



2024

REFLECTIONS

Reflections 2024

Volume XXIV

*Anthology of the Voices
of the
Academy for Lifelong Learning*

Cover

Snow Trees
Joe Gonzalez

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About The Academy for Lifelong Learning (ALL)

Expand Your Mind, Enrich Your Life, Engage With Peers

Since 1987, The Academy for Lifelong Learning of Cape Cod (ALL) has been making a difference in the lives of individuals 50 and over through academic and practical learning. ALL is a non-profit organization that offers its members the opportunity to pursue interests and expand social relationships.

With the assistance of fellow members who are volunteer program coordinators, ALL offers a wide variety of topics and subjects to explore. From history, climate change, and film to backgammon, bridge, and exploring Cape Cod, these subjects can be studied in person, via Zoom, or in a combination of both from the ALL classrooms in Grossman Commons at Cape Cod Community College. Programs are either twelve or six weeks in length each semester.

ALL is an organization whose mission is to enrich your joy of learning as well as make new friends. In addition to classes, ALL offers a series of guest lectures and social events. ALL's Board of Directors are volunteers dedicated to the pursuit of continued learning and friendship. If you are looking to enrich your life and continue as a lifelong learner, ALL is for you.



Grossman Commons Art Gallery

Message from ALL's President

I look forward to reading Reflections every year. When I read the first draft of this new Reflections, I was so excited to see what our creative members decided to share with us. Again, they did not disappoint. With deference to Forrest Gump, this edition is like a box of chocolates, you don't know what you will get when you "unwrap" the page, but each creation is quite a treat and makes you want more. And there is more: 78 pages of stories, poetry, essays, and visual art -- all drawing one in to enjoy them all. We are so lucky here on Cape Cod, a place where many gifted and talented people come together in our ALL community to learn, to share, and to create. This anthology is a testament to their talents. Bravo!

Thanks to those members who shared their creative gifts and also to our new editor, Maggie French, and her staff for all their hard work in continuing this tradition of excellence.

Dianne Tattersall



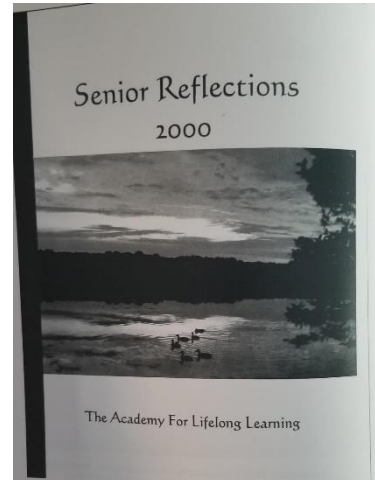
About Reflections

In 2000, the year the world moved into the twenty-first century, the Academy for Lifelong Learning published a compilation of writings and art of the membership in its first edition titled *Senior Reflections*, later shortened to *Reflections*.

This annual anthology showcases individual pieces of fiction, nonfiction, poetry, photography, and art reflecting memories, insights, humor, and philosophy gathered from the lifelong experiences of its generous contributors.

The members of the Academy for Lifelong Learning are an accomplished group of individuals who have distinguished themselves in the world of business, academia, arts and science, the military, and so many other fields during a lifetime.

All of us have something to share that peers and the community would benefit from reading and viewing. The 2024 edition of *Reflections* is the latest collection of prose, poetry, and art/photography worthy of your time. Enjoy – Maggie, Editor



We acknowledge and thank the Reflections Team for their efforts in bringing this publication to print.

- Barbara Berelowitz
- Mary Ann Donovan
- D.J. Foley
- Maggie French
- Mary Nyman
- Rita Richardson

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Steven Anderson

Steve is a joyful husband, joyous father, and jubilant grandfather. He lives in Plymouth, and participates in the Tuesday Writers Group at the Pinehills, CCCC's Poetry and Poetry Art of the Word.

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Connie Austin

Connie is an eleventh generation Cape Codder and attached to nature as inspiration.

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HM Ayres

Helen is a retired college administrator living in South Dennis. She is happiest on a hike in the woods or at the beach. She moved to the Cape from NJ in 2021.

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Paula Bacon

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Barbara Berelowitz

Born in Johannesburg, Barbara has lived in Paris, London, New Hampshire, and Cape Cod since 2003. She happily found ALL two

years later and has not left since. She has been a member of the Reflections editorial committee for several years.

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Mary Bonacker

Mary was born in Brockton. She has lived in several states, and in Cotuit for the past 25 years. She found ALL just months before COVID and is grateful that the courses offered via zoom helped save her sanity. She loves words and walking her dog through the woods.

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Diane Brooke

Diane and her husband moved their family to Centerville on the Cape 43 years ago. She was able to work from home and soon settled into life by the ocean. Her children are now grown and her youngest son lives 5 minutes away with family. She found ALL a number of years ago and have taken many courses and made new friends.

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June Calender

After a 20+ year career as an off-off Broadway playwright, June moved to Cape Cod, already the grandmother of three, now

great-grandmother of four. She is a compulsive quilter (both traditional and art quilts), has taught various varieties of writing classes as ALL. She has recently published a novel, The Friendship Quilts, which is NOT a how-to book.

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Carol Coteus

Carol is relatively new to poetry but has always enjoyed journaling. Additional artistic expressions include weaving, photography, and dance. She lives in Sandwich.

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Frank Cuphone

Frank has been a student of Native American culture most of his life and has coordinated ALL classes since 2010.

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Martie Dumas

Matie is a retired clinical social worker with a private practice in Natick and Yarmouth Port. She moved to the Cape with her husband, Joe, in 2005. In 2007, she woke him as she came out of a seizure, which signaled a brain tumor. Although benign, it changed their lives. Surgery, paralysis, radiation treatments, rehab followed. It's been quite a ride. Through it she discovered the gift of writing in 2009 and has not stopped. In 2014, she published a book, with her husband, "Relationship Rewired."

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DJ & Jack Foley

DJ is a washashore enjoying retirement on Cape Cod writing poetry, enjoying the arts, volunteering, and generally loving life.

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Joan Freedman

On her retirement, Joan knew she wanted to work with furniture. When she saw McKenzie-Child inspired furniture and houseware, she knew the direction she wanted to go. She took classes from a dear friend, Ginny Boylen, in her home then at Cotuit Center for the Arts.

Checkered Mirror, 26
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Maggie French

Maggie enjoys writing, gardening, and the philosophical aspects of both. As an amateur writer all of her life, she believes there is a writer in all of us.

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Jim Garb

Jim is a photographer, retired physician, occasional teacher, and sometime musician living on Cape Cod. Although he has been taking pictures since his teen years, he has become more serious about his work in the past seventeen years since retiring. My photographs have been exhibited at the Cape Cod Museum of Art, The Cape Cod Art Association, the Cultural Center of Cape

Cod, the Harvest Gallery Wine Bar, the Creative Arts Center in Chatham, and FotoNostrum Mediterranean House of Photography in Barcelona Spain, among other locations.

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Joe Gonzalez

Joe worked as an editor in publishing in New York before working for thirty-six years in filmmaking as a bilingual writer and Script Supervisor on films including Spike Lee's Do the Right Thing, Martin Scorsese's production of Kicked in the Head with James Woods, Lili Taylor and the IMAX Across the Sea of Time. He has a B.A. in English from Rutgers University and a Masters in Spanish from Montclair State University. Joe is now a newcomer to Cape Cod currently really trying to finish a book of short stories in Spanish. He also teaches Film Theory at ALL.

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Steve Goodwin

Stew just celebrated his 60th wedding anniversary with his wife Margot. They have four children and four grandchildren. He spent 35 years in the investment business in New York City and has been retired on the Cape for 35 years. Since being here, he has served on the boards of non-profits, in

elected office, and coordinated at ALL for over 15 years.

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Diane Hanna

"When December four o'clock hits, Diane leaves the little Wyeth room in her Cotuit house, walks to Loop beach, looks out towards England, and dreams of crooked houses. She listens for words within images and is inspired by the eloquence of a forgotten face, a collapsing barn, an abandoned factory, an old motor court on a silent road. She believes that party dresses (balanced by stompy shoes) should be worn on ordinary days, the crow should be our national bird, and our lifework is to put our gifts to full and joyful use.

An Unlikely Guest, 53
Elmers Cottage, 1923, 60

John Hunt

John is 82, retired, and has been enjoying the ALL Writer's Incubator for about 4 years. This is the first thing I've had published ...ever. These vignettes are written to a weekly prompt...about 500 words. I hope people enjoy it!

Eye Contact, 25

Fred McCormick

Fred is a retired civil servant who has lived in Cotuit on Cape Cod for over 30 years. He has attended ALL classes off and on since 2015. He enjoys bike riding, reading, senior softball, the Cape Cod baseball league, and mellow Cape Cod autumns.

Elizabeth's Fate, 32

Margaret McLaughlin

Margaret lives in Forestdale and writes about events and individuals who inspire her to be curious and honor compassion. She volunteers for WECAN and the Sandwich Food Pantry

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John McWilliam

John lived and worked overseas for many years. He loved his time in India, where he has returned a number of times in retirement.

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Wayne Miller

Wayne and his wife Karen live in Sandwich. He received a BFA from Mass Art, an MFA from Syracuse University, and taught painting at the State University of New York. He spent 20 years in New York City as both a painter and art gallery director. He is a member of the ALL poetry group and Scargo poets, and exhibits paintings with Miller White Fine Arts in Dennis.

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Havana Moss

Havana was a summer resident in Chatham as a child. She has taught yoga, lead hikes and bike rides and travelled twice to Tibet and Nepal. She has been writing stories and poems since the fourth grade.

Carolina Wren, 61
Wisdom of a Horseshoe Crab, 54

David Mullen

David is a retired educator having spent over 40 years in schools, 30 of those as Head of School in a couple of specialized schools in Maryland. In a brilliant stroke of timing, a school building he had constructed included a wet darkroom for photography five years before digital overtook the world. He has exhibited widely in the mid-Atlantic area and been published in CameraArts and LensWorks Our Magnificent Planet books.

Blackwater, 80
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Cape Cod October 21, 60
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Kathleen Murray

Kathleen is a beach loving, animal loving retiree who enjoys writing, movies, traveling, and socializing with friends on beautiful Cape Cod.

The Awakening, 62

Ellen Nosal

Ellen happily washed ashore for good nearly five years ago, and soon found friends and writing colleagues in a group she like to call Writers On the Storm. Apologies to Jim Morrison. When she is not writing, you will find her in her garden or making a fuss working for various issues in Barnstable.

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Mary Nyman

Mary grew up in Tennessee, served as an assistant in the Boston University English Department, and raised five children. Publications include a book of poetry, a novel for teens and a book of short stories. Presently she enjoys poetry class making art jewelry and painting.

October Snowfall, 64
Whimsy, 57

William Ray

William (Bill) is a native Houstonian. He attended Rice University and graduated from the New York School of Interior Design. Before moving to Cape Cod in 1996, he practiced Interior Design in Baton Rouge for 32 years. At ALL, he enrolled in June Calendar's writing class. Her support and inspiration helped guide his writing.

It's Gonna Cost Ya, 27

Rita Richardson

Rita has been a contributor and an editor of Reflections for several years. She enjoys beach walks, reading, writing, cooking, and anything related to France, where she was lucky enough to live, many years ago.

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Jim Sefcik

Jim has taught undergraduate and graduate courses on the American Revolution as well as for ALL programs. He and his wife take

annual pilgrimages back to the Cape each fall.

The Great New York City Fire Of 1776, 32

Michael Sullivan

Mike spent his working career as a New York City litigator (and he refuses to retire). He is a coordinator of the ALL class, The Economist.

