in the greater Washington, DC area before moving to Annapolis and the Eastern Shore. He served as a Foreign Service Officer in Germany and France and, on retirement, founded several small businesses. He is survived by former wife, Barbara; children, Martha Ricklin (Rand), Ralph Meima III (Michelle), and Steven Meima (Rachael) and step-children, David Frazier (Melanie) and Christopher Frazier (Jennifer), and his loving wife, Elizabeth (Barrie) Meima. A memorial service will be held at Heron Point at a later date. For full obituary information, please visit [www.fhnfuneralhome.com](http://www.fhnfuneralhome.com)

Photos on the following pages



1980 -Signing the documents making it official WE ARE SISTER CITIES



Mayor Leotard with Lydie Mann ,FSCA President, Buddy Chandler and others celebrate the occasion



1983 Mayor Leotard with Johnny Johnson at his artist exhibition in Fréjus



Ralph smiles in the background at one of our celebrations with Charlie Sieracki & Fielding Lewis

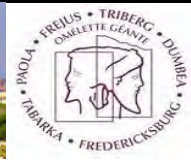


1994 – Fréjus - Minister of Defense Leotard presents Awards to WWII Veterans Harry Porter & Garnett Strother as A. C. And Phyllis Whitley observe

In 1980 Mr. Meima prepared a document about our “French Connections”. This is something you will find very interesting. - We have copied it, in his own words, and reprinted at the end of this issue. Grab a bottle of great French wine and enjoy his story.

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## **NEWS FROM FRÉJUS**



**Maryse Rigoulot**  
Director of Fredericksburg Section

### **Fréjus in the fall**

For our friends of Fredericksburg, a few photos which will remind them of well-known places or landscapes ...

The 2021 edition of the Air Festival at the Base Nature was a tremendous success with the biggest visitor rate ever ! Probably because of the need for recreation and gathering without our “health pass” – this being the case here.

More on next page



Then the city and the countryside where it is so pleasant to walk in the sunny but mild weather of the season.



More photos on the next page



**Fréjus is looking forward to your visit whenever you decide to come !**

Meanwhile, Philippe and I wish everybody a very happy Thanksgiving with family and friends



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## **FAVORITE HAPPY MEMORIES**



Our “Happy memories” series continues as we patiently wait for the pandemic to be behind us. Merci mille fois - to our friends who shared memories with us in this issue as well as our previous guest presenters . If you would like to provide something for our future newsletters – email me at [acpcw1@gmail.com](mailto:acpcw1@gmail.com) . I would love to have more volunteers. Each “Memory” is unique and interesting. I am receiving many compliments on this project that has helped get is through these many months of

forced inactivity. Phyllis – your newsletter editor.

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## **PAULA SUGGS**

As a chaperone for the Fredericksburg Sister City Student Group in 1989 I was told by a shop owner at a 'Parfumerie' in Frejus "our smell will make us irresistible". Thirty two year later I still smell that irresistible scent.

Mrs. Margaret Rose, our sons' high school French teacher recommended we join the Sister City Group; that was in 1988. Since then I have participated as a parent, a chaperone, a secretary, and a president. Not only have we received a wonderful education by our involvement but have made lasting memories and friendships. The exchanges not only included students but artists, basketball players, confreries of the Giant Omelette, dancers, singers, military veterans, and members of the Masonic Lodge.

On our trip in 1989 we were accompanied by Fredericksburg's Mayor Lawrence Davies.

Continued next page

The Sister City Charter was resigned, two Fredericksburg artists had an art exhibit and we celebrated the opening of the Port of Frejus.



In 2000 our 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary was celebrated in Fredericksburg with a 'Giant Omelette'. Each year the formal celebrations seemed more elaborate than the previous year.

Aside from the formality of many of the exchanges the students have always created the best memories for me.



Student group arriving in Fréjus from Paris



Students Nicholas Duval and Michael Suggs



Paula and Nicholas Duval

I remember..... hiking to an ancient volcano at Roquebrune, crawling with the students through crevices and tunnels I wouldn't have dared consider at home;



Sitting in a broken lawn chair at the ruins of the castle in Grimaud pretending to rule the kingdom; Sun bathing on the beach at St. Raphael with a group of American girls who just could not 'sunbath' as the French; A car ride with Phyllis and AC Whitley, Charlie Sieracki and Harry Porter to find the Pigeon Museum; Boat trips to St. Tropez ; Drives along the Mediterranean Coast to Cannes that were as beautiful as all of our postcards; as well as showing the French students how to properly eat an 'Oreo' cookie. However, each year one thing was confirmed by every participating teenager, teens dance to music in any language.

