



Reflections 2021

ACADEMY FOR LIFELONG LEARNING OF CAPE COD

Front Cover Photo: Dianne Tattersall

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Volume 2021



An anthology of poetry, prose and visual arts

Sunset at First Encounter Beach, Eastham June Calender

About Reflections

This year's publication features works of A.L.L. members produced during 2021. This collection of poetry, prose and artwork is rich in memories, insights and humor, thanks to the 39 talented contributors of this unique treasury.

Reflections Team

Editor: June Calender

Editorial Committee: Barbara Berelowitz, Catherine McMullen, Allison Partridge, Mary Nyman, Rita Richardson, Marjorie Wright

About A.L.L.

The Academy for Lifelong Learning (A.L.L.) is a Cape Cod based organization offering academic and practical classes to people aged fifty and over. Its annual two semester program, September to April, offers a wide range of subjects at various locations across the Cape. Classes are led by volunteer coordinators, many retired academics.

A.L.L.'s primary location is at Cape Cod Community College, Grossman Commons, where its administrative office and two dedicated classrooms are based. Course catalogues and further information are available online (www.acall@capecod.edu). Class enrollment takes place in August and January.

CONTRIBUTORS TO REFLECTIONS XXI

Steve Anderson: I am a habitually happy husband, appropriately proud parent and genuinely grateful grandfather. I live in Plymouth with Gail, my wife.

The Golden Thread of Memory page 60

Jean Arnold: As a teacher, life long learning is my mantra. For 13 years A.L.L. has brightened my retirement. Poetry and literature classes have been enriching. I'm grateful for the opportunity to continue learning.

Photo page 52

Connie Austin: I was born on Cape Cod and have lived here for most of my life. My poetry is usually a reflection on some aspect of nature; a "conversation with the universe and with the self".

An Ode for 2021 page 14

Paula Bacon: The ebb and flow of Bass River has always been a part of my life and of my ancestors' lives. A new bridge is cause for celebration although the 2020 goal will not be met because of Covid. The tides still bring new water in each cycle.

Bass River Bridge page 42

Barbara Berelowitz: I was born in Johannesburg, South Africa. I taught German language and literature at Wits University. My husband, three children and I lived in Paris and London finally reaching the U.S. in 1983. I moved to Cape Cod in 2003, happily found A.L.L. two years later and haven't left since.

Virus page 8

Coping page 10

Mary Bonacker: Born in Boston, now resident of Plymouth, recently found A.L.L. and poetry.

Return of the Mayflower page 1

June Bowser-Barrett: I retired from teaching writing at Middlesex Community College and moved to Sandwich in 2016. I am a playwright with over 20 long and short plays produced. My newest venture is a memoir titled *When the Voices in my Head Formed a Chat Group*.

The Blizzard of 1978 page 29

June Calender: I moved to Cape Cod 12 years ago after seeing my plays produced off-off Broadway. I soon discovered A.L.L. and have enjoyed many classes and friendships. Now I write and publish fiction and poetry, and pursue my long-time hobby, quilting.

The Shell Tree page 19

Daydreams page 26

Mary Clare Casey: Having recently moved off Cape to Plymouth, I hope to discover the natural world surrounding my home to further inspire my poetry. My poems link nature with my inner most memories and relationships.

Maclura pomifera page 47

September 11 page 48

Susan Elizabeth Clark: I am weaver of words, fibers, and pigments; Gemini, dreamer.

My Next Life page 27

Re-examining My First Love page 53

Tess Clarkin: I am a member of the Quahog Poets. I have been married for more than 62 years and have 15 grandchildren and 4 great-grandchildren.

When Least Expected page 2

Carol Coteus: I am relatively new to poetry but have always enjoyed journaling. Additional artistic expressions include weaving, photography, and dance. I live in Sandwich.

Silent Neighbors page 14

Photo: Heron page 14

Framed Memories, charcoal drawing & photo page 59

Anna Crebo: I live in Osterville, have served as music reviewer and feature writer for the Cape Cod Times, Cape Life, Cape View, and American Record Guide. I have been the pianist and organist for churches on Cape Cod and the South Shore as well as several musical theater productions. I hold degrees from Harvard (M.A.T.) and West Virginia University (B.A.).

Comet page 4

Sanctum page 4

Call to Prayer page 3

Jack DeBenedetto: I lived for several years in Japan and the Philippines and was a Peace Corps Volunteer in Yemen. These days I write poetry and create in various art media. My poems are in several chapbooks and my blog <https://jackdibenedetto.blogspot.com/>

Gifford Brewster page 60

What Could You Do? page 17

Glyn Dowden: I am from Wales, have three children, five grandchildren. I like to garden, write and perform poetry, have self-published memoirs and poetry books. I do reenactment stage performances of the Welsh Poet Dylan Thomas. I also sing with the Cape Cod Chorale.

Now I Remember page 58

Things I Have Lost page 61

Joe Gonzalez: I worked as a magazine editor in New York City and as a writer and script supervisor in films before retiring to Cape Cod. I teach Film Theory and Spanish at CCCC, co-edit *Escrivientes*, a Spanish Literary Magazine. I am finishing a book of short stories based on my childhood in Cuba.

Christmas Hitch page 31

Stew Goodwin: I graduated from Harvard, got an MBA from Columbia and worked in the investment industry for 35 years. Since retiring to the Cape in 1989 I have been involved in non-profits, local government, and as a coordinator at ALL for more than 15 years. This is my fifth article for **Reflections**.

Leadership

page 49

Barbara Hansen: I am a retired occupational therapist who moved to Cape Cod in 2008. My story in this year's **Reflections** is one of 87 short vignettes included in my recently printed book, **Thrift Shop Stories** based on experiences I had as a thrift shop volunteer.

Ice Cube Trays

page 55

Patti Hughes: I wish I'd used a pseudonym.

Jinx at the Barnstable Comedy Club

page 40

Hats

page 6

Miriam Kronish: I am a former teacher, administrator, and adjunct college instructor. I am a published author of books for children and adults. I am a member of A.L.L.'s curriculum committee My husband, Herb, and I live in Barnstable Village.

Abecedarian Hats

page 34

Barbara Leedom: A decade-long member and coordinator at A.L.L., I am also a columnist, novelist, and journalist. I write a monthly column for the *Dennis/Yarmouth Register* and facilitate Rising Tide Writers Group.

September 2020

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Absurdity of Blasphemy

page 44

Margaret McLaughlin: I live in Forestdale and write about events and individuals who inspire me to be curious and honor compassion.

Full Moon

page 5

Catherine Shortway McMullen: A life-long Cape vacationer, I now live year round in Mashpee. My **Reflections** contributions comprise the chapters from my memoir about family and life experiences.

Lessons in Poetry, with two photos

page 62

John McWilliam: I have been turned on to writing 'mini memoirs' by A.L.L.'s June Calender. Her class has inspired me to look back to my early life in up-state New York and my professional life in public health, working in many African and Asian countries.

Men and Their Hair

page 8

Thanksgiving

page 22

Bob Mollenhauer: I am semi-retired; I work as director of business development for the Climate Foundation of Woods Hole. After a five-year career as a professional baseball player, I spent over 30 years in higher education fundraising which included vice president at Slippery Rock University and Roanoke College.

The Czechoslovakian Babe Ruth	page 23
Toilet Paper and Covid-19	page 12

Linda Monchuk: I have recently moved to Mashpee from Fall River and enjoy writing poetry with my friends from A.L.L.

Blinking Lights	page 21
Not Quite Ready	page 21

Havana Moss: I lived on Cape Cod as a summer child and now year round. I have taught yoga, led hikes and bike rides, traveled to mystical places. I owe my interest in writing to a fourth grade teacher whose homework assignment every weekend was write a story.

Three Chairs	page 65
Silly Subaru Story	page 26

Frank Noonan: I live in S. Chatham with my wife of 57 years. I was a hospice volunteer for about ten years. It helps to recognize and be with our oneness.

Hospice Story on Nearing Death Awareness	page 15
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Ellen Nosal: My husband and I happily washed ashore to Centerville from Connecticut in 2019. My passion for words led me to be an advertising copywriter and a school librarian. Writing stories, short and long, keeps my head in the clouds, which is exactly where I like it to be.

Harriet's Story, with photo	page 56
Seaside Student	page 17

Mary Nyman: I grew up in Tennessee and went to college in Massachusetts. After serving as an assistant in Boston University's English Department, I moved to Wareham, raised five children, and taught high school and college English for 30 years. Now I enjoy painting, writing and making art jewelry.

Home Town Moment	page 57
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Alison Partridge: I was born in London and trained as a medical social worker in Scotland where I met my husband, Ray, a rheumatologist. We emigrated to the United States in 1965, raised four sons in Buffalo and Boston and moved to the Cape in 1993.

Camping Behind the Iron Curtain	page 66
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Nancy Paslaski: I have been writing memories for many years through classes at A.L.L. I've enjoyed hearing other people's stories and sharing my own.

The Trap	page 28
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Sheila Place: I live in Yarmouth Port, a member of A.L.L. for several years, including as a board member and chair of the Long Range Planning committee. I've done some writing in the past and find the discipline of writing every week for June Calender's class very helpful.

Scenes from a Catholic Girlhood page 35

John Poignand: John and wife, Marylou, live in Chatham. Born in England, he has traveled extensively in his professional life. He belongs to two writing groups and tends an elaborate garden does individual "portraits" of many flowers he grows.

flower photos pages 3, 9, 64, back cover

William Ray: I closed my interior design firm in Baton Rouge 20 years ago and moved to Cape Cod. I am an active member of the Historical Society of Old Yarmouth Program Committee and the Yarmouth 2020 Committee. June Calender is a continuing inspiration.

Betrayed page 38

Rita Richardson: I discovered A.L.L. several years ago and have enjoyed classes in the short story, writing, poetry and film. I live in West Harwich, half a mile from the ocean, a daily inspiration. I have published articles in *Cape Cod Life* and *The Essential Herbal*.

Pantry page 54

Socks Orphan page 37

Gershen Rosenblum: I have had many entrees in **Reflections** since 2003. Since joining A.L.L. I retired at age 90 as a clinical psychologist but remain active as a participant and coordinator at A.L.L. I also continue with hobbies of shell crafting, jewelry making, art collecting and framing.

My Family and Kin: A Brief Biography page 50

Dianne Tattersall: I live in Sandwich near the Cape Cod Canal and the boardwalk. I like photographing the ships and boats that travel the canal as well as the sunsets and other elements of nature which never disappoint.

Front cover photo

Marjorie Wright: I studied English at Smith College and London University, worked in the fashion trade press and development charities, lived in Nigeria and Ethiopia. She now lives in the UK and Cape Cod.

Oz page 64

IN MEMORIUM

Wade Sawyer Sniper page 69

Ray Partridge Survival page 70



Mary Bonacker

Thousands came

Masked faces keeping six-foot spaces
sat along the canal waiting for her.

Older folks, some who had not left their neighborhoods since March,
Bike riders, baby carriage pushers, a man in an old straw hat,
a lady dressed completely in red and blue bandanas,
a mom reading a book about the "landing" to children.

They manned the boulders, walked the jetty and set up chairs along the paths.

At last the shout rang out, "Here she comes!"

Gloriously, she floated down the aisle of the canal
like a beautiful bride.

We waved above the current,

We cheered.

We felt as if

she brought a certain hope
that sooner, rather than later,
we would be restored.

Tess Clarkin

when least expected

kindness is out there on a daily basis
usually from family or friends then
there is the day when it comes
from a complete stranger

pulled into CVS drive through to
pick up an order put my hand
down to retrieve my mask
it wasn't there still home
in the laundry room drying

drove to the Dollar Store saw
a man just entering asked him
if they sold masks he could have
ignored me after I told him that
I was trying to pick up meds for my
husband but instead he replied
"I will see." waited a while could
not believe it when I saw him heading
towards me with a package in his hand

it contained two masks would not
take any money as he walked away
I shouted to him "You are a kind man."
he waved back like it was nothing

Anna Crebo

Call To Prayer

(A Villanelle For Our Time)

So many reasons for us to pray;
So many people in distress.
How many more will die today?

The old, the sick, the poor, they say,
day.
Are those who're most under duress.
They are the reasons we should pray.

Afraid, confused, alone, they lay
Dying--no farewell caress.
How many more have pass today.

Piled up bodies on the way
To mortuaries under stress
For their souls now let us pray.

Lord God of love, help to stay
The spread of this vile pestilence.
Or thousands more will die each

Worldly concerns of yesterday
See vain—unworthy of address.
So many reasons we must pray.
And learned to live a whole new way.



photo: John Poignand

Anna Crebo

Comet

Space
Outer space
Past planetary spheres
At the edge of our solar system
Comets start their fabled journeys around the sun.

Look
In the sky
The comet Neowise
A body of ice and cosmic dust
Its shimmering gossamer tail trailing for miles.

Speak
Tell your tale
Like the ghostly "**Dutchman**"
Do you wander the celestial realms
A harbinger of disruption and dire events?

Time
Time will tell
Nothing is forever
Earth is in the throes of climate change
Will humankind survive the coming "*Sturm und Drang*"?
Life
Life goes on
Creatures adapt or die
Earth may be better off without us
Nature will find new forms of earthly existence.

Sanctum

Death...
It stalks us.
Concealed in the corners,
Cracks and crevices of life, it lurks,
Waiting to pounce like a panther in the darkness.
consciousness.

Gone...
In a flash!
Our myriad plots and schemes,
Just as though they never occupied

Why?
Who are we?
What are we all about?
Somewhere there must be a sacred place
Hidden in the depths of our latent

The shallow spaces of our daily existence.

Faith...
Believe it.
Pulsing to the secret life of our body
Wonder of wonders,
Wellspring of all creation.

Margaret McLaughlin

The Full Moon

During the darkest of nights,
the new moon didn't shine on us
to enlighten our daily reflections.

We knew that we had risen,
turned on the news and calculated how
close we were to the number of dying.
We double checked our temperatures, our grocery
needs,
our plans to take that 6' gasp of breath between us.

When the quarter moon arrived, our days had changed.
We sighed, turned off the news,
and calculated how close we were to the number of living.
We created our texts, our newly sewn masks,
our plans to reassess the 6' leap in our assumptions.

At the half moon,
we filled the day with whatever brought us joy:
the video of grandchildren, the first page of an anticipated novel,
the 6" conversation once avoided.

And then, nature reassured us.

The night was ablaze with certainty.
The cow was jumping over it.
The dogs were baying at it,
and the old man was wisely winking.

The moon was full again.



Patti Hughes

Hats

A hat can say a lot about who we are, or think we are, or wish to be. While it was once fashionable for a lady to wear a hat, today a stylish hat is hard to find.

I have a small head. Nothing makes this more obvious than a cap—the hat of choice today. I don't jog, sail, play golf or tennis and I don't like sports. Neither do I wish to be a walking advertisement for any travel destination, corporation or political affiliation. Wearing the wrong cap could get you shot. I would feel less self conscious with a pail on my head. I did once wear a Clorox bottle on my head and several coat hangers shaped to look like a fountain, but that was for a show about a woman who falls asleep in a laundromat and dreams of being a Vegas showgirl.

A sun brimmed hat without a tie under the chin is fine on a windless day, but I've been tossed around like a salad in a speed boat clinging to the rail with only one hand because the other was holding down my useless hat. At the Newport Garden Show last year I purchased a floppy wide brimmed hat when the sun broke through an overcast sky. "How does it look?" I asked my tight lipped friend. I plunked down the \$40.00 anyway and now it sits, serene and undisturbed on a closet shelf.

Jim, who was always unpredictable, but very vain about his appearance, started wearing a battered straw hat. Think planting time down on the farm. I used to say Jim, "WHAT THE HELL?" I am convinced he wore it just to get a rise out of me because with the onset of winter, he came up with another ugly hat, the one I called Cabbie from the Bronx. "Jim, don't wear that," I begged, but he continued to plant that dead cat on the top of his balding scalp. Gravity kept it there and maybe the hair oil of whoever owned it first. I could wear a pail on my head, but Jim had to keep up his J. Crew appearance. I admit to a double standard.

On a trip west some years back, my father presented me a white leather cowboy hat still in the box as a gift for a current boyfriend, a Texan. I never saw it on him, but my thoughts turned homicidal when I saw Dad's new girlfriend wearing it. Fortunately it was only a hat and not a gun from Dad's collection. I was able to console myself knowing that, while she was half my age, she had a GI-NORMOUSLY fat head.

I chose a simple woven hat to wear to an outdoor event recently thinking it would be less conspicuous than an umbrella as a sun shade. The next day, I received a note from one who

admired my hat because I looked like Anne of Green Gables. I'll take that as a compliment although I had hoped to look more mature and sophisticated. Maybe I could add a few ostrich feathers.

Masks are the new hats when it comes to identity. That good looking guy staring at the frozen peas in his homemade cloth mask is probably unavailable. His wife or his mother made the mask. At a church event I found myself thronged by women wearing tidy hand sewn masks with precious little hearts, flowers and such. You would swear it was a quilter's convention!

Nancy, my friend from Houston whose husband "is in oil", favors Lily Pulitzer designs. Ann, who likes girly pastels and nail polish to match her mood, bought a pale pink mask on Etsy. Judy, a retired hospital nurse, bought a whole crate of surgical masks. I still have a few.

