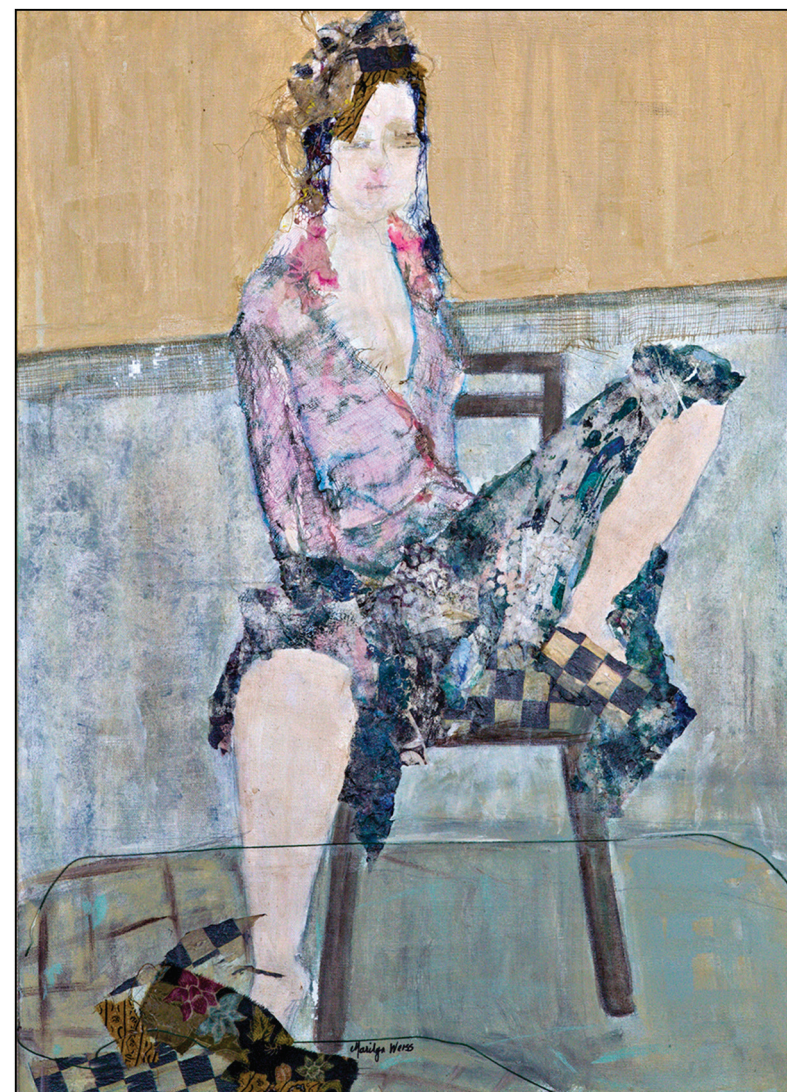


Q Review

2013 Q REVIEW VOLUME 18



QUEST 2013

VOLUME 18



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THE CREATIVE VOICE OF QUEST:

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EDITORIAL

Helen Neilson

This year's selection of Art, Prose and Poetry is finally gathered into one Q REVIEW manuscript. The size seems small for the great amount of thought and effort and heart used to create it. Perhaps it is the heart part that makes it so special—that tells those who will listen how proud all of us are to share this organization called QUEST. QUEST—the result of minds in pursuit of a gathering place in which to expand and retain their knowledge and creativity. It is our place to welcome and embrace others on the same journey.

Dedication

This 18th issue of Q REVIEW is dedicated to those members of QUEST who contribute to our mission and those devoted members lost along the way.

In memory of
Gertrude Itzkoff
Stefan Robock
Tom Sentell

This issue of Q REVIEW is in tribute to Joan Bonagura and Barbara Spector Karr, two of our beloved editors who have died in the last twelve months. Their skill and enthusiasm are in many ways responsible for the excellence of Q REVIEW.

We also wish to remember our colleague, Henrietta Levner, and express our gratitude to her estate for her generous gift to Q REVIEW.

Q REVIEW

The Literary and Art Review of QUEST

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**Deceased*

CONFESSIONS OF A JAILBIRD

Jerome D. Wiesenber*g*

It was the summer of 1954. I was in the U.S. Army, stationed in Fort Campbell, Kentucky. Actually the Tennessee-Kentucky border ran right through the middle of my barracks. While my room was technically in Tennessee, I often joked that when the summer heat became oppressive in the barracks, I could walk across the room to the “cooler” Kentucky side.

At a USO dance on post I met Sarah, a nice young nurse from Mexico. However, it was not Mexico the country, but Mexico, Kentucky with a population of 52! She apparently liked me since she asked me if I would go to church with her on Sunday morning. “I don’t go to church on Sunday,” I said. “Aren’t you a Baptist?” she inquired. I replied that I was Jewish. She appeared confused and I asked if she knew what that was. “Something like Catholic?” was the response. I later found out being Jewish in Kentucky was not something I should have brought to the attention of any of those townspeople.

Despite the differences in religions, we did date every Saturday night. Fortunately Jack, my barracks buddy, also dated a nurse from the same hospital. Most importantly, he had a car on the base and I didn’t. So we double-dated frequently, since the hospital in Hopkinsville, the closest town to the base, was still twenty-odd miles away and public transportation was out of the question.

One Saturday night, Jack said, “You do the driving.” It was not a problem for me. We picked up the girls at the hospital and I drove past the movie theater in town. It started to rain hard and I suggested that I could make a u-turn, drop them off in front of the theater, park the car and meet them inside. I surely thought they would appreciate my thoughtfulness.

After they exited, I attempted to pull away from the curb but noticed a car alongside. I waved my arm for the driver to pull up so that I could proceed. The car pulled up a little more until it was alongside. I noticed that there were two policemen in the car and two Military Policemen in the rear seat. Despite my further signaling for them to let me drive away, the officer in the front seat rolled down his window and ordered me to follow them, which I did.

“Park there and get out of the car!” I was told. Then one officer grabbed my arm and walked me down the block and into the police

station. Once inside they opened a cell, directed me inside and locked the door. "What did I do?" I asked. There was no response. From behind the bars, I kept asking why I was in the cell but there was never a response. After an hour, I was released from the cell and brought to the front desk. I was handed a piece of paper with instructions to report to court the upcoming Saturday morning.

I ran to the theater, purchased a ticket and found my friends seated near the rear. I tried to tell them what had happened but only heard "SHH, we are watching!" If there is anything worse than being arrested, it is when your friends don't realize or care that you are missing.

