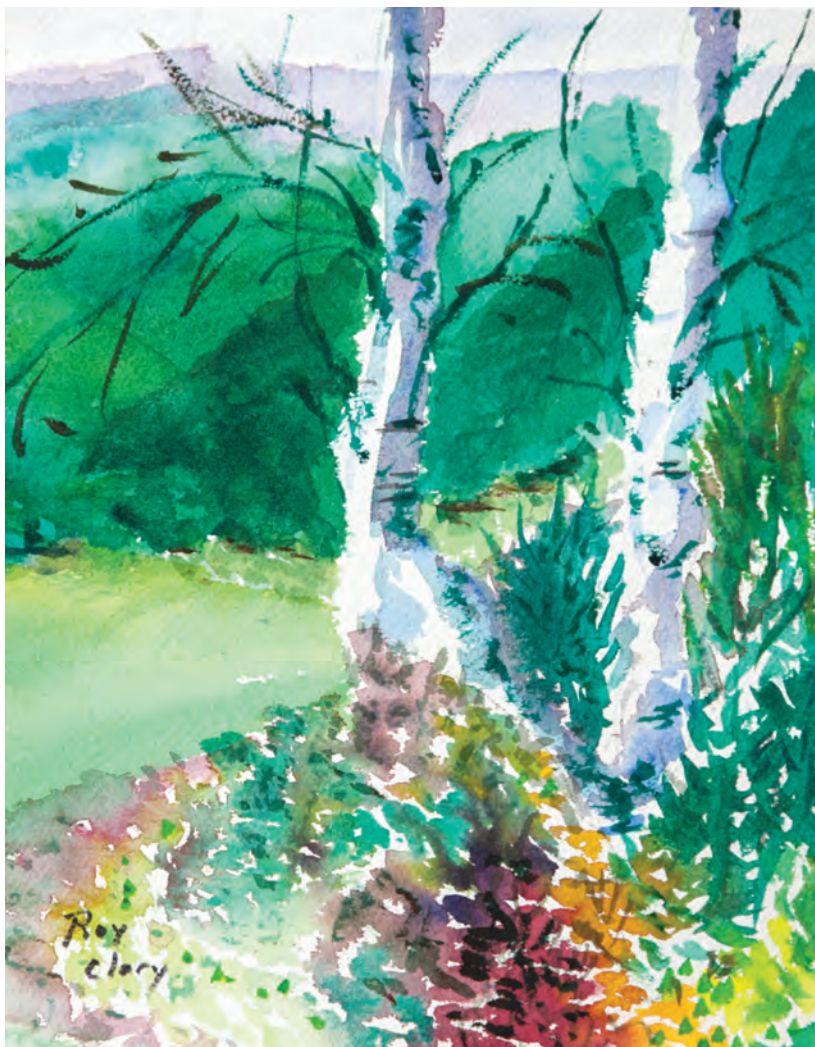


Q REVIEW



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THE CREATIVE VOICE OF QUEST

***Q Review* 2018**

Volume 23

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A WORD FROM THE EDITOR

“Curiosity is the wick in the candle of learning.”

– William Arthur Ward

I believe the one unifying characteristic of all Quest members is curiosity. Sometimes this curiosity leads to a memorable course or a brilliant presentation. Other times, it spurs moving poetry, prose or art.

In 2017, the creative juices were flowing freely at Quest. In fact, the editors of *Q Review* found ourselves with so many worthy submissions, we issued a separate publication, “2017: *A Year of Angst*,” which poetically chronicled an unforgettable year. If you haven’t read this unique publication, you can access it through Quest’s private website.

This was also the year that Lila Heilbrunn, *Q Review*’s longtime art director, decided to step down. We welcome the talented Paul Adler as our new art director and note that Lila will continue to serve as our photographer. Lila’s keen eye and attention to detail have immeasurably contributed to the success of *Q Review* over the years. Thank you for all that you do, Lila!

I also wish to thank all the editors and staff of the 2018 *Q Review* for their tireless efforts throughout the year.

May the candle of learning long burn at Quest.

– Wayne Cotter

IN MEMORIAM

We note with profound sorrow the passing of former Quest members **Barbara Blakemore** and **Ken Leedom**, whom we lost during this past year.

We also wish to remember our colleague, **Henrietta Levner**, and express our gratitude to her estate for its generous bequest to *Q Review*.

NOTE

The views expressed in this publication are solely those of the authors and do not reflect the views of Q Review or the Quest organization.



Q REVIEW

THE CREATIVE VOICE OF QUEST

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PENNIES FROM HELL

Wayne Cotter

I'm driving from Washington D.C. to New York early one September morning when suddenly I'm trapped in a massive traffic jam. An hour passes, then two. I call Dave, a business associate, to vent and inform him I'll be late for our scheduled breakfast meeting. From Dave, I learn why I've been sitting motionless on Delaware's I-95.

A tractor-trailer overturned earlier in the day. Perhaps you heard about; it garnered national attention. The truck hit a concrete barrier and 45,000 pounds of pennies spilled out over the highway. It delayed traffic for 13 hours.

To make matters more surreal, they were "blank" pennies—stupid, faceless pennies, on their way to the Philadelphia Mint to be imprinted, to become U.S. currency—*totally useless U.S. currency.*

I must confess, I've despised pennies for years. Doesn't everyone? They multiply on dresser drawers until finally, when we can't take it any longer, we gather them together, bring them to banks, and convert them to real money. It's so annoying and so unnecessary.

I guess I should feel sorry for pennies. They're the loneliest currency. Store owners shun them. Vending machines prohibit them. Even street people won't pick them up. I should feel sorry for all these pitiful pennies, but I don't.

Instead I sit in my car wasting valuable hours, just like all these other drivers and passengers. We're wasting tens of thousands of hours all because of sad, pointless pennies.

Sometimes I think a penny's sole purpose is to waste time. They've certainly been mucking up my cash transactions for years. "That'll be \$6.98 please." *Give me a break.* Just make it seven bucks, *I'm begging you.*

Did you ever see those cute little dishes some merchants use? "Leave a penny, take a penny." Cashiers reach in for two pennies or give you three pennies that you toss in the dish. It's absurd.

Most products are demand driven. We no longer produce spats, knickers, or monocles in this country. Do you know why? *Nobody wants them!* Well, nobody wants pennies either, but they're still with us, weighing us down at every turn.

Did you know it costs 1.7 cents to produce one penny? Our infrastructure is crumbling while we waste millions churning out currency we despise.

More hours pass. I'm still in Delaware, still in my car, still seething over pennies. I have no food, no water. I begin hallucinating. I see millions of blank copper coins and they're all laughing at me. I knew it! These pennies know I hate them. This was an act of revenge!

"I hope you never make it to the Mint," I holler from my car. "You're faceless, just like the bureaucrats that produce you year after year. Stay away from me—you. . . you 'Pennies from Hell'—Stay away!"

I leave my car. I'm now standing in the middle of the road. Reaching in my pocket, I pull out a few quarters, some nickels and a collection of pennies.

My face flush with rage, I shake a fistful of pennies high above my head. "*Do you know why we're here?*" I scream at my fellow drivers. "*Do you know why we've wasted all these hours? It's because of pennies, these goddamned worthless pennies.*" Then, with a dramatic flourish, I fling the coins to the side of the road.

"You don't want them," I shout at the drivers. "I don't want them. Nobody wants them! C'mon, throw your pennies out the window. Let's make a statement here. If it wasn't for these lousy coins, we wouldn't be in this freakin' traffic jam." And then, believe it or not, I notice car windows opening. I hear the jingle-jangle of dozens, maybe hundreds, of pennies slapping the pavement.

And people are enjoying themselves. In the midst of this mind-numbing traffic jam, they're actually laughing. Now I'm visiting other drivers, chatting, bitching about pennies, having fun. One driver hands me a bottle of water, another a sleeve of Oreos. I calm down. I return to my car. I'm still stuck in traffic, but now I'm penniless... and couldn't be more pleased.

. . .

TWENTY-ONE BIKE TRIPS AND STILL COUNTING

Caroline Thompson

For the past 21 years, my husband Steve and I have taken a one-week summer cycling trip, usually in Europe. This may sound adventurous, but these athletic-sounding trips have been rated “easy” or “easy-to-moderate,” not requiring us to climb many big hills, although there have been some. More than once, we’ve had to ascend hills that are three miles or longer. Average daily mileage ranges between 25 and 40.

For the first three years, we took tours with groups of about 15, plus two guides and a van that we NEVER used, but we soon discovered that we are not typical of, or comfortable with, a group. For one thing, we neither own nor care about the standard cyclists’ clothing: special shoes, shirts, shorts and gloves. For another, we are slow. When you take the whole day into account, including stops for meals, rest, reading and walking bikes up the hills, our average rate is about 6 mph. Third, we don’t care about the conversation with the guides, which, of course, the guides consider part of the job. Steve, in particular, would much rather use these long rides to think, not talk. Fourth, we are impatient with the annoying morning route review, even though we have directions. I don’t have patience for being told the obvious. And finally, there is the price—expensive. The price of guided trips must cover two guides, the van, and the bike rental, which is extra. And I am nothing if not frugal!

In 2000, we discovered the wonderful model of “self-guided” trips. This means the agent puts together the itinerary, provides the bikes (price included), arranges the hotels, provides directions and then you’re on your own. If you encounter difficulties such as inclement weather, getting lost, getting tired, or getting a flat tire (which neither of us knows how to change), you have to deal with it without assistance. And believe me, things go wrong! These bike trips have provided opportunities for tension like nothing else in our 27 years together.

On our very first self-guided trip, we ran into a problem when one page in our booklet of directions was out of order, so the directions made no sense. We went back to see where we went wrong, but of course it was not possible to resolve the problem that way because

we hadn't made a wrong turn. We never found the correct route and the wrongly placed page was not discovered until near the end of the day's journey.

We usually get lost at least once on every trip. More than once, after getting lost, with each of us insisting we know the route, I would say, "Okay, you go your way and I'll go mine, and I'll see you at the hotel tonight." It may come as no surprise that my way usually prevailed. Once, we arrived in a small town and somehow lost each other. This predated cell phones, so we had absolutely no way to make contact.

One time I made a turn (I am usually quite far ahead of Steve) and Steve did not. He kept going straight. Ten minutes later and no Steve, I turned back, fully expecting to see that he had been involved in an accident. But after riding for 20 minutes without seeing him, heart thumping, I had to turn around again. Finally, we found each other, almost by chance. Last summer, we had Garmin devices to show us the route, and on the very first day out, the devices failed to function as soon as we got off the regular path. We had to make our way, knowing only the name of our hotel for the night.

We've encountered other difficulties: We've ridden along narrow shoulders of busy roads or on bumpy cobblestone streets in small towns—not very pleasant. Once, we went through a mile-long tunnel that was pitch black. That was creepy! Then, there are the weather issues. We have had headwinds of 30 mph, temperatures in the 50s or the 90s and rain for most of the day.

Does this sound like an idyllic vacation? Well, for the most part it is. Like everything in life, you take the bad with the good, and the good is really wonderful. These trips mostly go along back roads, often near rivers, through woods, across fields and through small towns—routes that are just delightful. Since the terrain is mostly flat, the riding is satisfying. We stay at small, family-run hotels and always enjoy good dinners. Germany and the Netherlands are absolutely the best countries for these trips, but we have cycled many other European countries as well, even Thailand and Romania. The question is, how much longer can we do this? I can't face the prospect of not taking our annual bike trip. At this stage in life, we live for the present and try not to project into the future.

• • •

MY AMERICAN SEDER

Rita Post

If he could look at the 19 people crowded around our Passover table last year, my father would be delighted to see what his family has become. He was a social worker who worked to foster greater interaction among organizations of young people of different religious backgrounds. My husband and I, nonreligious and nonaffiliated Jews, raised our three boys as secular Jews. We celebrated and continue to celebrate Passover as a festival of freedom. We are a diverse group, but we share the same values. We want to make the world a little better than when we arrived.

As the family matriarch, I sit at the table, which is covered with a great variety of food, and I think about each person sitting, eating and talking here.