I favor a simple white paper mask or one in pale blue—whichever I find on the floor of my car that hasn't been chewed or trampled by the dogs. Many men I find favor black masks. Men who choose black masks are apt to be handy. Home Depot carries them. They're down by the gas grills. Masks are the new plastic bottles too. People don't discard a hat they've worn once, but masks are strewn in parking lots and dropped on wooded trails. Today I found a mask with a camo design in the woods. Did someone imagine the wildlife wouldn't SEE him coming? I took it home to wash and wear in the fall during hunting season. Two dogs crashing through the undergrowth might however give us away, never mind my neon orange hat.



Barbara Berelowitz

The Virus

I keep my social distance
and feel quite far away
How long will this be?
When will the virus go away?
No touching of each other
At least not out of doors
We keep ourselves as
Separate as we can.

This is crazy,
The real world is getting hazy
When can we go out and mingle
The thought truly makes me tingle
With fear of germs
We'll sally forth.

Before we go we'll have to dress
The face in mask under duress,
Rubber gloves our hands will stress.
Will we go out and feel the same,
Or will we forever be afraid
Of other people getting close?
The thought of it makes me morose.

But down we hunker in our space.
No one allowed to enter here.
How long will this persevere?
I've heard talk of a year.
If that's not something to fear
Then be happy and of good cheer,
For we'll emerge from our chrysalis
And fly like rarest butterflies
Seeking nectar everywhere.
Under the rules that govern us
Let's try and bear this
With a minimum of fuss.

John McWilliam

Men and Their Hair

My father was bald at 25. He looked like Senator Chis Coons, handsome, but still bald. My wife once asked me what I notice first when I look at a man. I said, "His hairline." What is it about men's hair? In my youth, I had a brush-cut. In my twenties long hair was the vogue. But then the genes kicked in: thinning at the temples. Oh my, it was my turn.

When I was 25, my aunt died. The family gathered at the funeral parlor in Lockport, NY, the last stand for my relatives. Arriving late, I looked around for my parents in the crowded room. I finally spied by mother. Standing next to her was a man who looked familiar, but not immediately recognizable. Then in a flash, I saw my father: he was wearing a toupee.

What do you say when you see your bald father with hair? After greeting my parents and cousins who were talking with them, there was a lull in the conversation. My father took advantage of the uneasy silence to ask the assembled relatives, “See anything new?” No one responded. He had to actually point to his hair piece.

Right then I made a pact with God that I only needed my hair until the turn of the century. Then He could take it. He kept his word for the most part.

Since the millennium, He speeded up the retrieval process. Comb-overs were somewhat effective in earlier days. However, something had to be done when the part inched closer to the right ear and the hair battled the oncoming breeze to make it to the other side of the head.

COVID-19 brought on the ultimate challenge. With no barber in sight, the remaining fringe turned me into a Bernie Sanders look-alike, and then worse. If I had had tattoos, owned a cowboy hat, and could sing, a braided ponytail might have been possible. Desperation led me to YouTube videos. Three-minute clips of transformations from haired to bald gave me encouragement that there was life after hair. Amazon delivered a 26-item grooming kit and the deed was done. My wife went from a “5” grooming attachment to a “2” as she mowed my head like my neighbor mows his grass. Soon the white hair, so jealously coveted, was on the ground in my backyard.

Why didn’t I ‘unhair’ myself earlier in life? It would have saved me from my vain attempt at vanity each morning looking into the mirror. My decision to go bald has taken a lot of weight off my shoulders.



Photo: John Poignard

Barbara Berelowitz

Coping

It's five o'clock somewhere and time for a glass of wine.
 I pour it and think how pretty it looks, waiting for me to sip.
 What happens if we run out? Masks and gloves and to the store
 We will have to go.
 Only essentials are available we're told
 so where does this put wine? Essential in my life?
 Upon the list of do's and don'ts it's high up in my needs.
 A glass will help take off the edge and get us through the eve.
 Might even make the TV dinner taste better
 Though that's tough.

The ones we have are not too good, not quite up to snuff
 But better these than none at all. At least we have enough.
 We'll get through a few more days
 And then we'll have to plan to order food again.
 A chore it is in these many days of house arrest
 We take what comes and order best
 But cannot be so sure that what we want will really appear.

We've tried this twice and for the price
 We'd like it to be better
 But we really are quite certain,
 that any other would be just the same
 How motivated can they be—these youngsters
 Who pick the foods off shelves in markets?
 They're grateful to be working.
 We are lucky they're not shirking
 The work they're able to be doing.

They get good tips from those of us
 who realize there are people who, with no fuss
 go through grocery stores
 and find the things we order.
 To them I say, hurrah hooray
 Thank you for doing the work you do for us

Because without you we'd be stuck.
 And trying to manage all alone
 There's nothing we can do, but rely on you,
 Every single one.

Mary Nyman

COVID-19 Poems

1.

Virus, monster
 Bigger than life.
 Nightmare.
 I died last night,
 The night before,
 Again tomorrow,
 With thousands of
 Innocents, who cared
 For the dying.
 First responders, firemen,
 Doctors, nurses,
 Health care survivors.
 Grocery store clerks
 Tremendous, my guilt
 Reaching out. Nothing I do
 Can stop the deaths.
 This virus will destroy
 The world we know,
 If we survive this life
 We think we know.
 What will it mean
 illness can uproot us all?
 What are dreams
 Never fulfilled or lived?

Weep for the world.
 Sing for love,
 Our hope which can
 Redeem us all.

2.

Hope is a daffodil, a crocus,
 A delayed bird's song.

If rain could soothe the soul
 And sun preserve the heart,

We might live through
 This season's newest blight.

3.

Already I have chosen
 The marble an inscription
 Circled by ivy or an olive branch
 For our ancient graveyard's
 Shady order on the hill.

I'll rest where I can view
 The marsh and feel the wind
 Above the flood plain—
 My world in retrospect.

The leave my life
 Beside this winding road
 To rest beneath this motto,
 "Nothing gold can stay."

4.

Freedom is enjoyment
 Sharing a swim
 On a hot afternoon
 In a saltwater pool.

Freedom is camping
 On a sunbathed lake
 With friends ,
 Self-distancing and masked.

Freedom is choosing
 How to vote.

Freedom is being part
 Of ZOOM poetry,
 And wresting a poem
 Into being.

Freedom is choice—
 Which path to take
 In this yellow wood
 Of Covid fears and dreams.

Bob Mollenhauer

Toilet Paper and COVID-19

I never could have imagined that toilet paper would be a staple of life. But in the novel COVID-19 pandemic, it has taken its place on center stage. I learned this lesson in the early stages of the pandemic.

I admit I was late in responding to the lockdown. I live by myself in a condo located a short walk to abundant food shopping. I'm retired, comfortable in my own thoughts and rumination about life and happily independent. I seldom cook for myself, but I have supplies enough to last me for several weeks in case of a crisis. At least, I thought I was adequately supplied until I did an informal inventory. I discovered that I owned only a few rolls of toilet paper. Not a problem, I figured. I don't watch much television, so I was unaware of the national run on paper and sanitizing products. I thought the push would be for milk, eggs, and perishable goods. A nation with the runs for toilet paper never entered my mind.

When I set out for my local grocery store, I had a short list of items to buy. Toilet paper was at the top of the list—the first time TP had ever topped my shopping list. Equally surprising was the realization that my grocery store was out of toilet paper. This really is a crisis, I thought.

What if I can't find any toilet paper? I remember doing a day hike in a national forest with a friend. We packed rain gear, water, granola bars and a few other items, but no toilet paper. Sure enough, nature called my friend about eight miles into the hike. His only source of TP was his wallet: he had four \$20 bills. It was an expensive lesson in potty training. It may also have been a premonition to my current situation. If I couldn't find toilet paper in any stores, maybe I needed to go to my local ATM. ATM's provide only \$20 bills so I could commiserate with my hiking buddy.

My luck turned at the local pharmacy. I've never shopped for food or toilet paper at a pharmacy but I needed to change my tactics. A clerk had a 12-pack of toilet paper on hand. It was the last package in the store. "Hey, how much do you want for that toilet paper?" I asked in desperation.

"Oh, you don't need to pay extra. You're just lucky that I found this package in the back," said the clerk. "You're double lucky. It's two-ply paper."

"Thank goodness," I said. "I was planning to use both sides anyway." My toilet paper package wouldn't fit into a shopping bag. I didn't want to risk exposing my prized possession to a thief who might pilfer my fortunate find. I now understood the fear felt by victims of purse snatching. What could be more frightening than a TP snatcher? For the walk home, I had to carry my toilet

paper unconcealed under my arm. It seemed that everyone I passed on the street had eyes on my toilet paper. It was a harrowing walk, but I and my TP made it home safely.

While I admired my good fortune and stately package of toilet paper, I thought that I needed to do all I could to preserve it. I considered using only two squares per session. Then I had another revelation: I would eat only foods that bind me. I vowed to eat lots of cheese, breads, and pasta. So what if I gained weight? It would be worth it to avoid becoming a target of a TP mugger. Of course that would mean going back to the store in the hope that binding foods would be available. But, I thought, it can't be as dangerous as shopping for toilet paper.

Barbara Leedom

September 2020

While we continue to hunker
In these times like none other.
We'd rather be going places
But we obey and are not out a lot.
We're using days
To clean out the clutter
To wonder at evening's orchestra.
Out there in thousands,
We watch for changed colors in leaves.

Crickets' crackle, katydids' cadence linger long
Into the night now, low sounds like they say katy did.
Did what? We do not know, so we make up stories
About their song as we tiptoe in the grass
We no longer have to mow
Now that it's September.
We remember going back to school, new lunch pails, shoes,
In threes and twos, we walked to our schools, with the tools
We had way back when—a notebook, a pencil, a pen.
This September we hope for the world's children
That they stay safe, that they learn, have fun
When school days are done.

We still hunker as we hope for our scientists, so few seen,
To do their best, while they continue to try to come up with a vaccine.
Bless them in September 2020 and all their days,
To them we sing our highest praise.

Connie Austin

An Ode to 2021

May you walk through bright fields of flowers
 Feel the bend and caress of grasses as you walk by
 Then stand on the tops of mountains and feel one with the universe
 Where all consign drops away
 fades into endless hills of blue.
 May you walk along woodland trails — carpets of pine needles beneath your feet
 Then sleep after lavender sunsets
 And walk to the blessings of each new day
 A bouquet of wildflowers on your windowsill.

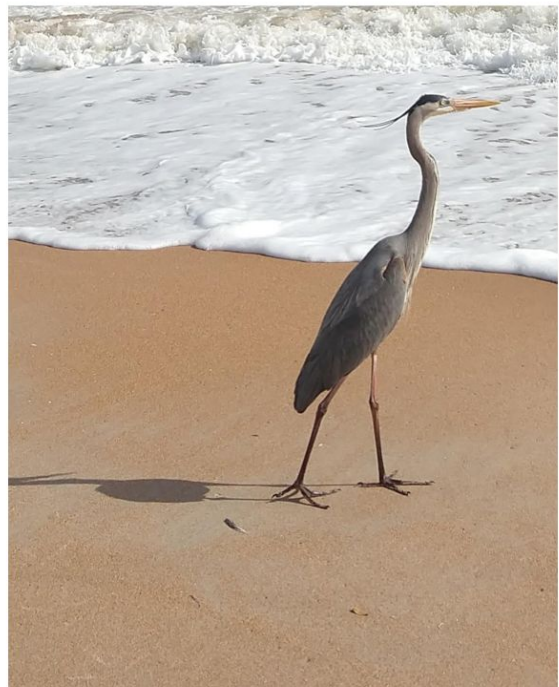
Carol Coteus

Silent Neighbors

Lives of silent neighbors
 are etched on stone
 with wilted flowers
 or rain soaked teddy bears
 for those still remembered.
 shovels stilled by COVID-19

Alice Pola, 1893-1920
 Olga Ronsoni, 1926-March 2020
 scribbled on paper
 grave half filled with dry rock soil

D'Allonso twins March 19, 1958
 Stones no longer heard
 Without knowing of lives lived and faded
 I know hope ended
 childbirth, lost in
 war too soon and pandemics now
 and hearts still bleed.
 safest tucked away
 on the arms of the earth.



Frank Noonan

Hospice Story on Nearing Death Awareness

Harry was the first patient I visited as a hospice volunteer. He was in his late seventies, had congestive heart failure, and lived alone in an apartment complex. He was short, with large, dark-rimmed glasses and, surprisingly, jet black hair. He motioned me into his living room, dragging behind him the plastic hose tethered to his oxygen supply. We sat and talked a little baseball and a little politics. At some point, he asked me why I was a hospice volunteer. I said, "Harry, when I was younger, I wanted to be famous. As time went by, the desire was for money, and, as more time went by, my main desire was relationships. Of all the relationships, the one that I desire most is with the spirit. You might think me strange but I have this idea that relationships with people in hospice are fertile ground for relationship with the spirit."

Harry's voice turned angry: "I don't want to talk about religion. I want hospice for the nurses. I don't want social workers or chaplains coming around telling me how to think or feel. My religion is simple: treat people the way you want them to treat you."

I responded, "Harry, you have a popular religion, the golden rule, which is easier to say than to do. But listen, I didn't come here to tell you how to think or feel." Harry's voice softened and he told me that he wasn't afraid to die; he said that he'd had a good life, but he was worried about what dying was going to be like, and whether it would be painful. I sensed his fear, and I remember feeling inadequate and telling him that the people who really know aren't here anymore.

Harry and I developed a routine. I would visit him once each week, late on Wednesday morning. I had been seeing Harry for about two and a half months when, on one particular Wednesday morning, shortly after my arrival, he said, "Frank, I had a dream last night. I was at the foot of a ladder and I thought of a psalm." Harry then proceeded to recite perfectly the first four verses of Psalm 23: "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not be in want. He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, he restores my soul. He guides me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me." I was beside myself as I sat there listening. These words were coming from the man who, early on, had told me not to bring up anything religious. For a split second I thought that Harry was playing some kind of mind trick with me.

When he finished the psalm, he said the most incredulous thing. "I looked up the ladder and I saw a bright light, and I began to climb because the light was drawing me up. I got almost to

the top. I couldn't see clearly, but I knew that everything was beautiful and that I was going there." As I listened to Harry, I began to feel warm inside. The spirit was near, not just in Harry's dream but right then, for me, as I was listening. I didn't reveal my excitement. Harry didn't like too much excitement. But I asked him to repeat the story of his dream. I must have had him repeat it two or three times, and each time we savored it. It gave him pleasure to tell, and me pleasure to listen.

Harry showed nothing unusual on that Wednesday, except for the dream that he shared with me. Two days later, I received a call from the hospice volunteer coordinator. She told me that Harry had passed away the previous night. I was tempted to tell her about Harry's dream, but I didn't. I didn't have confidence that she would understand, or take me seriously. I asked about the funeral and was told that the service was just for the immediate family.

There is a book, **Final Gifts**, written by two hospice nurses, Maggie Callanan and Patricia Kelley. In the book they talk about "nearing death awareness" (NDA) and they take care to distinguish it from the more common phrase of "near death experience." They define "nearing death awareness" as a unique knowledge about the process of dying, as communicated by dying persons. NDA occurs in those patients who are approaching death or are actively dying. Patients may appear confused or disoriented, or as though they are having a dream. During these experiences, patients frequently describe bright colors, light, or a beautiful place. The authors report that these experiences can be quite discomforting for unprepared observers. I had read *Final Gifts* about two months prior to my last visit with Harry and after the call from hospice I immediately connected Harry's dream and NDA. Nothing remotely like this experience has ever occurred in my subsequent hospice work.

If I had been at Harry's funeral service, I would have shared his dream on the Wednesday before his passing. I would have mentioned Harry's early concerns about dying and that his dream was "good news," convincing me that Harry died at peace and without any fear. This is the first time that I've told this entire story. It is tempting to continue further, to offer an opinion on the meaning of NDA but I will stop here.

Jack DeBenedetto

What Could You Do?

Eight minutes and forty six seconds,
is time enough for a cup of coffee,
to smoke a cigarette,
is time enough to chat, tell jokes,

wonder if they should step in.
is time enough to be curious about
the near bystander with his cellphone,
is time enough to ask whether what's
happening is wrong.

In eight minute and forty-six seconds
a man can say "I can't breathe"
as he's being strangled
he can say it over and over

he can go silent
and he can die.

Ellen Nosal

Seaside Student

After being part time Cape Codders for nine years, we thought we knew so very much about what our lives would like when we finally became full time residents about a year ago. We knew our favorite beaches and restaurants. We anticipated hosting friends and family year round. We relished the fact that we would no longer maintain two properties, both physically and fiscally. No more guessing games as to when to cross the bridge. We were east of that forever. In years past, I read about events held mid-week or offseason that I really longed to attend and now that world would be my oyster. Excuse the local shellfish pun. I often say, "Every day is an adventure on Cape Cod!"

We were challenged to understand the mindset of local drivers. People on side streets routinely look right at you, and proceed to pull out in front of you, regardless of the mile long gap in the traffic behind you. After a few months of something just shy of road rage, I mentioned it to a local who explained, "We like to let people in." Oh, I thought. I hope this "letting in" business applies to other situations. In time, I learned to anticipate this behavior and road rage faded, especially after all the times people actually let me make left turns out of difficult places like Star Market. I found myself doing the same for others. Out-of-towners are confused that they are being waved on, and not flipped off. We also discovered and grew to embrace the relaxed, friendly vibe that the locals have. We will never talk like they do, but we stopped noticing the long, drawn vowels, and missing Rs. It sounds like home. But the truth is, there are so many transplants to Cape Cod, we do not stand out. And when we return to Connecticut to visit family, it feels familiar, but not like home.