The following Saturday I arrived at the courthouse with a buddy of mine who, before he was drafted, had been going to law school. We took seats and noticed that others in the courtroom were looking at us. Soon a black man came in and sat on my left, followed by another who sat near me on my right. As the courtroom began to fill, I noticed that my friend and I were the only white people sitting in our section of the room. "My God," I said to my friend, "we are sitting in the colored section!" As born and bred New Yorkers we were not aware of the policy of segregation in the south. We were embarrassed but it was too late to move; we just had to wait there until the judge came in. I was the first case that was called, my name horribly mispronounced by the judge. Uh-oh, I think, things are not going to go well in this court for this poor little Jewish soldier.

"How do you plead?" said the judge. I responded that I was not aware of the charges. "Reckless driving," said the judge roughly. "You made a u-turn!" "A u-turn! We make those all of the time in New York," I responded. "Well, I wish I had all you New Yorkers down here and you would all be in jail!" the judge stated. With that in mind, I managed to come up with the exorbitant fine and we left. Coming out of that colored section like that in those days, I guess I was lucky not to have ended up rotting in their jail! Shortly thereafter, I was discharged from the Army and I returned to New York City as a free and happy man.

* * * * *

Sixty years later, while on vacation with my son, I had an opportunity to visit my old army base in Fort Campbell, Kentucky. When leaving the base, I related the story of my arrest to my son and suggested we drive the twenty miles to see the scene of the crime. I wasn't exactly sure how to find the theater and the jail, but

driving with my son through the town, I had the feeling to direct him to go either right or left on what seemed to be a main street. My son decided he would follow his own inclination and drove straight ahead. A few blocks later he decided to make one left turn and then another.

“There it is,” I shouted. “Stop the car!” There right in front of us was the movie theater with a municipal-looking building alongside. The street was deserted with no one in sight. Then from an office building nearby, an elderly man appeared. He smiled and seemed friendly so I related the story of my arrest. He said he recalled that the building in front of us used to be the courthouse and the jail also used to be farther down the block. And the street used to be two-way, before they made it into a one-way. That actually was the scene of my crime! It was amazing that the one person we saw and were able to talk to on that deserted street was familiar with the details of my tale.



L'CHAIM

Ellie Chernick

Friends and family meet
To eat
And celebrate.
L'chaim.
It matters not
If it's to tie the knot
Or who won the pot.
L'chaim.
Soon arrives a bundle of joy,
Girl or boy,
Must bring a musical toy.
The years go by
They really fly.
The little one now
Brings home her mate to be
Then they stand under the canopy.
L'chaim, L'chaim.

REMEMBERING

Ralph Shapiro

The private house, surrounded on three sides by a lawn which my father bought in the twenties in the then suburb of Boro Park in Brooklyn, had three spacious apartments. The first floor was rented; we lived on the second and my maternal grandparents on the third. For me, there was no division between these two floors. Each was my home and in each I was loved.

The kitchen in my grandparents' apartment was huge and I enjoyed sprawling on it while I played an intricate game of checkers with myself on the linoleum. I always won because I made the rules and was the only contestant.

Now, Bubbie, my grandmother, knew no English. Conversation with her had to be in Yiddish in which, as a matter of necessity, I soon became proficient. This failing notwithstanding, somehow, somewhere she had learned to play a card game which she called, as best as I could discern, *Kerisin*, which I deduced meant Casino. It was her joy and mine as well, from the age of six or seven until I "got too big" to play the game with her. The joy was enhanced by the promise of a piece of the savory cake she baked, even though it was just before dinner time. "Mama does not have to know," she would say in Yiddish, "you are so thin and undernourished," the mantra of all grandmothers.

Thus fortified we would sit at the kitchen table and play *Kerisin*. Where she got the cards or learned to play, I do not know. She knew the game; the good ten, the importance of spades and other cards (some of which I have forgotten) in the final count. As we played the game, I would gleefully "build" on the tempting cards thereby increasing my score. At that, she would shake her head and scold herself for her forgetfulness and downright stupidity.

Somehow these errors always occurred toward the end of a game which I was in danger of losing. When I pointed this out to her, she would utter some recrimination at her ineptness and congratulate me by claspng me to her ample bosom.

I lived there until I married and was drafted for service in WWII. She died in 1946, two months after I was discharged. To my regret, I did not have another opportunity to play *Kerisin* with her.

A NEW FRIEND

Isidore Schwartzman

As he got out of the cab and looked at his “suburban palace,” he thought for the umpteenth time how beautiful it looked even in this upscale area where it was surrounded by so many other, more expensive and even more beautiful homes. It still stood out. That proud feeling never left him, and the well-cared-for beautiful flowers spread around added the finishing touch. He did well. Ozzie and Harriet couldn’t have done better.

But then, of course, he always did well in just about everything he touched. He was the poster child that others always pointed to when looking for someone who had done it—someone who had achieved the goal that so many had strived for: financial security, beautiful wife, well-behaved children (so far)—the American dream.

He thought back to the Horatio Alger stories that he loved to read as a small child. There were very few alive today who had even heard that name. With “Luck and Pluck,” our hero always won the girl, got the job, succeeded in all ventures, and the stories all ended very happily for everyone concerned. He liked to think of himself in that same category.

But he also realized that somewhere along the way, he and Horatio had parted. There were some slight differences. He had help. He had the right name and the right appearance. He had the right religion and the right political affiliations: the right Myrna Loy wife and children who had never given him drug-related, teenage problems. But the most important thing that he had going for him was that, very wisely, he had chosen the right parents: on the paternal and maternal side, his parents were people of wealth and power. And it showed.

Doors opened for him automatically. Problems and roadblocks disappeared or melted away. Everything that came to him came easily and was solved before he was even aware of it. Wealth and power counted. Even when he was in uniform (handsome navy officer garb), he was never in harm’s way. He got to the American Dream without Horatio Alger.

And yet there were problems, things that he never talked about, things never discussed with anyone, things that he kept hidden and entirely to himself, covered over with that great, beautiful smile which hid so much so easily. Yes, there were problems.

Each morning he could hardly get out of bed because of the doubts and fears and anxieties that overwhelmed him. He was overcome with guilt, terror and bad dreams, all concealed from those around him. This was reality—not the deceptive smile. There was no way in which he could share these feelings with anyone—not his family, not his friends, not even a psychiatrist—definitely not a psychiatrist. He was stuck. He had to bear this terrible problem alone. He smiled a lot. He felt that there was nothing else that he could do. Showering frequently cleansed him on the outside but had no effect on the turmoil and pain on the inside.

Once inside the house, there followed the usual coming-home routine: the kiss on the cheek, the “how was your day”, even the faint hellos from the homework-occupied kids, and the usual comments on the wonderful aroma coming from dinner preparation in the kitchen. His only salvation was flight—to get to the shower as soon as possible, to be alone with his fear and close the door, claiming all the while how necessary it was to get rid of all that city dirt and grime before dinner.