The Friend, 21

Dianne Tattersall

Dianne is a former English teacher who followed her muse and retired to Cape Cod. Living near the Cape Cod Canal & Bay, she enjoys watching and photographing the ships, ocean, sunsets, and other elements of nature. ALL has been enriching her life for fourteen years, and she is the current president of this wonderful organization.

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Marjorie Wright

After years of living in both England and Cape Cod, Marjorie is now in Yarmouth Port, enjoying ALL as ever, and laughs with dear friends who don't grow old.

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After Pandemic *Jack Foley*

After the Storm
(Life After the Pandemic)

Listening During the Coronavirus Pandemic

Margaret McLaughlin

Today, I am listening to and for.
I am listening to waves at low tide for strength,
Their ripple across pebbles for resilience,
Their rush over receding sands for safe retreat.
I am listening to the wind for direction,
The whisper of bending pine branches for guidance,
The flutter of browned winter leaves for constancy.

I am listening to the cries of hawks across a salty marsh for courage,
The call of a cardinal for companionship,
The woodpecker's tapping for determination.

I am listening to the giggles of neighborhood children for joy,
The calls of their parents for wisdom,
The sighs of reluctance for acceptance.

I am listening to music for inspiration:
Dvorak for a new world,
Bernstein for a consoling psalm,
Lennon for a society reimagined.

Today, I am listening to you for comfort:
Your words for perspective,
Your laughter for relief,
Your heartbeat for life.

.



Evening Pink-1
Dianne Tattersall

Hearing The Silent Spring

Margaret McLaughlin

I turn on the radio.
I hear about the U.S. coronavirus crisis
masks designed,
tests delivered,
cases diagnosed,
hospitalizations and
needless deaths.

I turn on the radio.
I hear nothing about
hungry children in Yemen,
child soldiers in South Sudan,
abducted school girls in Northern Nigeria,
trafficked boys in Thailand,
traumatized children in Palestine, and
blind youth in Haiti.
It is a Silent Spring for them.

Why have we forgotten that what happens to the least of us, happens to each of us-
no matter what age,
no matter what race,
no matter what religion,
no matter what gender,
no matter what country,
no matter what crisis?

It should not be a Silent Spring for them.

I beg.
I beg.
I beg us,
no matter what age we are,
to turn up our global hearing aides and listen to their Silent Spring.

Goldilocks then came to the smallest bed in the room. She was so tired. The pillows, overstuffed with down, were inviting, the quilt too. A little table beside the bed held a book and a reading lamp. So cozy. She raised the quilt and slid silently between the spring-fresh sheets, pulling the quilt up to her chin. Her eyes fluttered toward sleep as she sank into the softness of the mattress. She whispered, “Just right ...

“Almost ...” That is what Claire added as she closed the book and finished the lukewarm dredges of tea. Editing remakes of classic children’s stories was once her dream job. The Golden Egg was becoming an editor for a children’s publishing house. The clean plate was her marriage to David, a plumber. The house he grew up in was a wedding gift from his parents. Most of all, her glass slipper was life in a small town surrounded by wonderful neighbors. She carried all the hopes and dreams of these stories with her from childhood. Since the pandemic, not so much. All of it in the aftermath of a shutdown and shut-in left nothing right. Let alone, just right.

In the last year, two of Claire’s neighbors had sold their homes and moved south to shared communities. The absence of companionship during those two years of the pandemic needed satiating, leaving the neighborhood too disconnected. Working from home, once dreamed of as a luxury to experience in retirement, became something different, too different.

The childhood stories that now occupied her thoughts were Jack and Jill came tumbling down. The three pigs huddled together while the big bad wolf huffed and puffed. The unknowns of whether people were friends or possible contaminants still fluttered around the edges of everything. Claire wondered if anything would be right again.

It was Saturday. New neighbors were moving in across the street. A child, about five, with curly hair, played on the front lawn while her parents and the movers formed an assembly line in and out. Claire smiled at the sight of the little girl dancing with the afternoon sun. She realized she was caught in this voyeurism when the dad’s inviting hand waved to her.

With no books to edit, the next day moved slowly. The company’s monthly meeting at the office was not until next week. David had an all-day job installing a furnace, which left the house to her. Today, it felt too big. During the pandemic, on days she felt this small, she would immerse herself in baking. When she ran this Betty Crocker marathon, she would box up the cookies, cupcakes, whatever, and leave them on her neighbors’ front porches, which was the closest to connecting the circumstances allowed. Today, it would be to welcome the new neighbors.

By the time she crossed the finish line, Claire had made what her husband called her Christmas batch of cookies. She stepped back from the counter. “Oh, this is too much,” she sighed and opted to make up one of her pandemic boxes. Boxes stored away unused for a year now. She would freeze and give away the rest; otherwise, David would eat them continually.

It was about four o'clock. David would be another couple of hours, which left time to bring the cookies over and make dinner. The sun traveled lower toward the horizon as fallen leaves moved in a synchronized ballet across lawns in the late afternoon breeze. Thinking there was nothing wrong with unexpected festivity, she tied the box with red and yellow ribbons and made her way to her new neighbor's door. The air mixed warm and cool, letting her know of the changing season, the changing neighborhood, and the changing life that had been these last four years.

Their front door was open. Claire spied the family opening boxes for their new home. Not wanting to startle the scene, she gently knocked on the screen door. A smiling face jumped up and ran to the door.

"Hi, I'm Samantha! We're new here."

"Yes, I know. Welcome."

"What's in the box?"

"Sam, it's not polite to ask," replied her mother from the dining table cluttered with plates, cups, and spoons.

"It's okay. I've brought some 'welcome to the neighborhood' cookies."

Mom, now at the door, invited her in.

It was then Claire again pictured Goldilocks in bed with only her curls showing above the quilt, saying, "Just right ... almost."

For Those Left

DJ Foley

March 11, 2020
WHO declares global
pandemic
Becomes a date in history
for those left

Lockdown life
daily statistics
stagger, numb
the mind
for those left

Death on a mega scale
diminishes
Life continues
for those left

Pandemic managed?
Just barely
New strains break through
prompt new vaccines
for those left

Masks have reappeared
Remind us
be careful
invisible risks,
unseen threats,
for those left

for now



Cape Cod Bay October 2021

David Mullen

In 2020, the COVID pandemic slammed into this country and across the globe with the force of a category 5 hurricane. Since then, it has killed over one million Americans and about six million people worldwide. As anxious as we are to see this pandemic in our rearview mirrors, it remains with us, sending ripples through our society. Its most enduring legacy may be that it has left imprints that might seem negative at first glance but could turn out to be positive in the long run.

While COVID revealed technological prowess in some areas, such as vaccines and ventilators, it exposed weaknesses in virtually every healthcare system, ours being no exception. In particular, our system has demonstrated that it is in need of comprehensive reform. We devote almost twenty percent of our economy to health care, spending \$12,914 per person. This is more than twice the amount spent by the next highest nation, Germany. Yet, for all this outlay, the results have proven to be unsatisfactory.

Overall, the quality of the care our system provides is one of the lowest among developed countries. A good example is infant mortality. We incur 5.7 infant deaths for every 1,000 births. This ranks us 33rd out of the 37 OECD nations. That is one example of how our healthcare system, which focuses on procedures rather than prevention, fails to deliver quality at a reasonable cost.

Covid also reminded us that we did not, and still do not, make enough personal protective gear to serve the country's needs. Those items, pharmaceutical ingredients, and medical devices are largely imported. Nurses, doctors, and pharmacists have been leaving their posts, creating large gaps in health care delivery. There is much work to do to make our healthcare system, which leaves millions under or uninsured, ready for the next pandemic. Hopefully, reformative measures will ensue.

Covid disrupted our society in other ways as well. Our children are still struggling to recover from the disruption caused by school lockdowns and Zoom classes. As yet, school buildings do not have adequate air circulation to protect students from germ droplets. The pandemic and other stress accompanied by low pay have caused many teachers to leave their jobs, creating critical shortages.

The way we work has also undergone change. It began when offices had to effect pandemic shutdowns. Since then, workers have been reluctant to return to offices full-time despite efforts to provide inducements. This has altered the axis of commuting, dining, and space renting. Industries from commercial real estate to restaurants and bars have had to recalibrate their business models. We may have entered a new era.

Entertainment and travel also have had to make adjustments in order to accommodate different lifestyle patterns. Post-pandemic (if indeed that is where we are) lifestyles have altered, sometimes minutely, sometimes majority. How we think, how we act, and how we relax have undergone transformations. The impact on how we will navigate the future is harder to detect.

For example, I have not gone to a restaurant since the pandemic began. Should I choose to indulge once again, will the places I frequented before still be there and be as I remembered?

The coincidence of pandemic behavior, streaming, and AI has changed the way we view movies, theatricals, and sporting events. Budgets have been recalculated, facilities have closed, and real estate has been reconfigured. The impacts of the pandemic that remain with us continue to be far-reaching. As we return to something resembling “normalcy,” we will look back on this period as a turning point. Perhaps it will be one that points us in a positive direction.



Eastham *Wayne Miller*

Prose



Thirsty Bee
Dianne Tattersall

Picking bridal veil lacy Queen Anne flowers by the side of the bicycle path we were riding on, our daughter managed to rest during the long bike ride we did most Sundays. "Look," she would say, "this is really pretty, and I want to get a lot of it. Please wait for me." We knew this delaying tactic very well, but she was right – it was a shame to ride around the Trianon pond without appreciating all the beautiful vegetation surrounding us.

The chestnut trees were in full bloom, pink waxy candles proudly stretching skywards, each seemingly more glorious than the last. We stopped and breathed in the sweetness of the spring air. How lucky we were to be here in Versailles, living within biking distance of Louis XIV's magnificent palace! The sky blued the background as the sun cast its warm, yellow light upon the glorious manicured gardens surrounding the artistically shaped pool of water, which was the Trianon's central feature.

As with all French gardens, this one was architecturally laid out with small hedges bordering the pond and trees in a straight line edging the bicycle path.

Being not quite *au fait* with the language yet seemed a mere bit of minutia at this moment, but we knew that Monday would come, and we would again face the embarrassment of seeming illiteracy where we lived. French was beginning to osmose into our brains, but oh so slowly, despite the television programs we watched and the radios to which we listened.

The beautiful sounds we heard the Parisians making when they spoke were lost on our straining ears as we tried to understand one or more of the words mellifluously tumbling out of everyone's mouth.

Eventually we learned to speak the language, and were moved to London.

The English gardens are full of roses of all varieties, and truly, the English rose is quite splendid. Delicate pastels mingle with fiery red blooms, and the aromatic high one gets in the evenings is a tonic for frayed nerves!

Today, I walked along Route 6A and visited the abundance of daffodils spreading all around me in the church garden of St. Mary's. What a very different joy in nature this is, and I thought of the soldier-straight Versailles gardens contrasting with the abundance of blooms popping out of the lawns all around me here. My heart lifted as I realized that the lack of rigidity

pleased my aesthetic senses far more than the memories of regimented beauty. The daffodils wave freely in the breeze, untethered by someone's architectural plan of how a garden should look.

My freedom seemed boundless as I wandered through the happily blooming varieties of jonquils, daffodils, and narcissus. Yellow with orange centers, white with yellow centers and suddenly a hybrid group – white with pastel peach centers all drawing the eye to look and linger. The pure white daffodils never before seen were the pinnacle of pleasure, and I watched as they danced in the breeze – ballerinas in the corps de ballet of "Giselle!"

Spring really is a quite poetic time of the year wherever I am.

The Friend

Michael Sullivan

The diagnosis was a muddle, at least to me. I never deal with medical terms, but I got the drift even before I heard the worst. Then, I asked questions.