My oldest son, Ken, is single, a writer, and lives in Brussels. My second son, Bob, is a lawyer, lives in Miami and is married to a Puerto Rican woman whose father's family came from Barcelona and were probably Conversos—Jews forced to convert during The Inquisition. She has two children, together they have a son and they do not practice any religion.

Going around the table: Dan, my third son, an acupuncturist, is married to Lynn, whose father was a Lutheran minister and who was previously married to an African-American man. She brings her two daughters and a son who had a Jewish grandfather. Dan's first wife, now a Buddhist, came from a long line of New England Protestants. Today, Dan comes with their two grown children.

Then we have Marjorie, Lynn's daughter, who is married to a German and has two children. Lynn's older daughter is Maya, who is married to a man whose mother was Catholic, although he was raised Unitarian, and he brings his 10-year-old daughter.

Then there is my cousin, married to a nonpracticing Catholic. Then my niece and her husband, who are both nonpracticing Jews. Finally, there sits my sister-in-law, who belongs to a reform temple in Brooklyn, volunteers to pray for us all and is accompanied by a black aide from Jamaica.

So, with all of this, we have evolved our special agenda. Everyone has contributed something: food, a topic to discuss, a song, a poem, a

question, something in his or her life to tell us about. Lynn, married to Dan, has volunteered to write our Haggadah because as a child she had been to many seders with her father and chose to raise her own biracial family in a multireligious home. Marjorie's German husband has written a poem about the grief he carries for what his country had done to the Jewish people and is humbled to be part of this seder.

We read parts of the Haggadah, which of course deals with freedom. We connect it with the African slave trade and other instances of slavery. We sing songs accompanied by guitars, a violin and a harmonica. Songs include, "Go Down Moses," "Dayenu" and "O Mary Don't You Weep." We eat lots of traditional food. We drink wine. We ask the four questions. We denounce the plagues. Marjorie's two-year-old enjoys crawling under the table. The discussion is widespread, including renewable energy, Black Lives Matter, climate change, women's issues and Trump. We catch up with our different lives—working in finances, radio, farm management and community organizing.

It has been an American Passover. I am proud of my contribution to our Jewish heritage.

• • •

MY FATHER

Deborah Yaffe

The wild strawberries
My father knew
Are mine now
My father's gone

• • •

THE SCAN

Eileen D. Kelly

“Your X-ray shows a possible mass in your chest,” said the doctor on the phone. “It could be an aneurysm. You’ll have to have a CT scan of your chest today. You also have to have a kidney function test three hours before the scan. You have to leave now to have it done. Oh, and stop eating. You’re supposed to be fasting,” she said.

“How did she know I was eating?” I thought. All this hubbub was created because I was scheduled for minor surgery two days later, which required a series of pretests.

When I got to the hospital lab I found out that the kidney test was needed for the kind of scan I was to have. They would be injecting dye into my veins, which could destroy my kidneys, and they wanted to be sure my kidneys were in good shape before wrecking them.

Later, in the waiting room of the X-ray Department, I was sitting near two women, one elderly and the other, I presumed, her daughter, when they were approached by a disheveled young man. He was dressed in what appeared to be a wrinkled, blood-stained blue karate outfit with a surgical mask dangling from his chin, and dirty white clogs. I was fascinated by the incongruity of bloodstains and karate, a bloodless sport. Then it dawned on me: he’s a surgeon. In a stentorian voice, he announced, “I operated on your husband,” and looked around at the entire waiting room as though we should all clap. Nobody did. Despite the loud voice, he mumbled certain words. What I heard sounded like: “We found a pineapple in his lung, put in a potato and connected it to an outdoor hose. Hopefully he’ll breathe easier once we hook him to a vacuum cleaner.” The two women looked horrified as the young man walked away without waiting for their response or questions.

Finally, I got called. The technician introduced himself and asked me if I was wearing a bra. I thought, “Things are picking up!” He said, “A bra’s OK. Lie down.” Things were really picking up. Then my body was rolled into the scanner.

Suddenly I heard a woman’s voice cry out from some off-stage area, “It’s an underwire bra!” The technician and his off-stage mom came in excitedly and asked me to remove my bra, without taking off my blouse.

I replied, "I'm used to things being more romantic." They didn't laugh. Next, a child came in. He said he was the Doctor who would inject the dye. Clutching a sheaf of papers for me to sign, he told me, "The dye might cause you to go into shock, but don't worry, we'll revive you. It could also ruin your kidneys."

"Should I be worried?" I asked.

"No, it doesn't happen that often," he said. The fellow then nicely asked if I eat shellfish.

I replied, "Yes, I love shellfish and I know a great restaurant." He ignored what I said and begged me to sign the papers. I signed and later learned that the shellfish question helped ascertain any allergy to the dye.

It was time for the injection of dye. The Boy Doctor looked for a vein. I asked if his hands were clean. He looked at me, bewildered. Deciding that my well-being was more important than this young man's ego, I said, "Seriously son, I don't want to get an infection. Humor me."

He replied in a hurt voice, "OK, I'll put on gloves." Why didn't he think of this before, I wondered?

The rest of the CT Scan continued uneventfully. Good news, I was later told: no mass, no aneurysm, no problem!

I was grateful but still puzzled by the staff's inordinate interest in my underwear.

• • •

THE HERO

Mary Beth Yakoubian

The Eagle Tavern sits on 14th Street, two doors east of 9th Avenue in New York's Chelsea neighborhood. Carolina was drawn to it this Friday because of the captivating music she heard leaking through the door. Her native Romania had not yet imported anything like the enticing sounds that beckoned her in.

She had been attending college in the city for half a year, and this was the first time she witnessed a live ensemble, a group of three unusual musicians. They were magnificent! She recognized two of the instruments—a violin and a guitar, but the third was a mysterious one she had seen only in books. Its strings resembled those of the guitar, but the sound box was smaller and round like a dinner plate. The music the three made together was spellbinding, and without realizing it she began bouncing up and down in time to the beat.

"Hey cutie," called out a man's voice.

Through the semi-darkness a handsome young man was approaching her, peanut shells crunching softly beneath his feet. He identified himself as Walter, inviting her to come and sit next to him. His greeting alone was reason enough for coming to America. After concentrating intensely on her studies for six months, this encounter was the reward she needed. Here, in the same spot as the most wonderful music, was this most friendly and welcoming person. Walter was the American man she had dreamed of: good looking, smartly dressed and so very intelligent.

Time flew as Carolina's attention was absorbed by both the bluegrass music and intriguing chatter of her new friend. The lively tunes began to sound more familiar. They were not all exactly the same, but they had a core of repetitiveness that was comforting. She couldn't stop smiling as the music and Walter's speech patterns blended in sync.

A Vietnam War veteran, he fascinated her with modest descriptions of his bravery. "I've seen men die," he concluded solemnly. But Walter couldn't mask his pride in what he felt was a more recent heroic accomplishment. Employed as a banker at the World Trade Center, he had been present on the ground floor of building number one on 9-11. Now, years later, he couldn't remember how many people he

helped save from certain death on that terrible day.

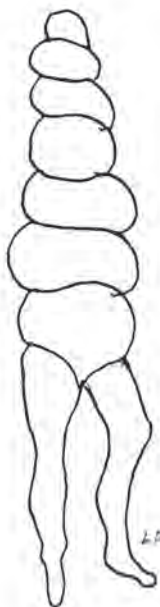
“Thank God you escaped just in time,” Carolina breathed.

Walter replied humbly, “I did what I had to do. Fate put me there for a reason.”

Carolina was euphoric at the discovery of the magnificence of this man: a respected international banker, spending his precious free minutes with her, an ordinary student working to someday become a physical therapist. Fortis Bank, that was the name of the place where Walter was an important executive. How worldly! How chic! Of course, she would love to accompany him to his apartment to hear more about his amazing life experience.

But then they both realized they had neglected to pay attention to their growing bar bills; they needed to pay before leaving. Walter became terribly embarrassed as, for the life of him, he couldn't find his credit card. Carolina insisted on paying for both of them; it was the least she could do.

• • •



HAPPY BIRTHDAY SALLY

Ruth Ward

Today is my eighth birthday and I'm excited. I'm having a party and my best friends are coming.

Oh, wow, it's the doorbell.

"Hi, Sally. Happy Birthday!" My friends are all stuck together like a wad of bubble gum.

I take them into the living room and put their gifts on the coffee table. Stephanie jumps up and starts a happy dance. We squeal and join in.

"Hey girls," calls my mom from the kitchen. "Keep it down."

I think Mom's grumpy because Dad isn't home yet. That doesn't bother me. He's a Ford car salesman, so he's away a lot on Sundays. And today I've got my friends to keep me company.

We're doing a speedy ring around the rosy when my mom bursts in. Just then the phone rings. She sucks in her breath in a funny way and goes back to the kitchen.

We keep circling and laughing until our hands break apart and we all tumble to the floor. As we roll around and catch our breath, I hear my mom on the phone.

"Doug, we've been over this a thousand times. I'm not trying to control your life, but this is your daughter's birthday. I'm glad you're making a sale. Right now I'd like to be making one, too, but I'm here, *doing my job*. And who's the woman who answered the phone before? I didn't recognize her voice."

For a long time, Mom's been telling Dad she wants to work at Lord and Taylor, but he always says she has a good job, raising me. So far, this is the best party I've ever had, but the sounds in the kitchen are getting scarier. Lately, I've heard my parents talk about calling a truce, which means not arguing. I want to run in there and say, "Let's call a truce, Mom. Leave Dad alone. I care, too, if he works on my birthday, but my friends and I are having fun."

Instead, I shut out the kitchen noise and laugh with the girls.

"All right, Doug." Her voice is soft because she's trying not to shout. "I can see what's important to you. You just stay where you are and clinch that sale. Maybe you'll take time off when Sally gets married."

It's quiet for a minute. I hold my breath and listen very hard. Then she says, even softer, "Sometimes marriage means being home,

whether you want to be or not... Listen, either you come to this party right now, or I'm spending the night at my sister's."

I breathe out and look at the girls. They're still laughing. Why is Mom so angry? Why should Dad take off work when I'm perfectly fine? Maybe it's my fault. Maybe I shouldn't have asked for a birthday party.

With Mom's help, we play pin the tail on the donkey and I open my presents. Then we have ice cream and cake. I feel sad when my buddies leave me standing on the front porch with my mom.

Suddenly, my dad pulls up in our new Fairlane. The tires screech as he reaches the curb, and he jumps out like a fireman. I hear a strange sound in my mom's throat, as if she were giggling and choking at the same time. Dad runs up the driveway, gives Mom a huge nod, and throws his arms around me. "Happy birthday, Sally!" he cries and whirls me around until I'm dizzy.

We all go into the living room.

"That's it, Doug," Mom says in a new, scary voice, "You're too late. You missed Sally's party, so you can take care of her now. Tonight I'm spending some time with my sister. See you guys tomorrow."

She rattles the car keys my dad left on the front hall table. Then she clanks down the hall and out of the house. As the door slams, I shut my eyes.

The thumping of my heart sounds very loud. I smell a whiff of chocolate from the cake I was eating a little while ago in a faraway land where I was a beautiful princess. I hear my friends singing "Happy birthday, dear Sally," and my head begins to spin. When it stops, I feel my dad's arms holding me tight. My eyes meet his and then go down to his shirt pocket. I see something that looks like a birthday card.

"Is that for me?" He nods. I say, "May I read it?" He lets me take it out and slip the card from the envelope. The card has two lines. "Happy Birthday, Sally, from your loving Dad. I hope this is your Best Birthday Ever." My tears fall on the last three words. My dad and I don't move.

• • •

ROTISSERIE CHICKEN AND THE SPANISH INQUISITION

Bob Reiss

You have to say two things about this story's title: (1) it caught your attention and (2) never before have those words appeared together. And what brought them together—well all I can say is, only in New York.

This all started when our friends Rick and Liora told my wife Debra and me, "You've got to try this place, *Chicken Provence*—they've got the best rotisserie chicken in the city." We did try it and, hey, it was pretty good. Rick then alerted me not to go there (39th and 3rd) on Saturdays—they're closed. "Must be orthodox," he said.

The next time I went there, I noticed a *mezuzah*¹ on the door frame, reinforcing the conjecture that the owners must be observant Jews.

I started to enjoy picking up my chicken, even though they deliver, because I found that the lovely woman proprietor was a native French speaker, and she tolerated my fracturing her beautiful language.

