



# Ashland Directions

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September 2015

Volume 43 Edition 1

What I did on My Summer Vacation  
By Al Porter, Editor and Publisher  
*Ashland Directions*

It's 4:30am on June 26th. Ro and I are being driven to Massachusetts General Hospital (MGH) in a car from the Able Limousine Service out of Hopkinton for a 5:30am appointment at the Cardiac wing. I'm to have a procedure that will change my life.

But I'm getting ahead of myself. Let me start at the beginning.

My Vacation continued on Page 8

We Thank Our Supporters Very Much...  
Evelyn and Harold Gates  
Ashland Lions Club  
Greater Ashland Lions Club  
Warren Conference Center and Inn

Important Insert This Month:  
The Homes Connection



Monday, September 7th

Last Day of Summer  
September 22nd



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## Ashland Day

Saturday, September 19th  
Take Part and be Proud

Auction: Friday, the 18th  
at American Legion Hall on Summer Street -  
Check-in & Buffet: 5pm - Auction: 6pm

Ashland Day Events:  
Bike Parade - Check-in: 9am - Parade: 9:15am  
Vendors setup by 9am - Opening Ceremony 10am:  
National Anthem - Grand Marshal - Citizen of the Year  
Field Events End: 4pm

Fireworks - Saturday, September 19th  
Hopkinton State Park

Gates Open: 7pm  
Fireworks go off at Dusk (approx. 8:45pm)

#### Business Notes

-- Opening Soon --

**Hahna Nails & Spa**  
12A West Union Street  
(next to Wine Empire)

**Los Cabos Mexican**  
**Bar and Grille**  
300 Eliot Street  
(formerly Nello's)

-- Now Open! --

**Wine Empire**  
12B West Union Street  
(next to Marathon Deli)

**Polished Nail Studio**  
132 Pond Street  
(the Dairy Queen Building)

**DL Cabinetry, Inc.**  
132 Pond Street  
(the Dairy Queen Building)

-- Name Changed --

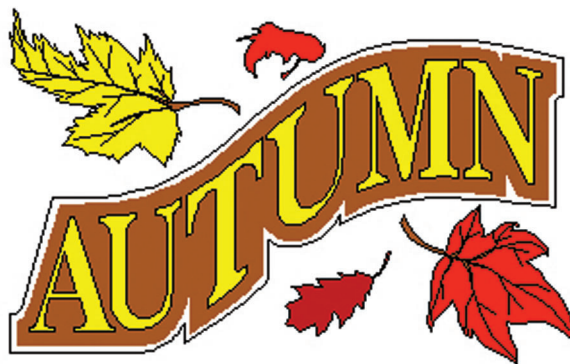
**Hess Express**  
Has Become  
**Speedway**  
196 Pond Street

#### Ashland Day Fireworks

Corn fresh picked daily arrives 11am each day at Marathon Mobil route 135.

All proceeds go towards Ashland Day Fireworks. We have been selling out so get it early and keep it cold.

First Day of Autumn  
September 23rd



Ad Deadline for  
October 2015  
Edition is September 15th



Through The Eyes Of...  
By Neha Shabeer  
"20 Years Later"

Lately, I’ve been talking a lot about me growing up. I only recently realized that along with me aging, my mom is too. All my life, my mom has told me she is 27, so I’ve always thought of her age as irrelevant. She has this everlasting youthfulness which has made me always think of her as my friend. Well, she’s mix of that bossy friend we all have, the fun friend, and the one who thinks she’s better than everyone else. To sum it up, I would say she is a pretty “cool mom.”

After years of always putting ourselves first, my dad and I decided to make this summer all about her! Luckily enough, this summer was my mom’s 20th medical school reunion. My mom attended medical school in a town in south India. My mom and her batch mates are dispersed around the world for the past twenty years. Her classmates flew in from across the globe for this event at a beautiful island resort in India! There were neurosurgeons from Dubai, intensivists from Australia, dermatologists from Great Britain, endocrinologists from Canada, and so many more! It was incredible to see these respected middle-aged doctors hail in their time machine - back to their college life with all their old friends.

My dad and I on the other hand were just along for the fun ride! Since we had some extra time to spend with family aside from the reunion, we travelled to my mom’s hometown in Kochi. There we took an overnight trip in a beautiful 3 bedroom, 3 bath, house boat on Vembanad Lake with my grandparents, great aunt, and uncle. We docked at ports along the way where we could buy fresh seafood for the chef to cook aboard the boat for dinner, buy movies, and watch the sunset from beautiful rice fields. The front of the boat was the perfect place for the family to show off their skills with some horrible yoga! We brought a huge speaker and had a dance party as well. Plus, we got to see exclusive behind-the-scenes training of racers in the annual boat race in Kochi. There were 100 people in a large canoe rowing in synchrony preparing their speed and stamina for the race. I can barely sing along in synchrony with my favorite songs! Afterward, with a lot of persuasion we convinced our captain to let us drive the boat for a little while.

In addition to it all, due to my terrible jet lag, I couldn’t sleep all night and kept talking. So my parents kicked me out of their room and into my uncle and grandpa’s room. There, my uncle and I spent the rest of the night scheming how we were going to buy a fancy floating houseboat, kidnap all of our friends and family, travel around the world in our boat, and never come back. Meanwhile, my grandpa was making occasional annoyed grunts with his head under the pillow trying to sleep through our chatter. Neha for #1 considerate granddaughter of the year!

It was a trip of a lifetime and I’ll never forget the memories, incredible food, and amazing crew! After the reunion, we went to the United Arab Emirates to visit my uncle and meet up with some of my mom’s high school friends. My mom’s closest friend since seventh grade got me a lot of Arabian chocolates and I now I hope we do a meet-up like this every year!