So, driving home, I had to think of my responses to the questions I would get, not to change the facts, but only the emphasis, to highlight the sense that I would not be a burden. I said nothing when I came home, my usual after doctor visits, and waited to be asked, and I was, as per our routine, but the asking was casual as always. My response was pure me, always trying not to be serious. “We are all going to die,” I said with emphasis, “and my things are in order, so it’s OK.”

She asked for an actual answer, still conversationally. I was at the stuck point. She had given me 50+ years of her life; I owed her. I went to her and held her, saying, “This time, it’s for real.”

She looked at me with full eyes, which reminded me of all the good in my life. We talked at length. I told her that there would be a minimum of pain and not much disorientation until the very end. We talked about the children and the grandchildren and what she would do when the time came and then after.

She cried a bit, the soft cry of a loss that has to be. I cried some myself, but at length, I changed the topic.

“I’ve had a great run, a wonderful life,” I said, “but I have some regrets. I’m going to deal with at least one of the regrets.”

“What do you mean?” she asked.

“I am going to see him again.” She knew who I meant and nodded.

He and I had been friends for so many years, and the beauty of our friendship was that we had absolutely nothing in common. He was the high school quarterback; I was a busboy in the local diner. He was crew-cutted back then and for life; I was often referred to, in the parlance of the time and place of our youth, as a hood. He became an FBI agent; I became left, not just talk left, but arrested left. And still, we remained friends. I was the best man at his wedding; he was mine. I was godfather to his first child; he was to mine. Over the years, we celebrated and consoled whatever was in order. But in his later years, he had slowly succumbed to the bitterness of a wounded mind, and even before he slipped into what they call dementia, we had parted ways.

My wife made the arrangements for the trip, so like her; if God were ever to appear on earth, she would want to cater the event. The flight from Boston to Chicago was a babble in my head, working itself through all the scenarios of how a man with no future should deal with a man who might well have an extended future but didn’t really know he had a present.

Caitlin, his daughter, my godchild, met me at the airport; we embraced. She looked worn, but I looked past that; to me, she was still lovely, maybe even strengthened by the pain of caring. Owen was in a facility. God, I hate that word, but we went there directly from the airport.

Caitlin led me into the common room where, she said, he spent much of his days, often muttering, sometimes angrily, at whatever, and sometimes loudly yelling at the TV. I saw him; his body had not abandoned him; he looked like he could still run an option play. I faced him for the first time in most of 10 years. I saw emptiness, complete. God, that hurt. The meeting did not get better. I was too late.

On the way back to the airport, Caitlin filled me in on all the doings of her extended family, seemingly not wanting to focus on her father. I did not push the issue.

When I got home, my wife asked how it had gone. I had no good reply, no snappy rejoinder. Regret, I thought, is as much a disease as any other.



Hawk Clouds *Dianne Tattersall*

Learning to drive a car is a major milestone for most teens; certainly, it was for me. A week or two after my 15th birthday, Mom said one morning, "Put some shoes on. We're going to have a driving lesson. The hayfield at the other end of our farm had just been cleared of the bales. Mom drove the black Dodge up the road to the hayfield. I opened the gate and left it open. She got out of the driver's seat, and I got in. She had turned the engine off. The hayfield was a rectangular, flat ten acres covered with alfalfa, clover, and weeds now no more than 3 or 4 inches high.

Mom told me how to start the car then how to put it in gear. Of course, it was a stick shift. She showed me how to move the gearshift and finally how to put it in low. I pushed the gas pedal with my right foot. The car leapt ahead. "Get your foot off the gas!" We spent at least half an hour stopping, jerking ahead, stopping, turning at the end of the field. Finally, I was able to drive from one end to the other with many stops and starts, finally smoothly enough to go to the gate, turn the engine off, and change seats with Mom. We were both stiff from anxiety.

"We'll try again tomorrow." The next week, she drove us to the Vehicle License Center in a town 10 miles away. I got a learner's permit. We had more lessons. Before school started, I had passed my driving exam, and a license was in the mail to me.

In the Midwest getting a driver's license was an important rite of passage although I would not own a car for many years yet. I had a couple of years when I was allowed to drive when we went shopping, going to church, to relatives' houses. Then my brother got his driver's license, and he became the driver except when we were going somewhere more than 3 or 4 miles away. Then Dad drove.

These many, many years later, I have owned a few cars. I have rented cars in Spain and in Italy (but never in England). In Italy, Rome especially, I was appalled and sometimes frightened by the lack of direction or thoughtlessness of drivers in congested areas. In other countries, when I have been part of a group in a van or bus, I have watched drivers cautiously.

I have never been in a traffic accident except once when a snowy road caught my wheels and sent me into a ditch that I had to be pulled out of. Only once have I thought I might die. That was in Tibet in a van with 15 people and a very good driver who had taken us safely over mountains without guard rails.

That morning we were driving along the Bhramaputra river from Shigatze, a two-lane road, mountains, on one side of the river on the other with no guard rails. Then we saw the road ahead was more than half covered by debris from an avalanche. A truck approached from the opposite direction. Our driver did not stop until he saw the truck was not going to stop. He pulled over with no more than 10 inches between us and deep drop into the river. He seemed to dare the truck to attempt driving over the piled-up rocky debris. The truck did not stop. Our driver finally stopped halfway through; the only exit from the van was on the riverside. We could not get out. I thought if the truck bumped the van or made rocks and earth shift against us, we would all die in

the river. We held our breath. The truck advanced tilted toward us less than a foot away. If the driver made any movement toward our driver (or vice versa), I did not see it. The truck went on; we went on. No one spoke until we finally reached Lhasa. At dinner, someone said, "I thought we'd all be dead." "It was a macho thing," someone said. "I gave him a good tip," our guide said.

Long before that incident my two daughters learned to drive at school, got their licenses and have owned their own cars. For the past 20 years, we have done road trips to celebrate my birthdays. We have explored national parks and cities. They took turns driving while I sat in the back seat. Both enjoyed driving; I do, too, but I was happy to be the navigator.

Earlier this summer I did a road trip with my daughter who was happy to drive a newly leased car. Now we have a GPS giving directions. We were in eight states with three delightful mountains. I relaxed as she drove and watched the scenery, the sometimes heavy traffic, including the trucks that seemed to be twice as long as they used to be. We saw no accidents. I marvel that most drivers go no more than 10 miles above the speed limits, use turn signals, and, in cities, stop and start at traffic lights. Our highways have excellent signage and are well-kept. I remarked, "This is, to me, an example of how well our civilization works." Yes, I know there are many traffic accidents, but the proportion seems minimal considering the millions of vehicles on the roads at any time in this country.

Eye Contact

John Hunt

Frank Johnson locked his 1958 Chevy Impala, stepped into the parking garage's elevator, and rode down to street level. He began his daily walk to the office building, where he supervised a talented group that created ads for a major pharmaceutical manufacturer.

A clever couplet that included the name of their current client was running through his mind, so he probably would never have even noticed the woman matching his every stride. Until that is, she tripped on a curb and fell sprawling onto the sidewalk.

“MOTHER!!”

Frank turned his head and saw a young girl---perhaps 10 or 12 years old staring down at her mother.

He automatically extended his hand to help this woman to her feet. Something electric occurred as soon as he grabbed hold of her wrist.

“This ordinary-appearing woman,” Frank thought to himself, “something’s quite special about her.”

She looked up at him. Her blue eyes silently pleaded ... “Please don’t just walk away!”

Frank furtively glanced at the crowd hurrying by---ignoring them. His eyes answered, “I’ll not leave you here”.

The woman got to her feet and turned her head to address her child. “I’m alright, Sally,” she reassured the girl. But she quickly placed her abraded hands into the pockets of her coat. The action was not lost on him.

Frank appraised the two of them- the disheveled hair and the wrinkled clothing- and realized, “They’re HOMELESS!”

Something prompted him to ask, “When was the last time someone took you and your daughter out for breakfast?” He hoped she would not take offense at his offer (was he too forward?)

She paused in the act of snugging up the zipper on her daughter’s light jacket. Her eyes registered surprise. She gave him a twisted smile. “It’s been quite a while!” But her eyes had become cautious.

Frank offered her what he hoped was a reassuring smile, “I know of a nice little bakery...next block over... just let me give work a call.”

She heard him telling his receptionist that “something’s just come up, I probably won’t be in today. I’m sure that the gang can get along without me.”

“Come on,” he called to them. “They serve great coffee...hot chocolate too! And if you’re REALLY hungry, the scrambled eggs or the omelets are really worth having.”

The woman took hold of her daughter’s hand and followed behind Frank until they reached the restaurant.

“Order anything you like,” Frank told them as they slid into a booth.

“Why are you doing this?” the woman asked.

“It seemed like a good thing to do.”

If eyes could frown---this woman’s eyes did so. “No,” she shook her head, “those are empty words. I want to know why you even stopped.”

Frank briefly stared---amazed that her eyes could speak so plainly. He realized that her question had put him on trial and hoped his response would be sufficient.

“It was not what you said...or didn’t say...” he began, “but what your eyes told me that made me want to know more about you. I don’t even know your name!”

The woman nodded. “Eyes,” she said, “eyes are such an important part of any conversation. Yours appeared honest to me. And when you began to suspect that we were homeless...there was no condescension...no pity...just honest concern. I, too, would like to know more. Do you think we could meet here again?”

Frank grinned, and the smile went clear to his eyes. “Just name the day!”

“Millie,” she told him, “It’s Millie Johnson. How about tomorrow...about this time?”



Checkered Mirror
Joan Freedman

It's Gonna Cost Ya

William Ray

Tommy was getting up a flag football game in the backyard when his sister, Jo Lynn, appeared at the back door of the old house, wearing a pair of his overalls that he had outgrown.

As she picked up the football on the floor and threw it to him, she called, "Can I play?"

He replied, "Jo Lynn, you know girls don't play football." But she knew he would usually relent when one of his friends didn't show up.

Their Papa's been real busy since the war. He is a carpenter, and lots of people are building houses. Last year, he added an apartment out back near the alley, with two parking spaces next to it. He rented it to a nice-looking lady that everyone calls 'Miss Mary Lou.' She has bright red hair and is always dressed real nice.

The apartment cut down on the children's play space, but the boys still play out there most afternoons, 'till Mama comes to the back door and calls, "I've got supper on the table. Come in and wash up. Papa will be home in a few minutes."

Most evenings during the week and every Saturday, a car pulls up next to Miss Mary Lou's apartment, and a man goes in. It is not always the same man, either. Jo Lynn didn't think much of it, 'till one night after supper, she heard Mama tell Papa, "I don't like what's goin' on back there at the apartment."

"Mama, what goes on back there is none of our business. That's her apartment, and she's payin' the rent on time".

"It's settin' a bad example for the children, and I don't like it, Hiram."

This made Jo Lynn think about it, too, but she didn't mention it to Tommy. She knew boys were clueless.

About a month later, a bright red sporty-looking car drove up and parked next to the apartment late Saturday afternoon. A nice-looking man got out with a bouquet of flowers and went to the door. When Miss Mary Lou answered the door in her night clothes, he threw down the flowers and yelled, "Who's that man in there?"

The children stopped playing and watched. They couldn't hear what she said, but he bellowed, "I'll kill the son-of-a-bitch!"

She slammed the door, and he yelled a few more things. Then, he jumped in his car and burned rubber backing out into the alley.

The kids all stood there in shock for a moment, and then Mama threw open the screen door and yelled, "Jo Lynne, you get in the house right now!"

The boys stood around in a huddle, giggling for a few minutes, then continued their game. About an hour later, the red sports car again skidded to a stop beside the apartment. The man got out and slammed the door. This time, he was carrying a sawed-off shotgun. He banged on the door with the butt of the gun and called out, "Mary Lou, get that son of a bitch out here, or I'm goin' to come in there and kill both of you!" The boys all scattered out of sight.