About my fifth visit, I noticed she was wearing a cross. This didn't jibe with the 'observant Jew' speculation, but I was a little shy about asking her. The next time, however, I took the plunge and said, "Excuse me, but I thought you were Jewish because you're closed on Saturdays."

"No, I'm Catholic," she said, "it's just that this neighborhood is kind of quiet on Saturdays and it doesn't pay for me to stay open."

Now all this seemed a little mysterious, so I probed. "But the mezuzah?"

"Well, my ex-husband is Jewish, and we were still married when we opened the store three years ago. I decided to keep it, because, you know," and here she dropped the bombshell, "I'm descended from Marranos;² in our old family pictures, all my relatives look like Sephardic Jews."

My jaw kind of dropped open. I had learned about the Marranos in Hebrew school when I was about 11 but I had never met one, nor did I think I ever would.

¹ A mezuzah is a piece of parchment (often contained in a decorative case) inscribed with specified Hebrew verses from the Torah.

² Marrano refers to a Jew in Medieval Spain or Portugal who professed conversion to Christianity in order to avoid persecution by the Inquisition.

“My parents were from Leiria in Portugal but moved to just outside of Paris, where I was born. That’s why I have a Portuguese last name, *Sandrine Dos Santos*. They never mentioned anything about a Jewish heritage but Leiria, a fertile region known for wine and olive oil production, had the largest concentration of Jews before the Inquisition.”

Sandrine further explained, “When I was 19, I came to the U.S. as an *au pair* and lived with a Jewish family. I noticed that Cardozo was a well-known name in New York (like the law school) and I knew that my mother’s maiden name was Cardoso (at one time there was no ‘z’ in Portuguese). Cardozo was a fairly common Sephardic Jewish name. Then I remembered a family story about my great-grandmother on my mother’s side who only spoke Portuguese but said some prayers in another language that no one understood.”

She continued, “I’m sure now that she was saying Hebrew prayers.”

Based on all this, Sandrine is convinced that she is of Jewish ancestry. After five years of working as an au pair and living through the family’s two bar mitzvahs, Sandrine went to SUNY Purchase and spent 15 years in the fashion industry as a designer and later, creative director. Her job entailed frequent travel to Europe; as a result of that and her heritage, she is fluent in Portuguese, French, English, Spanish and Italian.

All her life, she loved cooking and frequently prepared house dinners for her friends and associates. She turned that avocation into a vocation with the opening of *Chicken Provence*. If you’re in the neighborhood, drop in, get a delicious chicken, and speak with this lovely woman, whose forebears were victims of the Inquisition some 500 years ago.

• • •

TODAY I AM A MAN

Michael Wellner

Most of us who are New Yorkers, Jewish or not, are familiar with the expression: “Today I am a man.” When a Jewish boy turns 13, he is honored with a bar mitzvah which, in the eyes of the Jewish community, allows him to fully participate in his synagogue’s religious activities. But, of course, the bar mitzvah boy is still just a 13-year-old teenager and a long way from becoming a man. For me, another seminal event went a long way in making me believe I had really become a man.

Growing up, I was a fairly shy kid, and although I had lots of school friends, I was anything but assertive, and much more of a follower than a leader. I did well academically in high school but never dreamed of holding any kind of leadership position. That was reserved for the popular kids.

When it came time to select the colleges to which I would apply, my parents thought it would be simple. I excelled at math and science, and my father was a tinkerer with a fully equipped workshop. So, for me, a college choice was easy. I would go to an engineering school.

I applied to MIT, RPI (Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute), and NYU. In short order, MIT decided it could do without me. But RPI and NYU accepted me, and soon I was off to Troy, New York, where I would spend the next five years.

My first two years as a mechanical engineering major were filled with calculus, physics, math and the like. Academically I did okay, but by the end of my sophomore year, I realized that engineering was not for me. Luckily, RPI had a fledgling School of Management at the time, and the whole subject of business interested me. Before the start of my junior year I switched my major to Management Engineering. Things began to look up! I was taking courses that I could enjoy, understand and, most importantly, see some practical use for in later life. My grades began improving and for the first time I was consistently getting A’s.

I chose chemistry as my minor simply because I enjoyed it. In that department, I took a course called Colloid Chemistry, which had no textbooks, no exams, and a fairly nice professor, Sydney Ross, who my friends said gave only A’s!

When it came time for the final exam, Dr. Ross gave us a choice: 1) we could go home with all our notes available, solve ten problems of his choosing and turn that in as a final exam, or 2) we could study the ten problems and then sit in class without notes for an exam consisting of three of those ten problems. For me that was a “no brainer.” I always took detailed notes in class, so I chose the home option.

Now, all I had to do was wait for all my final grades to be posted. One by one grades in my other classes came in—A, A, A, A—all A’s except for Dr. Ross’s class; his grades had not been posted. So, I decided to go and see the professor to ask him when the grades might be ready. He had little idea as to who I was, and he asked me first which option I had chosen—do all ten problems at home, or come to class and try the three he had selected.

I told him I had chosen the home option. He then announced that he had decided that those who had made that decision would only be eligible for a “B” as their highest grade because that was clearly an easier option than taking the exam in class without notes. I was furious, and as Shakespeare said, I screwed my courage to the sticking place, and told him in no uncertain terms that that was NOT FAIR! I had gotten A’s in every other course, and I sure as hell was not going to have him, on an “ex post facto” whim, deny my getting a 4.0 average for the first time!

Much to my satisfaction, I prevailed. After some hemming and hawing he read my exam, decided that it was, in fact, pretty good and gave me my A. From that time on I got all straight A’s at school, graduated first in my major, and felt, perhaps for the first time, that I had truly become a man!

• • •

GILES PEDALS TO DISASTER

Jennifer Jolly

When we were young I thought my brother, Giles, who is six years younger, was a nuisance. He seemed to be excused for everything while I got the blame. When the opportunity arose, I pinched or hit him and then denied it vigorously when he let out an enormous wail.

As he grew older, I bossed him around and one year made him one of the three kings in a Christmas play that I produced. When Giles's turn came, he stood there looking miserable in a long red cloak and yellow paper crown and, to the great amusement of the audience of parents and grandparents, forgot his lines. I was furious with him.

But the worst day was when he was about four years old and the proud possessor of a tricycle. I used to stand on the rod at the back, hold his shoulders, and get him to use his strong little legs to pedal me along. My parents said this was dangerous. I was not to do it, but I continued on the sly.

On this occasion, our parents were going out for a while. We were to go to some of the employees at Dad's bakery if necessary. With Mum and Dad out of the way, I decided Giles and I would go to the back of the bakery where a steep concrete slope ran down to the side of the building and took a sharp curve at the bottom. This seemed the perfect place to get the tricycle going at full speed and enjoy the ride. I persuaded Giles to pedal down there.

"Come on Gilly Willy, let's go for a ride while Mum and Dad are out," I said.

He was an obliging little chap and, not wanting to be cuffed around the ears by his big sister, he agreed that I should stand on the back and he would pedal as hard as he could.

"Don't you dare tell Mum and Dad or you'll be sorry. Now pedal down that hill and don't forget the corner at the bottom."

Off we went with Giles pedaling like a little automaton and me hanging on the back. It was marvelous, the wind whipped through our hair and we gathered speed as we continued on our way down.

"Watch the corner!" I yelled as we approached. But when we reached it, the bike swerved and tipped over. I jumped off to safety but Giles was ditched into a patch of gravel. A stunned silence was broken by a hideous wail as my brother finally picked himself up. To my horror,

I saw that he had badly scraped his left cheek and his knees. The gravel adhered to his open wounds and blood poured out.

I was terrified, took hold of him, shook him and said: "There's nothing wrong with you," but he just yelled some more, abandoned the tricycle, and set off up the hill to tell the grown-ups. I could hear his screams and yells as he continued up the hill and was very frightened.

After a moment's pause, I decided to head up the hill, leave the tricycle to its fate and hide in a warehouse full of margarine boxes at the top. There I settled behind a pile of boxes, quivering and quailing and wondering what would happen. After what seemed a very long time, I heard footsteps. The parents had returned and I was in for it. Obviously, they had found the little monster with his blood-covered body wailing and making a fuss. I tried to think he was making an unnecessary scene, but in my heart I knew this wasn't true.

Suddenly I heard Dad's voice: "Are you there, our Jennifer? I know you're in there, come on out or I'll tan your hide."

"I haven't done anything," I squeaked.

"What do you mean you haven't done anything? Your brother is bleeding all over the place and said you got him to ride down the slope with you on the back and he tipped over. Your mother is trying to clean up the mess. How many times have we told you not to do that? Now come on out of there."

"No, I didn't tell him to do it. He's making it up," I lied.

I don't know what happened after that. I eventually emerged but was so frightened I kept on denying what I had done. I can't even remember whether I was punished for telling a lie. I know I never rode on the back of that tricycle again and was reminded for many years afterwards of the accident because Giles carried the signs of the gravel on his face for a very long time.

• • •

A FIRST CAMPING TRIP

Helen Saffran

One of the memorable events of my childhood was my first camping trip. When I was nine I was invited to join my best friend Ginny Brown and her mother and father, Anne and Wesley, on a trip to Connecticut.

Camping was part of Ginny's life; her mother was a Girl Scout leader and her father led a Boy Scout troop. Mr. and Mrs. Brown impressed me as a couple who did things together and seemed happy and relaxed. Ginny was an only child, and a miniature schnauzer named Muggsie completed what I viewed as their very *normal* family.

I was excited to be on this trip, but I felt shy and out of place. My mother was a widow and life was very different in a home without a father.

Also, I suffered from terrible gas pains after I ate. At home, I would lie down over the seat of a chair after eating to relieve them. I was scared and embarrassed by this malady and needed to keep it a secret from Ginny's parents. The only time I remember lying over a bench on the trip was when Ginny and I were alone.

The two of us bunked in sleeping bags in a pup tent apart from her parents. It was very cozy and we decided that we would go to sleep holding hands and see if we could wake up still holding hands. I don't remember whether we accomplished this sweet goal.

One afternoon I went on a long walk with Ginny to a store about a mile down the road. It felt very grownup to be on our own in a place that was new to us. We had a small amount of money to spend in a grocery store. What would two nine-year-old girls buy at their destination? Candy? Ice cream? Soda? We decided on a package of Lipton chicken noodle soup, which we loved.

Another vivid memory is taking a group trip to a nearby ocean beach called Hamanasset. We all went in the water and, holding hands, jumped over the waves. Ginny and I combed the beach for seashells. To our amazement, the beach had delicate colored shells that we could almost see through—pink shells, yellow shells, orange shells. They seemed magical to us and it wasn't until many years later that I saw them again on another beach.

About ten years ago I saw Ginny's name and email address on a list of Yonkers High School graduates. I was glad to find her after so

many years and I sent her a long email reminiscing about our friendship in grade school and how much it meant to me. We exchanged emails for about a year. She was married for the third time and was living in Iowa with a musician. She was singing in his band and performing in nursing homes and hospitals. She seemed happy. She sent me photos of her five cats and one of our camping trip. We were sitting at a picnic table with her father and eating corn on the cob. I looked sallow and much too skinny; Ginny looked pretty and healthy.

• • •

BOURGEOIS HAIKU

Linda Downs

Spiraling bronze hair
Coiled high around her torso
Legs kick to escape

• • •

SLEEPING WITH TROTSKY

Stanley Raffes

Everyone knows Leon Trotsky was murdered by Stalin's assassin in Coyoacan, Mexico, August 20, 1940, an icepick impaled in his brain. He struggled until his last breath, cursing Lenin and his insidious Mexican assassin, a former student. Very few people know we inherited his namesake, our beloved Trotsky, pedigree Russian blue cat, from my late great Aunt Irina. Our Trotsky carried on Irina's revolutionary spirit for 22 years in his amber eyes and temperament.

Aunt Irina scandalized/fascinated her staid middle class family. A blue-eyed Ukrainian beauty, communist atheist revolutionary art teacher at Stuyvesant High School, art director for the Daily Worker and supporter of the Spanish Civil War, Irina pedaled her neon bike to school, always wearing protest buttons. She was also lover to American artist Ben Shahn who helped Diego Rivera construct the legendary mural in Rockefeller Center with a prominent Stalin portrait.