Let me first set the scene. The UAE is HOT in August. When I stepped out from an air-conditioned room, the air condensed on my glasses. The days we were there, the temperature never dropped lower than 99 degrees! But it was a dream anyway after the long winter we had in Boston! We spent most of our time in Dubai, a remarkably modern city in the middle of the desert. It houses the Burj Khalifa, the tallest building in the world, and the Dubai Mall which is the world’s most visited shopping center. It was paradise! A must see for all tourists is the fountain show in front of the Burj Khalifa which takes place every night. The five minute show is absolutely spectacular as the water effects go along with a beautiful Arabian soundtrack. But the true highlight of this trip was our desert safari!

We cruised up and down sand dunes in a large land rover playing Nicki Minaj and screaming like we were on a rollercoaster to our campsite. There, we rode camels, where the entire time, I was pondering the question, “How does one properly mount a camel?” If anyone knows, please contact me as I would really like to know. As far as I know, you have to throw your leg up on the hump of the sitting camel and heave yourself up. After that confusing camel ride, we went on dune buggies which are way cooler than they sound. They are basically go karts to ride on sand dunes. Soon enough, it got dark and it was time for dinner. We sat Arabian-style and ate a delicious meal while watching a belly dancing performance. All too soon, the night was over and we had to head back to the hotel. The next day, I started my day off right with some

Neha continued in next column >

Neha continued from previous column

camel milk chocolate, which is in fact delicious and a lot healthier than normal chocolate. After that, we set off for the Grand Mosque in Abu Dhabi. It was grand indeed! The marble work was beautiful and the whole building had a serene feeling about it. The most exciting part for me was probably getting a complimentary burqa to wear when I walked in! Unfortunately, as we were leaving I realized we had to return them. It was a shame since they are incredibly comfy.

My trip ended all too soon, but I had a lovely time with family and the people of my mom’s past who I will stay connected with for the rest of my life! For more about the world through my eyes, keep reading my monthly column :)



**Meat Shoots**  
**Saturday’s 3:00 – 5:00 pm**  
*Great prizes and raffles*  
**American Legion**  
**40 Summer Street**  
**Ashland MA**

Run by the American Legion, Legion Auxiliary,  
Sons of the American Legion and the Greater  
Ashland Lions Club

Open to the public...

My Vacation continued from the Front Page

Many years ago we noticed that anytime I was involved with a physical activity, I would not be able to fully participate in it. The symptoms and stress test led my cardiologist to believe I had vasovagal. It is a common cause for fainting and is a non-life threatening condition.

In the spring of 2014 I requested further testing as my physical activity level was decreasing and my quality of life was being affected. So I was scheduled for a Stress Echo Cardiogram (S/EC). The result of this test showed I had a condition called Hypertrophic cardiomyopathy (which is life-threatening).

My cardiologist scheduled an appointment with Dr. Michael A. Fifer (Director of that program at MGH). We met Dr. Fifer who after talking with us for about 45 minutes said he wanted another EC done (right then). Over the next two months I had an EKG, a Cardiac catheterization and a Cardiac MRI. These tests gave the doctors more information about the size of the septal muscle and how much it was obstructing the flow of blood out the aorta. This also helped the panel of doctors to determine which procedure was best to correct the situation.

Once the tests were done, we met with Dr. Fifer who gave us four options. Upon hearing them and the one they were recommending was open-heart surgery. This was not what we were prepared for so Ro and I decided to wait until this spring to see if my condition changed.

So, this May we decided to go forward with the operation and met with Dr. Gus Vlahakes (Cardiac Surgeon and Professor of Surgery at Harvard Medical School) at MGH, who outlined the septal myectomy procedure and answered our questions. We set a date for June 26th for the five and half hour procedure.

Now back to June 26th. We arrive at MGH around 5:15am and wait with about 20 other people (who are also having surgery that day) for the cardiac wing to open. Once opened we all check-in and are taken to where we are suppose to be.

MGH has a special room for family and relatives while patients are in the operating room, its called the Gray Family Surgical Waiting Area. Having family there makes it easier for the doctors to contact them after surgery.

Going forward, I was obviously “out like a light” and can only relay what I’ve been told by Ro and others for the first two days.

Once the procedure was completed, I was taken to Blake 8 the Cardiac Surgery Intensive Care Unit. On the third day I was transferred to Ellison 8, which is a 36 bed unit for cardiac patients, where I spent the next 3 days.

I was up often, walking around the unit with the help of a “walker” and either a nurse or Ro.

July 1st finds me being driven home by our daughter Nicole along with Ro. I am only allowed to sit in a back seat with a “cushion” (made from a rolled-up blanket) between my chest and the seatbelt strap. Since then anytime we go out, Ro drives and I’m in the back (and keeping quiet about anyone else’ driving)...

On Monday, July 20th, Ro went back to work and I was left at home...

Then on Tuesday, July 21st, my surgeon gave me the “green light” to drive locally (along with my cushion).

Each day more of the pain lessens and I get more confident that things are getting better. I know it’ll take awhile before I’m back 100%, but I’m plugging at it each day.

For those of you who do not know of Massachusetts General Hospital, it is one of the largest research and training hospitals. But for all its “bigness”, the people working there care about each individual patient.

I want to Thank all the staff (the doctors, the nurses, the aides, the therapists and ancillary staff) on Blake 8 and Ellison 8 for their caring and dedication to help heal those in their charge. Everyone I met was not only cheerful, they were always ready to help if needed.

Thank You to all of you that sent cards, emails and well wishes, it was appreciated.

Now, as I heal and move forward, I look to being better than I was before.