As he trudged slowly up the stairs, he was aware that today was one of his worst days. All of the torments were working full force. He was overcome with misery. His legs felt as though they were weighted down with bricks. Forcing himself to keep his head erect, he made it very slowly to the floor above.

Dragging himself toward the shower, he was distracted by the beautiful picture outlined by the new window that they had installed just last year. It had the best view of the distant countryside from anywhere in the house. It had sliding glass doors and a small Juliet balcony.

He was overwhelmed emotionally as he gazed through the window. He walked over slowly to get a closer look. No French Impressionist could have improved this scene before him. At the same time he was suddenly aware that his legs felt so much lighter as he got closer. And the turmoil inside him began to melt away. The noises in his head were gone. For the first time in a long time there was a smile on his face—a genuine smile. These feelings had eluded him for such a long time.

He slid the glass door all the way and the warm, aromatic air drifted in slowly along with the hum of the distant traffic way off on the highway. So soothing. He was in heaven. This was the rare day in June that could inspire poetry. There was calm and tranquility and peace that he could almost inhale. He had found a new friend.

He pulled over a small chair to the railing for a better, more distant view. This friend must never leave him again.

He reached out to touch these precious gifts but they drifted farther away. He got up on the chair and tried again but everything moved back even more. He had reached the point of no return. He could not go back. He did not wish to go back. He could only go forward. Now he was even more determined than ever to make contact with his new friend: calm, peace and tranquility, contentment and stillness. And with a loud shriek of joy, he leapt out to make contact with the happiness that he felt must never leave him.

BLACK AND WHITE

Vivian Oliver

You left
and took the music with you.
It was time, I know, but
the parting hurt.
So proud and handsome
going down the steps,
receding beauty of yesterday.
I almost called you back.
But it was too late.
You're promised to another,
never again to feel my touch.

A QUIET MORNING

Donna M. Rubens

I had planned a simple at-home day which included, some “organizing”, a cursory clean-up and a walk, shopping cart leading the way, to the local supermarket. The day was chilly, but sunny, so I bundled up and started first to put out my recyclables. For this I do not need my hearing aids—I’m only going to the front and dumping bottles, cans and plastics into their designated container. But as soon as I finished this simple chore, a very old man, dressed in a shabby short coat, his head adorned with a choice baseball cap, his hands holding a cane, stopped and said something to me.

Pointing to my aging ears, I said, “I’m sorry—I can’t hear you. I left my hearing aids inside.”

This seemed to delight my new companion, who almost put a smile on his crinkling face. “You have my trouble,” he shouts. Agreeing with him, I grinned and started back up the stairs to my apartment.

But he barred my way, put his face up close and loudly asked, “How old are you?” An unusual question, man to woman, but at my time in life I gave myself an internal shrug and answered, “I’m 80. How old are you?”

He pulled himself up as far as he could manage and announced, “I’m 90—old age is Hell.” Satisfied, evidently, that this was enough socialization for the moment, he started back up the street, announcing, still in his big voice, “I’m going to my doctor.”

A few minutes later, having dressed my ears for the outside world, I did the two-and-a-half long blocks to the store, shopped and headed back home. At the first crossing another man was standing, peering hungrily down the street. He was hanging out by the corner bar, not yet open in mid-morning, and obviously had no intention of crossing. I was waiting for the red light to change, so we peered at each other. He was young-old, between 60 and 70, and as I neared his space, he turned away. I was not what he was looking for. The feeling was mutual—he must have been both hungry (for companionship) and thirsty. A past-his-prime wolf, in shorts, sweatshirt and sneakers on this winter day.

I started down the street, thinking of lonely old men, when I met yet another. A short, round kewpie doll of a fellow, leaning against a fence and dressed in a very old brown wool coat, a big scarf and a watch cap. “Have a nice day,” he whispered to me. His face was

sad and worn. It seemed he stood because he had not the strength to walk. My neighborhood is a quiet one—I might be the only one he would have a chance to speak to before chill sent him back inside. He got a smile as I wished him the same.

Was I finished with my neighborly interaction for the day? What an odd interaction it had been. As I unpacked and put away my purchases, I could not get the three men out of my own lonely mind. So, to give honor to them and to me in our diminished states of being, I wrote this story.

STREET WALKER

Donna M. Rubens

Nondescript old woman, scowl set on her face
sets out jaywalking on wide street,
as traffic comes, obeying the green.
No running for her—her walk is crooked.

She looks neither right nor left,
but keeps her slow pace all the way
to the other side. Self-assured New Yorker?
Or just that for her the future is past?

THE ORDINARY SPERM

Linda Rothstein

Some say life begins when egg meets sperm. I say that's unfair to the sperm. Doesn't a solitary sperm have a life too? Nonsense—if you've ever met a sperm you'd know a sperm's a person too. Just get to know one, the ordinary kind—not the highly mobile kind found in-vitro. I did. I searched for the forgotten sperm, the unwanted sperm, that sperm contraceptives are made for.

I found him at the racetrack. There he was at the lunch counter eating a hot dog. He was dressed in a Hawaiian shirt and plaid trousers. His outfit clashed and his tail was showing. He had an odor redolent of cigar smoke after sex on a littered beach. I introduced myself by name and asked if sperm have names as well. "We do," he said. "My name is Oh God—at least that's what dad cried out."

I asked Oh God if he was happy as a little gamete. "I'm still pretty small," he answered. "It used to bother me until I found out you can be microscopic and still have something to say. Not only that, we can say it in rhyme." I was happy to find a sperm with rhythm, but wondered how he could speak since they're known not to have vocal chords.

All of my dreams
Once came to naught
I couldn't be a CEO
Or an astronaut
In this new age of reason
A sperm is a person
We are more than we seem
When you have a wet dream

"That was just beautiful," I sighed. Then I asked Oh God if there was anything particularly stressful about life as a sperm. He mentioned the competition to get there first. "It's bad enough when you can't get out of the gate, but what about the times you get there and find a long line? What I don't understand is, if one is enough, why did dad have to send out the troops?"

I quizzed him about how sperm view the economy. He seemed embarrassed when I asked him about being too big to fail. On the subject of family planning, Oh God thought it was okay, but he

didn't ask and expected the egg not to tell. He didn't think much of condoms, unless it was raining. The pill was fine, but it was a little like having target practice without the target.

"I'll let you in on a secret if you don't tell," Oh God said. I wondered if he was about to say that he's lazy and only does the backstroke or maybe that he's afraid to put his head in the water. Turned out the thing he was ashamed of was that he didn't get much action.