I thank the Sister Cities Association for the years of memories and friends and that "irresistible smell."

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### MARVIN BOLINGER

Cathy and I were pleased to learn that Fredericksburg had a Sister City relationship as we relocated to Fredericksburg in 1993. Both Cathy and I were active participants in Tennessee with our Japanese Sister City prior to relocating to Fredericksburg. On every opportunity in both cities, we were delighted to host families from other cultures and felt that our son and daughter and indeed our entire family gained so much from these experiences. (continued on the next page)

I have so many fond memories of our visits to Fréjus. One that immediately comes

to mind involves Phyllis and A. C. Whitley. One afternoon we received a call from them asking if we would like to join them for a visit to a distant city to experience the Tour De France. The bicyclists were in the middle of what they called the Mountain phase of the race before they headed to Paris. Our immediate answer was yes. So early the next morning, off we set for our long drive to the mountains of France to see the bicyclists in action. Little did I know the mountain village we were visiting was so far away, but the drive allowed us to see parts of France that we had not seen before. The beautiful mountain peaks and the deep gorges of this part of France were clearly in view as AC negotiated the hair pin curves.



Upon arrival, we learned the racers were scheduled to finish that day's race in that village, so that gave us ample opportunity to enjoy the village before the racers arrived. The village was decorated for a festival with the atmosphere much like that of a carnival —lots of activities, music, food, and drink. We enjoyed lunch and the afternoon activities until a signal was given the racers are nearby. So, the spectators lined the streets and tons of cars and trucks hauling bicycles and parts as well as vehicles advertising the sponsors made their way by all the spectators. Almost immediately following the vehicles, the announcement is made the bicyclists have arrived. In a flash they were there and then were gone. We barely had time to spot Lance Armstrong as he flew by.







We made our way back to the car and headed back to Frejus. AC drove through an area that reminded us of the area around the Grand Canyon in the USA. Finally, we spotted a roadside restaurant, so we decided to have dinner. It was there we learned of and celebrated A. C.'s birthday. Outstanding restaurant with great food and an even better evening with friends. By the time, we arrived back in Frejus, it was almost time to begin another beautiful day in our sister city.

On another trip to our sister city in 1997, Cathy and I travelled via British Airways. Arriving in London, we learned the employees of the airline had gone on strike. No big deal. We changed planes at Heathrow and were on our way to Nice. Arriving in Nice, we immediately learned we were missing something important--my luggage. For the next several days, I had no luggage, so I was wearing what I had worn on the flight over. Each evening, we would wash what we could in the hotel room at night, get up the next morning and use the hair dryer to try to finish drying the clothes. A couple times we decided to go shopping, but the Airline employees kept promising luggage would arrive that day. After buying a couple shirts and some under clothes, we finally are spending our last day in Fréjus. On that last evening before our next morning departure, the luggage arrived. I left Fréjus with my luggage still packed generally as it had been a week before in Fredericksburg.

Another fun and memorable trip.

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### Upcoming online country / region roundtables for your

participation November 15 2:00 pm EST France Round Table

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89284360156?pwd=QkM1SjQzUS91SWtIdnJ2eGE2eHJWQT09> Meeting ID: 892 8436 0156. PW: 003187Country Rep: [mary@palko.me](mailto:mary@palko.me)

Questions: contact: Frederick Blanton, Virginia State Representative: 314-267-2829

email: [fredbsta@gmail.com](mailto:fredbsta@gmail.com)

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And now – about our “French Connections” by Ralph Meima. So - **Grab your glass and a bottle of great French wine and enjoy this article.**

THE VERY SPECIAL PRESENTATION FROM RALPH MEIMA

# THE FRENCH CONNECTION

with

FREDERICKSBURG

By Ralph C. Meima © 1980

Retyped May 9, 2005

From early Colonial times up to the very present Fredericksburg has enjoyed many deep and significant associations with France and the French. These associations originated in both directions. Thus, the French Huguenot émigrés Maury and Marye who came early in the Eighteenth Century, made important contributions, not only to Fredericksburg, but to our nation as well; the great La Fayette came here thrice. Two years ago a pleasant young French Mayor (also a member of the National Assembly in Paris) was here two days, and at about the same time a distinguished French literary scholar, now at Cambridge University, England, established part-time residence in our midst. Conversely, our Nineteenth Century fellow-citizen, James Monroe, fourth President, lived for years in France; a local National Guard artillery unit having many men from the immediate area went to the aid of France in 1918; and large numbers of our people have gone to French universities; many others have traveled there.