Summer traffic on the Cape came as no surprise to us. Now I could mutter, “Damn tourists,” with a cock-eyed smile at the chaos on the roads. Travels in the winter are a breeze (or gusty wind) compared to summer traffic. Heading west on the Mid-Cape Highway in the afternoon, I am rewarded with skies streaked with pink and purple clouds. Much to my delight, September is deliciously warm and quiet. The water is warm, the beaches are empty, and Cape Cod breathes a collective sigh of relief. This past winter was virtually snow-free, but long and bleak. And spring drags its feet as the cold ocean air makes me slow to peel off heavy layers.

Alas, I am a fidget and an extravert, so I began to involve myself in many new opportunities. I became a master of what I call, the “gulp” moment. That is the moment I insert myself into a situation that is new, even when it is scary and I know no one. The first such gulp moment was at the John F. Kennedy Hyannis Museum. There, I was welcomed as a volunteer docent. I am thrilled to learn new things every Thursday when I greet people from around the world. In time, I was included in the museum’s outreach education programs.

Monthly open mic nights at the local library bring repeated gulp moments, but the rewards are great. The chair yoga class is now a weekly treat, instead of just a summertime thing. How fortunate I was to find a book club that was brand spanking new, and all of us are on equal footing. The two classes from The Academy for Lifelong Learning have been enriching and exciting. It was delightful (and challenging) to strain my brain to speak and understand French. And the Telling Stories class had me writing for a deadline each week, with a group of inspiring writers. Just what I needed.

By the time we were all forced into isolation, I was happily busy with my new life. Just busy enough, with downtime that I savored. I felt valued, involved, and challenged. I am a Cape Codder! Now here, as across this crazy world, everything has changed. The museum and library closed. Classes, yoga, and my book club went virtual. We will not be enjoying the beach, concerts, galleries, or fairs with our family and friends for a while. However, in the few times I have driven, I appreciate the “let me in” attitude of my local friends. Indeed, I have been “let in” to this magical place. I miss it all terribly, but I am grateful to be alive and well. I have more time to tend to the vast perennial garden I inherited, regardless of my lack of a green thumb. Holly, azaleas, lilies, and hydrangeas thrive in the stubborn, sandy soil. I cajole a few other varieties to cooperate. Wildlife swoop and hop and scurry to entertain our patio lunches. Kudos to the A.L.L. teachers, Yoga Neighborhood, local museums and libraries, and everyone else who keeps me learning “virtually” everyday about what Cape Cod has yet to teach me. I will be an eager and appreciative student for the rest of my life.

June Calender

The Shell Tree

We walked a quarter mile along the water's edge near the flowering *rosa rugosa*, white, pink, or red that grew in a tangle of thorny briars as dense as a Brillo pad. "There it is," said Rachel. "I don't know who did it." Someone had threaded whelk shells that had holes in their sides on the bare limbs of a dead tree near the path. We were on the inlet side of Long Beach, a nature reserve west of Craigville Beach. Local people, mostly early morning dog walkers and others who enjoy sunning quietly on a peaceful stretch of sand, come here. Few tourists know about Long Beach. The two small parking lots are down a residential road. No sign points the way.



Over many years I visited Rachel, my daughter, for a New Yorker's treat, a few days of Cape Cod summer. Rachel had only recently found Long Beach although she had lived on Cape Cod over twenty years. Her discovery of a secluded beach was an illusory secret as we found out later in the summer.

The shell tree was special and, in a way, seemed sacred, as folk-made sites often do. Some are memorials, like the ghost bicycles, painted white, marking a deadly accident, or the roadside shrines, often including a sodden teddy bear, for accident victims. Not all folk sites are about grief. I have traveled to many exotic places and have seen folk expressions of joy and thankfulness. In the Himalayas, both in Tibet and in Nepal, where I have trekked, I came upon cairns—spontaneously created piles of stones—at the top of high passes. Each traveler adds a stone to the pile. Some cairns are large and ancient, some include prayer flags. Some are holy enough to deserve being honored by adding your stone while passing them on the left or by circumambulating them thrice clockwise. Exhausted travelers rejoice to have conquered a height. Tibetans shout "Lo gayelo!" loosely translated, Praise God.

Also I have seen ovoo on the steppes of Mongolia. They too are cairns. Stones are less plentiful than in the mountains, but they have been gathered and placed under the vast skies to mark resting places in a nomadic life. These cairns, too, are holy. They contain the sky blue or orange prayer flags of the Mongols plus offerings of thanksgiving and praise—no longer needed crutches, coins, empty [oh, yes, always empty] bottles of Chingas Khan beer or vodka.

The shell tree spoke to me of ancient impulses to praise the miracle of the sea, its edible bounty, the beauty of those spiral shells. Ah, I thought, some Cape Codders have Druid hearts; they love nature and its wonderful abundance. These are people who dig for clams, people who love cook-outs on a beach. These are people who are sad when a tree dies a natural death and so spontaneously festoon it with the shells, broken like the tree but still beautiful. These people save beached whales and hypothermic sea turtles.

I moved here a few years later and began frequent morning walks at Long Beach. Now and then I picked up a conch shell to add to the shell tree. I began to think of myself, “Wash Ashore” that I am, as a tender of the tree. I never passed it without a moment’s pause. Winter came. It was too cold to walk by the sea so I stayed cozy in my home. In March a warm and wonderful day—at last! I drove to Long Beach and thought now the ritual will begin again. As I walked the boardwalk I noticed, as I had in the fall, that a few of the rails of the fence were missing, some had been broken and taken away. I had seen remnants of fires on the beach with stub ends of those rails lying at the edge of the ashes. Someone—I assumed it was kids wanting a private place to party—had taken the dry and easily available wood to make their fires, cook their hotdogs, warm themselves as they smoked pot or drank beer or whatever they did. I understand the appeal of a fire on a beach. On the other hand it could have been homeless people needing warmth on a cold night.

That spring, many rails were missing. I was angry that the boardwalk is being destroyed wantonly. I walked on, enjoying a beautiful spring day, a cerulean sky, the patterns water had made in the sand, the way the marsh grass had turned old gold and flattened where it had been tall and harvest brown when last I saw it. Then I saw the shell tree--what was left of the shell tree. All the reachable limbs had been broken off. Pieces of whelk shells lay scattered and crushed at its base. The limbs, dead and dry, had been taken for firewood, I’m certain. Easier to take limbs of a dead tree a quarter mile out than to carry rails so far. They probably made a beautiful, if brief, fire.

Who did this? I know no more about who broke the limbs off than I know about who decorated them faithfully. I do know that one unknown group loved the world and its bounty and that the other group cared only about a couple of hours of warmth and firelight. I hope, the latter group were young and will learn respect for artifacts like the shell tree as they mature. I hope, too, that they stared into that firelight and found it beautiful whatever their state of mind, whether normal or altered by drink or drugs or the excitement of sex in the sand. I’m sure the shell tree’s limbs were beautiful even as they flamed and fell into ash. Finally, I am happy to see that people have begun to festoon other [living] trees and even bushes along the path with shells. Also an impressive cairn has been built at the end of Long Beach. The human spirit responds to the beauty of nature differently for each individual. Everyone responds.

Linda Monchik

Blinking Light

Last night I spied your tiny light
 Blinking red beyond the sea,
 An ember of life, sharp righting clear
 You called, "look, come, see me."
 Your waves lapped, clapped against the pier,
 Rocked in rhythm on the shore
 You performed a most magnificent score,
 An allegro — I wanted more,
 I felt you pull my skeletal core
 Your seductive lullaby
 Singing me onto your deepest blue
 Surrender, submerge — don't hide.
 But I stay anchored, alone on shore,
 Like the houses framing the beach
 Hear your call, feel your pull
 See your light just out of reach.

Not Quite Ready

I'm not quite ready for spring just yet,
 Tender leaves of daffodils
 That push their heads through soiled clay
 Call to me against my will.

I hear her knocking, rat-a-tat-tat
 Not quite ready, I said,
 No matching socks, dried egg on the plate,
 Greasy pans, stained sheets on the bed.
 Old cards in a pile, bills still unpaid,
 Dates missed, friends left behind,
 You come too soon, again, I plead,
 I need a bit more time.

I'm not quite ready, for Earth's rebirth
 Green grass, sun shining bright,
 I want to linger 'neath winter's cold,
 He warms my dreams by night.

John McWilliam

Thanksgiving

My father was a dandy. A silk scarf in his breast pocket, a Windsor knot, a tie clip, cufflinks, a grey fedora, and buffed shoes walked out of our apartment each day going to work. He grew up in Kew Gardens, Queens, the other side of the tracks from neighboring Forest Hills; he spent his youth hobnobbing with the tennis set. The son of a Scottish purser who met his wife-to-be sailing between Liverpool and New York. My father took on the air of the monarchy, which added to his dandy-ness: he kept a photo of the Prince of Wales in his wallet.

His father, my grandfather, was a well-schooled man having completed one year of medicine at the University of Edinburgh before his money ran out. He escaped to the sea and like so many others, settled in America. My father, on the other hand, was educated, but not schooled. He learned at the knee of his father all the kings and queens of the realm and left high school without a diploma. New York City was his university.

In the late 1920s and '30s, New York City was the place to be if you were a dandy. Expensive clothes, proper grammar, the ability to tell a good story and to remember a joke or two, got you into places where the smart set went. But my father had to make a living. He chose well: he became a waiter, then head waiter, then assistant manager at one of the popular hotels in mid-Manhattan. There he met and mingled with the stars, gangsters, and politicians of the day. As he regaled to me in one of his tales, Lucky Luciano once gave him tickets to his box at Yankee Stadium. My father lived the high life.

For the next thirty years, his charm and skills were used to manage hotels and country clubs located mainly on the East Coast. With each country club, he perfected his skills. He learned gourmet food from his chefs, wine from the bartenders and vendors, and how to party from the social committee. As the manager, he was accepted as an equal, or almost an equal, by the members. He played golf with them, he bought them drinks, and he organized private parties for them at their homes. This changed, however, when he came to Boston to manage two prestigious clubs—the Chestnut Hill Country Club, and the Dedham Country and Polo Club.

Coming to the heart of New England and the Boston Brahmin culture was the epitome of making it for my father. While it wasn't the British realm it was damn close: class, breeding, education, beautiful children, and the Lowells, and the Saltonstalls, and the Cabots. He was up to the challenge and ready to entertain the *crème de la crème*.

When the Massachusetts Governor played golf at the club, my father made sure that the state flag was raised. When the Board of Governors had their annual meeting, he had the club vendors send in their best wines and exotic *hors d'oeuvres*. He taught the staff how to set the banquet table for a five-course meal: the proper placement of the three crystal wine goblets and silver cutlery for each place setting. When a Lodge or Cabot requested a private party at home, he would personally supervise. Oh, how he enjoyed this.

But then he noticed, the Governor, instead of using the locker room to get ready for golf and to put on his golf shoes, sat on the bumper of his car to put on his gear, just like at a public course. My father came to realize that it wasn't only the staff who didn't know which wine glass or fork to use, the Brahmins were just as clueless.

My father dearly wanted the Brahmins to be Brahmin. Even the club house was not important to them. When he saw a poorly decorated sitting area in the club, he took two matching lamps from our living room at home to replace the dilapidated ones of the club. He soon realized that no one noticed, or, possibly, cared. I believe the last straw for my father was when a Cabot or a Lodge or a Sargent, I can't remember who he said, signaled to him, "Steward, steward do you have my mail?"

My father continued to serve, but not with enthusiasm. Once he fully understood the Brahmin myth, the New Yorker in him took over. He had to find a way to put them in their place, without them even realizing that they had been had.

The Thanksgiving buffet was his opportunity. This was a time when all members were in the club, to celebrate their mythical ascendance in the new world through their Pilgrim ancestors, whether true or not. Working with the chef my father hired an artist from a Boston art school to decorate the buffet table. Of the twenty or so turkeys that were cooked in the kitchen, eight turkeys were designated to be placed on the buffet table for decoration. This is where the artist came in. The artist took these eight turkeys and stuffed their cavities with mash potatoes. As the mash potatoes harden, the artist sculpted faces and put on foundation and make-up to make the potato faces come alive. Pilgrim hats were designed in black cardboard and placed on top of the turkeys.

As the members of the club entered the dining room and picked up their plates for their Thanksgiving dinner, they saw their sacred forbearers facing them on the buffet table. Here was a Bradford, a Standish, a Brewster, a Winslow coming out of the backsides of the turkeys. While they all marveled at the scene, my father was the only one who chuckled at their just desserts that he just served.

Bob Mollenhauer

The Czech Babe Ruth

He wanted to revolutionize baseball. He had an idea that would make hitters more successful. He had a plan to enact the idea that unfolded during my spring training season with the Oakland A's. The concept was presented to A's owner, Charlie Finley. Finley was one of baseball's renowned innovators. He led efforts to establish the designated hitter; to hold World

Series night games; and, he introduced colorful team uniforms. So, when teaching hitters to copy “the Babe Ruth Swing” was presented to Charlie, he was all for it.

“The Babe Ruth Swing,” as described to Finley, was based on the belief that Babe Ruth was the greatest hitter who ever lived. The Babe had the perfect blend of power and the ability to hit for average. The key was Babe’s swing: the slight uppercut, short stroke and long follow through. Even mediocre hitters could become great by perfecting “the Babe Ruth Swing.” A self-described Czechoslovakian national, known only as Milo, claimed to have perfected the swing. Charlie Finley bought the idea. He agreed to give Milo a tryout at the A’s minor league complex.

As a minor league player competing for a roster spot, I first learned of Milo via a newspaper article posted on the locker room bulletin board. The article announced that Finley had signed the “Czechoslovakian Babe Ruth” who would change the way hitters were taught to swing.

When Milo appeared in right field, I was skeptical. When he made throws from the outfield, I was furious that Finley had signed Milo. I considered spring training a sacred time of baseball renewal. It was players’ best opportunity to show that they were capable of making a team and pursuing the dream of being a big-league player. Spring training combined the euphoria of hope for the coming season with the tension of knowing that 30 to 40 players from every organization would be released by the close of the spring games.

Despite the pressure, it was an honor to compete for a roster spot. Many friends and former amateur baseball teammates would have given anything to be in my position. I had no respect for the decision to sign Milo and give him a chance that was not given to more deserving players. Still, it would be interesting to see if “the Babe Ruth Swing” would be another Charlie Finley innovation or would it go the way of the orange baseball, a failed Finley idea.

Milo had a few days of workouts to practice before his trial-by-fire began with Intra-squad scrimmage games. Milo’s weak throws from the outfield made me think that his hitting would be a fiasco as well. But, it was “the Babe Ruth Swing” that got Milo into camp, not his outfield play, so I suspended a decision.

When Milo stepped into the batting cage, managers, coaches, players, and scouts crowded to watch. Milo wasn’t a natural, but he did a great imitation of Babe Ruth. Milo was a big guy. He wasn’t portly like The Babe, but he had The Babe’s swing all right. It wasn’t his size or his swing that had the onlookers talking, however. Milo was outfitted with a batting helmet with double ear flaps during an era when helmets had no ear flaps. His helmet also had a chin strap

that made him look like a World War I infantryman. He wore padded batting gloves, protective arm guards, and what looked to be a bullet-proof vest to protect his ribs. Milo was a sight to behold. He wore his armor unashamedly.

Despite looking like someone rescued from a foxhole, he hit a few balls to the warning track during batting practice and paid no attention to the snickering of the players. I avoided Milo although a few players befriended him and learned that the “hitter’s armor” gave him confidence and a feeling of security. Milo became a folk hero to players who appreciated the joy he derived from participating in the American pastime.

As is true for all players, the test would come when Milo faced live pitching in an intra-squad game. Usually, Intra-squad games draw little attention. Milo’s inaugural, however, brought out a large contingent of baseball personnel. Perhaps in deference to the great Bambino, Milo was slotted in the cleanup spot in the batting order. He didn’t bat in the first inning. He led off the second inning. Milo took his stance replete with double ear-flapped, chin-strapped batting helmet; padded batting gloves; arm guards; and chest protector. He demonstrated “the Babe Ruth Swing” three times in the at-bat—futilely swinging at and missing three fastballs.

The fourth inning brought Milo to the plate again. He swung feebly at two fastballs before the pitcher hung a curveball. Milo displayed his signature Babe Ruth swing and deposited a soft, looping line drive down the left field line. Milo chugged into second base with a double. Immediately, from the stands behind home plate, Milo’s agent signaled Milo to leave the field. Milo ran off the field never to be seen again on a baseball field.

A week later, a newspaper article appeared on the locker room bulletin board. The headline read: “Czechoslovakian Babe Ruth Demonstrates Success of Babe Ruth Swing.” The article noted that Milo batted .500 in professional baseball spring training competition. Next to the story was an advertisement that touted an innovation in baseball equipment that would dramatically improve hitters’ success. The ad described how a batter, wearing the appropriate protective gear, could achieve a feeling of security and confidence. Successfully demonstrated in spring training by a hitter who batted .500 in live action, the protective gear would transform hitting. I never learned the name of Milo’s agent, but I had to give him credit for having an idea, identifying a risk-taking buyer, and executing a plan. Milo deserves credit, too. When he saw that hanging curve, he seized the one chance he had for success. It was the same thing the “real players” were trying to do in spring training.