Irina scandalized the family the most by attending the Free Love Communist Camp on Swan Lake in Hopewell Junction, New York, where she skinny-dipped under the stars and full moon, singing Russian protest songs and drinking vodka straight from the bottle with the intense Communist boys who always wore wire-rimmed glasses.

We adored Trotsky, who always perched himself, purring, spread across the *Sunday Times*, political books and pamphlets. He once chewed up the rent notice from the landlord when the landlord didn't give us heat or hot water for a whole week.

We buried Trotsky, who died peacefully at age 22, next to Irina on the grounds of the old Communist camp, now upscale condominium in Hopewell Junction, New York. On August 20th every year, we leave for Irina a bouquet of a dozen blood red roses, a laminated copy of the Daily Worker, Ukrainian vodka, and photos of Trotsky at his fierce, revolutionary best. For our beloved cat Trotsky, we leave a chewed-up catnip mouse painted with Stalin's image.

• • •

THE LAND OF GRACE

Jennifer Jolly

We shall go there you and I
To a castle in the sky
Where elves and fairies sing and play
Where music touches all that stay
Soothing gently, calming fears
While laughter takes away our tears

Where rainbows form like jewels rare
Shimmering in the smoke-free air
And streams like sparkling diamonds flow
While the pale moon's gentle glow
Bathes us in its tranquil light
In the soft and balmy night

Clouds quite small and puffy white
Float serenely out of sight
Then the sun's warm welcome rays
Stroke and soothe us and we praise
The loss of burdens, aches and woes
We're rid of harm from all our foes

Our journey to a different place
Lends to us a sense of grace
And we will sit among the flowers
Share our thoughts for many hours
We'll share out secrets lift the veils
That covered us through all travails

Then we'll be free from fright and fears
That troubled us across the years
We'll talk and wonder you and I
On what life means as time goes by
And touches us with gentle hand
In that far-off peaceful land.

• • •

YOU HAD ME AT HELLO

Mary Ann Donnelly

I was easy
So easy
A sucker for a soft seductive voice
And blue bedroom eyes
Full of promise and pleasure
Offering the world
Or at least the one
Where Coltrane ruled
With the cool Chet Baker
And even cooler brews
Talking Baseball and Byron
Soaking up rays
Kicking back
On a rolling river of romance.

• • •

NO ONE BUT YOU REMEMBERS

Mary Ann Donnelly

No one but you remembers
Me with long blonde hair
Seemingly bold, brash
No one but you knows
The me inside
The one who is so unsure.

There's no one but you
I want by my side
On happy days and bad
When our first grandchild was born
Or the day the pipes burst.

I knew we were tied to each other
The day I failed my driver's test
My mouth full of pennies
My mother's words couldn't soothe anymore
All I wanted was you.

• • •

ON LISTENING TO LEONARD COHEN IN THE AUDITORIUM

Linda Rothstein

I am listening to Leonard Cohen on YouTube
Courtesy of Wi-Fi
which is as mysterious to me
as the cosmos must have been
to neolithic man
who I imagine heard the music of the spheres
while gazing up at the dome of the sky
and wondered why he could not see sound.

I believe song was born of pain.
I believe it was a rock-a-bye baby thing—
a stone age infant shrieks in terror
as a dark presence flaps its black wings.

The mother wonders what will
make her baby feel better.
She draws the infant to her bosom
and rocks him and rocks him
and then finds herself crooning
and finds the sound of her voice is soothing.

And there you have it—
the first lullaby
and later perhaps as the infant chortles
the mother bursts into a soprano of song
the way a cloud lets a drop fall pitter patter
before opening its throat and releasing a torrent of rain.

Leonard Cohen died in November.
He did not live to see the last days of the dark man
who tried to bring light.
But I believe he knew there would always be terror
And we would always need song.

• • •

O FLORIDA

Wayne Cotter

Florida O Florida

Sing clear your song
Luring vulnerable prey
To your
Sun-drenched shores

Your palm-tree promises
And leisure-land dreams
Feed deep passions
Plant far-away seeds

Plastic flamingoes
Sticky bun skies
Air conditioners humming
Soft lullabies

But Florida O Florida

Fear not dark clouds
Or angry gales
They are but
Pale imposters

Your welcoming smile
O Cheshire Cat
Can overcome
Such monsters

Your treasured shores
Will glisten still
Your sun
Forever strong

And your prey
Will listen still
To embrace
Your siren song

• • •

OY FLORIDA

Hilda Feinstein

oy florida, oy florida—so far from the north
oy florida, oy florida—your riches reach forth
to your minions you call with the lure of your warmth

oy florida oy florida—your palm trees do sway
from miami to disney, beguiling your prey
they come from all over with money and shorts
chipping at golf balls, the cohens and schwartz(es)

hotels and condos, massages at spas
hot tubs and sailboats and convertible cars
the early bird sings through winter and spring
seafood, pastrami and bagels are king
a siren like sigh offers sensational meals
with real key lime pie—what sensational deals

day after day no worries or strife
sunshine then more sunshine—what a good life
basking on beaches floating in pools
fishing with dolphins visiting shuls
—well maybe

smiling and snorkling from October to May
hoping that hurricanes stay far far away
no destruction should fall here in florida south
leaving a bad feeling or taste in your mouth—of florida

oy florida
when the weather gets hot, the snowbirds retreat
packing the planes to get away from the heat
waiting for next year to escape from the cold
once again certain that they'll be paroled—to florida

oy florida, oy florida
to the minions you call with the lure of your warmth
tooo the m i n i o n s yooo caaaall—with the l u r e of
your warmth

• • •

REMEMBERING THE MAN ON THE MOON

Linda Downs

Sylvan sliver of light,
A shining shelf for the Queen of Heaven.
A yellow pod-chair for bedtime stories.
Night-light to the universe.
Rice paper at dawn.
Ripe orange orb in autumn.
Eerie eclipse, crossing a path with its counterpart.
That flat white disc, moving oceans daily.
Look! There he is,
twinkling eye, apple cheek and hint of a smile;
the man of mystery.
They land and gently bounce on the surface.
“One step for man, another step for mankind.”
A shrink-wrapped tinker-toy flag
is planted on the airless, windless surface.
The new color Sony, purchased just in time for the launch,
shows bleak black, white and grey landscape.
No Martians greet them at landfall;
no exotic plants, trees or animals
collected and studied.
No need to write home with inflated descriptions
to justify their journey.
Rocks are gathered.
One is displayed at the Smithsonian.
No matter how one associates it with
arduous accomplishment and national pride,
it disappoints.
At the next full moon his face disappears
into craters and rocks.
Emerging like a small and brightly colored marble
over the wide arc of the moon's horizon,
we see through astronauts' eyes
the earth-rise!
Our lustrous planet, suspended in endless space
pulling that big rock with it.
Earth, a living taw in the ringer of orbits,
our verdant home,
made more precious from this awesome perspective.

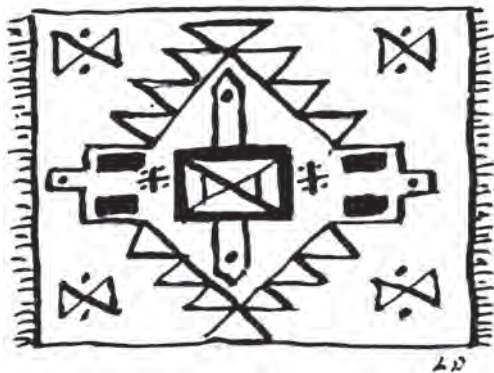
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ONE TUESDAY EVENING

Regine Rayevsky Fisher

I feel the wind changing
Stars shift in their constellations
I feel the moon spread whiteness on my face
And in the morning I feel spirit
Flying freely inside me
The space is so vast, there is no end to it
I feel no limit to my own existence
My thoughts are reaching the unreachable
My mind's at rest and gathers energy
In my hands I hold the planet
I am the Master, not to rule
But to live in harmony and love
I feel as if fear knocked on the door
Love opened – no one was there
Love filled my entire universe
I am floating in it
I feel like dancing, flying
I feel no weight
I am beautiful, I have no faults
An absolute perfection!
I am pure like water, sound, light!

• • •



HOLIDAY MEALS/HEAD TRIPS

Carole Cronig Abrahams

How much onion do you put in matzoh balls?
Do kanadles really have to be boiled in water, not soup?
I know you think curly parsley looks prettiest—is one bunch
enough?
What cut of beef did mother use under potato kugel?
How much should I skimp on salt and fat now?

My sister and I went on and on,
reconstructing the past and modernizing the future
through festive foods, celebratory foods,
presented in beauty, incantations of prayer.

Chicken fat, gribines, sweet potatoes
pickles, sour of course, and pickled tomatoes
if I could get Gus on the lower east side

Polished silver, finely tuned crystal
Bulbous tureens with floral handles, decorated platters,
Wine glowing purpley in elegant decanters

I have become the matriarch.

• • •



BEFORE WINTER

Stella Gold

At the end of a long autumn
Trees maintain their color.
A palette of yellow
Green red and pink
Sets a wonderful scene
For their final show.

A leaf dances slowly
In the wind
Fragile graceful
A discreet sign
Of forthcoming winter.

For us humans
The end of life
Is frightening
We have little control
Over the path
Of our destiny.

Yet on this Sunday afternoon
Sitting near the river
Under a bright blue sky
A sense of peace spreads over me.
I feel comforted
By the warmth of the sun
By the radiance of the trees.
I am grateful
For the gift of their beauty.

• • •

SUBWAY SURPRISE

Betty Farber

I paid my subway fare,
Sat on the R train,
Wearing my grey fedora
(Which covered my grey hair)
With matching grey scarf.
All was well.
A young woman
Sat opposite,
Glanced at me
And seemed to smile.
Upon leaving the train,
She leaned close
And whispered in my ear,
“I saw your eyes closing;
Don’t sleep on the subway.
It’s dangerous.
And you’re so adorable,
I want you to be safe.”
She left at Times Square
So for the rest of the ride,
I kept my eyes open
And concentrated completely
On looking adorable.

• • •

WINTER NYC

Mary Ann Donnelly

R train in winter.
A wall of black puffy coats
To add to the gloom.

• • •

IF LIFE WERE FAIR

Barbara P Gordon

If life were fair
the eighth-grade boy
with squeaky voice and rising lust
would not be plagued at age thirteen
with spindly arms and facial pocks

If life were fair
the guy with brains
not the human battering ram
who charges down the football field
would win the girl with flaxen locks

if life were fair
the rain would fall
and turn the desert into soil
those who starve and die of thirst
would live and dance and plant their crops

If life were fair
a chimpanzee
might keep a human in his zoo
and in the English countryside
the peers in red would flee the fox

• • •

BLUE

Art Spar

You are the true blue
Deep waters perfect your hue
I float without fear

• • •

FLIGHT

Martha Drezin

Aluminum, plastic, styrofoam, a sea of wrappers.
Drunk on chips, my mind wants to fly,
But flight attendants of mammoth proportions,
Like linemen, block dreams and the aisle.

Plump, succulent and pretty, legs stuffed into nylon,
Hair pony-tailed, they dream of the wild west.

I inch by inch from my seat, sidle sideways,
Pray there's no impasse because if I can't pass
Attendant and I will be glued until landing, stuck back
to back, blocking the aisle, holding flyers hostage,
the stuff of a movie.

Cut off from chips, no longer chipper—blue, potato,
corn and Pop Corners, which are oddly sweet—
passengers clutch phones furtively in sweaty fingers,
texting “R” for release.

High in the sky between points A and B, and in a chip stupor,
I think on who I fly from and who I fly to, all loved,
albeit, unequally. Then a mythical point C seduces me.
A new flight, a new life, a house and that chicken
I always dream of.