It is very fitting and proper, therefore, that right now a Sister City relationship is in the course of being established between Fredericksburg and the ancient city of Fréjus on the French Riviera, founded by Julius Caesar in 49 B.C. A private corporation, endorsed by the City Council and affiliated with Sister Cities International of Washington, D.C. has been set up in order to give this relationship purpose and meaning, and to oversee its operations on a permanent basis.

The Maury Family, French Huguenots, were among the first comers to this part of the Colony of Virginia, when it was little more than a vast wilderness full of wild animals and howling Indians. The Rev. James Maury arrived as an infant in the late Seventeenth Century in nearby Louisa county which then extended westward. As a

young clergyman he. founded a classical school where one of the greatest Americans of all, ~ Thomas Jefferson, as a boy went to study Latin and Greek [1. Jefferson. of course, was a great friend and admirer of France. A descendent, Fountaine Mayry, became a vestryman of our St. Georges Church in 1793. [2] Another, Commodore, Matthew Fountaine Maury, the "pathfinder of the sea" was one of the creators of the oceanography and was a founder of both the U.S. Naval Academy and the Weather Bureau just prior to the Civil War. His fine house on Caroline Street Still stands virtually unchanged.

The Huguenot Marye Family, father and son both named James, successively served as rector of St. George's church here from 1735 to 1780. [3] Marye Sr. was said to be the most learned man in Virginia west of Williamsburg. He also had a private school, and is thought to have provided 'the only formal schooling for our fellow townsman George Washington that the Father of His Country ever had~ A Doctor Marye, M.D. built a fine, large house on the heights west of Fredericksburg, known to this day as Marye's Heights which formed the pivotal point of Gen. Robert E. Lee's 90,000-strong Confederate army in the great Battle of Fredericksburg on December 13, 1862. The Marquis de Lafayette, friend of our fellow-citizen Washington, a hero of France as well as of America, thrice came to Fredericksburg, first on his way to battle (Yorktown) and again in his old age in 1824 as honored guest at perhaps the greatest reception ever given to anyone by the city of Fredericksburg. On the first occasion French Generals La Fayette and Rochambeau, together with Washington, coming down from the North arrived with their armies in Fredericksburg in September 1781---headed for Yorktown, where French Admiral de Grasse's fleet had bottled up the British army and fleet. La Fayette played a key part in the ensuing battle, which ended in the British surrender, paving the way for American independence. On another occasion in' 1784, La Fayette came here to visit Washington's mother, Mary Ball Washington. His third visit, November 27, 28, and 29, 1824 as guest of the city brought out huge crowds, including many personages. from Washington and Richmond. There was a triumphal arch,- military parades, banquets, and a grand ball. The Mayor of our city saluted the great man by saying that he and his fellow-citizens "feel a long and fondly cherished veneration for your illustrious name, and tender you the expressions of their affectionate regard and high consideration." La Fayette was made an honorary member of the Fredericksburg Masonic lodge, of which

Washington also had been a member. [From Program in possession of the writer.]

James Monroe, fourth President of the U.S., who began his career in Fredericksburg after service in the Revolutionary Army, was both Minister to France and principal negotiator of the Louisiana Purchase. He probably held more high civil offices, both elective and appointive, than any other American. After being Governor of Virginia and U.S. Senator, Washington sent him to Paris as Minister in 1794, a very critical time. There he remained for three years. In 1797 he was designated Minister Plenipotentiary for the purpose of persuading Napoleon to sell the vast French territory of Louisiana. His well-known sympathy for France and his excellent judgement of the existing political situation there enabled him to carry off with complete success this immensely important assignment. Monroe returned home in 1804. He and Mrs. Monroe brought back with them a large amount of French furniture, objects d'art, clothing and other property, a major part of which is on display at our James Monroe Museum in Fredericksburg.

Prince Napoleon Achille Murat of France in 1826 married Catherine Willis Grey, a young widow of Fredericksburg. She was a great great-niece of Washington, being the great grand-daughter of Betty Washington. She was also the great grand-daughter of Mildred Washington Willis, Washington's God-mother also. Col. Henry Willis, Mildred's husband, was the "big man" of the town of Fredericksburg in the earliest days of its settlement. The Prince's father, Joachim Murat, married Bonaparte's youngest sister, was King of Naples for a time, and was one of Napoleon's greatest generals. After the fall of

the latter, the Prince fled to Florida, eventually meeting Catherine Willis Grey. From time to time they visited here thereafter. [5] and also [6] youngest sister, was King of Naples for a time, and was one of Napoleon's greatest generals.