Mama heard the commotion and headed for the back door. "Mama, wait," Jo Lynn pleaded. They both stopped and watched anxiously from the kitchen door.

About that time, Miss Mary Lou opened her door, looked straight at the man standing there with the shotgun, and said in a very cool voice, "Larry Watson, think about what you're doin'. You do something foolish and could go to prison for the rest of your life."

She stood there with her eyes locked on his as he continued to rant. When he stopped, in a very clear, strong voice, she said, "Now Larry, you go on home, right now!"

He turned his head down in defeat and walked slowly back to his car. He threw the gun on the passenger seat, got in, and drove away.

Mama tried to stay calm. She opened the screen door and called out to the boys, "You better be gettin' on home now." When Tommy came inside, she said, "You go to your rooms and do your homework."

When Papa came home, Mama was waiting at the door. She locked her eyes on him before he could open his mouth and said, "Hiram, we have to talk." She led the way to their bedroom and shut the door behind them. Tommy and Jo Lynn could hear them talking but couldn't understand anything they said. When she came out, she announced, "Supper will be ready in a few minutes."

Supper was very quiet. Nothing was mentioned about what happened. As the week went by, Mama was very apprehensive every time the children went outside, but she said nothing.

Sunday morning, Papa put on his Sunday clothes and went out the back door to Miss Mary Lou's. When she answered, he said, "I am sorry, but you're goin' to have to move. I cannot have stuff goin' on in my backyard, endangerin' my children and the other children in the neighborhood. You're goin' to have to move!"

"Mr. Hiram, I'm very sorry about what happened the other day, but it won't happen again."

In a very strong voice, he continued, "No, it won't because you have to move out! I'll return the rent you paid this month."

"Look, Mr. Hiram, I like it here and am not planning to move. If you want to put me out, you're going hire a lawyer and it's goin' to cost you \$200."

Papa was furious. He couldn't believe his ears. He was fuming but said nothing. It was all he could do to control himself as he returned home.

Mama was waiting at the door. "What happened, Hiram?"

When he told her, she demanded, "What are you going to do?"

"I don't know. It's goin' to take a little time to figure it out."

"We can't let her stay here, endangering our children and settin' such a bad example."

"I know. I'll work it out."

The next Saturday morning, Papa didn't leave for his job. When Miss Mary Lou left for work, he went back to her apartment and began hammering and doing other stuff. He continued right through the noon hour.

When Miss Mary Lou came home from work that afternoon, she stormed over and banged on the back door. Papa went to the door. She blurted out, "What do you think you are doing? You have no right to take out all of my doors and windows. I want them replaced immediately!"

Papa just stared at her and replied in a flat voice, "If you want me to put them back, you're goin' to have to get a lawyer, and it's goin' to cost you \$200."

A Ball of Twine

Frank Cuphone

It had been lying alone in dark, dank basements and dusty drawers for possibly 50 years or more. The twine in a rusted Craftsman toolbox had been my paternal grandfather's, given to my father after Grandpa died. Then, when Dad passed, my mother had me venture down into her half basement in Moonachie, New Jersey, to pull out Dad's collection of "Just in case I need them" items. Some of the ensembles were from my maternal grandfather, some from Dad's father, and some from my father's accumulated items. That ball of twine was part of that generational agglomeration.

A little smaller than a baseball, the twine was white cotton originally but was now browned and blackened from years of dust, grime, and oil. That dirty ball of string had quietly lain undisturbed for many years, but today, I was prompted to use it. An old, broken clothes dryer hose needed to be secured out-of-the-way in preparation for a run to the dump, so I was beckoned to my string drawer containing old fishing monofilament, jute, newer white cotton string, and the old, venerable ball of cordage. Since a visit to the dump was anticipated, why not use the oldest, dirtiest string for the task at hand?

As I began to unwind it, it became apparent that several thinner strands had been twisted together into the heavier one. As the end began to separate into individual strands, I realized there were four strands...4. My lifelong interest in American Indian people and their traditions reminded me that the number four is considered sacred by many. Ceremonial procedures are done in 4's, usually to honor the four directions. Was there a spiritual message here? As I untwisted that seemingly ancient twine, my thoughts erupted into bright visions of lives unfolding — lives that were joined together with twists and turns of conscious decisions and other twists by fate.

The strands of twine did not separate easily, often clinging to each other, with twists that made their individuality difficult to discern —how true I thought, that we, too, are bound to one another in ways we may not fully comprehend —connected to all life even— but like the strands of twine, sometimes unclearly connected yet hopefully remaining unique so we can preserve who we are.

I cut about 2 feet of the twine to anchor the dryer hose,



Lillies *Joe Gonzalez*

but as I attempted to tie a square knot and two half hitches, the old, apparently rotted cordage parted as I tightened the knots! Even a moderate pull resulted in the parting of fibers again and again. The strands of twine had lost their utility. They had let me down and were of no further use.

Could this experience with the twine hold some lessons for me? Maybe old memories and relationships can't indefinitely support our present and future existence. I had believed in that twine to hold up and stay together—to be strong and to fulfill my belief that it could carry out my wishes. Could some of our past beliefs and relationships also seem stronger than they are—or is the point here not about the twine's true strength but about the comfort and confidence it gave me when I believed in it? Life, too, can be a tangle of twisted strands, sometimes holding together to support us, but sometimes, when we least expect it, the strands part and leave us hanging... Should I fully blame that twine or blame my own, maybe erroneous expectations? Can I accept the fact that change is inevitable? Maybe this can be applied to our everyday experiences with relationships and convictions that we believed in, but that somehow fell apart. Nothing lasts forever.

Elizabeth's Fate

Fred McCormick

A species of Now: Last year, in late November, a trivial cat scratch was ignored and became infected. As a result, Elizabeth, who had, long ago, forgotten about youth and family, about life itself, died alone in her ground floor apartment that faced the wide boulevard. Ironically, she had devoted her life to her cats.

The cat responsible, the last in a long line going back decades, meant her no harm. Oddly, it did not even try to harm the small canary in its cage in the few days the two were left alone in the apartment, while countless cars went by on the boulevard; unaware pedestrians walked quietly below Elizabeth's windows, distracted by their own reticent thoughts; and in the neat, narrow houses on the quiet streets, south of the main road, families, often strangers to one another, privately lived out their own destinies.

Eventually, for obvious reasons, the authorities broke into Elizabeth's apartment, looked aghast for a moment, then set about putting things straight. Her neighbors on the first floor asked few questions. They remained preoccupied by their own grim reflections. There was a short notice of the incident on one of the back pages of the local tabloid.

There was no one who could say when or why the strong, clear flow of Elizabeth's life force began to weaken, dwindle, and finally disappear or what was the reason for it. Only the State was left to settle the remains of her existence, without the need for eulogy. It had been a long time since the dry season had begun and the flowers of the desert that had bloomed so splendidly after a short period of rain were all dead and brown.

Lost moments for Elizabeth, forgotten Elizabeth...but her spirit, oh, her spirit...

A species of Then: The man, approaching, hardly saw her. From a distance, she was camouflaged by the gray and sepia tones of her outer garments. Dressing against the season, she ironically blended into it. As he came nearer, he noticed her sour expression as she vaguely examined a pile of soggy leaves, left to rot by a hasty park attendant. When she lifted her head and took in the leaden sky and the barren trees, he also became aware of her contemptuous anger, probably directed at the thieving god who annually looted Persephone's Garden.

She wanted the green again. She wanted it so much that a clear picture of it could not form in her thoughts, only its twisted abstract expression, with the color of summer's inestimable flowers blended in; too deep for watercolor, too muted for tempera.

"Hello, Elizabeth," the man said quietly when he came close.

He saw that she hardly noticed him, was considering the damp path to her left and right while shaking her head with regret. Suddenly she raised her dark eyes, looked directly at him with the desire to spear his body, to cause him to cry out in pain. He was someone else to her.

“Gone.” She said. “Why? He understood the gift. I know he did. Even if taken roughly, he understood all about it, yet he wouldn’t stay.”

The man shrugged. “He was a fool.”

Silence...The remembered and overwhelming verdure merged with the hot solstice blooms to become a self-portrait in her thoughts. She was caught up again in two exquisite prior moments typical of those that transcend quotidian reality. Their separate pleasure and pain united in her like an abstract image of the colors of the lost summer. She wore a light and airy dress. Her shoulders were bare and, with eyes closed, she uttered silent expressions of both agony and delight—opposite, yet intimately connected. Faced with the burning, immediate verities that put the lie to the mundane, she questioned whether that intangible creature could ever have existed. Where was she now?

She looked up at the man, realized that he too had wishes unfulfilled; or even worse, had wishes that had come true.

“He will never know.” She said, more a question than a statement.

“Not now,” the man replied. “An accident.” He hesitated. “And the other?”

“That was no accident.”

Was it only the surprise, or perhaps that small hint of scorn that his faced revealed that made her draw back? He wanted to reach out his hand but couldn’t.

In the sudden windy autumn shower that would steal the last russet leaves she began to weep.

Everyone is eventually betrayed by Time or Love. And everyone is guilty of a failure of betrayal by not taking the time to enter into the mysteries of those around us, to become part of them, to come to terms with them, to be like them on the outside, and thereby achieve a deeper understanding. What is the capability? Nothing lasts—a man or woman, beautiful to behold, a child in one’s arms, a landscape only half remembered, a short but moving song or piece of instrumental music, fleeting and unexpected. Things, in regret, are recalled, but never reclaimed



A Tale of Two Sails

Jim Garb

the fore while the name of a new acquaintance is lost in the Fibber McGee's closet of my mind. Many games we played had the advantage of adapting to a solitary pastime and could be perfected in private. How many hours did I spend endlessly bouncing a ball off the side of the garage chanting "*Plainsies, Clapsies, Roll the Ball, To Backsies,*" and was the time wasted? I don't think so. I learned persistence, patience, and coordination and had fun at the same time!

Other games, such as *Red Rover*, *Please May I*, and even the impromptu baseball games organized in the street, taught other lessons. Some people are more popular than others, some are more talented and therefore more desirable, some cheat, and some possess a boundless exuberance that obscures any other defect! Baseball, particularly, taught teamwork. The bat, the ball, and a couple of gloves were the possessions of various kids, all of whom had to be enticed to play at the same time!

The outstanding point of all these games was that they were organized completely by the participants. Parents and teachers left us blissfully alone. They were available to bandage any major injuries, and sometimes, an athletic dad would join us for a few minutes after dinner, but by and large, we were left to ourselves. We learned to negotiate, cajole, organize, and improvise.

Where do children learn these lessons now? Today's organized sports try to teach some, such as good sportsmanship or teamwork but also teach lessons we learned much later. Adults are fallible and can be biased, unfair, impatient, or unreasonable. They learn about pressure and intense competition. And they lose spontaneity. Kids don't play ball because they feel like it. Because it's a golden afternoon, and you just want to be in it. They don't gather for a hockey game because the ice is just right, and the temperature invites physical exertion. They play on a strict schedule that disrupts sleep and mealtimes and turns parents into chauffeurs.

I remember summers when the days stretched endlessly, unstructured and free. We had to entertain ourselves, and we did. Today, children left to their own devices seem to end up in front of the television or computer screen no matter how glorious the day. Yes, the world seemed a safer place then, and our boundaries were larger. Still, even in the confines of two connecting yards, we played hopscotch, *Monopoly*, marbles, and, now politically incorrect, cowboys and Indians. Games of hide and seek played in the falling darkness added an element of delicious scariness.

Will today's children remember summer with the same nostalgia? Will certain summers stand out in their minds, such as the summer of *Monopoly* when we sat for hours at the picnic table while empires rose and fell? Or the summer we learned to swim out to the float? Or the summer someone's dad constructed rope platforms in a few small apple trees, and we spent our days among the rustle of the leaves?