Havana Moss

Silly Subaru Story

Little gray Subaru rolling along
 Minding her business 'til fate did her wrong
 inhale leak in coolant hose
 Le fluid drip out—now starts her woes.
 Over heating melts the gasket.
 Repairs sound costly and too drastic
 100,000 miles? Don't ask.
 Why own a car, sez me to I,
 To watch it crumble before my eye?

The Cape is a corrosive place
 salt and dampness leave their trace
 Another Forester? Why not?
 Not its fault it got too hot.
 Lease the red one, my little dog said
 I'll look so elegant in red.
 Bigger and better than an '11
 And all little gray Foresters
 Go to heaven.

June Calender

Daydreams

Somewhere along the lanes and trails of growing older
 I learned to pay attention to the here and now
 and to forego daydreams ... that is the daydreams
 of a younger person who thinks the world is an enormous
 map stretching to an horizon beyond imagining.

Daydreams are now for planning and plotting the real,
 not the maybe, not the someday-when-I'm-older wishes.
 I AM older and many wishes came true, while others
 rusted like useless implements or solidified like the clay
 of hand-formed pots, pit fired. Raku, now cooled,
 already in use, with unpredictably patterned glaze.

I do not wander distracted by wishes when all around
 are little plants, tiny mushrooms, cushioned lichen,
 leaves turning autumn colors that capture my attention.
 The times I will walk this path are shrinkingly few.
 I have learned the Zen that expands the now,
 slows the footfall, pays attention to minute grains of sand
 and wisps of cloud that laze between earth and infinity.

Susan Elizabeth Clark

My Next Life

In my next life, I shall return as a cat. I shall not be a feral cat; born to be thrown away in the wilds. Matted fur, scabies, scars, fleas, ticks, worms, or any other of the unkempt afflictions are not for me. I shall not be continuously pregnant with nor caring for litters of kits which would be destined to suffer the same pathetic lifestyle as I.

A glossy coat and clear skin are more in keeping with a state which is my due. My particular pedigree matters not as long as, in the eyes of my personal guardian, I am the most beautiful creature ever given unto her care. Aside from these simple demands, my needs and wishes are few. I shall reside in a safe, warm home; quiet enough so that my napping is not often disturbed, but not boring. It would please me to use my non-napping time in the pursuit of gentle exercise such as luxurious stretching while being groomed, inspecting a crinkled brown paper bag, or chasing my tail around and around in the bathtub. An occasional snort of catnip would also be appreciated. I could share my space with other cats as long as they understand their subservient status. Dogs could be tolerated if absolutely necessary.

What would prove inconvenient and intolerable would be little humans. I should not wish to be pounced upon, have my tail pulled, or my whiskers plucked. Having a house infested with such miniatures would require that I spend most of my daytime hours viewing my world from the top of the refrigerator. It is a corner of the house not visited by warm sunbeams.

It would be preferable that meals be served at regular hours and that the fare, rated personally by *moi*, be of high quality and not some cheap slop with grain fillers. Remember, a cat is a consummate carnivore. Aside from a few blades of grass which I'll occasionally nibble to cleanse my gut, the only vegetation I ingest is second-hand through rabbits, chipmunks, and mice.

Speaking of wildlife, if I desire an occasional foray in the great outdoors, it would be convenient if a swinging door were provided. It is most demeaning for a cat to sit at the door asking to be allowed out. My guardian should also be of staunch enough character so that she graciously accepts the gifts, alive or dead, which I, oh so humbly, offer. In return for her mindful attention, I shall greet her at the door when she returns from her daily wanderings. I shall remind her of life's priorities by curling up in front of her when she sits at the table staring blankly at folds of paper. Most importantly, I shall serenade her in my most melodious purr until I feel through her hand and voice that she is at peace. Graciously and humbly submitted.

Nancy Paslaski

The Trap

First, you should know my name is Lilly and I'm ten years old. I'm in control 90% of the time; I'm tough and I'm fearless. In fact, I'm not even afraid of dogs which most people think all felines are. I've snarled and hissed enough at the neighborhood dogs, they're afraid to come in my yard.

I want to tell you about an incident that occurred recently that still has me bugged. Our next door neighbor, Steve, has a trap set up in his back yard. I heard him telling the father of my family, he catches squirrels and takes them to the dump and lets them go. That's fine with me because I don't like those pesky critters. Every time I come out of my house they start chattering away like they're hollering at me. I've never hurt a single one of them. I only chase 'em to scare 'em.

My curiosity has to be satisfied so whenever I'm out side, I go over to Steve's to check his trap. The trap is a heavy metal cage and you can see inside from any angle. When he sets it, it's open and some kind of food is inside to entice an animal to come in. While the animal enjoys the food, the trap shuts. When a squirrel is in the trap it's so busy trying to get out, it doesn't see me, lurking around. They are so stupid they don't know they're stuck.

On one particular visit to the trap, the animal inside wasn't a squirrel. It was bigger and hadn't much room to move around. I'm walking around, studying it from different angles when I hear "the bell" ringing. I stop what I'm doing and make a bee-line for home. You see, when I was a kitten, the bell was rung every time before I got my food. (I hear that's Pavlov's theory of conditioning.) Now, as an older, wiser cat, when I hear "the bell" I know it means there's a treat waiting for me at home. My favorite is a piece of cooked chicken. Nothing can top that!

After I finish the treat, I go to the back door and let out a meow meaning, "Open the door so I can go back out." The mother of my family says, "Lilly, you're not going out again. Steve's wife called me and asked me to ring the bell so you'd come home. There's a skunk in Steve's trap. You were stalking a skunk, Lilly. If you got sprayed you certainly wouldn't like that!" I didn't know what she was talking about but I did know, from being around her for ten years, that she meant what she said and wouldn't change her mind. I gave a few more meows to let her know I didn't like this and then went out on the back, screened-in porch. I spent the rest of the afternoon sitting on the window sill staring at the trap. I was angry so I sat with my ears back, tail hanging down and occasionally, wagging it slowly. This was one of those times I was not in control and I was really bugged. Still am!

June Bowser-Barrett

The Blizzard of 1978

I'm sheltering at home during this pandemic; I'm reminded of the blizzard of '78. I'm not sure why that is, exactly. First of all, this stay-at-home order came in the spring and the blizzard was in February, the dead of winter. This shut-in experience has gone on for nine weeks now, and may be longer; we were only sidelined for two weeks in 1978. I think what the two have in common is my attitude toward them. In both cases, I was perfectly happy to be home at leisure. Of course, I wasn't stranded on Rte.128 which became a parking lot for stuck cars, or sleeping in the lobby of the Howard Johnson Motel. I was teaching then at Shawsheen Tech, so I knew my paycheck wasn't in jeopardy.

We got two weeks off from school. The town of Bedford, MA was a winter wonderland. I lived in a townhouse with a large parking lot. The snow piles were so high that we dug snow arches to access the sidewalks. We were forbidden to drive so the roads could be cleared. I walked to the supermarket and brought groceries home on a sled. We didn't lose power; the house was warm and cozy. The kids had a blast playing in the snow which got them really tired and asleep early. I got to chat with neighbors I had never met and caught up with those I only saw occasionally. Life was good.

One night into the second week of the stay-at-home order my friend Peg called from Concord, a neighboring town. Her husband was stranded in upstate New York on business and she was alone with the dog. "I'm going crazy here. How about you and David come over for supper tonight? I'll make chicken and dumplings, homemade bread, pie." Peg was a fantastic cook but there was a no-drive order in effect. I hesitated.

"I don't know. We're not supposed to be driving."

"Oh, you're only five miles away. What are the chances of getting caught in that amount of time? I haven't seen a National Guard truck anywhere in the past week."

"Yeah, I guess you're right. OK, we'll be over about five." I got to work shoveling out the VW Bug which actually was great in the snow because the engine was in the back where the weight was really needed. In addition, if I did happen to get stuck in the snow two guys or girls could lift it up out of any rut. We piled into the car with my bottle of wine and David's games and puzzles. David was ten at the time, turning eleven in May. We drove leisurely through

Bedford Center; it was deserted and very pretty with the street lights highlighting the snow on the Common.

Heading west on Rte. 63, we had just crossed over the town line into Concord, when I saw the headlights of a big truck behind me. "Oh, no," I said, "It's the National Guard." The truck pulled up next to me and indicated that I was to pull over. David looked stricken. "Are we in trouble?" he asked. "Are they going to arrest us?"

"I don't know. Don't say anything. Let me do the talking."

I pulled over to the side of the road and a very tall guardsman walked up to the driver's side. Another soldier was in back of the car taking down the license plate number, I imagine. I rolled down the window." Good evening, Sir."

"Ma'am, are you aware that there's a ban on driving in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts?"

"Yes, Sir, I certainly am aware of that and I would never break the law unless it was an absolute emergency." David now looked like he might cry.

"What exactly is your emergency, Ma'am?"

"My mother is all alone in her house in Concord because my father is stranded in upstate New York. He works for Polaroid, and they sent him there to set up cameras in a new RMV. My mother called to say she wasn't feeling well and could I please come over and help her with her medications." I was now pushing the bottle of wine under the driver's seat.

"I understand that, Ma'am. We'll be happy to follow you to your mother's house to make sure you get there safely."

"Thank you so much, Sir." Damn! This was in the days before cell phones. I couldn't even give Peg a heads-up.

We took a road off Rte. 62, then another road to Black Duck Pond, an idyllic spot with a cluster of three houses built around a small pond, now frozen. The huge National Guard truck was behind us. I got out of the car and rang the doorbell. I should mention my friend Peg is eleven years older than I am and that she has let her hair go naturally gray. As Peg stood in the doorway, I threw my arms around her and said in a very loud voice, "Mom, I'm so glad to see

you. How are you doing? Don't stand there in the cold. Let's get you inside. These nice Guardsmen followed me to make sure I got here okay." I waved a thank you to the truck.

"Good night, Ma'am. Be careful on the way home tonight."

Once inside, I collapsed on the couch and told Peg the story of my encounter with the National Guard. She was not impressed with my story. I couldn't figure out why.

"Oh," she fumed, "I can't believe they actually believed I was your MOTHER!"

I explained that her gray hair probably saved us. Otherwise, I might be sitting in the State Police Concord Barracks until they figured out what to do with us. I'm not sure that overrode her indignation at the assumption of her age! Dinner was delicious, and we encountered no problems on the drive home. Peg still says the same thing now, years later, whenever we tell that story. "Can you believe they actually thought I was her mother?"

Joe Gonzalez

A Christmas Hitch

Dear Family and Friends,

Forgive the late arrival of your Christmas presents. It was truly not my fault. I did not procrastinate. Let me explain. I sent Santa Claus my list of individuals and presents very early in the season. He received it and replied, "No problema". However, a problema did arise—in fact, many problemas.

From what I've been able to piece together, on Christmas Eve Santa prepared to hitch his team of veteran reindeers to the sled for his annual delivery, but they refused to be hitched. They complained they were getting too old to be traipsing around the world for a whole night in the freezing cold. In addition, Dasher complained about the rheumatism in his hands that had stopped him from sewing. Prancer had the same complaint but in his knees and therefore had not pranced in months. Vixen was suffering from depression and had put away his box of magic tricks. Comet had stopped playing games because no one was in the spirit to play anymore. Donner and Cupid were suffering from laryngitis and could not sing. Blitzen, the fastest of them all, had developed painful bone spurs on his back hooves and could hardly

walk. And, to boot, Rudolph's nose had stopped glowing, its inner energy as dead as an old AA battery.

Santa still tried to rouse them explaining how disappointed the children of the world will be if they did not receive the presents they had asked for and were eagerly awaiting.

"It's your duty and responsibility to make these children happy," Santa insisted. But his words fell upon deaf deer ears. Though Santa is a jolly old soul, this made him angry. He threatened them with withholding their salaries. "No play, no pay," he warned. The reindeers responded in kind. If their salaries were withheld, they would report Santa to the Reindeer Union. Santa did not back down. The reindeers announced they were immediately calling their shop steward and were going on strike. In essence they were shutting down Christmas right then and there and no matter how Santa tried to make them change their mind, they would not budge.

Santa was in a fix. There weren't going to be any Christmas presents this year. In desperation he made an overseas emergency call to the Three Wise Men--aka The Magi--in the Middle East asking them if they could possibly distribute his presents along with theirs during the Epiphany.

"It will be our pleasure," responded the Balthazar. "Send them to us." Relieved and thankful for their generosity, Santa went in search of a post office to mail the presents which took him an incredible amount to time. Unfortunately, since it was the evening before Christmas, all the post offices were closed. In desperation, he called the U.S. Congress and explained his situation.

"This is a world-wide emergency, you have to help me," he begged. At first, the Congress aide who answered the phone thought it was a joke, but Santa Claus managed to convince him by reminding him of all the toys he had brought him in his childhood: the Smurf family set, My Little Pony, Teddy Ruxpin, Koosh Ball, Jenga and many more.

"Wow," the aide was convinced. "Unfortunately, Santa, all post offices are closed for the holiday," he explained. He did, however, give Santa the address of a FedEx near him that was still open. Luckily Santa found a U-Haul still open and loaded all the presents into the biggest U-Haul he could rent and sped to the FedEx facility. At first the FedEx employees thought Santa was just someone in Santa suit trying to pull one over on them. If it hadn't



been for the great luck that Santa was carrying his unlimited American Express Preferred Card,

he would not have been able to ship the presents because the FedEx employees knew that crazy people could not obtain an unlimited American Express Preferred Card. Even though it turned out to be incredibly expensive, Santa could finally relax once the presents were on their way to the children of the world. Or so he thought.

As soon as the Balthazar, Melchior and Caspar received the presents, they left the Middle East on their camels to make sure they could get to the United States by the Epiphany. But luck was not with them. Shortly after departing their home, the Magi found themselves enveloped in one of the worst dust storms to hit their area in years. The immense dense cloud of dust forced them to seek shelter at an inn for a couple of days until the storm abated. They loaded their camels once more and travelled west and then south into Africa and across the Sahara until they reached the port of Casablanca in Morocco. There, they embarked with their camels and presents on an oil tanker headed for the New England coast of the United States.

As they crossed the Atlantic, a bomb cyclone turned blizzard was making its way through the American Northeast, pounding the New England states with strong winds and gusts peaking close to hurricane force. Chilling temperatures were causing unprecedented havoc for all travelers on roads, the air and sea. miraculously the tanker was able to reach shore and anchor. As the Magi disembarked, one of the camels loaded with presents slipped on the gangway and hurt one of his forelegs. They managed to make it to a local Holiday Day Inn where they spent a couple of days before they were able to take to the road. They didn't make it too far. The limping camel was howling in pain. The Magi were forced to return to the Holiday Inn in search of a veterinarian experienced with camels, who would be able to treat the ailing creature. It took almost a whole morning before they found one. An ambulance was called to transport the camel to the veterinarian's office where the doctor examined the damaged leg. His diagnosis was not good: the ankle joint half way up the leg and the bones of the foot-arch were fractured but, even worse, was that the freezing temperatures had interrupted the blood flow through the leg and gangrene had set in. They only way to save the camel was to amputate the infected leg. The Magi had no option but to agree and gave their permission. The amputation went well, but now they were down to two camels which had to carry all the presents as well as Balthazar and Caspar. Melchior remained behind to care for the convalescing camel. Obviously, this slowed down the disbursement of the presents.

Eventually, Balthazar and Caspar arrived at my front door and said, "Here are your presents." I was very much surprised, not at the sight of the Middle Eastern Kings and two camels, but by the fact that the presents were my presents—that is the presents that I had asked Santa to deliver to my family and friends. "Those are not mine," I explained. "They were supposed to have been delivered to my family and friends. See each one has a name and address."

They wouldn't listen to me. "You're getting the presents," they replied. "We can't do any more. We're exhausted. We even lost Assup?"

"Assup?" I asked perplexed. "Who the hell is Assup?"

"Our camel," Caspar explained. "And if you want your presents delivered, you'd better get your ass up on a camel and help us." So they hopped on their camels leaving me with my mouth hanging open and all your presents littering my front door. I had no other recourse but to wait until after Christmas, go to the post office and mail out your packages again. Now you understand why they took so long to get to you. Next year, I'm not trusting Santa Claus or the Magi. I will send them out myself via the U.S. Post Office because I don't want to want to hear anything about getting my ass up on a camel.

Miriam Kronish

Abecedarian Hats

Over the course of our lives we wear many hats.