Eggs with good chromosomes
Act so uppity—
They only go out once a month
And then they are bitchy
Here I am always ready
To play my role
But nobody wants you
When you look like a tadpole

At that the window opened and there was a mad dash to place bets. "I'm going to bet my wad," Oh God said. He swam away. I noticed he had a great breast stroke. In the distance I heard him sing:

Hurricanes, flood, oceans rising
We're focused on sex—not surprising
The recession has bottomed
Things can't get much worse
If you believe what I say
Here's a tip on a horse

I didn't want it to be one of those days when you can't remember the day before, so I wrote it all down, all except for Oh God's secret. Didn't want to betray his trust. Spermatozoa have feelings too.

PETE THE UNHAPPY UMBRELLA

Ruth Robbins

Pete the Unhappy Umbrella stood in his rack in the hall. He felt very sorry for himself. It was Monday morning and it was raining.

What a terrible life, he thought, to be an umbrella. Pete never saw the sunshine. The only time he left his rack was when it was raining. He could tell by the rattle of the breakfast dishes in the kitchen that it would not be long before he would be taken from his lonely but warm and dry spot. Pete hoped that Susie would take him to school. Pete liked to go to school because there, at least, he could talk to the other umbrellas in the cloak room.

He didn't like to go shopping with Mrs. Moore because she was always bumping into other people. They would get very angry and often push Pete and say mean things. This made Pete feel very bad because, of course, it wasn't his fault.

There was one thing that Pete was really afraid of. He was afraid of being forgotten. He had seen many forgotten umbrellas in movies, subways, schools and even in church. He wondered what happened to these forgotten umbrellas.

What was this? Mr. Moore was taking him out of the rack. Well, today would be different anyway.

When they got outside Pete hardly had a chance to stretch himself, let alone get wet. Mr. Moore hailed a taxi, and they were warm and dry inside the cab before Pete knew what had happened. Pete was very pleased with his luck. Besides, he had never been in a taxi before.

Finally the taxi stopped and Mr. Moore got out. Pete waited but nothing happened. The door closed and the taxi moved on again. Now Pete knew what had happened. He had been forgotten.

At the end of the day Mr. Carlos, the taxi driver, returned the cab to the garage. As he was locking the cab's doors, he saw Pete. Mr. Carlos had many customers that day. Who had forgotten his umbrella? It was a mystery to him. There was nothing for him to do but to pick up Pete and take him home.

When Mr. Carlos got home, everyone was glad to see him. His children ran up to him and gave him many hugs and kisses. His wife, Maria, told him she had a special meal ready because his brother Joe was coming for dinner. This made Mr. Carlos very happy because he loved his family and was especially pleased that

his brother was there for dinner.

After everyone had told about their day, Mr. Carlos brought out Pete. Everyone wanted Pete for their special umbrella. Then Mr. Carlos's brother Joe said, "I really could use that umbrella. Would you give him to me? On sunny days in the park when I am selling ice cream to the children it gets very warm. I would like a nice umbrella like that to put over my ice cream stand to keep the sun off my head."

Mr. Carlos said, "Sure." He handed Pete to Joe the ice cream man.

The next day Joe took Pete to the park. He proudly opened his beautiful big umbrella and put it over his ice cream stand. Pete was so happy he could hardly believe it.

The sun was shining. The children were laughing. Everyone was eating ice cream. Pete thought to himself, "This must be the best thing that ever happened to any umbrella in the whole world."

THE CUP

Helen Neilson

On the "R" Train going home,
I sat and watched a plastic cup
tossed away when useless.
It rolled from side to side
in a curved half circle
as the train raced from stop to stop.
It paused, round mouth open,
to stare or rest
when the train slowed down.
Then inspired, resumed the train's pace.

Sight limited, movement controlled,
without a thought or brain,
it marched to the tune of the train;
had more life empty than when filled
like youth chasing old age.

SWIMMING WITH THE SNAILS

Robert Reiss

A few years ago, my wife, Debra, was doing her usual relentless search for the ideal place to stay in our targeted vacation venue, Provence. Mining the internet, she came up with an old Provencal *Mas* situated in the tranquil countryside near L'Isle sur la Sorgue.

According to its website, the inn, *Les Carmes*, had once been the home of an order of Carmelite monks but had been totally renovated into a luxurious *chambre d'hôte* by Brits, Ann and Mike Parkes. It sits on four acres of landscaped gardens, has seven suites, an inner courtyard for *al fresco* dining and a swimming pool.



Arriving at Les Carmes, we were not disappointed. Ann had reserved for us their most recently renovated room, a huge space with restored wood beams, all-new bath and a commanding view of the countryside. (Ours was the only room on the top floor). Settling in, we rested until dinner, a wonderful *repas* prepared by the Parkes' son James, 29, who ran the kitchen.

The following day included a stop at one of the famous market days in Provence and some sightseeing in nearby Avignon. That afternoon we relaxed poolside on what was a glorious June day. Feeling warm from the strong sun of southern France, I plunged into the pool and swam towards the other end. There I grabbed onto the rim to regain my strength for the swim back (about 10 yards). While hanging on the rim, I noticed some black spots on the side of the pool just above the water line. Not wearing my glasses, I couldn't quite make them out, but I did notice that these spots were moving. Squinting and peering, I most definitely identified that

these were not spots, they were snails! Oops! My swim came to an abrupt conclusion as I hoisted myself out of the pool as fast as I could. I debated as to whether and how I should break this news to our charming hostess, Ann Parkes. I decided to tell her about it during the aperitif hour before dinner.

Before I summoned up enough nerve to tell her that she had visitors in her pool, Ann proudly announced to her guests that tonight James would be serving his signature dish, *snail ravioli*. A poker face is not one of my strong points. The muffled gasp and look of horror must have been apparent to Ann. She laughed and said “Oh, you must have seen them by the pool.” Not missing a beat, she continued, “Didn’t I tell you about the snail farm?”

Ann then recounted the story of how she became the only English *heliculturist* in France. Since the Carmelite monks had once farmed Les Carmes, a French law to protect farmland mandates that the property continue to be farmed. Ann and Mike were informed of this provision when they applied for a permit to run the inn. Ann researched their options and eventually decided on snail farming partly because it took up relatively little land. She had to spend three months studying snails’ reproductive cycles, the grains on which to feed them, and how to set up an electrically-fenced enclosure. (The latter apparently didn’t work so well.) In true French bureaucratic fashion, she was obliged to take a test to validate her intimate knowledge of a snail’s anatomy and thus be issued a permit to operate a working snail farm.

The Parkes raise *Gros Gris* snails—the same species as garden snails, but slightly larger. After being harvested the snails are taken to a nearby state-licensed laboratory to be kept for a few days without food, to cleanse them internally, and dried out before being killed and frozen for use in the kitchen. They sell their surplus snails in the markets of nearby towns such as L’Isle sur la Sorgue, where trestle tables laden with olives, brightly colored vegetables and local cheeses display the finest in Provencal produce. Twelve of the Parkes’ finest snails will retail to French gastronomes and adventurous tourists for around €5 and make a popular starter served in garlicky butter with crusty bread.