Is anyone out there for a game of *Red Rover*?

Moody Junction

Diane Brooke

I was too young to even know the Ten Commandments when I first broke one definitively. And not just once but for years! I coveted Roger Moody's train set! I knew it was useless to even dream of having such a thing for myself. In the late '40s, girls didn't have train sets, and my mother and I, living with my grandparents, could never have afforded it anyway.

We lived in a Cambridge apartment house, and Roger was the only other child in this rather sedate establishment. Age and propinquity made playmates of us, and I was as welcome in his apartment as he was in ours. Roger, the only child of older and wealthier parents, had more toys than I could imagine and a real magician at his birthday party, but none of this aroused my envy. It was his train set.

This was truly enviable. I don't remember its set up in their apartment, but I do remember that the train had its own room when the Moodys moved to a single house up the street . It was not a playroom with other toys but a room where the table took up the entire space save for a walkway around it. I believe it was a Lionel, although brands didn't have much meaning for me, and it had everything! There were chutes where cattle filed into a cattle car, logs rolled down onto a special flatbed, water tanks filled up the water car and the engine itself, puffed and smoked and gave that long-drawn-out whistle that makes vagabonds of us all. Tiny people were waiting at the miniature station, driving along the shaded streets, passing the time of day in front of the general store, and tilling the outlying fields. There were bridges, tunnels, and signals that really worked. I longed for an hour alone with this wonder, but even this tame dream was beyond my grasp. Roger was bored with the train, and only my most eloquent pleading would move him to start it up and put it through a couple of its paces. I would be begrudgingly allowed to work on one precious accessory, and then it was shut off, and Roger was looking for something else to do.

When we were old enough to be allowed to walk down Mass Ave., we would visit the Hobby Shop where Roger might purchase some new wonders for his train, and I would content myself with one or two of the tiny people which were within my skimpy budget.

Well, of course, times change. My mother remarried and we moved to the country. Sisters and a brother arrived. I grew up. Once, in my teens, Roger invited me to a dance at his school, but the bond between us had vanished, and we went our separate ways. I never asked him about the train set.

But I hope he still has it! I hope he had children and, perhaps by now, grandchildren who have played with that wondrous setup. Perhaps it has gotten broken over the years, and pieces have been lost, but I hope there is still enough there to fascinate a child, even a child of the Nintendo generation! My sons had a train set, but, like Roger, they were bored. I bought one of them an engine that smoked and whistled! It was really for me, but the thrill was not the same. I guess your first train set is the one you always remember.

God Doesn't Count Hours Spent Fishing

Janice Botelho

In January 1992, my husband Ed's surgeon walked slowly into his hospital room. He sat next to Ed's bed and gave him the terrifying news as gently as possible: Pancreatic Cancer! He looked the kind doctor straight in the eye and said, with amazing conviction, "I'll beat it; I have too much fishing to do."

Over the next few difficult months, he repeated it to every doctor, nurse, and me often enough that, in spite of my fear and sadness, I began to believe him. How could I not? He was certain. His plan was to be fishing for trout by the end of May. And as the weeks turned to months, I began to realize that the seemingly impossible dream was his miracle motivation.

A soft, warm day May 28th, the kind of day that feels like God has given us a gift after a cold and terribly hard winter, I stood on the beach and watched Eddie reel in a beautiful rainbow trout. He was still very thin and a bit weak, but with a triumphant smile on his face, he held up that fish for a picture. To the amazement of his doctors and me, he fished in one tranquil, beautiful spot or another for 25 more years. I guess that God doesn't count hours spent fishing.



Brewster Flats

David Mullen

Secret Alarm

Martie Dumas

Lilac and Edie are friends from the Thirwood Gym, but at 80 years old and 93, respectively, neither would answer to 'gym rat.'

Today, Labor Day, they meet to do the exercise program they perform every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday morning at 9:30 with the director, Re-Ann.

Lilac, who suffered a stroke, arrives at the gym door in her motorized chair to find Edie outside pacing.

"What's going on?" she asks.

Edie, who never swears, answers, "The damn door is locked."

"What." Lilac sneezes. "This door is never locked."

"Bless you," says Edie, "I know."

Lilac isn't concerned. Edie is the Librarian, and she knows everybody. "I've just texted Serpico."

"What . . . wait a minute," says Lilac. "You know how to text."

"Sure do." Edie stands proud. "My nieces."

"Ah, I get it. And a smartphone, too."

Edie laughs. "Can't text without one."

Lilac lets out a breath. "I guess we'll have to wait."

Edie says, somewhat shyly. "Can I ask you something of a personal nature?"

Lilac smiles and nods her head.

Edie dives right in, "How did you get your name?"

Lilac smiles in a big way. "My daddy named me."

"Really." She says.

"Yep. The story goes like this." Lilac settles herself in her chair.

"My mother loved lilacs, and my daddy always bought them for her, so when I was born, he handed me over to my mother and said, "Here is the most beautiful lilac of all."

Edie and Lilac hear the jingle of keys. "That must be Pico," says Edie.

Serpico, or Pico, from the Maintenance Department, hails from Jamaica. With a shiny pate and a lovable disposition, Pico's in his sixties and sad to everyone, soon to retire. Everybody loves Pico.

Pico struts toward them. "Hi there, girls. What're you doing working out on a holiday?"

"It's the best time, Pico," says Edie.

Lilac chimes in, "No one to bother us."

Pico takes out his ring of keys, finds the master, and unlocks the door.

"There you go, girls. Have fun."

"Thank you."

Both women enter the gym. The gym boasts ample space: about the size of a high-school girls' basketball court with a wall on one side of three large glass windows, measuring 8 feet in length and 4 feet high. Under these windows rests a black wooden bar, wide enough to wrap a hand around. Lilac calls it "the ballet barre."

At the back end of the gym, four strength-training machines are juxtaposed next to each other. These machines are connected to each other and powered by weights. A large mirror is hung against the back wall. Next to that mirror lies a rack with hand weights ranging from one to 50 pounds, plus Thera Bands. Into a corner across from the weight rack sits a fitness machine called the Nu Step. It's a recent donation by a resident.

The front of the room possesses a wall-mounted television. It features regular TV programming plus music of your choice. In addition, there are amenities like a wall phone, hooks to hang outerwear, and a water cooler. There are more fitness items: a rowing machine, two stationary bikes, and a treadmill.

Open floor space in the middle of the room is large enough for chair and floor yoga classes.

With her grey steel walker in front of her, Edie heads over to the row of chairs and pulls out one to create a space for Lilac's power chair. Lilac remains in her chair to perform the exercises.

Lilac goes toward the weights rack and pulls out 1-lb. weights for Edie and herself. Edie retrieves the Thera Bands.

With the exercise supplies resting on the chair between them, Lilac asks, "We ready?"

Eddie answers, "Let's go."

First, the leg stretches, followed by twists, then stretches of the spine, called 'cat and cow' just like yoga.

"Now the weights," calls out Eddie. Both women do bicep curls and triceps curls, followed by hammer curls.

During these repetitive exercises, something in the ceiling catches Lilac's eye.

She's unsure at first, but Lilac notices a rhythm to the small flashes that emanate from a ceiling light she swears was never there until now.

Unwilling to stop their exercise flow, she calls out to Eddie.

Eddie, who continues to take breaths and perform her punches, finally rests her weights on her lap, "Yeah, Lilac."

"Look up."

Eddie is mesmerized by what she sees. "What's that?"

"Dunno," Lilac puts down her weights.

Suddenly, Rudolph, one of the security guards, jumps into the gym.

Rudolph, who towers over six feet in a burly physique, has a black bushy head of springy curls that frame his face.

A scowl of a face that reads, "Do not mess with me."

"You come to join us, Rudolph," Lilac says with a laugh.

Rudolph is taken aback for a sec. "What are you ladies doing here?"

Eddie answers. "We're doing our exercise routine."

Lilac punches with a weight, "Without interruptions."

"Or so we thought." Eddie picks up a Thera band. "What are you doing here, Rudolph?"

"We-l-l," stutters Rudolph. "First, the Silent Alarm in the ceiling gave you away. We didn't know if it worked, it being on a sensor." Rudolph walks in front of the two women. "And second, Senior Management wants this room closed and locked."

"But why?" Lilac wants to know.

"No one is supposed to be here." Says Rudolph. "Senior Management wants holidays quiet for open house activity."

"Really," exclaims Lilac. She picks up her Thera Band. "Wouldn't watching folks exercising show good use of the gym?"

"Think what you like." Rudy collects the gym toys and puts them away. "You're not Senior Management."

After Rudolph puts the gym supplies away, he points his finger toward the door. "Bye-bye, you two."

Angry and disappointed, Edie and Lilac leave reluctantly. "We didn't even get to finish our routines." Lilac moaned. "It's not fair."

Rudolph's finger continues to point toward the door.

"C'mon, Lilac," Edie shuffles with her walker. "We'll get to the bottom of this."

My First Beau Was Blue

Ellen Nosal



My beau Working on Beau
Ellen Nosal

Getting my driver's license in August of 1973 set me up for a lifetime behind the wheel. In a house with plenty of used cars belonging to my licensed older siblings, I had to borrow wheels. Mom was willing to lend me the 1971 Saab, but I struggled with the three-speed manual shift on the column. I could get around town in a pinch, but I never got comfortable with the shifting. As I recall, the death knell for my experience with the Saab sounded the day I found myself at the top of a hill in Wethersfield, Connecticut, at a stop light, with a line of cars behind me. Luckily, my sister Mary was in the passenger seat, so we switched seats right there at the light, and she got it going without rolling back into anyone.

In the spring of 1974, I acquired my first car—a 1965 Mercury Comet in a sad state of disrepair. My brother, Howard, probably brokered the deal. Probably for less than \$200. My then-boyfriend/now-husband, Ken, got to work on the heavily rusted body, including replacing the floorboard on the driver's seat side with the front of an old refrigerator. Up until then, I called it the Flintstone mobile – like the foot-powered car driven by Fred Flintstone. Buckets of Bondo were sculpted over sheet metal and riveted above the remains of the wheel wells. With the exhaust system repaired and no longer belching into the driver's seat, the risk of asphyxiation was minimal. I selected Nassau Blue for the paint, and Ken sprayed it into an almost presentable vehicle.

Thus, the long tradition of naming cars began. Beauregard joined the car corral at our home on Neipsic Road in Glastonbury, Connecticut. French for "good looking," I chose the name Beauregard. It was quite tongue-in-cheek, of course. I loved finally giving up the school bus and driving to high school for the remaining months of my senior year.

"Beau" was my chariot for commuting to the Hartford branch of UConn in West Hartford, starting in the fall of 1974. With a bit of luck, I could get there in 30-40 minutes, five days a week. That's all I needed. I wasn't planning a world tour. But, with the early arrival of winter, I needed snow tires. I left Beau in the trusted hands of Howard's friend, Skippy, at Hallmark Tire in Glastonbury. When I went to pick it up, Skippy said, "I can't let you drive this home, Ellen." He opened the trunk to show springs popping up right through the rusted frame. Through some logistical magic, Beau made his way to another Skip's house (Howard's brother-in-law) to have the frame welded. You will note that if I were paying real money for all these improvements, it would have totaled the cost of a much better car.

In January of 1976, I started taking classes on the Storrs campus of UConn. My commute from home was about 40 minutes, heading east this time, five days a week. The winter brought many challenges, but I was determined to get there and back. Campus rarely canceled classes, so I trudged along on back roads that were usually in want of a recent plowing. I took a job at the

Daily Campus newspaper, selling ads, just to have a bit of gas money. Good ol' Beau rattled and clunked but never failed me. Getting up the steep, snowy driveway in the dark was usually the hardest part of the trip. One needed just the right approach and speed.

