

# Marking 50 years of naturalization ceremonies at Monticello

by Monticello - June 6, 2012

This July 4th marks the 50th anniversary of the first naturalization ceremony (<https://www.monticello.org/exhibits-events/calendar-of-events/july-4-at-monticello/july-4th-speakers-at-monticello/50-years-of-july-4th-ceremonies/>), held at Monticello. Kay Nimax, 77, will be there as around 80 men and women from across the globe will become American citizens on the West Lawn of Monticello on the nation's birthday. Nimax has made a point to celebrate Monticello's significant naturalization ceremony anniversaries.

"It just really gets you. I'm always in tears and get goosebumps when people give their oath," she said. "It just reminds me so much of when I became a citizen."

Fifty years ago, Nimax remembers how emotional she felt taking the oath of citizenship on the steps of Monticello. "I was really excited and I was really proud of it," she recalls. "I was really nervous and I didn't know what to expect."

**It was a decision that would change her life forever.** Nimax and her husband, Pierre, left their home country Luxembourg, the small landlocked European country which borders Belgium, France and Germany, in pursuit of the American dream.

She originally wanted to immigrate to New York City, but they settled in Staunton, Virginia. "Thank god we came down here. It is much better here to raise children than in a big city," Nimax said. The Shenandoah Valley, also, seemed like the perfect place to relax and actually reminded them of Europe.

The only struggle at the beginning was the language barrier. However, with the help of her family and various books, Nimax learned English. "It was hard, especially the first year, until I could learn English because I could not communicate good with the people. Once I learned the language, it was no problem,"

she said. "And the food, of course, was all different, too."

**The Staunton News-Leader**  
Virginia JUL 15 1958

## Become Citizens Of United States

Two Staunton women were among those who took the oath of allegiance in naturalization ceremonies at Monticello, home of Thomas Jefferson, near Charlottesville, this morning, becoming citizens of the United States.

They are Mrs. Kay Nimax of 1308 Lyle Avenue, wife of Pierre J. Nimax, who is employed as a linotype operator with The Staunton Leader Papers, and Mrs. James H. Druff, wife of the superintendent of Western State Hospital.

Mrs. Nimax arrived here from Luxembourg on Aug. 8, 1958 to join her husband. They live in their recently purchased home at 1308 Lyle Avenue. The Druffs came to this country from The Netherlands in 1957. They reside at 503 Robin St.

Also scheduled to take the oath of allegiance at the special ceremony were Kenneth Haldane Cram, Walter Leopold Hahn, and Erika Paula of Waynesboro and Helena Bergmanis of Rt. 1, Fort Defiance.

Mrs. Nimax' principal witnesses were Mr. and Mrs. C. E. (Jack) Dorsett of 12 Virginia Avenue; Mrs. Joyce Flavin, Miss Henriette Mackey, both of Staunton, and a number of other friends.

Mr. Dorsett had served with the U. S. Army in Luxembourg—the



**MRS. NIMAX**

native country of the Nimax family, during the first World War.

Mr. and Mrs. Nimax have a son, Dean Michael, the first born American in the Nimax family. Mr. Nimax previously had become a citizen.

Mrs. Nimax is the former Kay Eisenloeffel. She is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Jean Eisenloeffel of Luxembourg. Her hobbies include gardening, sewing, knitting, bowling and photography.





(T-D News Bureau Photo)

### Thirty-nine Become U. S. Citizens at Monticello Ceremony

Thomas Jefferson's Home Setting for Unique Exercises Yesterday

## 39 NEW AMERICANS

# Oath of Citizenship Given On Lawn at Monticello

1963

CHARLOTTESVILLE, July 15 — (P) — Thirty-nine persons became United States citizens Monday in the unique setting of Thomas Jefferson's Monticello home. Federal District Judge Thomas J. Michie administered the oath of citizenship to the 39, including two children, on the lawn of the home of this nation's third President and author of the Declaration of Independence. More than 100 persons watched the ceremonies. Hardy C. Dillard of the University of Virginia, also founded by Jefferson, told the group that behind America's diversity lies a "wholeness," an intangible spirit "which animates our history, sustains our people and breathes life into our institutions." Dillard said the United States isn't easy to define because it is both a product of the universal heritage "fed by many streams reaching back into antiquity" and because of the "factor of diversity." Part of our heritage which perhaps more than any other separates us from the totalitarian world is our belief that the ends do not justify the means, Dillard said. "This is really the ethical keystone of our insistence on liberty and particularly liberty of press and speech," he said. It is paradoxical but true "that the right to speak freely and fearlessly does not destroy the national consensus but, on the contrary, helps to cement it," he said. Speaking to "my new fellow citizens," Dillard said, "The call to citizenship is not merely a call to privilege but a call to duty, at times a stern and tough duty. This duty is at the root of our institutions."