After hearing all this over more than a few aperitifs, we found the wherewithal to proceed *à table* and partake of James’ signature snail ravioli. It was delicious. You could hardly taste the chlorine.

THE SUSHI PLACE

Linda Rothstein

An outdoor table
At the sushi place
People swoosh by
On their way home from work
For us those days are over

My eyes tear
Too much wasabi
I cry for the yellowtail on rice before me
Once he or she swam the ocean blue
Now he's navigating the pink of my gullet

I cry for the days
When I could pour hot Saki
Down my hatch and
Not trip over the curb

Now I rock slowly
Opposite you on our little skiff
Our eyes still dreamy
Now full of the past
Not the future
Two little boats
Cast adrift
In the tides of time

TIMING IS EVERYTHING

Rita Post

My husband and I needed a vacation and for reasons no longer remembered, we planned a ten-day vacation for Christmas, 1958. We had three children, ages six months to five and a half and we would be away for Christmas Day and the coming of Santa Claus. Since we are Jewish, we had no religious obligations but Santa was fun.

We hired a baby sitter in her 20s whom we had used previously, gave her instructions that the children were not to go into the basement before Christmas Day and flew off to the Caribbean. Three countries were on the itinerary: Jamaica, Haiti and Cuba.

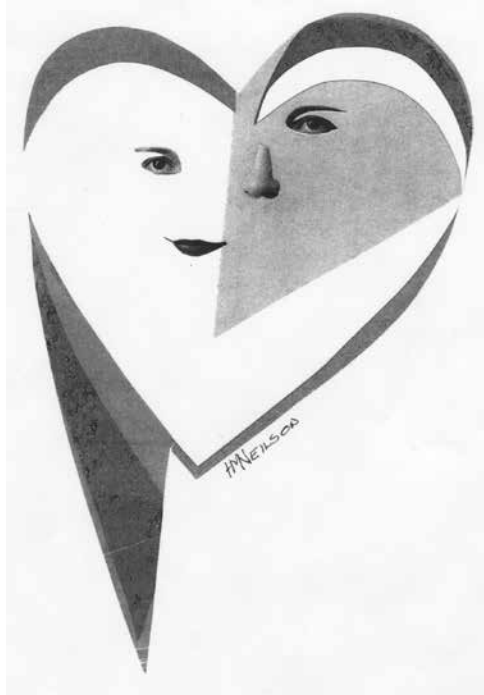
First to a resort in Jamaica which was warm and relaxing for three days, then to Haiti for another three. Haiti was shocking: so poor—trip from airport lined with makeshift shacks, no telephone service in the main city, Port-Au-Prince, very few people employed, but fascinating art work. We went to a voodoo celebration with a local taxi driver in the middle of the night in evening dressup. It sounds pretty ridiculous but we did it. Meanwhile, we read in the newspapers that there was fighting in Cuba led by Fidel Castro and we tried to change our itinerary, but there was an Eastern Airlines strike and every plane was booked.

So we boarded the American Airlines flight to Cuba. As we circled Havana, the pilot got on the intercom as though we were in a movie, and told us that the airport had just been closed and we were re-routed to Miami.

This was New Year's Day, 1959, the day of the triumph of the Cuban Revolution. We flew to Miami—deplaned at a special part of the airport where another plane had just landed with refugees.

We called home to reassure them that we were not caught up in the revolution, but we still had three days of vacation to go. The only flight available, however, was that same day several hours later. Not enough time to see the Cotton Bowl Parade or to tour Miami Beach.

We flew home and I called my house and my father answered the phone. I thought I had called the wrong number by mistake—but no. It was my father and my mother who were baby-sitting. That afternoon the baby sitter had had a miscarriage! You can imagine how happy my parents were that we had come home to their rescue, and most fortunately were not caught on the ground in the Cuban Revolution.



LOVERS OF PARIS

Betty Farber

On the thirty-seven bridges crossing the Seine
Parisian men and women have pledged their love:

They attach a padlock to the side of the bridge,
Lock it and toss the key into the dark water.

Will he be faithful because the key
Is sleeping at the bottom of the Seine?
Will she turn from temptation because her promise
Is locked on a bridge near the indifferent waters?

Lovers of Paris—stay true to each other,
Though life flows by like currents in the river.
May joy outlast the strongest metal clasp,
And love be locked in your hearts forever.

REMEMBERING ANNE DREW 1941-2012

Myra Nissen

I met Anne when she applied for a job as a secretary at EFL, a small foundation funded by the Ford Foundation. I believe it was her first job out of college. It was 1961 or '62. I was the office manager and in charge of hiring the support staff. I hired Anne and we became best friends while she was there. Anne didn't stay long. She left to go to NYU Film School. She told me when she left EFL that when I hired her she really couldn't type very well. Since I couldn't type very well myself, I never bothered giving Anne a typing test. Later she told me that every night before she went home, she emptied the contents of her waste basket into her handbag because it contained all the papers she had ruined trying to type. We were all very lucky that she failed as a secretary because she became a talented film maker.

Anne was the only attendant at my very small wedding which took place in the apartment of friends of my parents. A week before the wedding, Anne showed me the dress she had bought to wear as my maid of honor. It was a light, blue wool A-line mini dress (the year was 1967) with crocheted sleeves and neckline. It was the very dress I had bought to wear as my wedding dress. She returned hers, of course. Anne and I were always in sync.

Anne and I celebrated our mutual December birthdays together for many years. We usually had lunch and then went to the movies. Last year, Anne said that because the weather is always so bad in December on our birthday, next year we should celebrate on our half-birthday. I agreed. Maybe she knew she wouldn't make it to December 4, 2012. She didn't even make it to June 4. When I told my daughter Thisbe that I would never be able to celebrate my birthday again because it would be too sad without Anne, she said, "No, Mom, you will have a celebratory luncheon in memory of Anne and invite your friends who knew her and Anne's close friends."

I said I thought that was a good idea. But I didn't mean it. I can see my friends any time. But Anne? As a documentary film maker, she lives on in the films she made on Indira Gandhi and Edward Villella among others. And she lives on in my heart. I don't need the lunches.

AUGUST MEMORY

Barbara P Gordon

a skin of water
covers the lake
tight as glass

the mirrored sun
bright yellow
glares

skittering creatures
at the edge leave
vanishing ripples

a sudden breeze
shatters the glass
revealing pebbles below

this my invitation—
I wade in teeter
on uneven stones

currents feel
warm cool cold
warm again

my pale feet shimmer
slithery fish
tickle my toes

I am ten years old

AT THE CHELSEA

Stan Raffes

3 A.M., a surreal scene:

I sleepwalk the wrought iron balconies and
high, shadowy hotel corridors, past and future
with peeling paint, period mauve rugs saturated
with 125 years of literary genius, mayhem and madness.