Beau was replaced with a red 1972 Comet in 1978. I loved the snazzy white vinyl top and bucket seats, but that car always ran hot and had transmission problems. It was on its way within a couple of years. The fact that I can't remember that car's name should tell you it was no substitute for the true Beau in my heart.

First Rotary

Paula Bacon

Around the river is maritime history at every turn. The roundabout or first rotary on River Street has a story intertwined with the passage of time. Horses, bound to the wharves at the end of River Street to meet the barges and small packet boats, would quench their thirst at the horse trough on the public way to meet the need to provide water for the working animals. A blacksmith would tend to the pump and forge new horseshoes in his shop, which was now used as a garage. Water troughs were more common than today's gas stations. About every three miles, a community would maintain a horse trough until hoof and mouth disease discouraged the practice, and the electric automobile replaced the horses. At a later age, a rotary would emerge.

And at my backdoor, the local mason, Billy Bohane, who reworked the landmark, told me the story. That was on High Bank, where talented craftsman Billy gave new life to the crumbled steps of my old 1841 Greek Revival house. Billy made the rotary perfectly round by carefully placing each brick himself to control the circle. This is a reminder that what happens on the banks of Bass River may change, as does the water that flows by, but the river is like a connective thread. Pleasant Street was a dirt road in those times. But with the auto, the street was paved, and a rotary emerged. A car smashed into the original rotary, trying to go straight. Mistake. One has to go around a rotary.

Back to the working waterfront: start on the rock pile off of West Dennis Beach. Ships would unload goods for mercantile like wheat and corn from mid-Atlantic states or for lumber and coal yards from nearer places. Three buildings existed on the rocks. And the mouth of the river was straight toward shore then. The mouth drifted west over the years. That movement tries to continue today in spite of the rock jetty. Barges and small sailing craft would transfer what was unloaded through the mouth of the river to the wharves all along lower Bass River to waiting horses and wagons.

Another era brings civil engineer Charles Henry Davis (1865-1951) to the scene. He bought up land and what was on it. He took three small houses and made one house with seven chimneys, from which the house was named "the House of Seven Chimneys." The Judah Baker windmill was there, too, and later moved to its present site with an early historic preservation effort led by Charles Henry and his yachtsman buddy Ted Frothingham. Saltworks were all along the shore to help provide a means to preserve the fish before salt was sourced cheaper from mines in places like upstate New York.

Davis was originally from Philadelphia. He was known as a mover and shaker. As president and co-founder of the National Highway Association 1911, he promoted the idea of "Good Roads Everywhere" as the automobile era demanded more road construction. Davis also founded the World Peace Movement. A rotary was just one of the ideas that Davis thought would improve life.

The Great New York City Fire Of 1776

Jim Sefcik

On September 21, 1776, just 12 weeks after the Declaration of Independence and six days after the British Army had captured it, fire destroyed 20% of Manhattan. How did the combustion start? Was it an accident or arson? Who was responsible?

In 1776, New York City was North America's 2nd largest urban center, the home of some 25,000 residents. It was a major port and the headquarters of the British Army. The population was diverse, with many religions, divided politics, great disparities of wealth, and 14% of its population was enslaved.

New York had a history of arson, notably in conjunction with slave uprisings in 1712 and 1741, as well as a pattern of violence, especially involving protests against the Stamp Act in 1765 and following Lexington and Concord 10 years later. Also, many of the buildings were wooden, and while there were 11 fire companies in the city, about 1/3rd of the firemen had fled prior to the arrival of the British.

The British had a policy of burning towns in War. They shelled Charlestown, MA, in June 1775, Falmouth, ME, and Norfolk, VA, in 1776 and continued to do more throughout the Revolutionary War. General Gage had told Admiral Graves in September 1775 that it was okay "to lay waste such Sea Port towns." American radicals also favored burning cities in protest of Parliament acts and to keep out British forces. Even George Washington considered destroying New York City to deny its use to the British. On more than one occasion, he discussed the matter with his staff and ultimately asked the Continental Congress for guidance. Following discussion, Congress was not opposed to the idea, but they never ordered him to do so.

Both the Americans and the British understood the strategic significance of New York. Both sought to occupy the moral high ground throughout the War and wanted to tarnish their opponent's reputation. It was more than simply a military exercise throughout.

In the early summer of 1776, the largest amphibious force ever assembled up to that time arrived in New York. Ultimately, British forces numbered more than 400 ships and 30,000 troops, including Hessian. Washington countered with approximately 28,000, many of whom were poorly trained, ill-disciplined, and from New England, where New Yorkers were not especially loved! During the battle for Long Island in August, both armies had no reservations about putting buildings to the torch.

Fire broke out in Manhattan around midnight on September 21 near Whitehall Slip on the East River. Soon, there were reports of as many as 50 different places burning as strong winds blew in from the west. Responding firefighters found broken pumps, few working nozzles, and fire buckets with missing handles, some of which had been cut off. The Americans and the British reported seeing men and women carrying combustible materials and matches and starting fires. Some were captured and imprisoned by the British. Some were stabbed with bayonets. And a few were even thrown into a fire, including a woman. Collectively, at least eight people were killed by both sides.

Overwhelming evidence showed that the fire was deliberately set, either by rebel soldiers, rowdy civilians, or disaffected persons from either side. More than 45 acres were incinerated, and between 200 and 1500 buildings were destroyed, including many mansions. Trinity Church and the Customs House were also heavily damaged. The fire spread from the west side of Manhattan along the Hudson River, went up Broad Street to Whitehall, then crossed Wall Street to Broadway and north to Church Street. It was said that signs of the conflagration could be seen as far as New Haven, CT, which is 70 miles away!

The British rounded up about 200 men and women on suspicion of involvement with the burning; most were quickly discharged. No British soldier was charged with arson. The investigation undertaken by General Howe has never been released; Howe's papers were destroyed by fire in 1826. But, as one of the Peace Commissioners, he wanted the incident to go away as quickly as possible to avoid unfavorable publicity and to curry favor with Americans. Both sides, however, utilized the press to present their version of the story. The British and the Loyalists blamed the Americans, but Washington had withdrawn his Continentals to Harlem Heights before the blaze began.

In October 1783, less than two months before the British finally evacuated New York, General Carleton convened a commission to investigate what had happened seven years earlier. Thirty-eight depositions were taken, of which six stipulated the fire resulted from an accident. None of the remaining 32 blamed the British.

Despite the Great Fire, the British occupied New York City thereafter throughout the Revolutionary War. Its strategic location between New England and the Middle and Southern states and its deep-water harbor overrode the difficulties of remaining in the heavily damaged town.

So, who do you blame for the Great New York City Fire of 1776?

My Favorite Car

John McWilliam

Why is there such a fascination with the automobile in America, particularly by men? We didn't invent it. Daimler and Benz did that in Germany. We don't make the most beautiful. The Ferraris and Lamborghinis of Italy did that. We don't even make the most reliable. Leave that to the Japanese. America's skin in the game is quantity. We make more cars than anyone else, thanks to Henry Ford. As always, in America, more is better. Chevy, Ford, Oldsmobile, Cadillac, GMC, Chrysler, Pontiac, and even Tesla are Made in the USA.

The all-American man has internalized the car to be a part of his DNA: strength – horsepower; speed - seconds from zero to 60 miles per hour; and size – turbocharged engine. Being able to differentiate cars by design is a whole other matter. The preoccupation of adolescent boys in the 1950s, including my brother and me, was to tell the difference between a Chevy Bel Air with its two-tone color and a wraparound windscreen from an Oldsmobile with its fins. We would stand on the Humboldt Parkway overpass in Buffalo, New York, quizzing each other on the make of each car rushing under us. To do this today would be impossible. How many times have I gotten into a black Honda SUV in the Stop and Shop parking lot when my black Highlander was in the next row?

While I have my share of favorite car stories, my most prized car was a used Dodge Minivan. Anyone who has owned this model in the 1990s knows how wonderful it was. When I was assigned to India for a job, I was given a shipping allowance for a car. Naturally, the Dodge Minivan had to take up that allowance. In India, 22 people out of a thousand own a car, a low number compared to the U.S., with 980 out of a thousand. However, with a billion-plus population, the number of cars on the sub-continent dwarfs most statistics. I was proud to know that my Dodge Minivan was the only one with all these cars. The predominant car in India during the '90s was still the black Ambassador. You may remember it from pictures of the Raj, with Mountbatten exiting the car and Nehru waiting to greet him. I was happy to supply the Minivan, an American icon, to the roads of Delhi.

Then, the Minivan hit a snag. The driver and I went to the airport at midnight to pick up a friend arriving from the U.S. The driver left me off to greet my friend and drove to the airport parking lot. We waited for the driver to return to arrivals to pick us up, but he never came. I walked back to the parking lot and found the driver trying to start the Minivan, to no avail. My friend and I took a taxi home, and the driver stayed with the car to be serviced the next day. However, by 8 a.m. that morning, the Minivan was in the garage of my home. The inventiveness and hutzpah of the driver cannot be overstated. He found a length of barbed wire on a fence at the airport and tied it to the front bumper of the Minivan and the back bumper of an Ambassador taxi, which he had hired to pull the Minivan from the airport to my home in the middle of one of the largest cities in the world.

Finding a mechanic to ascertain why the Minivan didn't work was not an easy task. There were no American car dealerships in Delhi. The embassy helped as they had their own garage to service their fleet of Chevrolets. A mechanic was found. The diagnosis was completed with the sad news that it was not repairable in India. It needed a part, the computer system, that only

Dodge dealers have. The Minivan would remain in the garage unless we could get the part. Fortunately, I was scheduled for a trip back to the U.S. I was able to buy the part, large as it was, and put it in my luggage. However, I could only buy it with the promise that the original computer would be returned to the Dodge dealership, as it was a proprietary part. I do not believe that the diplomatic pouch ever before had a Dodge Minivan computer system included in its contents going to Washington.

The resurrection of the Minivan was short-lived, however. It soon became a piece of furniture in the garage, and we had to lease a ubiquitous black Ambassador. Each time my wife stepped out of the car, she felt like Lady Mountbatten. When packing to return to the U.S., we contemplated bringing back an Ambassador. It would have been a hoot driving it in D.C. However, the love for the Minivan -- no matter that it didn't run, was old and had caused so many problems in India -- overcame our flirtation with the Ambassador. When our shipment arrived, the Minivan was on its home soil and returned to plying the highways around Washington after an expensive visit to the Dodge Service Center.

Mother Goose is by now a multi-time Great-grandma. She of the nursery rhymes was a domestic goose, responsible for many a feather bed and, unfortunately, many Christmas dinners. Still she is proud of the stories boys and girls of a pre-tech generation learned, recited and still remember.

(Old Mother Hubbard went to the cupboard to get her poor dog a bone...}

Old Mother Hubbard had the grand idea of rescue shelters for many a poor dog, and cat, and various other animals. "Mere bones to gnaw on are not enough," said she. Now the animals are adopted well fed. They are loved and give love in return.

(... she had so many children she didn't know what to do...)

The Old Woman Who Lived in a Shoe finally got her kids through college— on scholarships! They bought her a condo; quite a few return between mates or jobs. She joined a quilting guild and makes crib quilts for many grandchildren and sells extras on Etsy.

(Mary had a little lamb, and everywhere that Mary went, the lamb was sure to follow...)

Mary, unfazed by much, including wandering sheep, saved her money, bought a big ranch in Montana, raised her sheep organically, never crowded in tight pens, and never fed hormones. She also raises llamas and angora goats. Their wool goes into the scarves that cost as much as a fur coat.

(Miss Muffet sat on a tuffet, eating her curds and whey, along came a spider who sat down beside her...)