An aviator's hat, when flying in an airplane
 A baseball cap when playing the game
 A chef's hat when cooking
 A driver's hat when driving
 An elegant hat when going out on the town
 A farmer's at when farming
 A gardener's hat when gardening
 A hairy hat when wearing a wig
 An itchy hat when wearing wool
 A jolly hat when in clown costume
 A kooky hat when in a silly mood
 A large hat — if you have a large head
 A mini hat — if your head is smaller
 A Navy hat if you're a sailor
 A opera hat if you're on your way to the Met
 A Panama hat if you're in the tropics
 A Quaker bonnet if you're on your way to Sunday meetinghouse
 A rain hat if you're walking in a rainstorm



A snood if it's windy
 A turban if your hair is wet
 An unassuming hat if you want to blend into the crowd
 A vagabond hat if you're adventurous
 A watch cap if you're at sea
 An X-tra hat in case you lose one
 A youngster's hat if you're a toddler
 A zucchetto if you're a member of the clergy

We all have hat memories:
 Favorite hat,
 A hat we wear to keep us warm in winter
 A hat with ties that won't blow off our head when it's windy
 A hat to match a particular outfit
 A hat to hide a bad hair day
 A hat to provide shade under the summer sun
 A frilly hat, a silly hat
 A batty hat, a catty hat
 And that's that about HATS.

Sheila Place

Scenes From a Catholic Girlhood

It was the year before I could make my First Communion, but I wanted to be one of the angels in the procession into the church for the class ahead of me. I made sure my behavior was appropriately angelic and I remember how excited I was to be chosen—the long, flowing white dress, the pretty headband and oh! — the wings. How beautiful the wings were. I was a very cute angel, if I do say so myself, and I have a picture to prove it.

All this, of course, led up to the big event for the following year, First Communion which required a year of preparation. I got my very own Baltimore Catechism—you know the one: Who made me? God made me, and so on. Why was it called the Baltimore Catechism? Did they run out of Catholic children in Baltimore and ship the left over catechisms to Batavia, New York? Memorization was the order of the day. Now I feel fortunate that I remember almost none of it. How meaningful could it possibly have been to memorize page after page of dogma at age seven?

During rehearsal for the big day we lined up, girls and boys separately, probably to prevent us from having impure thoughts. We marched from the school next door to the church where a nun was waiting at the front of the church with her clicker. Click and you genuflect, click again and you file into the pews. The clicker was very much like what we used to train our dog, Zoe, when she was a puppy. I guess that's what we were, Catholic puppies!

Confession is a requirement for receiving one's First Communion but, being seven, there wasn't a long list of sins to confess. You must confess something; so you make it up. I invented something along the order of I called my sister a name six times, I disobeyed my parents three times, I lied twice. I don't think I had any impure thoughts, but I wondered what they were. I thought maybe it was something to look forward to. I watched the faces of classmates leaving the confessional for hints of what was in store, and, too soon, it was my turn. I went through the ritual: "bless me, Father, for I have sinned", remember, I'm only seven.

Father Whomever listened; maybe he said, "For your penance, say three Our Fathers and ten Hail Marys. Keep up the good work!" What? I've just poured out the terrible things I've done and you tell me, "keep up the good work"! Of course I didn't say that. My guess is he'd already heard similar confessions many times that morning and was less attentive as the morning went on. I began wondering about the value of confession.

The Sisters of Mercy were ever present in my life in ways that are memorable for the wrong reasons. The exceptions were Sister Mary Anthony, my very sweet, patient first grade teacher, and Miss Horgan, my spinster-lady fourth grade teacher who was a lovely person and a good teacher. To supplement her meagre salary, Miss Horgan sold the Encyclopedia Britannica. Of course we bought the set as well as the annual updates. They were a presence on the living room book shelves for many years. What does one do with old encyclopedias? We won't discuss Sister Mary Fidelis, someone who's better forgotten. The rest of the nuns were unpleasant and sometimes cruel. They would have fit right in with Ireland's Magdalene sisters. I'm not kidding. Looking back, I feel sympathy for them, and I wonder if they ever doubted their choice of a vocation.

The next big event in my Catholic girlhood was Confirmation which is a ceremony when you commit to a life as a Roman Catholic. It presumes, at age twelve or thirteen, you are old enough to make that commitment. This meant more instruction, more memorization and more rehearsals. Happily, the clicker was gone which meant we could manage simple directions. At Confirmation you choose a saint's name which you will probably never use again. This seemed a very big deal at the time. I chose the Theresa who was martyred protecting her virtue. How about that for a role model? So I became, for one day, Sheila Catherine Theresa Brown.

Our parents insisted upon Catholic education for all six of their children. Luckily for me, Batavia had a Catholic high school just in time. I escaped the fate of my siblings who rode a bus to Buffalo every day to go to Canisius High School, [the boys] and Sacred Heart Academy, [the girls]. I was able to go to shiny, new Notre Dame High School. I had a life with my friends. Oh, and the education was very good too.

So, what is the most important lesson I learned? I learned to question and to think about what a spiritual life meant to me. As a result, I'm now a Unitarian.

Rita Richardson

Sock Orphan

Where did you go, my friend, my mate?
 How could you leave me in this solitary state?
 I've got no holes, I'm quite elastic,
 But since you left, I don't feel fantastic.
 Was it the washer that spun you silly?
 Or the dryer's hot breath that sent you willy-nilly?
 I'm no good without you,
 I'm kind of a bore.
 When we were together,
 We had friends galore.
 I knew it might always end like this,
 Alone in the bottom of the sock abyss.
 Maybe one day we'll be together again,
 Or find each other in a thrift store bin.
 We were so good together,
 Two of a kind,
 Now you've left me in a bind.
 I'm all alone. I miss my date,
 Guess I'll have to match up
 With a wanna be mate.
 Sock it to me sounded so cute,
 Now I'll just hide away anonymous,

inside a boot
 being single will have to do
 best foot forward.
 I'll find a new shoe.



William D. Ray

Betrayed

Once the house was quiet, Bobby slipped on his overalls and climbed out the window. There was no moon. The pine straw was prickly and crunched under his bare feet as he made his way through the East Texas woods to Jim Bob's house. Deep in the woods, he stopped because he thought he heard someone following him. He listened carefully, but all he heard were the crickets. He ran the rest of the way. Out of breath, he tapped on Jim Bob's window and said, "I heard there was somethin' goin' on up the road. Wanna go?" In less than a minute, Jim Bob was out of the window and the two barefoot twelve-year old adventurers were headed up the dusty road. Bobby continued, "I heard Pa tellin' Mr. McGregor there was a meetin' tonight at the crossroads." They could see a large bonfire up ahead. Flames were visible above the dark pine trees lining the road. They broke into a run. They didn't want to miss anything. As they got closer, they saw a large cross in front of the bonfire. At least thirty men in long white robes, wearing masks, were milling about. It was just what Bobby imagined, a meeting of the Klu Klux Klan. They slipped off into the woods and watched quietly.

Bobby wasn't sure, but he thought he recognized the voice of the man who was standing up front, talking. After he made some announcements, the man said, "We will be taking in six new members tonight. I ask the candidates for membership to step forward. When the men stepped up close to the large cross, Bobby couldn't believe his eyes.

He didn't know what to say when Jim Bob whispered, "Look, there's your pa." The boys were fascinated as inductees were given robes and white pointy hats. Then they were instructed on the rules of the secret brotherhood, which included always taking care of fellow members. Bobby was shocked at what happened next. The man upfront called out Jake Winfrey for committing a grievous crime against one of their members. Then two men dragged out Bobby's neighbor, Mr Winfrey, all tied up. Mr. Winfrey explained that when he stopped behind the grocery store on Saturday, he saw young Mr. Jim Langford kicking a little nigger kid who was laying on the ground. He asked Mr. Langford to stop. Then he said, "The next thing I knowed, Mr. Langford turned and swung on me, so I cold cocked him and told that little kid to get out of there."

The man running the meeting announced to the crowd, "This man, Jake Winfrey, has done grievous injury to one of our members." Then he faced Jake and in a loud voice said, "I sentence you to fifteen lashes with the whip." They were tying Mr. Winfrey to a tree with his hands stretched over his head when a car came racing up and stopped in a cloud of dust. The

U.S. Marshal got out. The boys' eyes bugged out as the marshal stepped in front of the headlights of his car and called out to the man up front,

"Sheriff, release that man! I'm taking him into custody." When the sheriff resisted, the marshal shouted, "You release him immediately or I will have the entire U.S. Army down here." The marshal then grabbed Mr. Winfrey by his arm, shoved him into the back of his car and sped away. When the boys realized that the man up front by the cross was the sheriff, they just looked at each other with a touch of fear and headed home. They had enough excitement for one night.

On the way, Jim Bob asked, "Did you know your pa as joinin'?" "No, and please don't tell anyone. Do you know who the nigger kid was?" Jim Bob replied, "I heard folks talkin' about it at church on Sunday. It was one of Arch Martin's boys. I don't know which one. None of 'em are too bright, but none of 'em are trouble makers." Bobby said, "I can't believe they was goin' to horse whip Mr. Winfrey. He lives up on the other side of the crossroads. He's a good neighbor. He comes and helps Pa pick peaches every year. I'm glad the marshal got there before they started whippin' him."

Bobby was torn. Should he tell his pa that he snuck out last night? He wondered how his pa felt about them wanting to horse whip Mr. Winfrey. He didn't sleep well. All of this stuff kept rolling around in his head. The next morning at breakfast, as he was finishing his third pancake, Bobby looked up and said, "Pa, me and Jim Bob slipped out last night and come up to the crossroads." Ma and Pa both stopped what they were doing and looked at Bobby. They both looked surprised, but Pa also looked angry. He exclaimed, "You had no business down there!"

"I know Pa, but they was gonna horse whip, Mr. Winfrey." Pa replied, "This is none of your business. I don't wanna hear no more about it. "Pa, I know those Martin boys. The oldest one's about my age. They always keep to themselves. I never knowed them to want to hurt anyone. "Boy, I'm not goin' to tell you again. Keep your mouth shut about this and mind your own business. You've had enough breakfast, now get out there and slop the hogs. "Bobby got up and dutifully followed his pa's orders, but he felt betrayed. The man that he loved and looked up to was a member of the Ku Klux Klan.

Patti Hughes

High Jinx at the Barnstable Comedy Club

For nearly a century community theater has thrived in Barnstable village The Barnstable Comedy Club, an all-volunteer organization continues to provide a home for aspiring actors, directors, and costume makers.

For close to a quarter of those 100 years I have participated in productions ranging from musicals to mysteries, comedies to dramas. It all started when an invitation to become a member arrived in my mailbox. I didn't know much about theater, but I checked off a few boxes, props, costumes, hospitality. I received a call almost immediately. The show about to open was called *L'il Abner* and was based on the long-running comic strip of the same name. I worked backstage as part of the crew. I soon learned that's where the fun really happens.

It is traditional for members of the cast to prank each other during the last show of a run in an attempt to trip up the actor's ability to stay in character. One such prank involved a very realistic pile of dog doo from a joke shop. You never knew where it would turn up. It went from stage left to stage right and I first encountered it on my stool – no pun intended. It had its best moment though when it was floating in the bucket from which the cast members had to ladle out a drink of the "powerful youth restoring elixir". No one lost a line or gave any indication that the potion was anything less than delightful.

This "youth restorative potion" transformed scrawny hillbillies into strapping young men. While average men are typically easier to come by in community Theater, handsome beef-cake types are not. Someone had gone to a gym and convinced three weight lifters to be in the show. With the aid of suspense building music and a fog machine, the hillbillies slip off- stage. The fog clears and there are the body builders posing and flexing their muscles in remnants of the same clothing. It was brilliant! These young studs got into the spirit of things very quickly. One of them was responsible for the following prank.

All the townsfolk are clustered around a man holding up a plaque proclaiming the founding of their town, Dogpatch. It's a celebration! The actors gaze in wonderment and pride upon the backside of the plaque. Unbeknownst to the actors or the audience, someone has taped a naughty picture from a men's magazine onto it. Not a single guffaw or facial expression gave it away.

Because there weren't enough men to partner the women for the big ho-down, I volunteered to make three life-sized dolls. After constructing a skeletal frame that would stand erect, panty hose and a dress shirt were stuffed with hay to give the body bulk. Next I attached trousers to the shirt with multiple safety pins. Jacket and tie were last. The feet were strapped onto the

ladies shoes for stability and to keep the legs from flinging around while they were dancing. I was dressing one doll on a long table when the Director thoughtfully commented, "If things don't work out for you, you could always get a job in a funeral home." It still makes me chuckle.

The curtain was closed as the dancers hurried into position. Suddenly there was a panicked flurry of activity around one of the women and her doll partner. The doll's trousers had fallen down exposing his pantyhose legs! The pants were yanked up just as the curtain opened and the dancer never missed a beat. I felt terribly responsible for this technical failure! How had this happened?

I found out when one of the body builders ran past me holding out a hand full of safety pins! "I think these are yours," he said with a mischievous grin. Well, I was good and thoroughly hazed and I was hooked on live theater! No production impacted me quite so much as that first one.

My memories are especially vivid from a backstage perspective. I may not remember the name of a show or even the plot. My memories are of what I call the show within the show, the layer upon layer of subplots contained within the confines of any production. All the participants including the audience make up this rich tapestry.



Some of my memories include making twelve different edible desserts for each of ten shows. I remember rapid fire costume changes and a slip left lying on the stage. I remember a certain sleep sofa that was hard to open, a temperamental curtain that jammed and a mustache that wouldn't stay affixed to a face. I could tell you who needed encouragement and who talked too much backstage and who was a diva. I remember the night the power went out and the actors went on-stage with lit candles. I remember the astounding voices in the Cole Porter Review the night my father died. I remember all the children who grew into teen-agers and finally went off to college and careers. The highs were high and the lows were low and the drama was non-stop. It's been a wild and wonderful ride. There's a place for YOU in Community Theater. Get involved. You won't regret it.

Paula Bacon

Bass River To Get a New Bridge

Cartographers use rivers to divide. Environmentalists view rivers as watersheds. Historians know that waterfronts have long attracted people. The Pawkannawkut Indians were here first. They were part of the fishing and hunting Wampanoag nation. But this new decade will allow people here today to get back to intimate connection where the river hits the shore. A new bridge will encourage people to walk, bike and fish as well as provide transit for cars. A real revitalization will restore all this.

Main Street was the lifeblood of the community of old, instead of just highway Rte. 28. The villages of South Yarmouth and West Dennis developed on the banks of the river where a path could be laid. The packet ships created a livelihood. Years ago a book, **Scuttlewatch** was written by Marion Crowell Ryder to acquaint young people with the activity on the banks where women often had little shops while their seafaring husbands were off delivering salt cod or bringing goods from other communities to Bass River. Searching from the scuttle on the roofs of houses for packet landings was a part of daily life for women and children left on shore. Need for a ferry across the river kept Elihu Kelley busy. Ferry Street marks the access. Eventually a wooden bridge helped people and their horses cross. Then the automobile age challenged the easy flow of people walking between villages. More people and more traffic have made challenges for pedestrians.

The proposed seventeen million dollar 2020 bridge will connect the two villages and not divide, people from the banks of the river. The sidewalk and bike lane combined with a lighted crosswalk will return important qualities of a bridge to the area. The seven acres of parkland from Bass River Park in West Dennis across to Packets' Landing in South Yarmouth will become a destination.

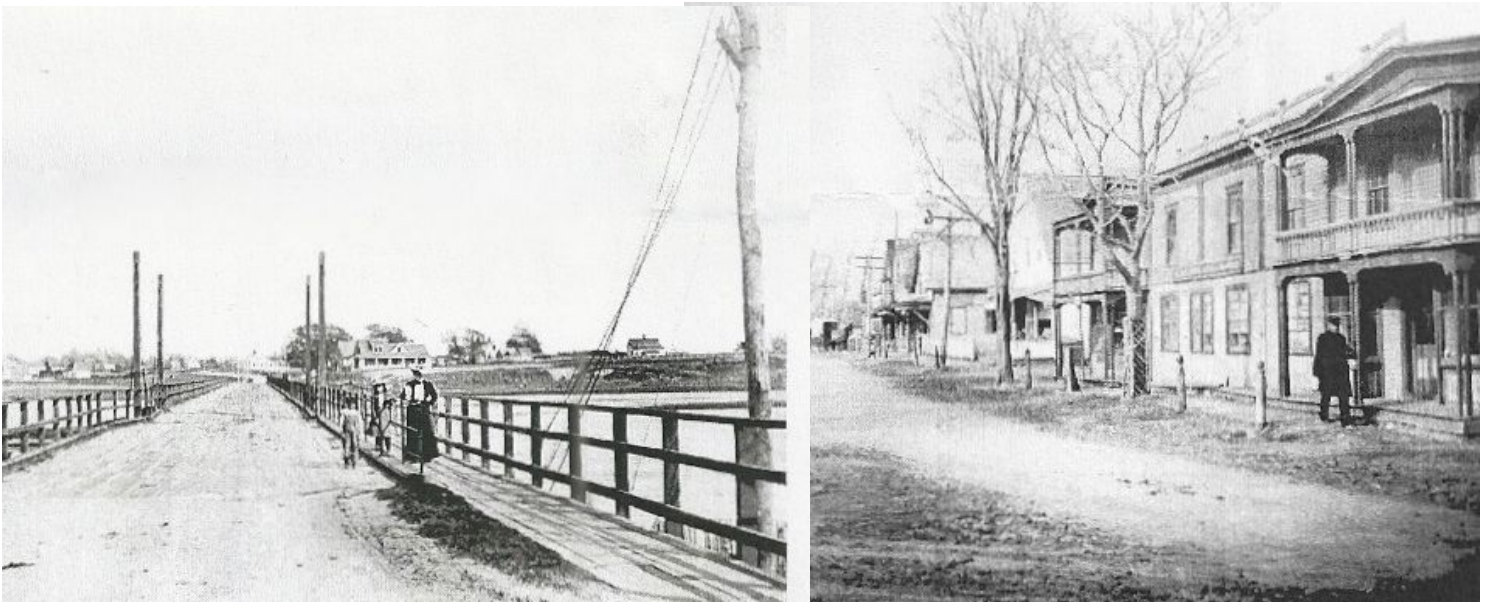
The river has stories which start at the mouth at Smugglers Beach. In the days of prohibition, a speakeasy along the beach attracted many Boston politicians. Stories of the politicians jumping out the windows during raids still amuse. Obviously liquor was smuggled up river. A little story of Eisenhower stopping on a dock during a swim got him yelled at. We would like to believe our hospitality is normally better than that. A fish market previously stood where Bass River Park is now. During at least one storm, the windows broke, with fish swimming through the restaurant. People could not resist saying the place had the freshest fish around.