Radiators hiss steam. Certainly this winter night
is full of ghosts. An ice storm rages outside.
My mind, the imaginary bellhop.

Dylan Thomas staggers out of Room 205 with ravaged eyes,
intoning his poems, in his resonant, metronome voice.
His breath smells of the salty coast of Wales
mixed with cheap gin poured into chipped shot glasses.

Thomas Wolfe, bearded, six-foot-eight giant,
tortured somnambulist, NYU teacher
in a frayed Abraham Lincoln trench coat,
is stooped over his gray Olivetti
typing future chapters from his voluminous unedited
“Look Homeward Angel” on the neon-lit balcony,
dreaming of his father carving tombstones
in Asheville, North Carolina, sipping bourbon from a Dixie cup.

Room 100, its porcelain tub forever tinged in crimson,
where one mad night, Rocker Sid Vicious became
Dickens’s Bill Sykes stabbing Nancy, his groupie bride,
like a demon butcher.

Room 508, lounging in silk Saks pajamas,
smoking French cigarettes,
Leonard Cohen watches pink dawn rise over West 23rd Street.
He completes the final verses of “Suzanne”:
“You know she’s half crazy—
That’s why you would want to be there—
She touched your perfect body
with her mind.”

WHERE DO THEY GO?

Mary Ann Donnelly

I watched my father die
in a shrouded cubicle
at the Methodist Hospital.
Eyes shut no sound
but the beep, beep, beep
of the blue dot that measured his fading breath.
He hears you they said so I spoke,
telling him I loved him
telling him I know he loved me too.
Asking him not to leave me
but he did.

Where did he go?
Not his stroke-felled body
(now ashes—in a box)
but the man with the two-dimpled smile
and the side-to-side walk
you recognized a block away,
who understood and always forgave.
No one else like him.

Where do they all go?
No one else like them
with their smiles and quirks.
You expect them to give you a sign and you wait.
But they know the secret and will not share.

MONA LISA SPEAKS

Trudy Owett

Here I sit, in my private room
at the Louvre, in Paris.
Scrutinized daily by multitudes
who search for the personal life
they think they see
in my self-conscious smile.

Simple and unadorned, I am centered
in front of an arid landscape.
This small painting is believed by many
to be the world's most famous,
and daVinci's best.

I suppose that's an honor,
an honor I do not want. That is why
I guard my privacy ferociously
and manage a vague, indefinite smile
that doesn't reveal a thing.

Can you believe that daVinci labored
for seven, yes, seven years
before leaving my portrait. Unfinished.
With no eyebrows.

I'm angry, and deep down, a rebel.
I'm tired of putting up a pleasant facade
when I'm so unbelievably bored that
I think I'm going out of my mind.

And yes, I have a secret.
One that you might not comprehend.
I dream that this brave new world will make
my deepest fantasy come true. Which is
to model on Versace's runway.

TRAVELER

Barbara Spector Karr

I visit my husband Emanuel Karr in the hospital
after his fall down half a flight of marble steps
in our 1890 former tenement building

several doctors give him various pain killers
on his chart I see a diagnosis of Senile Dementia
Manny is a week away from his 97th birthday
he moves his hands in a ritual gesture
what are you doing, darling

I'm putting people who died in WWI into body bags
we have to take care of those who suffer
the Hospice movement calls this behavior a state of traveling
between the past present and future

it is 1946 WWII is over Manny's first wife Fagie is
serving at the first Nuremberg Trial as a court-stenotypist
Manny is still in the Army on his way to the American Embassy
in Moscow for a tour of duty in the Military Attaché's office
he stays in Nuremberg one month sits in court each day

the defendants sit in a well-guarded area he watches Fagie
wearing earphones listening to the translations of the testimony
as she writes it down with her machine

the US Army had made films of the liberation of the camps
by order of the Supreme Commander of the Allied Forces
these films are shown in court as evidence of the Nazi genocide

it is now 2011 in the nursing home Manny asks my son Matthew
to have the names on the walls of his room painted over
what are the names

Bergen-Belsen Theresienstadt Dachau Auschwitz

THE WONDER AND MYSTERY OF GENIUS

Donna M. Rubens

Mesmerized, I sit on the bench at the Frick Museum, wonder struck by Rembrandt's self-portrait—one I had previously never seen, or perhaps passed by.

Now, newly restored, centered in a gallery as its main attraction, it glows, grabbing me so that I felt I could not move away from the glory of its remarkable sheen.

The artist himself, decked out in costume—a pleated golden jerkin, in the style of the 16th century north country peasant—
But no peasant could ever own a garment such
as that, so rich, luminous, like a halo over the heart.

One hand holds a stick, silver tipped, his hat and cloak
are rough, dark and plain. He stares out to catch his viewer
as if to say, "Look here. I grab the glory of beauty:
it is mine to offer, yours to ponder.

My gift—what could be better?"

Rembrandt at 52, bankrupt, so the plaque says, unbowed
by life's trials, his own model, so carefully dressed.
The strength of his genius as great as ever, no matter
the battles with burghers—true passions, untouched by stress.

The wonder and mystery of genius—
petty details of mundane life neither touch nor deter greatness.
Each stroke of his brush says "master."

Glued to my seat I cannot leave—entrapped I stare and stare.

CHARM

Helen Neilson

How do you spell
the spirit of a cat—
eyes of true gray,
a temper of hisses
a bite or two?

How do you measure
an IQ of answer meows,
the snap of a long, shaggy tail
or a yowl of protest?

How do you paint
the beauty of a soul
loyal and loving,
giving without return?

How do you count
pure purrs of a happy cat,
the songs she sang to me,
or the depth of loss without them?
Now, that Charm is gone.

ENVELOPED

Roy Clary

Night enveloped Day
Like a honeymooning bride
 With shy smiles,
 Sweet scents,
 Soft sounds
And secret shadows.

IN DREAMS

Roy Clary

In the magical ecstasy of dreams
 I swim in lazy, languorous seas,
Wander in wanton, wondrous hillsides,
 Delight in heated, honeyed valleys,
 Ride on radiant rays of sunbeams,
And steal kisses from moon-crowned brides.

PANIC

Mary Ann Donnelly

The dread returns each September
With its crayon blue skies
Taunting my memory of a refugee's flight
Over the Brooklyn Bridge
Eyes straight ahead no dialogue
Stopping only to behold the North Tower crumble
Before resuming the voiceless trek home—
The word taking on new meaning
Knowing now
It can happen here.

I had heard the South Tower fall
Mistaking it for explosions from an invading force
Panicking as a grey cloud
Marched down William Street
Pursuing office workers
Escaping like extras
In a Japanese horror film.