• • •

FACES OF HUMANITY

Leonard Leventon

Turned to the sky
Eyes upside down
Flames from their fingers
Converging from the shadows
Hatred abounds

Swastikas
Armbands
Confederate flags
Jew haters
Chanting
Last century's 3rd Reich ragtags

Whole world is watching
In Germany they're shocked
They expressly outlawed this
Make us all bigots
Great again stuff

Counterprotesters mounting
Swallowing up the hate
Shrinking them back to the shadows
Dowsing their inflamed trigger fingers
With overwhelming Humanity
Dignity and
Grace

• • •

UNTITLED

Donna M. Rubens

Gertrude Stein was wrong,
So wrong
When she sang that song of the rose.
A rose is never just a rose.
It is always a loved one's delight,
A queen of a flower,
Meant to shower tender feelings
That matches its splendor.
Red, pink or white,
On its throne,
It is cherished by all who love.
Gertrude,
Stuck in ennui
Couldn't see.
Give me a rose of any color,
For me,
A rose is always royalty.

• • •

BLACK LEAVES

Donna M. Rubens

Two black leaves.
All that are left
On a giant tree in the back.
They cling, stubborn, with their stems
So hearty, despite the season's truth.
Will they still be here
When new green life arrives in the spring?
Or will the tiny buds push them away?

• • •



Yona Rogosin, *Imagine Too*, Multimedia Collage



Diane Figueroa, *Concentric Circles*,
Semi-precious Stones, Swarovski Crystal, Glass



Marilyn Weiss, *My Gal*, Multimedia Collage



Shoshana Kagan, *Powerful Solar Panels*, Photograph



Lila Heilbrunn, *Perspective*, Photograph



Pete Weis, *Nemo's Uncle*, Photograph



Deborah Yaffe, *Swimming Pool*, Photograph



Helen Neilson, *Alien*, Collage



Arlene Hajinlian, *Cedar Waxwing* Watercolor



Michael Wellner, *Grand Teton National Park*, Photograph



Beverly Francus, *Eilat, Israel*, Photograph



Sondra Lipton Sahlman, *Squirrel*, Tennessee Marble



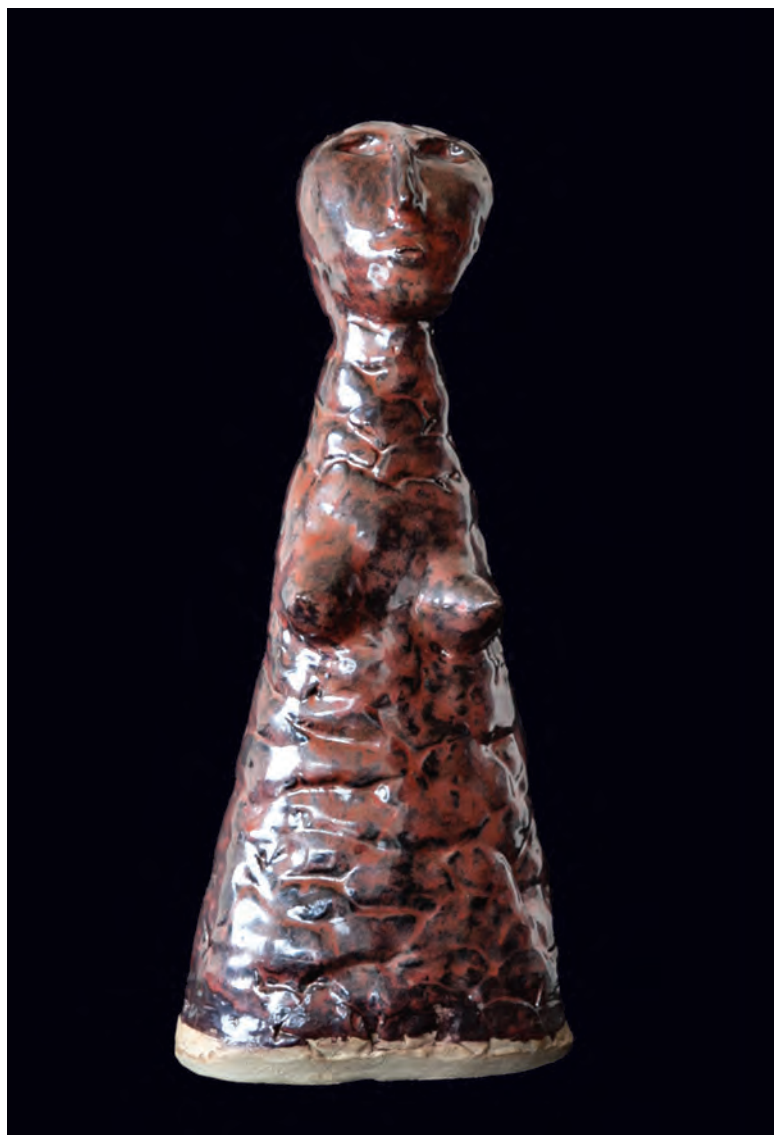
Helen McMahon, *Battery Park*, Pastel



Leonard Gold, *All in the Family*, Tempera



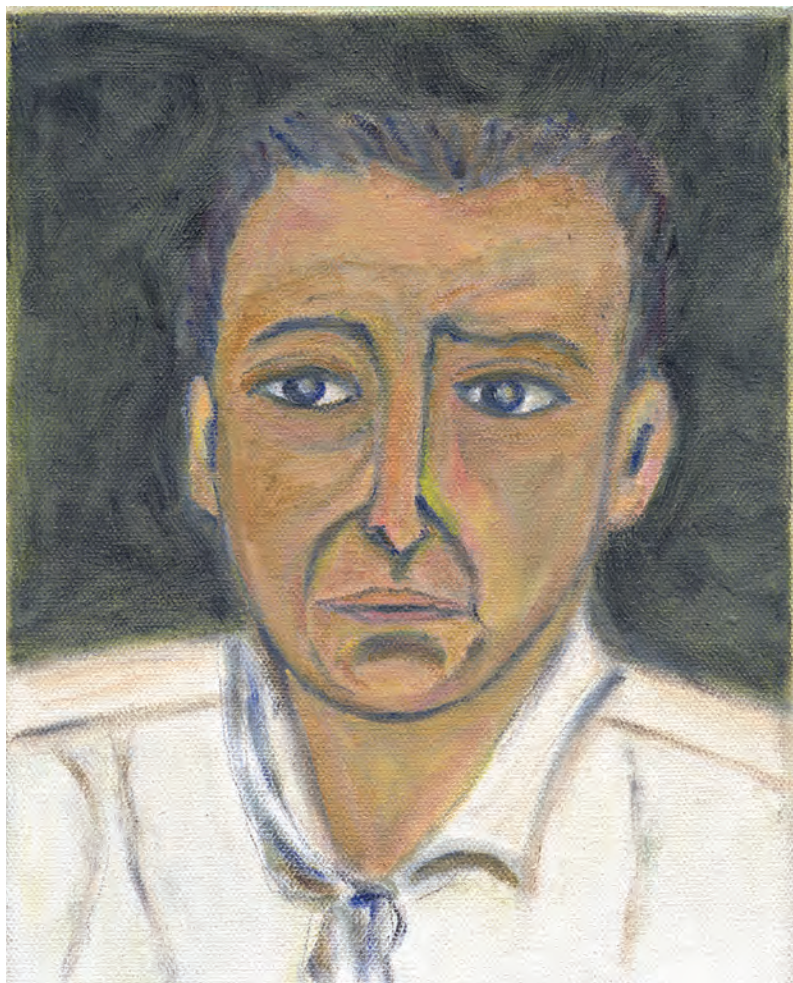
Renee Woloshin, *Technicolor Dream*, Acrylic on Canvas



Rosalie Regal, *Searching*, Clay



Jeanette Himmel, *Forsythia*, Mixed Media Oil & Collage



Paul Adler, *The Anxious Man*, Oil on Canvas



Donna M. Rubens, *The Sisters*, Oil on Cardboard



Gil Santiago, *Bird Sculpture*, Metal Farm Implements

AT MY WINDOW

Eva Shatkin

I see the world from my window
these sweet autumn days
as tree tops in the park
bear a warmer green
to tender orange shades
then yellowing before each
will strip to its lineaments.

In early morning
the chimneys on the roofs flare
plumes of vaporous smoke
dissolving at their heights
into the glow of daylight.
The flags on NYU buildings
Flaunt insignia into the wind.

Some windows illuminate
occupants arousing while
others sleep on in darkness.
Down below, the streets
stir as the city awakens
to another day.

On Monday garbage trucks
herald the week with fanfare
as slowly walkers trail their dogs
and the youthful start their runs.
The day's workers occupy buses
and yellow taxis ply for fares.
Slowly the streets catch fire
and traffic stalls.

I see it all through a lens
removed from actuality
to court diversion while
at my morning workouts.
The city goes about its business
and so do I.

• • •

ADVICE TO SPAGHETTI

Eileen D. Kelly

Don't let him break you
minus a struggle
If he whacks
to snap you in half
Spill onto the floor

Keep your strands whole
Jump into the pot
Lots of water?
And a dash of oil?
Then coat all your strands
You'll slip and slide and
dance with each other
Enjoy! More fun
comes only
when you get sauced

When you're cooked
let him pour out the water
You'll love being cozy
Piled together nice and hot
Don't mind if a strand slips out
and goes down the drain
There're more of you

Welcome the sauce
he pours on you
Roll in it
Splash it all over
Yes, red is your color

When you land on a plate
don't be afraid
You've done your job
And people love you

Accept the cheese
on your head
graciously
Be proud, spaghetti!

• • •

ON 684

Marc Kouffman

There's a fresh tar pillow on 684
Where a deer rests his head forevermore
Inside the yellow line wide and bright
Vehicles are stranded day and night

High overlooking a ten mile lake
I leave my car to take a break
Until tourists begin to flap
Their shopping bags and baseball caps
Rolling backwards with increased pace
My Subaru and I are in a race
And the vista that I stopped to see
Was roundly praised but not by me

Look at the Bedouin all decked in white
Weave through traffic: what a sight
With balletic ease, he mesmerizes me
Then lands with his cycle in a tree

Further South in the breakdown lane
A family scurries to prepare for rain
There isn't any time to goof
With plush recliners on the roof

Down the road not very far
Suspects are frisked against a car
Two black teenagers are spread like an eagle
By troopers who say, "It's perfectly legal."

Like the real estate deer in the homebuyer's dream
The toxic flow of this vehicular stream
Carries Lyme disease, emission pollution
To our highways and byways that have no solution
For what's to come around the bend
When what's just passed we need to mend

• • •

A TIME FOR EVERYTHING

Helen Neilson

There was a time the child was small
and needed a hand to hold.
When he could walk straight and alone
time came to free his hand.

He found freedom to know himself,
baby, youth to young man.
Had time to dream of what could be
on the puzzling pathway.

Little by little, he changed and chose,
made decisions what not to try,
dared think of love and profession,
outgrew those who still held his hand.

There is a time for everything:
the letting go, the freedom gained,
the choices made for life and love;
a time to grieve for those alone.

• • •

A MEMORY

Trudy Owett

The word Cellar makes
me shudder. And remember
what happened when I was
a small child, in Vienna.

My father, thrown down a
cold flight of steps, into a cellar.
By the Gestapo who had raided
a cinema.

Where, through the business he'd
been in, he was secretly showing
"All Quiet on the Western Front."
A film banned by the Nazis.

This broke my father's back.
Yet saved his life. Because
early in the Nazi Occupation
only able-bodied Jews were
deported to the Concentration
Camps.

My father escaped to America but
never healed. Until he died, his bent
body and excruciating pain were
the reminders of what can happen.
In a cellar.

• • •

LAPSANG SOUCHONG

Steve Koenig

I wander the aisles of glass-topped jars:
Green tea with peach, lapsang souchong, mild or very smoky,
tea with coconut, tea with almond, chocolate tea.
The karamel tea comes from Germany, a gift from his ex,
cupped in my hand, a burning aroma rises.
Could be more beastly, like the silver needle tea
whose flowery scent triggers my asthma.
You never know what's going to cause an atchoo, or who.

I wander the racks of dungarees. The names might be trendy,
but I no longer watch enough tv to know. The streaked metallic
style is back; the kids wear only kitschy retro, with a smattering
of flares to let you that that some things never change,
even the ones that didn't fit in in the first place. Once we said,
sneering, the only good thing about punk is it gives ugly people
a place to fit in. Now we realize the truth, about it and about us.