Miss Muffet became lactose intolerant. She became a vegan. She knew sitting on tuffet attracted insects and caused sciatica.

She joined a gym became a devotee of the Cooking Channel. She learned to reupholster tuffets in cool modern fabrics and colors and has a thriving business with the best interior decorators.

(Mary, Mary, quite contrary, how does your garden grow)

Mary, a Master Gardener and ikebana expert wanted to become a star in the world of floral artistry but her personality was a detriment; she scoffed at all advice to get psychiatric help. She self-medicated with street drugs, added home grown belladonna and a large amount of marijuana and lost all interest in horticulture or any kind of culture for that matter.

(Jack and Jill went up a hill to fetch a pail of water. Jack fell down and broke his crown, and Jill came tumbling after.

Alas, poor Jack and Jill! The concussions they suffered have limited their lives. Lengthy rehab and counseling have allowed them to live meaningful lives as call center employees and leisure time bingo callers at a senior center.

Little Beau Peep lost her sheep and didn't know where to find them.

Beau Peep, as she chose to spell it, refused to believe she had early-onset Alzheimer's. Her grown children took her car keys and bought a pair of border collies to bring her home when she wanders into the nearby Walmart and can't find her way home.

(Three blind mice, see how they ran after the farmer's wife. She cut off their tails...

The farmer's son became a medical researcher who caught the mice, did ocular implants, and gave them prosthetic tails. Now, they run around mazes and take part in research trials.

(Jack Spratt could eat no fat, his wife could eat no lean ...)

Jack Spratt had the body of a mega-marathoner. He actually doesn't run but writes about the sport in Outside Magazine. Their marriage ended bitterly. Shirley Spratt joined a Big is Beautiful group. She became a promoter of World-Wide-Wondrous-Woman pageants after becoming the tenth wife of a Zambebian tribal chief.

(Peter, Peter, pumpkin eater, had a had a wife and couldn't keep her ...)

Peter, the owner of Pumpkin Pies for All Occasions, like Jack Spratt, had a lousy marriage. After three divorces, he married a botanist who published articles about the superior health advantages of eating the many members of the squash family.

(Humpty-Dumpty sat on a wall, Humpty-Dumpty had a great fall...)

Humpty-Dumpty was taken to the ER, where a brilliant trauma doctor put him back together and sent him to a Brazilian plastic surgeon who worked a miracle with blond comb-over wig, blue contact lenses, navy suits, and red neckties. Because of the uncertainty of the patch job, his only exercise is golf. His brain was so scrambled in the fall that the mix of yolk, albumin, gravel, and Superglue made coherent thinking impossible.



Garden *Wayne Miller*

Poetry

An Unlikely Guest

Diane Hanna

Curious to consider an elephant
in the living room. No place for her
to sit so she uses her trunk, moves settees
and coffee tables to make space against
the wall, looks into the fire, wishes for
a bag of peanuts, galoshes, a warm hat.

It might be troubling: the tracked-in straw,
mud on her huge, galumphing feet, but I am
moved by her rheumy, bottom-of-the-well
eyes that speak of time eternal and all like-
minded souls who wander the high plains
under hard blue skies.

We have tea and talk of yearning, how
it takes you away from dishes in the sink,
unmade beds, all those weary routines, away
to drifty horizons in the back of the mind,
road trips on the wind, dizzying heights
of accessible stars, and moon-falls in the backyard.

Her eyes are full of story. Listening,
I forget her weight and messes underfoot.
Forget that she is an elephant and I
a chronicler of emptiness. Really no need
for words when our hearts bump together,
each recognizing her own

Wisdom of a Horseshoe Crab

Havana Moss

Walking into deeper water for a swim
A horseshoe crab comes shuffling toward me
Making steady progress
Against the outgoing tide.

I stop and watch, hands on my knees.
He is medium sized
With scattered barnacles on his shell
Not so old, not so young
Coming closer now
And about to run over my foot!
I step one foot aside
He passes between them
Makes a U turn and stops.

But how can this be? Why is he not afraid?
I think his navigation system must be off
Or he is puzzled by my foot in his path
Or the current swirling about my ankles.
Is it possible to make a brief connection
With this ancient homely creature?
Wait, I think he has something to tell me
And it is this:

How to Survive for 450 Million Years
Keep your spiny shell on top
And your soft belly protected
Follow your chosen path
Keep all eight of your eyes wide open
Harm no one and carry no weapons
A sharply pointed tail
Is only to flip yourself over
When you are upside down.

The Theory of the Last Hors d'oeuvres

Marjorie Wright

When we first arrived, the tray was full
There were so many to choose from
Why hurry
Later it just seemed a little silly to
Narrow the range of choice
Best to keep your options open
There was so much time...
Until recently when it was
Hard to ignore
How diminished the supply
How few were left
What! Just this last one?
It certainly looks luscious
But it wouldn't be right

Bald-Faced Hornets' Nest

DJ Foley

Bald-faced hornets' nest
Vital in spring
Bigger than a child's balloon
High in the maple tree
Bouncing among the greenery
Hornets dash about
Constructing milky
Paper condominiums
Slight swelling softens
Its heart shape
that hangs over
the street

Nervous neighbors
comment on the
growing bulge
Getting an exterminator?
No, no need
30 feet from us
Great for
garden pests
Thriving community

Now,
tattered nest
dangles in
the bare tree
Empty
Sad harbinger of winter
On its way

Hornet's Nest – 1 *Jack Foley*



Hornet's Nest -2 *Jack Foley*

Whimsy

Mary Nyman

Autumn trudges
down a dusty road,
wreathed in her
archaic summer clothes.

Purple asters
mark her train
trailing the boulders
warming in the sun.

The shadows stretch
across the afternoon
while brash winds blow
to ripples on the lake.

The wild geese voice
the commonplace,
in irrevocable response
to what a season makes.



Autumn Trees

Joe Gonzalez

Almost Haikus

Joe Gonzalez

Simple is the love
Given freely to cherish:
Undesigned, unwrapped.

Frozen windowpanes.
Short-term frigid beauty.
Life beats a warning.

Rusted by the cold wind
Winter leaves hang on, trembling.
Stubborn flock of birds.



Mirror with Sunflower
Joan Freedman

An Ode to Exercise

Marjorie Wright

Oh how I love thee, let me count the
Reps. By running, jumping to avoid the strain. As time goes by
I know I must just keep on trying. Hold the string
To keep from flying. Like Peter Pan
I'm younger daily. Or so I hope as slip and sliding
Down the slope. — I grope
For youth, forever
Trying.



Rocking Horse
Joan Freedman

Elmers Cottage, 1923

Diane Hanna

The sea was nowhere in sight.
Still you could smell tides coming in,
hear gulls squeal far off in the milky skies.

We lived here in summer, knee-deep
in meadow, our feet bare, limbs unfettered.

Hot days melted into each other
under buttery suns. Nights were clouded
with dreams never far from want.

The sea was nowhere in sight.



Homage to Hopper *David Mullen*

Carolina Wren

Havana Moss

Good morning little Ms. Wren
Perched on a gutter
Peering down at her messy nest
On the corner of my porch.

With black eyeliner and a bold white eyebrow
Short stiff wren tail pointing straight up
How such a small bird can sing so loudly
Is a mystery.
“Chewy chewy chewy chewy”

And “Machu Pichu Machu Pichu.”
She bounces up and down
Looking left and right

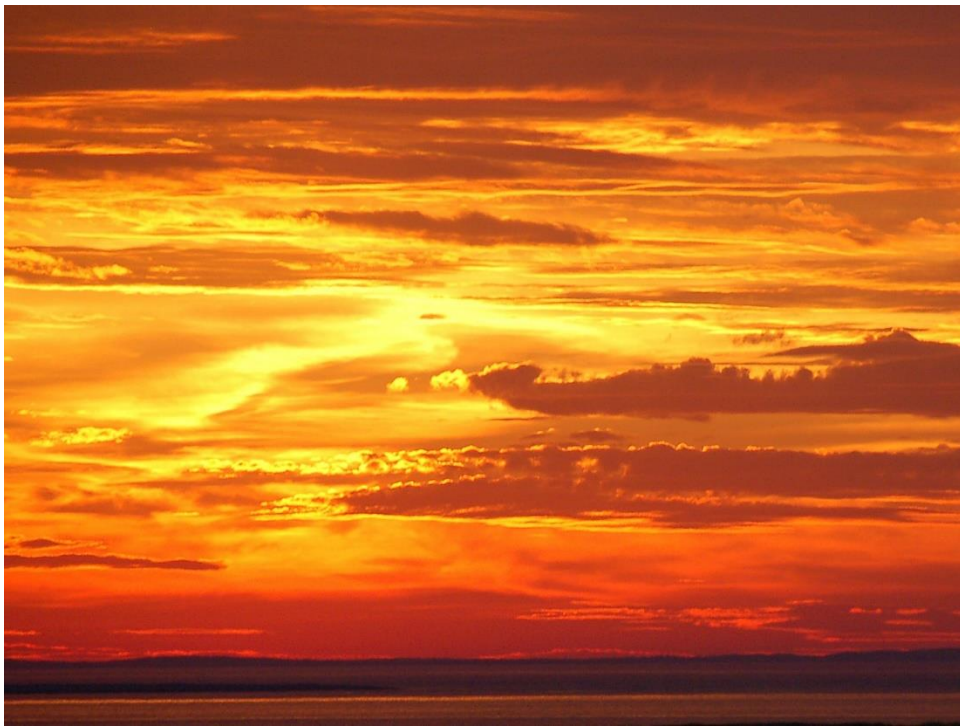
And brings small treats in her bill.
Her man is nearby watching
He doesn't seem to help out
Except to stand guard
And proclaim the presence
Of his small family .

The Awakening

Kathleen Murray

Still black.
And then a crack,
As sun blood spills
From deep within.
Then blending saffron
heals the wound.
A sunrise like no other.

Peace.



Blazing Sunset

Jim Garb

Presence/Presents

HM Ayres

Gifts of beauty
arrive on the wings of hummingbirds
white foaming waves, and
best friends holding you in their arms
while you cry

By the window
On the beach
With you

I am floating out to sea
Snails and mussels in their delicately patterned homes
accompany me
as I am carried back to shore

Standing up, foam at my feet
I turn
towards inspiration
and hope

Gifts of beauty
arrive on the wings of hummingbirds
white foaming waves
And
Best friends holding you in their arms
while you cry

October Snowfall

Mary Nyman

Who would have thought
the fragile leaves,
transformed by autumn's brush
to golden green and red,
would rub the wind
with crystals pure and white
on a full moon harvest night.

Winter assaults
the consciousness,
spatters its effigies
in corners
of the yard.

I, too, would rest
with color,
long before
the season forces
its demise.



Blue Vision *Jim Garb*

A Looming Life

Carol Coteus

Hand's light touch glides over
twisted strands of warp thread
with the tautness of violin strings.

Durable spun cotton delicate
prickles of mohair lustrous
alpaca dyed indigo and fern.

The mouth of the shed opens
wide to receive a passing shuttle
carrying rich hues of the earth.

Floating side to side
building color and texture
the threads come to life.

Face to fabric day after day
an intimacy develops as
with that of an old friend
together weaving a new story
.



Pink and Green Coleus
Joe Gonzalez

To a Gull Crouched Atop the Subway Stairs

Diane Brooke

What are you doing here?
You who fly so strong and free,
You who ride the ocean's gales
And skim the waves on a stormy day.

What twist of fate brought you so low?
Crouching, injured and sodden,
Your baleful eyes dimmed in pain,
Uncaring of the passersby.

Are you one of the gulls
That soar past my city window?
Who have lifted my heart
On so many mornings?

Bringing with you the memory
Of windswept beaches,
Of whitecaps glittering in sunshine,
Of the tang of the sea.