Life resumed after a week on my couch
Resisting the return to normalcy
Relentlessly surfing the news
For the endless loop of disaster
Rewinding—fast forwarding
Over and over so I would never forget.

Back to the scene to a silent city
Patrolled by camouflaged
Men with guns
The faint sweet smell of death hovering over
Like Berlin after the War
In the movies I watched with my father
Knowing now
It can happen here.

THE GRADE

Linda Rothstein

His apartment was wretched,
Reeking of smoke.
Dirty dishes showed splotches
Of last night's tomatoes,
This morning's egg yolks.

The sheets gray with age,
Semen-stained bedspread,
The place where she'd come
Because she was failing.

Her teacher, the arbiter
Of academic success,
Stood by his unmade bed.
Without as much grace
As to offer her water,
He pressed his body upon her.

Thoughts in her head—
Conjugation, declension.
Was coercion a noun?
The same as revulsion?
Crawling a modifier?
As in the sensation of lice
Right where he touched her?

His vermiform thing was so tiny
It tickled inside her,
So funny she was smiling,
Getting lost in her thoughts:

I may have been partying
While I should have been studying
Now I must pay the devil his due
I'll do what I have to all through my life

So on went the panties.
Though she left feeling dirty
Our little girl Hester got her bartered-for "A".

SHIPWRECKED IN RED HOOK

Stan Raffes

Me, a snowball in hell, dedicated Jewish social worker,
meandering through the notorious Red Hook Projects.
There, even the police go in pairs with a snarling attack dog.
Already up and down 12 flights of stairs,
nudging past the drug dealers with dark glasses,
gang members in red bandannas.
Elevators broken, stairs lit by 15 watt bulbs,
eyes peering out at me.

My client, Karen, scrawled a note—"delayed, wait for me at 3 PM."
Her sixteen-year-old son had tried to jump off a school roof.
Now had to kill three hours in the local La Paloma bar,
where two of the men pulled up their denim shirts
to show me pale scars from old knife fights like war medals.
They bought me stale beers in appreciation.

Back past shadowy figures, up those same stairs.
The interview dragged on.
Talking about medications, poverty, depression.
It was 6 PM in dreary January—
an eerie darkness everywhere.
Preoccupied, I walked out the wrong way
in the maze of buildings.
Four young gang members in full colors
formed a semicircle around me.
Wordless, no visible emotion, just making gang signs,
reaching menacingly under their Army field jackets.

My unlikely guardian angel came
in the guise of a gypsy cab driver.
His loud, shrill horn broke the silence.
The teenagers dispersed like dark clouds.
Amos became my unlikely savior in his white Ford Galaxy taxi.
Drove me to the Starbucks on Montague Street.
Hyperventilating by then, my hands too shaky to hold
the coffee mug. I celebrated my unlikely angel,
and just being alive.

2070

Barbara P Gordon

we will sit in the garden
as long as we can
while the dew still clings
to the yellowed grass

bright water shimmers on the horizon
its silvery tentacles
reaching toward us
closer each day

we speak of the neighbors remaining
the last dog in the village howls
hungry
exploring vacant houses

a few hearty seeds sprout
back of the wall
two hens and a rooster still alive
and there's seaweed maybe a fish

so crowded inland—
hard to remain
hard to leave
fifty-five years in this place

AT THE SOUP KITCHEN

Stella Gold

People with no money
Wait on line in the street
In burning heat
And icy rain.

At five in the evening
The door opens
Eighty people enter
And sit around tables
Set for a meal.

They are a mixed crowd
Of mostly jobless men.
The homeless wear
More shabby clothes
And push carts filled
With all their belongings.

Many women
Familiar with the place
Sit together with confidence.
They care about their appearance
And request attention.

At five-thirty another group
Stands at the door
Most of them somber men
Eager to leave quickly.
With a greeting
I hand to each
A bag of food.

An old woman with clear blue eyes
In a pale-wrinkled face
Always offers a smile
Before pulling
From her pocket
A hard candy
She saved for me.



ESSEX STREET MARKET, LOWER EAST SIDE
photograph
Lila Heilbrunn



CELTIC PIN-PENDANT
sterling silver, semi-precious stones
Diane Figueroa



PUT ME DOWN!
photograph
Janise Bogard



HYDRANGEA WITH CHINESE WRAPPING PAPER
oil on board
Sondra Lipton-Sahlman



ENCHANTMENT
watercolor
Harriet Finkelstein



PALLADIO LANTERN
photograph
Charles Sinclair



ZINNER

FLOWER SEEDS
watercolor
Pearl Zinner



BLUE TIDE
mixed media
Yona Rogosin



LIFE DRAWING
charcoal and crayon
Carole Cronig Abrahams



NECKLACE
fossilized coral with beaded beads
Roslyn Schachter



POD
collage
Helen Neilson



SELF PORTRAIT oil on canvas **Roy Clary**



GONE watercolor *Isidore Schwartzman*



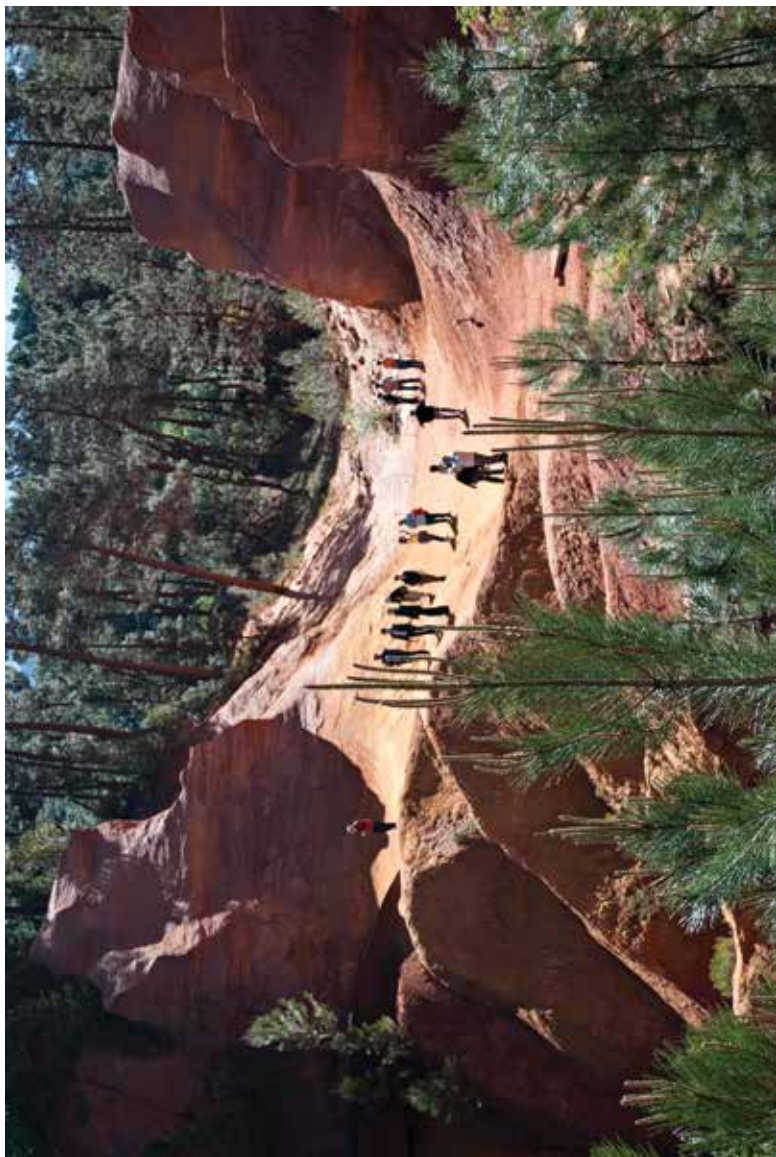
CORPORATE CRIME collage: paper *Mary Peltz Buchwald*