After the fall of James Fitzgerald, a mysterious and romantic character, was said to be a Dauphin of France and reputedly one of the 21 claimants of the non-existent throne of France after the French Revolution. He was said to have been adopted, when and how never became known, by a General Fitzgerald of Notoway County, Virginia. James, the man of mystery, in 1816, married Elizabeth Thornton of "Fall Hill" nearby. All of his life, even after the collapse of the Confederacy, a steady flow of wealth enabled the Fitzgeralds to live in opulent style at a time when most people here, having lost most of their wealth in the war, were reduced to dire poverty. [5]

Count Georges Arnaud of Paris who had been associated with the failed Panama Canal Co. of Ferdinand de Lesseps, later taken over and completed by the

Americans, came to Fredericksburg about 1890 to plant grapes and start a wine industry. His vineyards on Laucks Island also failed. After having lived in luxury and ease all of his life, he was forced into giving French lessons to some of the young girls of the town at his home. A number of them, now old ladies, still living here, remember him with pleasure. He married a widow from Wisconsin, and their son, Willie Arnaud, became a famous organist.[5]

Battery F, 111th. Field Artillery - "La Fayette, we are here ! This old and honored National Guard unit contained many men from the Fredericksburg area. In World War One, after *being* Federalized, it served in France with the U.S. Army as a part of the 29th. (Blue and Grey) Division. It landed in Le Havre on July 15, 1918, and went into the line ready for battle on Nov. 8 at Breechainville in the Vosges Mountains. Before it could go into action the Armistice was signed three days later.

The Mount Sion French Family. In 1977 a French family visited Mount *Sion*, a large house built by a grandfather of President Madison's wife, *Dolly*, in 1722 to 27 together with about 600 acres of land, mostly woods, located at Corbin, 8 miles east of Fredericksburg, on the "Washington and Rochambeau Route". Mr. J. B. Barrere, one time professor of French Literature at the University of Lyons and now at Cambridge, England, was invited to lecture at the University of Virginia. He and his wife have returned and occupied the house at Mount Sion part of the time since then and plan to continue doing so - whenever possible. Prof. Barrere is considered the leading authority on the great French writer Victor Hugo and has lectured on him and other subjects in some of the most prestigious universities in the U.S., Canada, Europe, and elsewhere.

The Mayor of Fréjus, France, M. Francois Leotard and Mme.

his wife, visited us July 13-14, 1979. He also is a member of the French National Assembly. Their visit came about through a suggestion of the U. S. Consul General at Marseilles

{Ralph Meima, Jr.} of whose district includes most of the Mediterranean coast of France. Fréjus was founded in 49 B.C. by Julius Caesar, and under Caesar Augustus became the chief Roman naval base of the western Mediterranean. Located near Cannes, its population swells from 30,000 in winter to 150,000 or more in the summer because of its magnificent beaches.

The remaining evidences there of the power and grandeur of the Roman Empire at its peak are said to be more varied than those of any town in France. After visiting the Fredericksburg area and meeting with the Mayor and City Council, M. Leotard thought well enough of Fredericksburg as to suggest a sister city relationship for his city and ours.

In addition to the foregoing, there have been a multitude of personal, private contacts between people of our area and La Belle France. Some of our Mary Washington College faculty people have come from there, and some of ours have gone there for part of their education. The daughter of retired Dean, born here, married a man who was U.S. Consul at Lyons, France. Countless numbers of our people have traveled for pleasure there. French ambassadors to Washington have come down here a number of times as guests of our city. In the future this interesting and rewarding relationship is sure to grow and flourish.

--Ralph C. Meima

--SOURCES--

[1] Clifford Dowdy, The Golden Age, p. 208.

[2] Oscar R. Darter, Colonial Fredericksburg, p. 2 and Carrol H. Quenzell, History of St. George's Episcopal Church, p. 91.

[3] Douglas Southall Freeman, George Washington, Vol. 1, p. 136. [4] Virginia Military Organizations in World War I, Arthur

I Kyle Davis, Editor, p.

[5] personal communications from Mrs. Lynn Franklin.

[6] Encyclopedia Britannica, 14th Ed., Vol. 15, p. 972

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## **FSCA DIRECTORS – 2021**

*Merci mille fois to all our Directors who continue to lead us in 2021*

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