I wonder when I first realized that I was outside, then in.
It could be dancing at my first club, where Tony told me,
“Don't worry, just jump up and down and have fun,” and I did,
since the packed floor barely made way for sweat to drip down.
I could be standing outside the smoky bars, catching all that
traffic would allow.

I wander the external globe:
México, Papua Nuigini, Türkiye, Bhutan, and do things I haven't
the courage to do at home. White water rafting, kissing young
strangers, risking Darjeeling Fireball pickle, wearing a *gho*.
I take these all home with me; Customs permits all memories,
unstamped. I detect the smoke of lapsang souchong
filling my nostrils but it's just the metal of the radiator, triggering
my asthma, an inhale of albuterol soothing the fear,
a nip of Laphroaig
returning me to the precipice where Donovan sings of old Islay,
writing an aerogram to one of the many places that are my home.

• • •

ESCAPE

Art Spar

Loneliness like an ice cube in my five-year-old pit
Isolation so chilling I don't know to cry
Endless hours of silence call me
To ESCAPE toward the warmth of my private world

Betty and Murray lived in a shoe
With too many children to know what to do
A second marriage each with children in tow
Unwanted baby Arthur tipping the brim to overflow

A mid-life marriage with no honeymoon
Five older children with one plan; ESCAPE
A father who lived for what he found outside his home
A first responder mother worn down putting out fires

Jonny Holstein lives inside the porch TV
"Jonny Holstein is your imaginary friend," my family reminds me
They all think Jonny is a little boy
But my immature naiveté senses Jonny's ambiguity

My love for Jonny is so strong it hurts
After all are asleep I steal downstairs to the porch where
Jonny's spacious home is entered through the back of the TV
Where we wrap our arms around each other and love

Jonny is the salve of comfort
The mother's milk I thirst for
The romance promised by Million Dollar Movie
Till the next day of loneliness begins

Jonny is there only for me
My steadfast imaginary companion
Androgynous for all occasions
Whose love fills an empty house

• • •

OUR SAUL

Barbara P Gordon

red jacket, hair shot with silver
a reassuring presence
at the head of our table

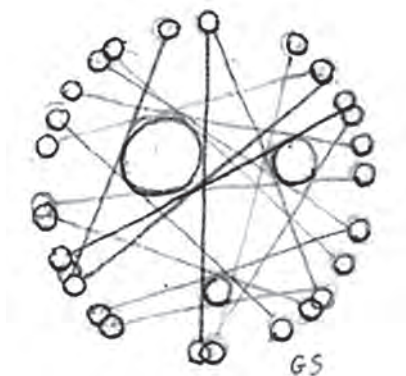
every week he bared his soul for us
turning a bardic microscope
on the journey of his days

truth teller, he mined his marriage
his love, his loss
all the gestures of his grief

he read so well, inflections of his voice
reflecting a rich background
in dramatic arts

with humor or with passion and
a sly sense of mischief
he shared with fellow poets
his admirers and friends

• • •



THIS MORNING

Stella Gold

Through the window
I see
A cherry tree
In bloom
Over the tender green
Of sprouting grass
And I feel
Like singing
With joy
For today's offering
Of unexpected spring.

• • •

HINDSIGHT

Helen Neilson

Strange is it not, how true it is
we never recognize the truth
when facts lie bare before the world?

After all the damage is done,
then truth brings recognition
and hindsight helps us mourn.

• • •

IRRETRIEVABLE

Judy Winn

Words that flew out
That were regretted
Wishing that my mouth
Could take them in again
Swallowing my words.

Words that were spoken
Before it was time
Falling on deaf ears
Never really heard
Still floating in space.

Pithy words uttered
Blank stares looking back
When no one got it
And my tongue was tied
No voice to say more.

Words I wanted to say
Rehearsed in silent scenes
Waiting for the right time
The moment came and went
I said nothing.

• • •

CONFRONT YOUR FEARS

Stan Lieblein

1946
War over
Safe in The Bronx
Saturday afternoon
Sent by Mom to the movies
With a box lunch
To see "The Courage of Lassie"
Second Feature
"Angel on my Shoulder"
Story of a man's descent
Into the fires of Hell
Nightmares of hellfire
Child Psychiatrist
3 Sessions
Only make believe
Don't believe
60 years later
Turner Classic Movies
"Angel on my Shoulder"
Turn on the TV
10 minutes later
Press off button on the remote
Just a coward

• • •



THE NET

Gina Lebowitz

This spider spins
a messy web
it seems disorganized,
torn in spots,
still, it serves to
trap an alien creature

She stings him, yet her
fluids won't dissolve
his flesh; transfixed,
mesmerized, his marrow
rests calmly in its bones

She prods his ribcage –
not an ounce of fat; here,
no usual nourishment.
Day after day, his fine,
gold hair glows
inside her web
like the sun

She cannot eat him;
he is impenetrable
she cannot know him.
Each day she asks,
creature, what are you?
What do you want?

One day, rousing from his
torpor, he smiles at her
stinger. I am your net
he says. I have tangled
you up and caught you;
you will never be free of my
silken, inscrutable strands

• • •

THE FIRST LIGHT

Sy Amkraut

The first light fans
Out over the sky

The dew glistens on
The leaves

The cock croons a
Happy song

The warm breeze
Wafts over me

Fanning the joy of a new day

• • •

MY WORLD

Ellie Chernick

Madison Avenue has decreed
The color for the year shall be
Green.

But for me there is no other
Hue

When the sun slips down
And the moon's not around
My world is encased in
Blue.

• • •

THE SEARCH

Yona Rogosin

Black backing breaks off
crumbling like ash
revealing nothing.
No names and dates to guide me
I stare and stare
in my despair
at the faces who are long gone
but somehow connected to me.
Like an orphan longing to know
I search for my forebears of years ago.
But the gaps are chasms
the alleys are dead end
with too few threads to tend.
So many pieces are missing.
No one to ask who is living.
A difficult and frustrating task,
I will persevere and push on
until it is absolutely, positively clear
that I cannot find a speck more
about those whom I hold dear.

• • •

KALEIDOSCOPE

Helen Saffran

As a child
I had a kaleidoscope
That was magical and beautiful
I marveled at the changing
Designs
It was my world
Of color
Then one day
I had to know its secret
I took it apart
And found
A few pieces
Of colored glass

• • •

PICTURE

Helen Saffran

Took down your picture
On my refrigerator
And replaced it with a photo
Of purple morning glories
Which I took last summer
In front of my house

It wasn't to be

• • •

THE DEATH OF ELORD REVOLTE

(Based on an article from Southern Poverty Law)

Ruth Ward

The young boy couldn't get it right;
Neither could he change his name.
His homies praised him for his might;
Policemen didn't do the same.

The Juvenile Detention Center
Second Street, Miami-Dade
Was full of boys with urban hearts
Of gravel, tar and asphalt made.

The breakfast seemed too small one day,
One milk was not enough.
Elord stood up to get some more
No "May I?" – he was tough.

Officer Rizzo feigned outrage,
Standing without consent?
That big boy had it coming,
What should be his punishment?

He told Alberto, "Get this dude
'Cause his respect is lackin,'
I never liked him from day one,
We're gonna send him packin'."

Alberto whistled to his boys
And pointed to Elord.
They all jumped on the thirsty guy
This sure beat being bored.

They punched and kicked and throttled him,
"So you like to rebel?"
"Just 'cause you're big don't mean you're special,
You can go to Hell."

The medical examiner
Could see that the torn vein
Beneath Elord's left shoulder
Had induced intensive pain.

But so had many other wounds,
So many – where to start?
Blood flowed from the adrenal gland,
The thyroid, lungs, and heart.

He was martyred for a drink of milk?
His standing caused his fall?

* * *

No one has been indicted
And there's no one I can call.

• • •

TRANSITION

Ruth Ward

Robins in oak trees
Pull me close with their tweeting,
“Stay with us,” they cry.

Their song is pleasing
But I pull myself away.
I need a challenge.

Asphalt eats my feet,
Bright neon skies burn my eyes.
City, I love you.

• • •

YAHRZEIT

Judy Winn

A fourth year to light this memorial candle
That has only dredged up the demise
Of a father who lived past ninety-eight.
If I do not strike the match
Will memories of his ending
Slide into my deepest recesses?

I want to forget that he was left in a nursing home
Where I had no say because I was not his guardian.
I want to forget the flights I took to see him
When will you be back? Soon I say, knowing a month will pass.
I want to forget how he sat in his room alone
And I ached for his aloneness.
I want to forget all the days when I called
And could not get an orderly to hand him a phone.
I want to forget his slipping memory
When finally all he remembered was me.
I want to forget
Arranging his flight home after death.
I want to forget
I had no access to his clothes for burial.
I want to remember meeting his wishes
To be buried next to my mother.
I want to remember that he was laid to rest in a white shroud
And looked like a priest, the Cohanim he was.

I read the prayer may his memory serve
As a blessing and inspiration.
I light the candle.

I remember how he inspired me
I remember how he gave me confidence
I remember his kindness and how he loved me.
I know that on every yahrzeit
What I want to forget and what I want to remember
Will both be there.
I go to a party and dance with abandon
For the joy of his life.

• • •

THREE BLIND GIRLS AND AN ELEPHANT

Linda Rothstein

It happened that Tuesday back in November. I went to sleep early, only to be jolted out of my dreams by the sound of trumpeting from the street below. I peered out of my window and there was something that looked like an elephant and it was orange.

“Could an elephant be orange?” I wondered, so I called my girlfriend Shirley. Shirley lives over on the West Side, and I feel sorry for her because it’s so difficult to get crosstown to Bloomingdale’s these days.

Shirley said yes, it was orange, but she didn’t think it was an elephant. Let’s call Louise, she said. Louise lives on Fifth Avenue across from the Central Park Zoo and maybe she would know if an orange animal had escaped. Louise said the zoo had penguins and even a polar bear, but the polar bear was white. She was sure there were no orange animals at the zoo, but she’d come over and take a look.

So, we congregated on the sidewalk, shivering in our lingerie. Louise said maybe if we stood beneath the beast, whatever it was, we’d be warmer and, besides, we might find some clue as to whether it was an elephant or not.

So, we climbed under what we thought was the belly, but when Shirley reached up to touch it she said it was soft and squishy. Shirley said the orange thing must be a balloon that got loose from the Macy’s parade.

Louise was busy pulling on something I could swear was its tail, but she said, “no,” it was only the rip cord and the orange thing was not an elephant. It was a parachute that failed to open.

I wasn’t convinced. The thing still looked like an elephant and it smelled like an elephant. I took a step backwards and got poked by something. I reached up to touch it, and with embarrassment I realized the orange thing indeed was an elephant—a male elephant.

We were all so relieved it was only an elephant. For a moment we thought it was a Republican.

• • •

TRAVELS WITH JUDY: THE INS AND OUTS OF CEFALU

Pete Weis

A conference in Taormina, Sicily, gave my wife Judy and me an excuse to explore a part of Italy we hadn't been to. We plotted out a rough tour of the island. Cefalu looked like a good place to spend our first night—just an hour's drive from the Palermo airport and halfway to Taormina. Before picking up our rental car, we visited the airport tourist office and booked a hotel in the old section of town.

Judy navigated us into the center of Cefalu. "The map suggests that this street can take us right to our hotel from the central square," she said, so I pointed the car as indicated. That street turned out to be one way/wrong direction. "So, turn right on the next street," she directed. This one did go in the right direction, but it was closed for repairs. The next street, *uh oh*, led us into a one-day-a-week pedestrian-only marketplace. People shouted at us as I motored cautiously through the crowd. "*Scusi, scusi!*" I called out, and with a few dozen more *scusis* we finally made it through.

I pulled into a gas station, took the map from Judy's lap and went up to the older fellow who was standing by the pumps. I pointed to the proper place on the map—it was just two blocks away—and said, "Hotel?" He twiddled his fingers to ask if we were walking. "No," I responded, pointing to our car, "*la meccanica*" (which I had misremembered from our travel guide; the correct word is "*auto*"). Luckily, he understood.

But, it turned out there were only wrong-way streets between us and the hotel. We had to drive around "*La Rocca*," which he indicated by pointing to the huge formation that sheltered the old part of Cefalu. This meant taking the two-lane highway that took two miles to circumnavigate *La Rocca* and would deliver us to the street with our hotel.