I won't come home this way.
I couldn't bear to see those yellow eyes
With the fierce light gone.
That effortless soaring stilled.

May your spirit return
To that ocean world
Where the wind blows wild and free.
May your strong wings lift you again,

Far from city dumps,
Far from scrounging for scraps
On a hard city sidewalk,

Far from the inhuman cars.

Nature's Nurture

Mary Bonacker

Tell the birds your troubles,
They will hear your anguish.
Assume grief will disappear,
as wings just flutter funk into the air.

Trust trees with deep secrets.
They may tell the forest,
but won't let your hopes elapse
or hide them in trunks, stuck in the sap.

Make wishes upon stars.
Cosmos can come calling.
Dreams in galaxies will bloom,
return, and tell you when to shoot the moon.

Breezes bearing whispers,
traverse universes,
'til that miracle descends,
and you realize you've caught the wind.

Don't take a snake's embrace.
It cares not for your thoughts,
downs ideas with a mouse-meal,
eliminating chances they'd be real.

If Only

Mary Bonacker

Try not to pose with if-only-ness. It
often pictures loneliness. Not that one
should be untruthful., I just suggest it
is unfruitful to worry over milk that's spilt,
or why you let some flowers wilt.

Good decisions do sit better
that's why you shouldn't have penned that letter.
Everyone will taste regret,
tough twists and turns we can't forget.

Make amends or let wrongs fade
in a lidded box where sorrow stays.



Whale Tale *Jim Garb*

Their Moment of Gold

Connie Austin

Maple leaves

Let loose from their tree

Drift - like butterflies- to alight upon the earth

Those highest up A whole eight seconds of glory

Their final flight in the spotlight. Stardom

They glow against the dark woods behind them. Deep purple backdrop

Shimmering bits of flickering light

While those from the lowest branches must be content with their two seconds to shine

Their tender green-ness - barely recalled - Past glories gone

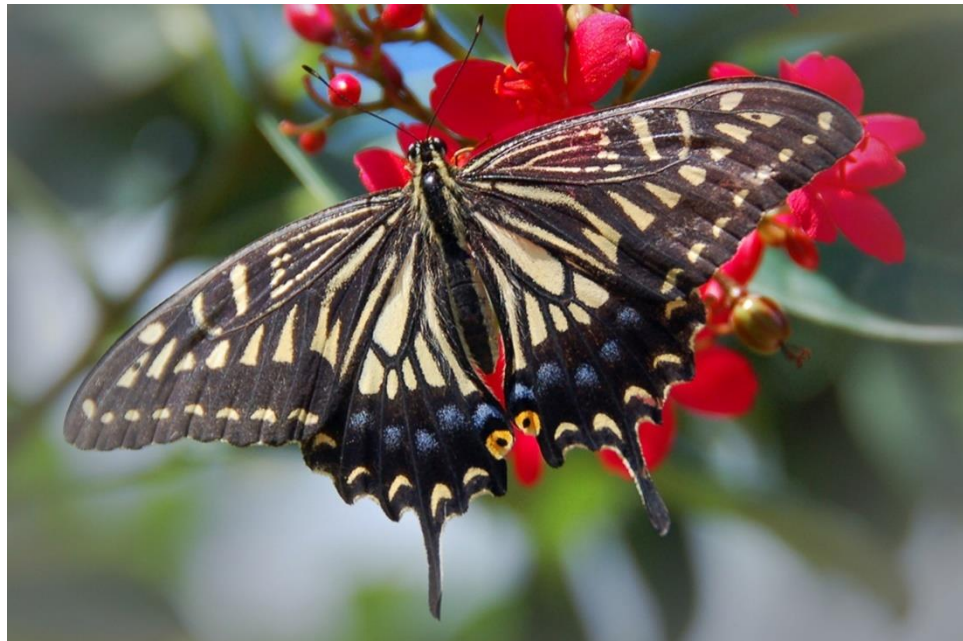
Their battles with caterpillars - with blight - fear of tropical storms

Triumph over adversity Only distant wisps of memory

Their moment is now. Only now

These eight seconds

These two.



Butterfly *Jim Garb*

Two For Two

Joe Gonzalez

I need the push
Of a gentle hand
To right my wrongful path.

I need the warmth
Of a healing heart to
Soothe my psychic wounds.

I need the power
Of a caring angel to
Scare away my fears.

You are the hand.
You are the warmth.
You are the power.

And I will love you.
And I will heal you.
And I will comfort you.
And I will save you.

And so, I save myself tomorrow.

My thoughts are consumed with the initial plunge into
chilling water, a briny bouquet; aching lungs,
racing breath struggling to find rhythm with
straining arms and legs; and then as
though a wave rushes beneath
me I ride into blissful
synchronicity,
an orchestra
of perfection; each
instrument working in
unison with others propelling
my body, freeing my mind to
places in the past or visions
of what will become. It's during these
times when problems are solved, forgiveness
is granted, conversations are engaged
with those no longer here. I
wonder if my laugh is
heard beneath the
surface, or if
others know
when I
empty
tears
from
my
goggles.

Bye the Sea

HM Ayres

There were seagulls at the funeral
Sitting quietly among the mourners
Paying their respects

Waves crashed the ceremony
Releasing deep emotions
Wet with salty tears

Birds took flight
Rising to say the Kaddish
the sun slipped out
to say farewell

The ocean rushed in
Leaving seashell offerings
In its wake



Shades of Gray
Rita Richardson

The Route to Angle Tarn

Marjorie Wright

In tribute to a Lakeland Lover
Returning to be scattered on the tops
Peaks and valleys
Bathed in golds and tawny reds
Cross-cut with stoney walls and roving deer
Rolling mist, cut through with sudden shafts of sunlight
Showering leaves
The walking party setting off
Revisiting an oft-climbed route
The path for thirty years or more
He would have led the way
This last as ashes for the wind
Far-flung too soon
To settle finally in the high spring of Angle Tarn
A resting place he wished to join
Journeyed there by all of us
A lingering salute
Now where he felt that he belonged



The Route to Angle Tarn
from Howtown via Martindale. (Ullswater, Carlisle, UK)
Marjorie Wright

Reunion

Dianne Tattersall

Taking a deep breath, I open the front door
You meet me with a long, quiet hug,
Wrapping fifty years of our lives in our circle.
A hesitant, yet comfortable time of embrace

Before words break the silence and we are talking,
Sharing stories of our separate life paths
Marveling over the similarities that our lives have taken.
Becoming more comfortable, more attuned to each other again
Like we used to be when we were young
Crossing the divide of the fifty years in short order.

At some point you take my hand and time melts away
As we find our way back to each other.

We continue to do that-- find each other over time.
Sweet kisses, long embraces, physical intimacy
It's a wonderful experience
I feel joy and passion -- love reignited!
United after so long apart -- we are blessed
And, I am so very happy -- safe in the warm, quiet corner of your heart.

Alone

Anonymous

Alone
Again
Climb the stairs
The Lark Ascending
Alas, no Lark
Just loneliness
Between the sheets
Not just a fortune cookie
No longer funny
“Do not be afraid of competition.” Between the sheets
“An exciting opportunity lies ahead of you.” Between the sheets
“You are kind and friendly.” Between the sheets
“Plan for many pleasures ahead.” Between the sheets
“Experience is the best teacher.” Between the sheets
“Don't hold onto things that require a tight grip.” Between the sheets
Loneliness
Between the sheets.

Daybreak
Alone
Between the sheets
Arise
Zoloft
The Lark Descending
No Lark
But boiling water
But wrong roast
Too light
Too dark
Wrong again.
 Coffee
 Alone
 Newspaper
 Email
 Connection?
 No one reached out
 No one responded

Abba
Alone for ten years
Or was it longer

Wishing he were here

To ask.

The Father is gone

The Sons are gone

Is the Holy Ghost

Alone?

Am I just a Holy Ghost?

Alone.

Sunset

Dinner

Looking at phones

Reading

TV

Silence

Together

Alone

Again

Climb the stairs

The Lark Ascending

Alas, no Lark

Just loneliness

Between the sheets.

Christmas Presence

Steven Anderson

Front seat passenger
rusted, worn Ford Econoline Van
seventy, glaucoma, bifocals, my job
not to fall on raised cement sidewalk slabs,
potholes hidden by aged oak leaves,
illuminated by long-defunct streetlights,
trip on narrow threadbare wooden front steps
that groan, grind, grizzle under mere presence,
or avalanche down three-story spiral staircase
completed before Great War.

Balanced in back between bulging Hefty trash bags,
Ernie holds index cards four by six,
addresses, names, IDs, phone numbers.
Practices surnames' pronunciations, dials, waits,
"Christmas presents. Five minutes.
Turn the outside light on. Side door?"
John, driver, internal GPS navigates Shoe City's traffic,
one-ways, unregulated intersections, aggressive autos.
At each delivery, pries rear doors open,
retrieves numbered black plastic sacs, checks for dogs.

Occasional young man sparse beard, track shoes,
women just past adolescence
one child in diapers, another on the way,
aspirations untested, bills unpaid,
greet with broad, joyous smiles,
warm thankful words, firm handshakes,
gracious grateful goodbyes.
Grandmothers forty, fatigued,
advice unrecognized, unheeded,
nod, sigh, careful measured grins.

But men of an age bad knees, troubled backs,
stand aside, silent, removed,
aware, embarrassed, their best
forty hours, OT, part-time,
won't pay for both rent and Santa,
cognizant, self-conscious, disappointed,
their kids believe the big man's elves
are three white guys in hoodies,
with 401K's, employer match, dental,
and prosperous privileged Christmases.

South Africa

Steven Anderson

“When people are determined they can overcome anything.” ~ Nelson Mandela

South Africa, eleven official versions of the spoken and written word.
90210-type wealth in the Sandton section downtown Johannesburg.
Hunger, poverty, mind numbing unemployment in Soweto
optimism, aspirations, diligence, dedication, and deep pride though.
Generations of elitist privileged concerned their worlds will collapse,
while those in tin roofed villages drink rancid water from government taps.
New liberties and freedoms but same antiquated, stratified economic status.
No one takes the end of racial oppression, Apartheid, or terror for gratis.
How to hold together, move forward this conflicted nation in long run.
Said Nelson Mandela “It always seems impossible until it is done.”

Legacy

Wayne Miller

Throw nothing away.
Save every toothbrush, save every hat,
every shopping list, refrigerator magnet, every photo.
Leave the underwear drawer full,
keep the shower running and a coffee cup in the car,
so that those who come after us
will know how we lived.

Throw nothing away.
Save every painting, keep every poem,
every song we sang, all the plays we wrote, all the jokes.
Leave the diaries open and the wardrobe full of costumes,
so that those who come after us
will know that we tried.

Throw nothing away.
Save every newspaper, keep every flag,
every slogan, every lie, every gun, every knife,
every slur, every hate, every scream,
so that those who come after us
will know why we failed.



Blackwater *David Mullen*

The Boy in the Attic

Wayne Miller

A boy sits on a pony
in a photo in the attic
face down on a shelf
next to a matryoshka doll.

Behind him is a storefront
with windows and curtains
like the kind you see in old movies
of Leipzig or Budapest.

The boy has a look of uncertainty
as the camera records a moment
in a fear inspired diaspora
that cleansed Russia of gefilte fish and genius.

The boy in the photo is dead now
having taken his last ride in a nursing home wheelchair
ending a life once described as
circumcised, unionized, eulogized.
Shalom.
Yahrzeit? Long forgotten.

And yet
on a shelf in the attic
next to a matryoshka doll
a boy is sitting on a pony



Daily Bread *Rita Richardson*

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Back Cover

Ptown Fence and Sky
Joe Gonzalez

Perfect Wave
Dianne Tattersall