The river widens here; Horsefoot Cove now has a busy marina. Ospreys work the area so there is usually activity in the air. Up river a little more, by Bass River Golf Course, the narrows have swifter current. During the early days of aviation, the golf course was an airfield. From there Russell Boardman broke records flying non-stop to Istanbul, Turkey. Many early aviators crashed, which was the misfortune of Russell Boardman, dead at 33. He owned the land which was sold to the town, his family is still around. The golf course now provides a green vista from the bridge. The river opens up again and Grand Grove where the Dennis side provides a broader shore and shellfish are abundant.

On the Yarmouth shore, an elite sailing camp, Bonnie Dune, was created by the Rogers family to entertain their children and friends from the Boston's North Shore. Word spread and many came. The Davenport building family was introduced to Cape Cod by the camp. During WW II it was hard to get councilors so the camp folded. Old campers now have homes in the area. Wilbur Park was part of the camp. It was given to the Harvard psychiatrist Dr. Wilbur in trade for services. Eventually he gave part of the land to the town and part to his son's fiancée. Across from Wilbur Park where the river takes a turn is an eddy with the current always moving in the direction of upstream. Wilbur Park today has been greatly upgraded with money from fishing licenses. A fine dock and ramp are good additions.

Another bridge was needed at this point. The trip upriver may have to wait for another day. The tide comes in and out twice a day with about a two foot gain at high tide. Stories of Vikings and Native Indians are part of the lore. History marches on and the stories change but measuring one's life flow on the river bank is a gift I treasure. The proposed new Bass River Bridge at Rte. 28 will confirm this. Do visit. I hope other people can also enjoy this river. Cheering on access is my hope for the future.

Vintage newspaper photos of Bass River Bridge



Barbara Leedom

Absurdity of Blasphemy

“John Lennon said the Beatles were as big as God or Jesus. I’m not sure of the words but people were horrified, religious ones anyway. They called it blasphemy. God, how some people carry on when musicians and comedians make fun of God—which no one knows what that is anyway. But don’t tell my mother I said such a thing.” Kathleen knew he wouldn’t tell.

“Profound utterance,” Andy said. “This is going to be a long trip. My knees hurt already. Too much playing squash. Yep, it’s going to be a long journey home.”

“We can talk about the blasphemy stuff,” Kathleen said. “it’s just the two of us. No one can hear if we talk in whispers.”

“It really got to you, didn’t it?”

“Yeah, it did. I keep thinking about people being put in prison for blasphemy, laws about blasphemy. I’m glad we went but it was hot and crowded and, if I had to travel to this part of the world again, I’d choose some other country. I know, I know I wanted to do a real far-off, far-out place, but...”

“Look. This must be an old plane. These were ashtrays.” He knew his partner sitting next him in the giant jet, was conjuring what she’d do about blasphemy when they got back to Colorado. She’d start a fund, hold meetings or write letters to companies doing business over there. They’d been together two years, and he knew his Kath as if it had been always.

“Can you believe people over there still smoke? Yuck!” Kathleen dug into her tote bag, which was the size of a microwave, for her knitting. “It was all advertising. It wasn’t blasphemy, it was lies, lies and more lies. The tobacco companies lied, the ad agencies lied and people died. Anyway, now we know. But they’re still being conned in that country.”

Andrew watched her take out the knitting needles and the start of what would be a pink and blue cap. He had not and would not ask about the knitting. He knew but he would not ask. Marriage scared him. “For shame, the advertising industry,” he said.

Kathleen adjusted the knitting needles and began to knit. The needles made slight clicking sounds that she thought of as her brain waves. Why she thought this she didn’t know. Why she thought most things she didn’t know. Not looking at Andy, she said, “I’m thinking of Salman Rushdie. Do you know where he is? Did you read **The Satanic Verses**? I did but I was nineteen and I didn’t get it. I’ll read it again; I have it somewhere. Maybe Mom hid it. Mom wouldn’t want to offend anyone. Mom considers offending a sin.”

“Now, Kath, you and I can’t help it if we were born rich, I read the book and I didn’t get it either. But what a fuss it caused. Do you know if there’s still that fatwa?”

"I don't know, but that's another thing I'm going to research. People should be allowed to write or say just about anything, even if it offends other people."

"Tell that to fundamentalists. Any religious fundamentalist. You don't make fun of their God. It's called, uh, blasphemy. That's the definition."

"We're moving. Here comes the steward."

"Kindly turn off your phone, Sir," said the steward, a man Andy thought looked something like the pictures he'd seen of Salman Rushdie.

"Done," Andy said. "It's going to be a long 16 hours without being wired."

"No, Sir. You may use devices once we're airborne and the captain has given the okay"

"Really? I heard this airline didn't allow phones on planes?"

The steward frowned. "You were misinformed, Sir, like many other western notions about our nation. A woman in business class asked me about stoning women for adultery. Stonings are very rare."

"That's a good thing," Kathleen said. She crossed her legs and noted the steward looked at the ceiling as she did so. "There's a well known American story about stoning. It's *The Lottery*. It takes place in the days of the Pilgrims and Puritans. It's about a woman who was stoned to death. When I first read it in high school, I couldn't sleep. We were too young to be reading that story. I don't imagine you have read that story."

"No, Ma'am. Have a fine flight. I'll be along with the breakfast menu."

"We get breakfast?" Andy asked,

"Of course, Sir. Three meals plus snacks. It's sixteen hours."

"You ought to tell that to other airlines," Kathleen said. She put her knitting needles in her lap and loosened her seatbelt. She thought if they were going to eat their way home, she'd eat a lot, even though she was certain it would be curried rice and lamb. No pork, of course. She hoped no dog.

A woman's voice, which clipped every syllable, announced, "Guests may now turn on your devices. Flight attendants will be taking your drink orders. No alcoholic beverages or any drinks with caffeine are served on our flights. Thank you for your cooperation."

Kathleen giggled. "Blasphemy, you think? Caffeine is blasphemous?"

"I guess because it's a high. But we saw them with opium pipes. I have a book in my backpack under the seat. I got it at one of the stalls when you were looking at scarves. It's about a neighboring country which I won't mention in case we're being bugged."

"What makes you think that?"

"Because bugs are everywhere. You'd know the country. Women can't drive cars and men can marry as many women as they please. Do you want to go there sometime?"

"Not a chance. This was enough," she said.

"There are some really different practices in different parts of the world. I never learned this stuff at Choate or Yale. How about you at Fordham?"

"Fordham's Catholic, liberal, but Catholic."

"I know. Did any of the profs talk about blasphemy?"

Kathleen shook her head no. "They were all pretty careful. It was during the priest's pedophile crisis. Tough times for them."

Andy yawned. He kissed her hands and let go of them. "Good God, I'm sleepy."

"Shhh, careful with your language. Blasphemy." She nudged his thigh.

"OMG. Blasphemy—what absurdity.

Now about stoning and cutting off hands and the heads of heretics and ..."

Mary Claire Casey

Maclura pomifera

My nephews collect fluorescent balls
of the Osage Tree in tin buckets,
carry them to their grandfather's garage
where they dissect the furrowed skin
of the fruit they call the monkey brain.
With one slice, their fishing knives plunge
through to the milky white juice,
sticky like semen. It oozes into veined
cracks on the cement floor, collects
in small puddles at their feet.
"It is good for nothing," they say.

In another time, children of the Osage Tribe
watched their elders strip the outer bark
of the tree until they reached its lemon-colored
sapwood. In bowls, molded by hands,
they soaked the wood until the color bled
into the clear water, until it was dark enough
for dying blankets, the same blankets
in which mothers wrapped their babies
at night. In the bottom lands of the Red River Valley
they sang to them in the wilderness of the woods,
their songs as soft as feathers on the wind.

Mary Claire Casey

September 11

Now I am sitting with my son
in the dusk of evening, watching
the news special as it rolls
across the screen, replay after replay.
A woman in the background remarks-
“I wondered what all those people
were doing at the window, waving.”

It is how we learn to say goodbye.

(Wave to the camera, I tell my son;
say bye bye. Blow a kiss.)

It is hard to see their faces. So much smoke
and fire. Sometimes you see a coat,
or a shirt flapping in mid air
like a signal flag calling for help.

Later, someone informs us of how
hot it was inside the building,
on what floor the impact took place.
Points of fact.

(The sky empties itself of light.
I lean my head against my son. He does not pull away.)

After that, the camera moves in—
closer. Someone is narrating, “My God,
I think they are jumping. They are.
They are jumping out the windows.
You can almost see them
Flailing against the wind.”

I want to call the station, even now
tell them: close your eyes, picture them
floating like graceful birds. Now they feel
nothing. Only the wind as it lifts them
skyward, carrying them on pockets of air.

Listen. Do you hear them? Their voices
hovering overhead: I love you. I’m sorry.
Do not forget me. Look upward.
Kiss the children goodbye. Goodbye.

You feel nothing for what seems forever.

Much later, we go outside, my son and I.
It is September, the sky is filled
with a thousand eyes,
their eyes—bright fires of light.

We turn our gaze upward, hear their voices
on the wind. They lean in—closer to us—
With such ease — and wonder—
as we wave goodbye.

I turn the volume down.

Stew Goodwin

Leadership

As this country wends its way through a maze of crises: economic; political; health; and social, our citizens have been forced to consider the important issue of leadership. At different times in our nation's history the quality of its leadership has been especially crucial. Recent events have demonstrated that we live in one of these times. *I have had the good fortune to come into personal contact with some outstanding leaders. My mother had a friend who visited our home with some frequency when I was growing up. As I listened Eleanor Roosevelt articulated the views which marked her leadership.

Once I had the opportunity to spend a two and a half hour flight sitting next to Martin Luther King, Jr. and his wife Coretta. I was able to experience his passion at a distance of a foot or two. When I was serving in the army, I had a boss, a major who had received a battlefield promotion (from sergeant to lieutenant). He gave me a powerful lesson in the exhibition and installation of courage. As a local government official I got to know a fellow electee (a water commissioner). He exemplified transparency and accountability.

*Boiling these lessons down to one word to represent an essential leadership quality, I would choose empathy. The ability to perceive situations through someone else's eyes in order to transmit a sense of understanding is a key to creating the type of leadership that can both foster and sustain unity. Think about it for a second, the deep divisions separating elements of our nation's population largely arise from a lack of empathy.

*In World War II our people were united, by their leaders, in a cause that allowed them to minimize their differences. Our path out of the Great Depression was opened by similar sentiments. Athletic teams and businesses are most successful when they can focus on goals that override interpersonal conflicts. I have two opposite memories from my military service in the Vietnam War days. One involves being shot at, actually feeling the breeze from whizzing bullets, and sometimes seeing them strike someone nearby. My basic expectation of those in my unit was what they would do to help me stay alive. Then when I got back to the states wearing my uniform in public invited abuse from anti-war protesters.

- * We are in survival mode now. If we fail to unite by expressing empathy
- * we may not be able to overcome the challenges that lie before us. We don't
- * all have to think alike, to believe alike, or to look alike to forge a bond strong enough to enable us to move forward. It will require a tier of leadership that can prevent us from attacking one another. I pray that such a tier will emerge.

Gershen Rosenblum

Once Upon a Time: A Brief Biography — Part II
(see Reflections XX, pages 36-38 got part I)

My Family and Kin

As I was growing up, my immediate family consisted of my parents and three brothers, one 10 years older, one 6 years older and a twin brother, 20 minutes older. My father could best be described as a resolute autocrat. As an only child, he was obviously pampered and self-absorbed. He expected strict compliance with his rules and was quick to use the shaving strop on his young children when his anger was aroused. He demanded our presence at the dinner table at 6:00 pm sharp. If we were a few minutes late arriving home he banished us to our room without supper. If he did not like the meal my mother had prepared he would push the plate aside and demand something else.

On other occasions, when the mood suited him, my father could be friendly, outgoing and considerate. Often, during the summer, he gave my twin brother and me three cent each with which to buy a lemon-flavored snow cone at the neighborhood store. He also provided us with 10 cents monthly to go to the local cinema. My father was not interested in sports and never took us to baseball or football games, unlike the fathers of many of our friends. He also was annoyed when we played the radio loud enough for him to hear. We would often turn the sound very low and press our ear close to the speaker in order to hear our favorite children's programs: *The Lone Ranger*, *The Green hornet*, *Jack Armstrong*, *Little Orphan Annie*. We also listened to radio broadcasts of the Red Sox games in the same fashion. On the other hand, he did not object to music being played at a normal level; thus the entire family was able to listen to the Boston Pops, the New York Philharmonic, as well as the big bands of the era, Glenn Miller, Artie Shaw, Tommy Dorsey, Benny Goodman, Gene Krupa. We were also permitted to listen to the top comedians of the day, Jack Benny, Fred Allen, Red Skeleton and others.

In many ways my father's moods and prohibitions were unpredictable. At times he could be affectionate and likable; at other times he could be stern, punitive and autocratic. When I was 11 or 12 years old, I remember fantasizing that I was an adopted child and that my "real" father loved sports and was a parental paragon. My most vivid memory of what I perceived to be unfair treatment was when he demanded to know which of us (my twin or I) had dulled his plane. He was a carpenter and needed sharp tools to do his job well. The culprit in this instance was my twin brother but he refused to acknowledge his culpability. My father, confronted with denials by both his sons, decided on a foolproof decision. He beat both of us

with his strop, apparently reasoning that not only would he punish the culpable one but that the other would learn a lesson as well.

Fortunately these occurrences were very infrequent. For the most part, my father treated us with benign neglect. Unfortunately, this was not the case with my two older brothers who were subjected to much more discipline and emotional abuse than we were. My oldest brother responded to my father's demands passively while my other older brother rebelled constantly and was frequently locked out of the house. He left when he was 16 to live at the home of his girlfriend; they married at age 18.

My mother was, for the most part, an uncomplaining sufferer. She dared not interfere when my father punished one of the children, but secretly, whenever my brother was locked out of the house, went down to the basement where he sought warmth and shelter and took food to him. She did the same when my twin brother and I were sent to bed without supper. After my father had gone to bed she snuck into our room with a sandwich and milk.

I remember being taught to give her insulin with a hypodermic needle when she was too ill to do it herself. However, there were long periods of time when her symptoms were in remission and she was able to cook and manage the household tasks. But since she had no daughters to help her with these chores my twin brother and I were required from the age of eight on to dust, vacuum, beat the carpets, wash and dry the dishes, stoke the furnace, shovel out the ashes, clean snow off the sidewalks, help with grocery shopping and many other tasks which my mother asked of us. We accepted this as a matter of course. In all honesty, our housecleaning left a lot to be desired. We were eager to go outside and play with our friends who waited in the alley for us.

My mother was a patient, loving woman. She cared deeply for her four children but felt helpless before the tirades of my father. I often wondered why she didn't leave him. I couldn't appreciate that she had nowhere to go nor would she ever abandon her children. My mother valued education and often expressed a wish that her children became doctors or lawyers, the two professions she knew best.

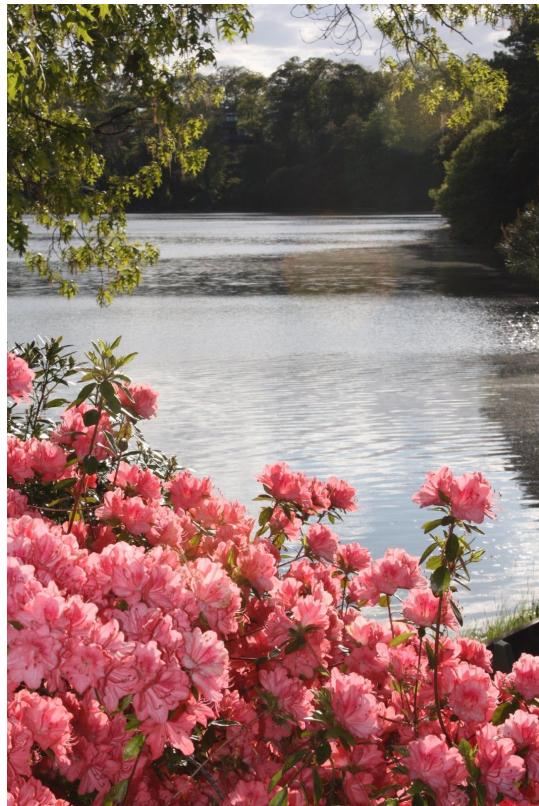
My brothers and I were expected to work after school; it was customary for us to turn over our earnings to her to help pay for household and living expenses. My father, a carpenter, was often out of work during the Depression and even during World War II. Thus, our financial contributions helped significantly. However, unbeknown to us, my mother secretly squirreled away some of this money for our future college education.