We soon registered at the hotel and were advised by the English-speaking clerk that we should simply park down the street wherever we could find a space. Needless to say, this old section of town had streets that could barely allow a subcompact car to pass our subcompact rental after I'd parked just two inches from a wall and had climbed out the passenger door after nearly impaling myself on the gearshift lever.

Judy spent the evening in bed to recover from the previous night of sleeping in the airplane, but I had to investigate the quaint neighborhood, including a Gothic church backed up against *La Rocca*. After an hour of night photography, I too collapsed into bed.

The next morning, we enjoyed walking around the old harbor with its centuries-old buildings, small trawlers with nets drying and a fish market. Then it was time to travel on to Taormina. But first we had to get out of Cefalu. Easier said than done.

We went back to the hotel, checked out and asked the desk clerk for advice. He pointed out on the glass-covered map on the reception desk that we were now on the next to the last street in town. We should simply go down to the end of the block by the harbor, turn right, then right again onto the last street. In just one block, this street emptied into the same highway that we had used the evening before. No problem.

We carried our bags to the car, loaded up and took off as directed. But at the end of that street we were stymied. There was the highway, to be sure. But in between us and it was a flight of stairs, going up! Had we gone the wrong way? Not possible—the route was too simple for us to have missed a turn.

Was there a different end to the street? I backed up a bit and peered into what was apparently the entrance to an apartment building courtyard. I backed up a bit more, but no other alternative appeared. Nothing to do but go forward. Fortunately, (1) there were only five steps and (2) our little Ford Fiesta had front wheel drive that could pull us upward as well as onward. So, for the second time in less than 24 hours, there was a small crowd watching me drive. We ascended to the highway. Each time we mounted another step, the tires would emit a squeak. But we were soon out of Cefalu and on our way to Taormina.

A bit of advice: never buy a used car from a rental agency, you never can tell where it's been!

• • •

I REMEMBER GRANDMA

Michele Mackey

I loved my Grandma Esther. She was from Romania and spoke English, Yiddish and Russian. But she spoke Russian exclusively when she did not want the children to understand what she and my grandpa were discussing. She sailed to America in the early 1920s with my grandpa Aron (Americanized to Harry), her two brothers, my mother and my aunt. My mother was only five months old. I am a first generation American.

Of late, it seems that immigrants want to retain their culture when they come to the United States, but my grandparents wanted only to be thought of as American citizens. To Grandma Esther, the biggest insult was to call someone a “griner,” a newcomer. My grandma was thrilled when she learned, after much practice, how to write her name. Her English was peppered with words such as “nuising” for the word “nuisance”. Even though she could not read, she found her way alone on the subway to our house in another borough without incident.

She and my grandpa lived in a four-flight walkup located at the corner of Ludlow and Delancey on the Lower East Side. At that time, the neighborhood was crowded with other Jewish immigrants and their pushcarts, recreating the small villages or shtetls of Eastern Europe that they had left. My grandpa knew all the neighborhood shop owners. When my family visited, he would shop and then yell up to my grandma from the sidewalk “Esther, send it down!” My grandma would stick her head out the window and lower a shopping bag attached to a rope four floors down to the street. My grandpa would put in the parcels he had just purchased and grandma would then hoist them up.

To my delight, my grandma would take me with her to the Essex Street Market. I will never forget the hustle ‘n bustle of the crowds and the variety of goods from fresh flowers to clothing. Mayor LaGuardia opened this market in 1940 for the street merchants and the market eventually grew to include 475 vendors. What a scene!

There were quiet times when we visited for the Sabbath and Grandma lit candles. She would cover her head and, standing in front of the lights, make circular motions with her arms while reciting the traditional Jewish prayer.

When I was one year old, I ran a high fever and had convulsions. The doctor, who made house calls, refused to climb the four flights. My father issued threats and the doctor still refused. My father and grandfather solved the problem. Each took the doctor under one arm and carried him up the four flights to our apartment.

When I was fifteen my grandfather died and my grandmother came to live with us in the Bronx. My family was going through difficult financial times and we moved into a one-bedroom basement apartment. My parents had the only bedroom while my younger brother Bruce, my grandma and I slept in the living room. Every morning my grandma would listen to the Yiddish news on the radio. It was never good. They reported on all the horrible things that had befallen the human race while we slept. Comments about the news always ended with the same question: "Is this bad for the Jews?" Grandma would then tell me all the things to watch out for during the day. By the time I left the house I was afraid of my own shadow.

As the years have passed, I feel grateful to have had grandparents and to have been able to spend time with them. Especially my grandma. She was special to me and she made me feel special to her. I still miss her.

• • •

TWO HAIKU

Betty Farber

SPRING SONG

Between plastic bags
Piled high for garbage pickup
Purple tulips bloom.

SUMMER SONG

No more poems to share.
No coffee and conversation.
Quest classes over.

• • •

A MEMORABLE VACATION

Jerry Wiesenberg

It was in the mid-1950s when I was released from the U.S. Army and returned to a more normal life. I had always wanted to visit Mexico and what with scraping together my salary and the cash in my soldier's savings account, I figured I could afford the trip. I convinced a college friend to travel with me.

We booked our trip, purchased airline tickets and flew from New York City to Dallas. At the airport, we were told there was a problem with our aircraft and that repairs would be made shortly. We waited for some time, reboarded the plane and taxied down the runway. Then a pilot announced that the repair was unsuccessful and it would be necessary to change planes. We soon learned that the new plane also had a problem, and so again we had to exit and reboard our original plane in which the repair had been completed, although not successfully, as I discovered later.

A short while after take-off, I looked out the window and noticed that one of the propellers had stopped working. I brought this finding to the attention of a stewardess. At first she was unbelieving. When she looked out and confirmed the bad news, she began to cry and said, "Maybe God does not want us to fly." "Not fly," I said. "I am looking forward to this trip and I do not care what God has in mind."

We continued the flight with one propeller. Granted, there was not much choice. And we landed in San Antonio where the problem was finally resolved. A new passenger came on board. She was old and spoke only Spanish. She told me she had a bad heart and had placed her medicine in the overhead compartment. In the event her heart gave her a problem, I was to get down her medicine and hand it to her. Soon she announced she needed the medicine. I got down the package, examined it and found that it was a bottle of scotch, which she began drinking. She offered us drinks, and we enjoyed their healing properties. When the plane finally landed in Mexico City, my friend and I staggered off the plane while our health benefactor walked off without a problem. So started our exciting Mexican adventure!

One evening we found the name of a Russian restaurant in our guidebook. We thought it would be interesting to eat Russian food in Mexico. Unfortunately, we could not find its location. I asked a

man standing in front of a restaurant where the Russian restaurant was located. He said he didn't know, but that he owned the most exclusive restaurant in Mexico, and that Rock Hudson was coming there for dinner that evening. I told him if we couldn't find the Russian place, we would come back.

We couldn't find it, so we went back to his restaurant. We were soon seated at a table next to Rock, and the owner sent over a bottle of wine, declaring it was lousy wine that he wanted to get rid of. We ordered what he recommended, a chicken dish that he said he marinated for 48 hours. Later he came over and asked what I thought of it. I replied, "It needs ketchup!" We laughed, and the two of us joked back and forth with him for some time. When the check came, I told him to tell Rock that he shouldn't have to worry about the bill. "Jerry Wiesenberg would pay—not for his bill but for ours."

A week or two later my sister came to Mexico City with her girlfriend. I had recommended that she go to that highly rated establishment. When they got to the restaurant, the owner asked them how they knew about this place. My sister said that her brother had been there the same night that Rock Hudson was there. The owner said, "I know Jerry Wiesenberg, but who is Rock Hudson?" My sister was ready to fall over. Had I been there I think I would have fallen over too.

My sister related that two Mexican gentlemen came to their table and not only ordered for them but picked up their check as well. Their bill came to something like \$200. Maybe we shouldn't have paid our bill. But our bill that night was ridiculously cheap. A wonderful ending for a wonderful vacation.

• • •

INCIDENT ON A BROOKLYN BUS

Hilda Feinstein

It is early morning and most seats are filled by Brooklynites on their way to work or school. A child sits near the front of the bus next to a woman zealously taking notes with a stubby yellow pencil. The youngster, African-American, about six, appears frightened, perhaps terrified. Her expression contrasts starkly with that of the smiling teddy-bear adorning her pink backpack. The woman grips the child's hand, losing her pencil as the bus jerks to a stop.

Earlier that morning a thirtyish Caucasian woman notices with pleasure the crinkle of leaves under her feet. She speed-walks toward the bus stop, relishing the first bite of autumn after an interminably hot summer. The brisk day reminds her of her Vermont childhood. Sprinting for the bus, she twists her foot on the cracked pavement. "Damn!" she mutters, hobbles aboard and drops into the seat behind the driver. The throb subsides as she massages her foot. "A bad way to start the day, but at least it's not broken," she thinks. It is her first day on a new job.

Every day in New York is exciting for her. She is enthusiastic, as yet untouched by the cynicism of many New Yorkers. Her eyes lock onto the street. Although tantalized by Manhattan, she prefers Brooklyn. She loves its unique vitality, its influx of young people, its old neighborhoods, its grand parks. The bus passes the Brooklyn Academy of Music, her favorite place for theater and dance. She feels content. All she hopes for is a steady job and the smooth progression of her relationship with J.K., her live-in boyfriend. Eleven dollars an hour as a census worker will help for now. She checks her watch, not wanting to arrive late, 8:15 a.m.

The bus treks into heavy traffic, sirens screech, horns blow, a typically noisy rush hour. Unexpectedly, the bus stops short, all thirty-five thousand pounds. Standing passengers pitch forward. Everyone reaches for something stable to grasp. Packages drop, a wheelchair rolls over an elderly woman's foot and a boy's eye is hit by a flying pencil. No crash, but all are startled.

A jolt of loud, mostly indiscernible words interrupt her thoughts. Passengers tense as an agitated man accosts the bus driver. "You, driver—stop this bus!" His screams compete with shrieking bus brakes, his face within inches from the driver's face. The two men look very much

alike, both dark-skinned and muscular with graying mustaches, one wearing a bus driver's uniform; the other, a short red jacket. Our fearful Vermonter slinks deeply into her seat. For a nanosecond, sailing through her mind, a cobalt blue Lake Champlain blends into a steel blue sky. Time unfreezes, thrusting her back to reality. She is further unnerved since she cannot locate her cell phone.

"You left my child! Damn you bus driver, and you did it on purpose!" the man yells wildly. The perplexed bus driver does not flinch, stating clearly that he is innocent of the passenger's claim. He releases a control lever, opening the front door. The angry passenger thrusts his hand deeply into his jacket pocket, making contact with the driver's arm. The driver says nothing. The man growls, "I've been convicted of three felonies—go back for my child!" Amazingly, the driver remains calm. He pushes the protrusion in the man's pocket down toward the floor. Thankfully, his adversary does not react.

Everything seems surreal, the passengers' silence palpable. The driver announces, "Bus out of service. Everyone off!" Just then, appearing at the door is a girl about nine, panting and crying profusely. At the exact moment she pulls herself up the steps, another passenger tackles the man in the red jacket. A shot is fired.

The next thing our New Englander remembers is intense pain to the same foot that she had twisted earlier that morning.

Accompanying her in an ambulance are the child with the pink backpack and her mother. They tell her about the part of the incident she missed while unconscious. The police apprehended the man in the red jacket who had calmed down after seeing that his child was safe. The unruffled driver was truly a hero and the only casualty of the incident was the Vermonter, shot in the foot when the gun in the man's pocket fired.

The mother, a freelance writer, asks the Vermonter for a pencil to record this event. Hers had gotten lost in the fray. At 10 a.m. they arrive at the hospital.

AFTERMATH: The wounded Vermonter survives; her foot heals well. She never gets to her new job, but experiences a uniquely memorable New York morning, making two new friends along the way. More at home on scenic Lake Champlain, she returns to Vermont. J.K. remains in Brooklyn; they are still friends.