Nimax says when she was leaving her home country only 100 people were allowed to immigrate each year to the United States because of Luxembourg's small population of 250,000 people. "I think people who live here don't really appreciate it that they are American citizens and that they are free," said Nimax. "You have more of an opportunity to make something of yourself here." After five years in the U.S., Nimax decided to make America her permanent home.

In a fluke mail mix-up she received the details for her naturalization ceremony two hours after the ceremony had taken place at the Harrisonburg District Court. As luck would have it Nimax received a

special invitation to take part in the inaugural naturalization ceremony at Monticello.

## Sir Robert Flies to New York

LONDON, July 2.  
The Australian Prime Minister (Sir Robert Menzies) left London by air today for New York.

He was accompanied by his wife, Dame Pattie, and their elder son, Mr. Kenneth Menzies.

During his fortnight's stay in Britain, Sir Robert had wide-ranging talks with the Prime Minister (Mr. Macmillan) and other senior British Ministers.

He will leave New York tomorrow for Charlottesville, Virginia, where on Thursday, he will give the Thomas Jefferson memorial foundation oration at Monticello, Jefferson's old home.

Sir Robert will meet President Kennedy in Washington on Monday.  
—A.A.P.

On July 4, 1963, Nimax and 38 new citizens, including two children and 100 audience members, listened to Sir Robert Menzies, the 12th Prime Minister of Australia give the “Thomas Jefferson Memorial Foundation Oration,” in celebration of Independence Day.

Menzies was the first non-American to give an Independence Day speech at Monticello. His speech also marked the first of what is now considered the oldest continuous naturalization ceremony in the United States outside of a courtroom.

Menzies spoke about Australia's founding and how it was based on the work of America's Founding Fathers. He also talked about politics, current events and Jefferson's lasting legacy on democracy.

“If, as Mr. Jefferson did, we believe that an informed democracy is the greatest and most humane system of government ever devised; that it elevates and enfranchises the individual citizen; that it reconciles some demagoguery with much dignity; are we doing enough to make it understood by other nations and other peoples? Are we, perhaps, too negative in our democratic faith, defending it against aggression from outside, but not doing enough to preach its gospel abroad? What would Mr. Jefferson do and say if he could revisit us and look out upon this new world? For freedom was his burning faith. It was not something just to be practiced, but it was also a faith to be preached...”

At the end of his speech Menzies reflected on the significance of celebrating liberty at the home of the author of the Declaration of Independence.

“The freedom of man, sir, is not a local perquisite and it cannot be defended in isolation. There is no better place than Monticello in which to remind ourselves of this great, though occasionally forgotten truth.”

Since 1963, more than 3,000 people from every corner of the globe have taken the oath of citizenship at the annual Monticello Independence Day Celebration and Naturalization Ceremony.

[. \(http://www.monticello.org/july4\).](http://www.monticello.org/july4)

From presidential visits to speeches from famous Americans such as Sam Waterston, I.M. Pei, and General Colin Powell, Independence Day at Monticello continues to bring thousands each year to Jefferson's West Lawn in celebration of liberty and the pursuit of happiness.



For Kay Nimax, her American citizenship is never far from her mind. When she comes home after a trip to Europe she proudly shows her passport to the custom officials. "They say 'Welcome home!'" "That just makes you feel so good."

Read Sir Robert Menzies [1963 speech](#)

[.\(http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/download/media/pressrel/TKJG6/upload\\_binary/tkjg63.pdf;fileType=](http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/download/media/pressrel/TKJG6/upload_binary/tkjg63.pdf;fileType=)

And also view the [July 3, 1963 Australian Newspaper "The Age, Melbourne" article](#)

[.\(http://news.google.com/newspapers?](http://news.google.com/newspapers?)

[nid=I300&dat=19630703&id=nEYVAAAAIBAJ&sjid=pZYDAAAAIBAJ&pg=3959,227847\).](http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=I300&dat=19630703&id=nEYVAAAAIBAJ&sjid=pZYDAAAAIBAJ&pg=3959,227847) about Sir Robert Menzies trip to the U.S.

Look back on [90 years of July 4th celebrations at Monticello!](https://www.monticello.org/exhibits-events/calendar-of-events/july-4-at-monticello/july-4th-speakers-at-monticello/50-years-of-july-4th-ceremonies/) (<https://www.monticello.org/exhibits-events/calendar-of-events/july-4-at-monticello/july-4th-speakers-at-monticello/50-years-of-july-4th-ceremonies/>).

**[BRINGING HISTORY FORWARD \(HTTPS://WWW.MONTICELLO.ORG/EXHIBITS-EVENTS/BLOG/?CATEGORY=BRINGING-HISTORY-FORWARD\)](https://www.monticello.org/exhibits-events/blog/?category=bringing-history-forward)**

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