My father did not share my mother's high regard for education. He believed in the "self-made man" and felt that higher education was a waste of time. In that regard he admired my twin brother who was managing a window shade store the age of 17. My oldest brother got a job after he left high school and attended Lincoln Institute which was the night school of MIT where he subsequently received a certificate in mechanical engineering and design. He would have preferred to a college degree but did not have the money to go to day college and my father would not (or could not) help him financially. My middle brother dropped out of high school when he left home and, to my knowledge, never obtained a GED. After the war he and my twin brother went into business together manufacturing and selling venetian blinds, radiator enclosures and table pads.

My mother died when I was 17 years old. On her deathbed she revealed that she had accumulated \$1300 over the years from our earnings and wanted my twin brother and me to split this money for our college education. My brother said that he was planning to enlist in the Air Force and did not need his share of the money. He insisted that I should take it all. Two weeks after my mother's death I received notice that I was accepted to Harvard and I used the money to help pay for my first two years of college. Tuition was \$400 a year at that time. I enlisted in Army in 1943 when I had no more tuition money.

(to be continued)

Photo: Jean Arnold



Susan Elizabeth Clark

Re-examining My First Love

My first love was a woman. No, I did not at the age of eleven have a carnal attraction to a member of my own sex. It happened because the actress Mary Martin was cast as Peter Pan. What young girl isn't lifted on high by a boy in green tights who promised eternal youth, adventure, and who could teach her to fly. Not only did he defy gravity, but he could, by utilizing Tinker Bell's fairy dust, take me along on a magical journey.

After all these years, I decided it was time to still the long-forgotten twinge in my loins and fully vet this memory of an immortal youth. I went straight to the source and borrowed a copy of Sir James Barrie's unabridged story. The real Peter dresses in skeleton leaves and tree sap. It was not a huggy, squeeze vision. Peter avoided physical contact with others because of an alluded to negative association with his own mother and by extension all females. His initial contact with the Darling family children of early 20th century London was because of curiosity. He returned to retrieve his shadow which became separated from him when he was chased from the bedroom by the children's nurse, a Newfoundland dog, named Nana.

Disney's version of Peter Pan and Wendy is similar to the original. What I wanted was to learn about Peter's personality and whether I still found it attractive. Was a lovely fantasy I had carried around all these years justified? What I found was a bossy, egotistical, pompous, ruthless dictator. He was a quixotic child with a temperament more like a tantrum-riddled two-year-old, not a young boy of about 11 as evidenced by his size. This may be understood as due to his lack of parental guidance and discipline. The stultification of his personality and refusal to grow up mentally and physically may be attributed to an environment similar to that displayed in **Lord of the Flies**. With no laws except those deigned by Peter and his nemesis, Captain Hook. Peter and his gang of lost boys, Hook and his band of pirates, the Pickaninny redskins, and the beasts of the jungle ranged the island of Neverland at whim killing each other and pillaging.

To Peter make believe and truth were the same even to the point of serving the lost boys and Wendy make believe meals. They dared not question him. He would conveniently forget names and events which were of no immediate use or interest. He was unappreciative of Tinker Bell's loyalty until she was willing to sacrifice her life by drinking poison meant for him. He claimed other's ideas as his own and disdained the acts of writing and spelling since he could do neither. Like that petulant two-year-old, he rushed from one interest to the next when the former became old and boring.

His treatment of Wendy snuffed out any flickering flame which I may have kept smoldering for Peter Pan. Even though he hated the idea of 'mothers', he wanted Wendy to be a mother for him and the lost boys. Her job was to cook, clean, nurse, sew, mend, coddle, be ever understanding, not ask questions, or doubt his opinions or actions, obey his commands, and never ever grow up and leave him. Goodbye, Peter. Here's your shadow. What's your hurry! Safe trip back to Neverland.

Rita Richardson

The Pantry

As this strange pandemic unfolds, it seems increasingly clear to me that we ought to go back to the concept of having a pantry; that homely, nearly forgotten room of the house. I'll bet your grandmother had one. My grandmother's pantry was a large, closet-like room with a door that adjoined the kitchen. In it resided the Kelvinator refrigerator, with its motor coiled on the top. It was barely five feet in height and didn't make very good ice cubes. But it kept the milk, cream, butter and eggs, from Kennedys in town, cold.

The pantry also had a worktop table with a window above that looked out to the small backyard and her beloved garden. The wrap-around shelves that lined the pantry walls held everything needed to turn out three meals a day: canned goods, flour, sugar, molasses, shortening. The fresh veggies like onions and potatoes were tucked into corners or hanging from bags under hooks that were under the shelves along with sturdy shopping bags and the larger kitchen utensils like a long handled fork, a ladle, a flour sifter, remember those? I'm sure the upper shelves held Saltines, Hydrox Cookies—not Oreos—oyster crackers for soup. Surely there was a box or two of Fannie Farmer candy because my grandmother had a sweet tooth.

There may have been a tin green and cream-stripe breadbox that kept the homemade brown bread from going stale. I now wish I had the recipe for that bread. It may also have held the "heels" of bread for her delicious turkey stuffing. She had Bells Seasoning, salt and pepper, parsley as well as cinnamon and nutmeg: that was the extent of the spice array. I remember peanut butter, Marshmallow Fluff, Vermont Maid maple syrup—so delicious on the French toast she made occasionally in the black, well oiled skillet. No fancy cake mixes, Hamburger Helper, flaked sea salt or gravy mixes would not dare take up valuable space.

So as we shoulder the months of this virus, I've decided to set up my own pantry in a little nook at the bottom of the basement stairs. I will stockpile Campbells tomato soup, chicken noodle and cream of mushroom soup in case we have to resort to tuna casserole. No doubt Nana made her own preserves but I will have Smuckers, some Nutella, a few boxes of good crackers, cookies and instant pudding.

Although I hardly ever use them, a few cans of veggies, paper products (remember the toilet paper shortage last March?). I'll add a few bags of beans, peas, lentils and some packets of yeast for homemade bread...a worthwhile past time during the dull days of winter.

We can learn a lot from those homemakers of the '40s and '50s who kept their larders lined and pantries well stacked, all without the aid of take out, go out or Instacart. My makeshift pantry is a reminder of the good old days, useful and practical and never out of style.

Barbara Hansen

Ice Cube Trays

"Do you have any ice cube trays?" asks the short haired, short of stature, round faced woman. She walked into the Thrift Shop using a cane but moved quickly.

"Let's look," I say. Together we search unsuccessfully amid pots, assorted covers, casserole dishes and plastic bowls on the shelves in the area designated kitchen items. No ice cube trays today. As I continue moving items hoping to spot a hidden ice cube tray in a back corner, I learn Ethel is 90 years old and her husband Bob is 95 suffering from a bit of Alzheimer's. He also has some physical limitations keeping him home on most days. Ethel, however, can leave him alone for a few hours while she does errands like finding ice cube trays. It is for her husband that she is on the mission. He wants ice in his drinks.

She has already been to Ocean State Job Lot and a couple grocery stores. All she could find were long cylindrical shapes. Frozen water in that shape fits well in water bottles but her husband prefers a glass. Ethel has been told that there is no longer a need for ice cube trays because refrigerators have ice makers now. Yet, Ethel's and Bob's does not. I want to help. Could she use small paper cups or freeze a small flat block and break it into pieces or maybe buy a bag of ice. Ethel prefers the way she has done all her life-just a few rectangles to jingle in a glass of water or the occasional ginger ale. First choice would be aluminum with a pull up bar but a plastic tray requiring an arm twist might be ok. She leaves the shop disappointed.

Two weeks pass before Ethel returns to the Thrift Shop. I ask her if she ever found an ice cube tray. She hadn't and poor Bob is still having drinks without ice and is not happy about it.

We search again and this time find a Bon Bon giant two inch ice cube mold set in red. It is made of silicone. I Googled later to learn that you can buy these on Amazon for \$9.99 but today we give it to Ethel free.

The story does not end there. Ethel found the two inch cubes are too big and, because of a flat bottom, are difficult to pop out of the tray. Both Ethel and the one review on Amazon gave the same report. But perseverance does pay off. Only days after this latest failure, two blue traditional sized ice cube trays were found just in time for Bob to enjoy his Super Bowl drink with ice.

This is one story of 85 in a book Barbara has just had printed titled **Thrift Shop Stories**

Ellen Nosal

Harriet's Story

The real estate listing in 1981 described it as “a stately older home.” The photo showed a white Greek Revival colonial with a hip roof and trimmed hedges. It stood tall and proud, steady and strong, at the top of Main Street. It had a history and a future. I was instantly smitten. It checked all the boxes on the list of must-haves according to the clippings in my binder from Colonial Homes Magazine. I looked past the ugly



wallpaper. I looked past the petite kitchen, and wiggly windows. I looked past the busy street too close to the front door that was flanked by pillars. I was infatuated with the fire-place in the living room and winding stairway, which I imagined festooned with winter greenery.

It was May, and the magnolia tree wore the delicate, pink tulip petals that were soon whisked away in a rainy wind. Two voices echoed in the vast emptiness that was soon filled with furniture and, much later, with a crib, and more toys than two sisters would ever need. A swing set enjoyed the shade of the hydrangea tree. Voices now laughed and cried and sang and shouted when the doorbell rang. At Halloween, neighborhood children, costumed and bundled, teetered on the top front step and helped themselves to treats. Winter brought the little truck that cleared the sidewalks. One hundred year-old windows rattled and wore a lacy layer of frosting. Chins sat on the windowsill, waiting for Dad to come home to be greeted by the snowman crafted with mittened hands. The bay window in the dining room nestled the Christmas tree. Holiday garlands gave a regal wrap to the banisters, just as I had imagined.

Squealing girls in pastel dresses led Easter egg hunts. Bathroom mirrors reflected gap-toothed smiles, twinkling braces, and the first smudges of lipstick. The big deck, added in the 1990s, hosted birthday and graduation parties, and searches for shooting stars on frigid winter nights. A floppy cocker spaniel, and then an affable beagle tip-tapped on the kitchen floor of my home that I now called Harriet. She was the matriarch, the keeper of dreams, my guardian angel. Her work was far from done..

The top landing of the stairs became my place to sit and churn my thoughts, deciding, and making choices, hugged by the ancient plaster walls, now sporting colors and patterns that

made me smile. Baby gates at the top and bottom fell away to allow several prom dresses and a wedding gown to sweep down those twisted stairs.

Thirty-eight years later, the real estate listing described her as charming and warm. It would take just the right family to love her as we did. It made it so much easier to leave her for our new life in a comfy ranch on Cape Cod, knowing that excited newlyweds would make their own happily ever after in the house on the hill.

Mary Nyman

Home Town Moments

My childhood was contained
in a white clapboard house
On the edge of town
High on a bluff
Overlooking Red River
Where spring floods
Covered fields for miles.
While daffodils crowded
Our front yard, trillium,

Days were programmed
By schedules, schools,
Riding my bike,
Swinging on grapevines,,,,
Activities were real,
Unquestioned, mostly happy.
Town was remote,
So foreign and away.
But it was night

Jack-in-the-pulpits, crocus
With whippoorwills,
And violets bloomed
Overlooking the cliff.
Growing was patterned
By leaves and forest
And a willow tree
Climbed and read infor hours

Trees shimmering
in full moonlight
where I felt beauty
My soul immersed in comfort
What is touched by moon majesty
In memory now returns to the heart.



Glyn Dowden

Now I Remember

Let me begin as a spark swirling
into space, a light so bright dark-
ness recoils into night.

Let me see your face a place
where my eyes can rest,
where your calm voice will be heard
above the grind, above the rim-
less waves driving in from
the sea.

We will search for peaches and
honey in a weed-riven garden
where you dug for potatoes
where sweeties mixed with
the fragrance of wallflowers
bright eyed and innocent
splashed along the wood fence tilts
toward a dirt lane
roaming to nowhere and you
smelling of soap with an arm
around my shoulder, telling me
I was special.

Let me continue down the time
you answered the door, frail in
the grayness of age, blue eyes
bright with a smile as regret
snatched at my throat and shak-
ing fingers gripped my hand in
the dim light shadowed

Passover lived and I left
in search of blessing from
strangers bold, holding a book
of half-truths and equations. What was it
like

the swift rushing currents taking
them away, leaving you a school
cap and broken swing, a few
stranded photographs curled
around the edges

Let me float on your wind and
your prayers singed by the heat
of the sun, soiled by the earth in
your hands, your cheeks damp
from tears of thankfulness.

Let me turn back those yellowed
pages and open the curtains
when a new day begins and all
is almost forgotten, almost never
written until now.

I have come this way to talk
to you, sleeper of the deep,
keeper of my secrets the ones
I never knew and now I surren-
der your words to the ground
upon which I tread as the world
turns, words burn and black is
the color of the dead.

Carol Coteus

Framed Memories

Cumulus puffs of brilliant white so delicate it seems to hover just above
dewy eyes of blue surrounded by lashless folds of skin and a fan of creases.
Perched on her lap inspecting her face with intimacy permitted to only a grandchild.

My finger tip traces the lightly etched of easier times,
meandering lines to nowhere; those youthful adventures,
and deepest grooves for years best forgotten.

Pausing at her thinning lips lightly tinted by Revlon's Pinky Blush,
our two smiles meet and then we giggle
as her teeth drop, a trick I never tire of.

Sun- kissed hands, sapphire veins beneath
paper- thin skin, fingers sectioned by knobby joints.
Cracked nails hidden under lacquered rose.

Hands that hold oils and pastels,
trained by Masters, guided by her heart.
Charcoals reflecting deepest sentiments.

"Together" modeling friendship
between two children,
one of color, the other blond.

"Fear" soulfully depicted in that
of a Cambodian family
peering from a war-torn window.

Obligatory bowls of yellow and orange citrus,
vases of daisies, crooked creeks through fallen trees.
None which moisten my eyes like her charcoals.

With ear to heart I listen while
sinking into softness,
her hands gently stroking my hair.



charcoal: Frieda Long

Steve Anderson

The Golden Thread of Memory

My Love.
 Your quirky smile,
 quiet smile,
 quiet glances,
 off key singing,
 bad knee,
 nimble mind,
 buoyant attitude,
 lost car keys,
 patience with Mom,
 confident encouragement,
 Key West hurricane,
 cross country vinyl seats,
 no air Arizona,
 canned beans, Mac and Cheese,
 first house, flooded basement,
 leaky roof, breezy windows,
 almost finished repairs,
 post dated checks.

The children,
 sleepless nights
 front yard catch
 little league,
 soccer carpools
 Sunday morning pancakes
 math homework
 driving
 graduations, weddings.
 The grandkids.
 Your caring touch,
 fond embrace
 gentle lips.
 Dearest.
 don't worry,
 no I didn't
 die alone.

Jack DeBenedetto

Gifford Brewster

At a health facility I recover
 from a fall at home.
 For two weeks I'm in quarantine.
 Then a roommate comes.

Skinny, long scraggly unkempt beard,
 with a black patch over left eye,
 wearing a red watch-cap and mismatched
 clothes, the eighty year old is assigned the next bed.

Gifford Brewster's surname and given name
 indicate a lineage from the early days

of Europeans on Cape Cod. He shows traits of those old Yankees. I ask if he's from Falmouth and get just one word - Nope. He's crotchety, taciturn, and stingy with words.

Gifford is from one of the islands, was a plumber and has a house mate to help him. What brought him to the hospital and what his many health problems are I don't know.

His ancestors created the character of the area. they were frugal, hard working people, and they gave money to fund schools, libraries, museums and hospitals. The institutions, some with names of the benefactors, continue to serve us.

The infirm man in the next bed has this as his heritage whether he knows it or not. All New England today Shares in the patrimony.

Glyn Dowden

Things I have Lost

Where are all the things I have lost when not paying attention, my favorite lead soldier with a bent rifle the one that always survived and eventually won the war, a rare copper farthing dated 1902 the one I never traded, safe in the table drawer next to my bed, a girl with long blonde hair and large front teeth whose name I cannot remember, the phone number that may have changed my life and my children as they move further and further away forgetting to call and where's that dog the one they called Henry and who was that stern man who took my driving license,

so many things disappear when shedding skin like my boy scout badges and blue fountain pen along with my reading glasses ten times a day but not you, I haven't lost you.

Catherine McMullen

Lessons in Poetry

I only began to appreciate or even read poetry after I retired. Three women are responsible for this.

First is my dear friend and neighbor, J. Lorraine Brown. We met when I moved to the Cape. She is a published and award-winning poet. I have read her chapbooks and attended her readings and Mutual Muse openings.

Second is Loren, my granddaughter, who, after conducting an extensive interview with me as part of a homework assignment at age 11, wrote this poem incorporating my answers.

Words of Wisdom

Loren Elizabeth Root
December 2014

Aroma of a flower
blossoming from the fresh spring soil
Eyes like oceans,
ready to be explored
Soft touch warm hearts.

As a child
No phones, computers.
White house, tiny town
Walk almost anywhere you want
A short walk to anywhere.
Play Cowboys and Indians,
Or ride a bike around the block
neighbors close
they played baseball, empty street.
Hospital visit, a fright.
Worked hard in school, career as a director.
Back to the hospital, frightened again.
Very proud of son and daughter,
In their cap and gown.