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MUSINGS

Harriet Finkelstein

The New York Times. When I was a little girl, I was totally attached to a beautiful, pink-garbed doll, which, I am told, I dragged with me everywhere. I still remember what she looked like. She was my Linus blanket, my comforter. As we must, we all grow up and adopt other kinds of comforters. In today's scary world, *The New York Times* is one of mine. Everything seems to be falling apart, but the *Times'* wonderful reporters, columnists and contributors put things into perspective. Day after day, no misdeed escapes *Times'* scrutiny and all that is current and coming is there to discover. Miraculously, neither snow, nor rain, nor heat, nor gloom of night holds up my newspaper. Every morning I look forward to seeing it on my doormat, waiting for me to pick up, have breakfast with and enjoy the comfort of its wisdom.

My Hudson River. I've seen the Grand Canyon and the Amalfi Drive in Italy and the Great Wall of China, but one of the most spectacular views was right under my nose—that of the Queen Elizabeth II cruising up and down the Hudson River, gleaming white in daylight and shimmering and sparkling at night. As seen from my living room windows, the majestic ship seemed to fill the full width of the Hudson—so surreal. That was many years ago. What a memorable treat to see the “Queen,” in all her glory, filling up the space between New York and New Jersey. Now, post-High Line and skyscraper development, I see only a sliver of the waterway that Henry Hudson thought was a passage to India. But New Jersey and the gorgeous western sky are still mine.

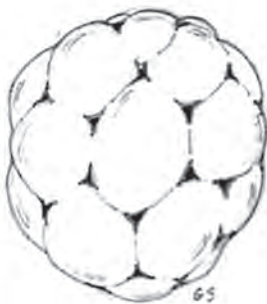
Trees. Every December I dread seeing the last leaves falling off the trees in my apartment complex. Once they are totally bare, the elegant trees, which have given me so much pleasure, are stark, harsh and forbidding. So, when the first snow falls, and I peer out at a wondrous, delicate white world, I never fail to be delighted. But, too soon, the fresh white snow drops away, leaving a grungy vista. What can I do but wait. The months fly by and every April, the first little buds burst out and the fresh green roofs of leaves emerge to cover my building. Thanks to the bounty of nature, which gives and gives, my little piece of the world is up to snuff

again. Wouldn't it be lovely if every block of the City was filled with trees? Maybe Trump could sponsor "Trump Trees" since he wants his name on everything.

My Computer. How did I live without it? How did I live without Google? Perhaps it seems strange, but when a computer can ease an acute physical problem, gratitude can turn to love. Years ago, late one night, even though I had been a contact lens wearer for umpteen years, I simply could not remove my lenses. It was late, I was tired. What to do? I turned to my magic computer, solver of multiple problems. Google directed me to a video, which illustrated, step by step, what no eye care doctor or other health professional had ever provided. That conundrum was solved and my life was made infinitely easier. Computers are a great blessing and they say the best is yet to come.

Food. My favorite lunch sandwich is mashed avocado, lemon hummus and sliced tomatoes on Zaro's multigrain bread. Over twenty years ago, recovering from a serious health problem, I attended a talk by a health guru and she spoke about the importance of eating properly. If not for that lady, I would never have even thought about buying lots of the foods she recommended. But, a few weeks later, I sat in on a talk by a Sloan Kettering doctor who had been a patient there as an adolescent. He poo-pooed food regimens and said we should eat and do whatever makes us happy, within reason, of course. He had the entire audience giggling. Food may or may not have medicinal value, but laughter is the best medicine.

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AND LIFE GOES ON

Palma Mahl

It was a smooth landing at the Fort Lauderdale Airport. Just in time for lunch on the beach. Getting off the plane was a breeze. The agent was there to assist me with a wheelchair and we headed to baggage to meet my son.

“Run, run, run!” was shouted as people ran toward us, flailing their arms and dropping belongings in disarray. I didn’t know what was going on and I wasn’t going to wait to find out. That was enough of a sign that something was terribly amiss.

I jumped out of my airport wheelchair and began to run, when everyone started hiding under chairs. I ducked under a chair for protection. When I lifted my head to see what was going on, the young man next to me gently held my head down and calmly told me to keep it that way. Then the doors leading out to the tarmac opened so people could evacuate the airport. Now I was on the tarmac with hundreds of other dazed travelers milling around, wondering what had just happened. We still had no idea.

I called my son who was picking me up to let him know I was safe. I knew he was waiting for me at the baggage claim. I told him I was safe and on the tarmac. He said that was great news. He then told me there was a shooter in baggage, but he was safe. The shooter lay down ten feet from him when he ran out of bullets. My son had hidden on the floor behind a Starbucks kiosk. He had found two gallons of milk and was holding them for, who knows what, protection? I could barely breathe. I was thankful he was safe.

We now knew there was a shooter in the airport. I told everyone on the tarmac what was going on. My son was being held by the FBI and was not allowed to leave, since he was a witness. He was also told they had no idea when he could leave, and that he could not get his car. Community was built on the tarmac, as we all tried to grasp what was happening. I was still out on the tarmac, but I was so worried about my son that I didn’t worry about myself.

As I have been known to do, I began to chat with a family. They were traveling with three teens, and we became instant family. After two hours on the tarmac, agents began moving us all, warning there

could be more shooters, and we were all moved into an empty airplane hangar. I stood for a while and then found a seat in a cart.

After another two hours, they opened the hangar and said we could leave. People were calling for rides and trying to figure a way out. Buses showed up to transport people headed for Port Everglades, but what could I do there? My new family, headed for Boca, was including me because that is where my son lived. They called an Uber, and we all piled in and headed to the Boca Hilton, where there was a big family dinner that night. It is five hours later, now dinner time. I never did have lunch.

My son was still with the FBI, no food and freezing from shock in shorts and a tee-shirt. After all, he was just going to pick up his mom at the airport.

In the Uber, I called my daughter in Colorado and told her I was on my way to a party at the Boca Hilton. She was a bit alarmed and confused as she watched the story unfold on the news. My new “family” insisted I stay with them, since I had nowhere to go. My son was still with the FBI. When we arrived at the hotel everyone was amazing, trying to comfort us. I went with my “family” to their room to freshen up and gather my senses. It was all so surreal.

They insisted I have dinner with them. At 7:30 my son finally called to say he could leave and take his car. Huge relief and lots of deep breathing. He arrived at the Boca Hilton. I was finally able to hug him. It was unbelievably emotional. My “family” insisted my son stay at the dinner, knowing what he had been through.

The next day I had a TIA and stayed overnight in the hospital, but all was fine. I stayed the week and recovered my belongings. Finally got my lunch on the beach. What a strange trip it was. And life goes on.

Appreciate every moment—they are precious.

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A HAPPY MEMORY

Donna M. Rubens

So much of childhood is lost as time goes by. But I often find I can sit quietly and call up happy memories, times visiting my best cousins and getting a favorite ice cream cone. Each was a special event I recall so many years and decades later. I can still taste the flavor—lemon custard—not available anywhere near my house. I can remember how perfectly happy I was reading books like *Mr. Popper's Penguins* that I borrowed from the local library. I can still remember another of my favorites, a large farm book illustrated with paintings of animals we did not see around my Midwestern home.

The time was the earlier part of the nineteen thirties and the place was suburban Chicago, which was quiet, relatively simple and secure. Later, even with the war raging and older boys and men joining up to fight abroad, my mother managed to maintain this sense of security.

I had a sheltered and quiet childhood. When my father died, I was just nine years old. The impact on my household was tremendous. But my mother persisted and did everything she could to keep my childhood and my older brother's childhood intact. She was a happy mother. She had grown up in a struggling immigrant family, so every day with a breadwinning husband she loved and adored, with enough to eat and take care of her family, was a treat for her.

She then spread the treat to my brother and me. As she expected, we were both good children. I do not recall tantrums or demanding anything, even when I had to do something unpleasant or wished to have something special. As I think back on it, life was neat, not as the word is used today, but as in having pleasant enough boundaries. A neat childhood was when I could always count on my mother being close by, serving up good and warm homemade lunches when I got home from school. (No one ate at school in those days). It was having pennies or an occasional dime to spend in the candy store on the way back for the afternoon. Just that was plenty to keep me more than satisfied.

It always seemed there was no shortage of books to read, and there were always toys and dolls to play with. It seemed to me that my parents, and later my mother when she was widowed, understood that I was entitled to time and space for my own enjoyment. I could always count

on clean, comfortable clothes and, for sleep, fresh pajamas and nighties and an abundance of stuffed animal friends to snuggle with. All this, a childhood where I felt safe and cared for, occurred in what seemed a very removed and secure neighborhood away from the city bustle.

Now, as I remember and write this, I realize that the neighborhood of my childhood would probably be considered bland or stereotypically homogenous. As a child, it was more than enough. I often wonder if I had been raised in New York City of the same time and era, would I have been so happy? Would I have felt as safe and calm? I only know it would have been altogether different, and I would have been a very different version of myself.

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FROM ROAST CHICKEN TO COQ AU VIN

Dolores Dolan

When I was in my twenties, some of the men I dated liked to give me books, maybe because I frequently talked about a book I was reading. Or maybe they were trying to improve my mind, like Arthur Miller educating Marilyn. One beau gave me a copy of Allen Ginsburg's "Howl." The night I finished reading it I had a nightmare.

Other men bypassed this literary route and instead introduced me to exotic foods in French and Spanish restaurants. My mother's home cooking in Brooklyn was far from exotic. Her repertoire included, for example, roast chicken, meat loaf and corned beef and cabbage. Exotic to my mother was Shrimp Lo Mein at Wong Lee's and Veal Parmigiana at Tony's on Flatbush Avenue.

"Snails, I don't think so," I said to an editor at CBS News when we dined at a little French restaurant on Ninth Avenue. I had stayed late a few evenings to help him with a project and, in addition to the overtime, he offered to take me to dinner. He said, "Try the escargots, you might like them." I struggled a bit with the pincers and tiny fork, finally extricated the dark, garlicky creature and popped it into my mouth. Then I dipped the crunchy French bread into the garlic and butter sauce and, after a few more snails, I said, "They are delicious." My companion ordered Coq au Vin for two and, once again, I was enjoying food I had never tried before. And to top it off, he ordered a dessert that I had never tasted—Crème Brulee. How was I ever going to eat roast chicken again? I did, of course, but French food became my favorite when I dined out.

And then I discovered Spanish food. Ricardo, a friend of my cousin's, took me to a Spanish restaurant in midtown. "Cold soup; are you serious?" I said. He had ordered two cups of a soup that looked like tomato soup but was cold and had bits of onion and green pepper floating on the top. Gazpacho. It was so delicious that I asked for another cup. I forget what we had for dinner but I do remember the sangria with pieces of oranges and apples in a decorated pitcher. I'm sure my mother never considered putting fruit in her red wine.

One summer I was a cocktail waitress in a posh restaurant on Cape Cod. I had zero experience with cocktails and couldn't tell a Stinger

from a Sidecar, but the owner, an energetic octogenarian, wanted to add a younger person to her experienced staff. A customer who came down to the Cape on weekends from his home in Rhode Island asked me out on one of my rare weekend days off. He suggested going to Provincetown for the day, a town I had heard of but had never visited. When we sat down for dinner at a restaurant on the water, Sy asked me if I'd like a martini. He said, "A martini is an acquired taste but you might like it." I said, "I'd like to try it; customers are always ordering them and I'm curious." I don't know if it was the sun setting, the piano music in the background, or my pleasure at the taste of the cool, dry gin and vermouth, but I have always remembered fondly my first Beef-eater Martini on the rocks with olives.

On an August night at a party on a Manhattan rooftop, I met fraternal twins. Tom was tall, heavy-set, jovial and bald. Bill was tall, thin, serious-looking and bald. I told Bill that he resembled the actor, Mel Ferrer. He said he had never heard of him. For the next couple of hours, we talked about books and politics. He was impressed that I had recently been to Ireland on vacation and had visited Yeats's gravesite in County Sligo. His mother was from Sligo. After a few dates, he invited me to a dinner party at the apartment he and his twin shared. Tom made the drinks and Bill did the cooking. He made scalloped potatoes and baked stuffed pork chops. The stuffing consisted of bread, apples, raisins and spices. Not exotic food, but very tasty. As we were eating dinner in the backyard garden under tree lights strung overhead, I thought to myself, "This guy is handsome, smart and he can cook," a rarity among men in the 1960s. On many anniversaries we had stuffed pork chops for dinner. Yes, Bill and I got married.

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