"Take care of yourself,"
"Be honest and ethical"
I will always remember
Her words of wisdom.

Third is a woman named Kathy who I've never met. In December 2018 I received a Facebook message. Kathy asked, "Are you Dorothy's daughter? I'm Elaine Fenstermaker's daughter." I replied that I was Dorothy's daughter but didn't know the connection.

"Our moms were best friends through high school in Lake Preston, SD, and maintained that friendship throughout their lives." Then I remembered Elaine, and her daughter and I became friends on Facebook.

I had taken my mother to South Dakota in 1995 to visit her original home. She and Elaine had a reunion lunch. I sent Kathy that info along with a photo of them. I told her my mother had died March 2003; hers had died in June 2003.



On Christmas Day, I received another Facebook post from Kathy. This time it was a copy of a handwritten poem my mother had written in 1937, at age 14. Kathy also sent a copy of her mother's poem, written at the same time, and a photo she had of the two of them in the summer of 1937. I wept. Kathy sent me the original copy of my mother's poem, which I framed in sterling silver.

Christmas Time

Dorothy McDonald
Lake Preston, South Dakota
December 17, 1937



Christmas time is here at last
With all its jolly fun,
And sleigh bells jingle merrily past
While the reindeer are on the run.
Santa Claus is fat and jolly,
His whiskers are snow white;
To each little girl he gives a dolly
And each little boy a kite.
Stockings are hanging in a row,
Christmas trees are lit.
Happy children sit below,
waiting for Santa's gifts.

Poetry has a new and strong meaning in my life thanks to these women

Marjorie Wright

OZ

if you look back far enough
in Charlotte's web you find
the scariest of spiders
might become a friend
and any road that's yellow brick leads
more than you intend
to see that all's not right with Oz
it isn't now... it wasn't then
you learn the tin man's mournful
but did you get the joke
the kindest man pines for a heart
stories train us at a stroke
though they now seem far away
they showed what's true what's not
helped us see and say a lot
don't throw me in the briar patch
know this story has a catch
the clever rabbit's plea suggests
that trusting tricksters fails the test
to seek attention — a thousand tries
but shouting wolf might prove unwise
if indeed the world's a stage
and revenge is written large
those stories played out page by page
are now ignored by those in charge
deaf to threats folks stand their ground
and fail to compromise
but if you look back far enough
you may see what's to come
that all those lessons learned I guess
were only learned by some



photo: John Poignard

Havana Moss

Three Chairs

This House has too much furniture
Three chairs are banished to the cottage
Where they sit in a row with no purpose.

The first an oak armchair, weathered and confident
A pleasing curve to the arms
Too heavy to move from place to place
As past chairman of the board
He called this meeting to order.

In the middle a granny's rocker
Low to the floor, red and olive fabric showing wear
So narrow, who could sit in it now?
Only a tiny woman wearing her lace up shoes
She's thinking of her friends all gone on ahead
Leaving her here alone.

Someone found the third chair at the dump
And gave it a coat of lacquer
A straight up ladder back with a flat seat
And no cushion
Simple charm and so uncomfortable.
Sit up straight, feet on the floor, no talking!
Just kidding, you know I'm from the dump.

What do they talk about with nothing in common?
Their pasts no doubt, all so different
I sit and listen, hoping they'll talk to me too.



Alison Partridge

Camping Behind the Iron Curtain

My husband and I shared an interest in travel and, living in Britain, had both traveled extensively in Western Europe as students on limited budgets after World War II. By 1962, the second year of our marriage, we decided we would travel further afield and venture behind the Iron Curtain. Czechoslovakia, which had been under German and then Soviet rule for some years, attracted us with its old cities and beautiful countryside. We had four weeks of accumulated vacation so we planned a camping trip. Camping presented no problem as we had compiled lists from previous trips. However, traveling through Eastern Europe, under communist jurisdiction, required more planning. We needed visas and information about campsites, gasoline, maps, road conditions and provisions. We were required to prepay for our six days' camping in the country. The rate would be 25 shillings (\$6) a day, which was rather more than we were used to spending in Western Europe. The embassy warned us that camping was not as developed as in Western Europe. They gave us a short list of official camp sites which seemed promising. Our local garage obligingly assembled a selection of the "most likely" items we might need for our small Ford car.

The journey south from Edinburgh to Dover was uneventful, as was the ferry crossing to France. But as soon as we drove the car off the ferry we discovered we were unable to restart it from the self starter on the dashboard. Nothing in the pack from our local garage could help. After an hour of fruitless conversation with the crowd of Frenchmen who had gathered around our car, we learned that the nearest Ford garage, our sole source of help, was in Brussels, 150 miles away. What a start to our trip! Dwelling on our misfortune was pointless, so we accepted a push start from our entourage and set off for Brussels. I drove while my husband studied maps and efficiently led us to Brussels and into the service station without my having to stop the car.

My high school French had certainly not included mechanical terms or a unit entitled "In the Service Station," but we learned that the car needed a new generator, which could not be fitted until the following morning. So our first night had to be in a hotel with dinner—expenses not included in our budget, but not crippling. With luck we would get to Czechoslovakia!

We picked up the car at noon and spent the next few days driving across Germany in glorious weather. We traveled through the Luisenburg mountains and visited their labyrinth of caves. We had been told that the roads deteriorated the further east we traveled but found that although they were bad in Eastern Germany they improved by the time we reached the Czech border. Because it was Sunday we filled the gas tank and replenished our food supplies before entering the country.

We entered the country at its western border and drove to Karlovy Vary, the nearest town with both a government office in a hotel and a campsite. At the Hotel Moskva we learned that exchanging money required them to telephone Prague at 7:00 the following morning to learn the exchange rate that day. Too bad, but at least we had a full tank and plenty of food. No-one appeared to have heard of a campsite in Karlovy Vary, so we set off to look for it street by street. After an hour we came a signpost, AUTOCAMPING, at an empty field sloping down to a stream. Much relieved, we sat on the grass and had a cup of hot tea from our thermos before pitching our tent. At the bottom of our field was a row of cabins along the stream where families were enjoying Sunday afternoon activities.

We soon saw a man walking purposefully towards us. Oh dear, had we got it all wrong and this was a private site? But no. In halting English he told us he and his family lived and worked in Karlovy Vary but spent the weekends in his cabin by the stream. He invited us to use it instead of our tent. What kindness! We could not imagine this happening at a campsite in the West. So we enjoyed our dinner by the stream and a night in a bunk bed. The only downside was the profusion of mosquitoes by the water!

After breakfast the next morning my husband drove back to the Hotel Moskva to change our voucher for money only to be told gruffly, "This is 11:00 a.m.! I said 7:00 a.m. We have a free call to Moscow at 7:00 a.m. each day and cannot call at any other time!" So spent another 24 hours in Karlovy Vary. We explained our problem to our host who graciously said we could stay another night. Lesson number one for us: the Czechs we met are charming and helpful, officials mean what they say, and woe betide you if you do not fall in line! The following morning we were at the Hotel Moskva at 7:00 sharp when we finally exchanged our voucher for money and set off to explore the country. We planned to proceed eastward to Prague, then travel south into Bohemia and back to Vienna in Western Europe.

Now that we had our money we had to learn about shopping. We had noticed large numbers of cherry trees with ripe fruit along many roads, some so ripe the fruit was falling to the ground. In theory, we supposed the fruit belonged to "the people" but nobody appeared to pick them off the trees or the ground. We did not like to presume, so we, too, left them alone. The following day there were queues outside several of the shops. We took our place in the queue. The shops were full of cherries and everyone was buying them! This was the kind of occasion when we bitterly regretted our lack of the local language. We would have loved to have such things explained to us. In general breads and baked goods were in good supply, as were vegetables, but fresh meat was limited. If there was a line outside a shop it was worth joining it; we learned that places with no visible shoppers had very little for sale.

The next 24 hours were uneventful. We found the next campsite—another empty field with a primitive latrine and a cold water tap—without difficulty, but no sign of a camp office or any other campers, whom we would have loved to meet. If passers-by saw us and our tent, they

invariably wanted to look inside, so we kept it neat and presentable. One time when we were eating breakfast a visitor expressed surprise at the size of our eggs, which we had brought with us from the West. Theirs were the size of pullet eggs.

We traveled to Prague as a day trip; and went to a campsite to the south in Bohemia. The old city, founded on the river in 870, is one of the most impressive in Europe. We parked the car near St. Wenceslas cathedral and walked down the main street. The shops were large, comparable to those in Western Europe but with far fewer goods on display. The prices seemed higher than in the West. For lunch, we visited a restaurant used by office workers. The menu offered a choice of three main courses and three desserts, all the same price. We selected different mains, both stews, which arrived looking very similar with four small cubes of meat and some vegetables floating in an abundance of gravy. The desserts, large portions of cake with a sweet sauce, seemed preferred by the other diners despite costing as much as the main course. In the afternoon we walked over to the old square by the Charles River and walked across the famous bridge lined with stone statues of Catholic saints.

We left Prague by a southerly and discovered a campsite in a field clearly marked with the site's name. It offered rows of little wooden huts. The camp manager, a 67-year-old retired teacher, said he could not accommodate us because all his cabins were full of school children. We assured him we were self-sufficient with our tent; we could pitch our tent wherever we chose. Both he and we would have liked to talk all evening, but finding a common language was a problem. We could offer English, French or German and he proposed Latin! I had school Latin but no hope of conversation with my odd classroom words like *mensa* (table) and *amo* (to love). So we had to rely on goodwill, sign language, smiles, gestures and the occasional word in any language. In subsequent travels we and our friends called this method of communication "Eurospeak."

The following day, our last full one, we explored the Bohemian mountains. We had planned to purchase some glassware but could buy only five glasses of a set of six because we needed funds to fill the car with gas. Our campsite that night was a field by a factory. At 7:00 the next morning we were awakened by the merry sounds of young women on their way to work. We peered out of the tent, which they took as an invitation to look inside, chatter and question. They were doubtless at least 30 minutes late for work that day. We wondered whether we should go into the factory and explain why they were late.

Leaving the country was as trying as entering it. We stopped at the border, identified by a small hut. A bored-looking customs officer asked the usual questions: Where had we been? For what purpose? What had we bought in Czechoslovakia? And finally, where were our lodging tickets? We asked what these were. He showed us some white tickets that he said were placed in our passports on arrival and should have been handed to the hotel manager each night to be stamped by the local police station. We explained that we had stayed in campsites

without services. Becoming more officious, he told us to go back to the last village and ask the police to stamp all 12 vouchers. We doubted they would do this and said that we had no money and only enough gas to proceed into Austria. Finally he flung open a small drawer which was overflowing with white tickets with a police stamp and said "There!" triumphantly, "You should be like the other tourists!" We were encouraged. If there was no bureaucratic future for the tickets beyond a drawer, then we were "home and dry." We argued for a few more minutes. Finally, he took our unstamped tickets and stuffed them into the bottom of the drawer. We thanked him and did not speak until we had arrived at the Austrian border. "The West" seemed staggering with all its billboards and all its color. The campsites had hot showers and services. When we unpacked the car we found a 5 koruna bill under a seat so we could, after all, have bought the sixth glass to complete the Bohemian set.

IN MEMORIUM

Each year Reflections publishes writing by a former contributors who have passed away.

We are aware of other losses among A.L.L. members during the year, but we can only print these few essays.

Wade Sawyer

Sniper

The jungle growth was pointy, sharp and hard to move through. Sticks mixed with green foliage could cut his fatigues, yes, his skin as well. The ground was cold as evening came on, but he was still sweating from his trek through the jungle. Comfortable wasn't a term he was used to. Sniper was an assignment. It was a nightly duty and they all took turns stuck alone and isolated in the bush at night. Mostly it meant sitting in a hole and listening for enemy chatter on the trail. Snipers had radios with them, but they were generally forbidden to use them in the dark of night. They had to wait for dawn, and then report to the squad leader. It was mostly boring and routine, but there were exceptions.

Glen was deep into the woods, where he would be able to hear, and if he was quiet, he would make in through the night. Behind him there was a rugged rock cliff which gave him shelter and protected his back. There were stories of snakes and even tigers up in these mountains, but he was more worried about spiders and bugs. Big ones... ugh! He brought a big can of industrial strength Raid to clear away the millipedes and centipedes.

He made his last radio check at about 9:30 pm and decided to make his space a little bit more comfortable. He had his sniper scope, supply of hand grenades, a dozen magazines of ammo for his M-16, and a couple cans of C-rations. He rolled his extra socks into a pillow and used his nylon poncho liner for a blanket. He made his hole the best he could; but, after all, it was a hole in the ground.

Glen settled quietly and then more abruptly. He could hear voices. Talking voices. That was what he was sent for, he got his notebook. Listening hard, he tried to identify how many voices there were, and what direction they came from. One of the voices sounded female. Then there were probably another two or maybe three male voices. They were calling and talking, not whispering. They seemed to be setting an ambush for tomorrow morning. This was a high-level catch. Glen could get a commendation or something good if he handled this right. He wondered, and he listened some more. His sweat had turned cold and he still had the whole night to get through. He slowly wrapped his poncho-liner around him, making no noise at all. The V.C. were halfway between him and the trail. As he listened, he could determine they were at two locations near the trail, and they were settling in for the night. The VeeCee were now quiet.

Glen was a couple hundred yards away from them, and he wanted to keep the distance until the morning. He had his M16 cradled in his arms and ready for action. He had his attack plan ready. He closed his eyes...

Raymond Partridge

Survival

I was 11 years old when war broke out in 1939. Everyone seemed to know war was coming. After years of frustration and anger over the Versailles Treaty at the end of the First World War, Germany decided to spread her wings. Adolph Hitler became Chancellor in 1933 with the subsequent absorption of the Rhineland, Austria and Czechoslovakia.

After the occupation of Prague, Neville Chamberlain, the British prime minister, gave an unqualified guarantee to Poland to protect her if she was attacked by Germany. No thought seemed to be given to the fact that we shared no common border with either Germany or Poland. Germany invaded Poland on September 1, 1939. An ultimatum was sent from London to Berlin, demanding that the German forces withdraw. September 3, 1939 was Sunday and, at 11 AM we, as a family in London, listened to the radio. The sonorous voice of Neville Chamberlain said "I have to tell you we sent a request to Herr Hitler that he withdraw his forces from Poland. No such undertaking has been received. A state of war therefore exists between us."

We were all drinking our customary calming drink, tea, when suddenly the air raid sirens sounded informing us of a coming air raid. "My goodness," said my mother, "they haven't

wasted much time.” We all crowded into a coal cellar for protection. The “all clear” sounded after about 30 minutes: a false alarm we were told, unidentified aircraft over the English Channel.

We then entered the period of the phony war which was to last six or seven months when few shots were fired in anger. I was away from London at school and when the war started to “hot up” after the fall of France in June, 1940, we were able to view some spectacular dogfights between British and German planes.

The long period of bombing of London, known as the blitz, started in September, 1940. We endured it every night from darkness to dawn. I experienced some of it as I returned to my home during school holidays. My sister and I took our reactions from our parents. My father was very deaf and claimed he couldn’t hear the bombs. My mother was determined not to be shaken out of her warm bed by the “Huns” whom she hated. Nobody in our house took shelter. The blitz lasted until Christmas, 1940. After Christmas there were two huge raids on London. One destroyed the central area known as The City which was the business and banking hub.

Then “The Silence” which was gratefully received by war weary Londoners who trod their way through fresh rubble, broken glass and shrapnel every morning on the way to work. On January 13, 1931, there was another air raid. Nothing much happening, a few odd bangs in the distance. It was a Saturday night. My sister Joyce was getting married the following day in a church one-and-a-half miles away. The reception was to be held at our house after the ceremony. Wartime weddings were, by this time, quite simple. Food and drink were severely limited. A reception at the bride’s home was able to fill the needs quite easily. On Saturday evening everyone, except for my mother and myself, was out. My sister was with her husband-to-be and my father, to whom Saturday nights were sacred, was at some public house or bar, somewhere in the district.

About 9 o’clock I was in the kitchen putting something in the larder. I heard and felt a dull thud. Shortly thereafter a shower of earth rained over the house. I was puzzled. I’m not sure my mother even appreciated it as she was busy with other things. About 15 minutes later we heard a loud banging at the front door. A policeman said, “There is an unexploded bomb in the garden about 3 doors away. You all have to get out now.” To which my mother replied, “We can’t possibly do that, we are having a wedding here tomorrow.”

“Sorry lady, you will have 15 minutes to get out.”

Fortunately we had friends who lived about a mile away who offered to put us all up, and host the wedding. Our problem was my father. No one knew where he was, the Cherry Tree, the Macdalla, or the Duke of Clarence, all local pubs. Ron, Joyce’s fiancé, went off to look for him. Messages were left with the guards at each street corner who prevented access to the area. He did appear, late at night; but who found him I can’t remember. The wedding went off fine the next day. We were allowed a brief visit to our house to pick up food, presents and the like.

Three months later I was in London for the Easter holidays when the bomb was finally removed. A huge bomb, it was five or six feet long and two feet wide—a more than one-ton blockbuster. I am not by nature an introspective person, but it did occur to me later that if the bomb had exploded, my mother and I would certainly have been killed and the course of our family's history would have been changed.