HALLOWEEN photograph ***Stan Raffes***



LIGHTHOUSE watercolor ***Vivian Oliver***



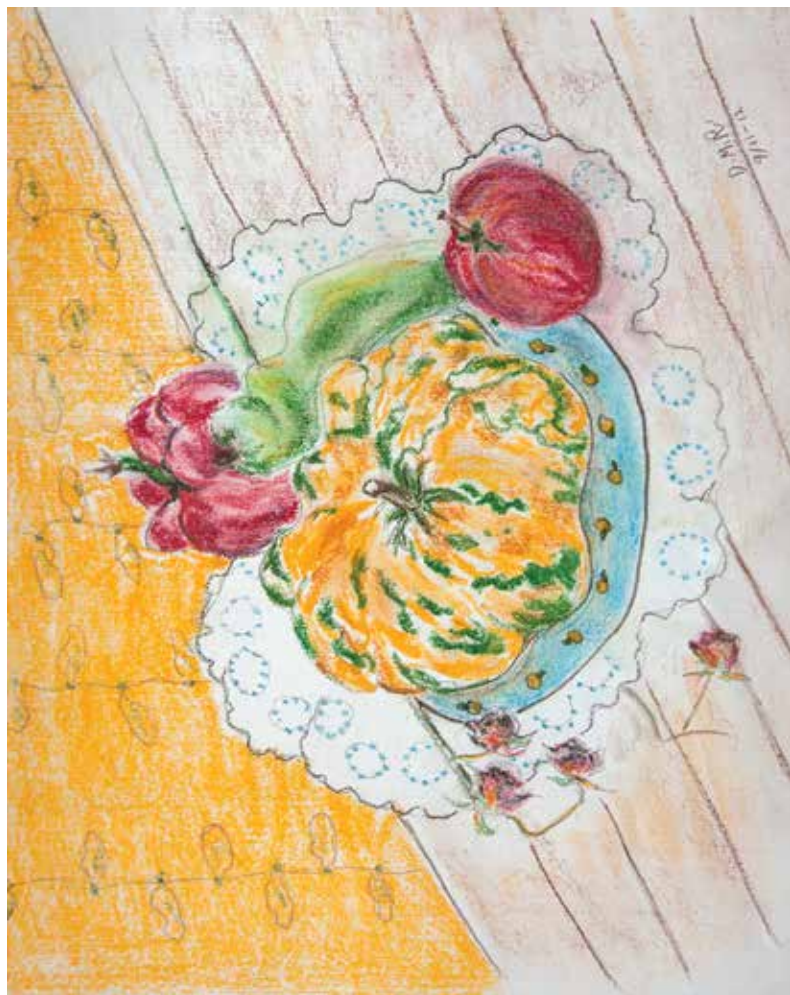
PROVENCE, FRANCE photograph ***Beverly Francus***



ON WATCH IN THE SEA OF CORTEZ photograph *Marc Deitch*



DOCENT'S HANDS photograph *Ruth Kovner*



NOW MAY I COOK MY SQUASH? pastel & colored pencil **Donna M. Rubens**

TO NANCY, WHO IS MISSING

Trudy Owett

When you walked in the door you were
slightly rumpled, and your lipstick was askew.
We hugged and we kissed and we found
a table, and ordered red wine as we usually do.

You asked me to help you to solve this puzzle,
this mystery that you are forced to endure.
Who is this man who says he's your husband,
who won't let you out and won't let you do
whatever it is that you want to do.

I try to explain and assure you gently
how lucky you are to have this man.
You're married, he loves you, believe him
and trust him. But I see on your face
that you don't think it's true.

It's been said that we are what we remember,
and Nancy, who are you, and who will you be
the next time that we are together...maybe
next month or perhaps next year.

Digging into your purse you can't find your wallet.
It's gone...you say...along with your keys.
But somehow you hand me a few crumpled
dollars. We pay the check and then I see that
he's waiting for you, right there on the sidewalk.
I hold you and hug you...then you walk away.

WORKING AGAIN

Robert Reiss

Delta calls 4:45 am
My 8 am flight is now 9 am
Hmmm. Isn't that like waking me up
To tell me I can sleep later

OK I'm up, I'll go to the airport anyway
And relax with my New York Times
The cab driver charges me two tolls
Then adds on a 20% tip
Too tired to argue

I'm a little rusty on security
Left my cell phone in my pocket
Get called out for the dreaded pat down
Oh and my bag doesn't make it either
My shaving cream container is too big
Good-bye shaving cream

There I am in my socks
Trying to recover my belt, jacket, shoes
Computer, computer case, cell phone
Takes me a while to become whole again

It's a Delta commuter flight
Run by Aero Mexico
No comments please
Departure now 9:30 am
Don't think I'm gonna make my 10 am meeting in Reston

Mechanics waiting for a part
Something wrong with the loudspeaker system
Now the flight is 10 am
I carry on my bag to save time at the other end
They take my bag — too big for commuter plane racks
Gate check

I text my Reston contact
ETA — noon (only 2 hours late)
Arrive at Dulles 11:30 am
Wait for my bag on the tarmac in the rain
Taxi driver won't take credit card

Now I know why I retired.

BREAKING RECORDS

Steven Koenig

As the hammer struck the pale blue trees on the Freedom label, I shrieked inside as Randy Weston's *Berkshire Blue* became timber, chips flying throughout the room, black bark in my hair. Workmen wearing goggles, glasses and hard hats, one had a hack saw, shaving the lips of the vinyl. *Perez Prado's Mambo*, his bigote split as if chapped and cracked in winter weather.

John Cage said if you only listened to recordings, you haven't heard music. He posited a group called Capitalists Inc. (it was not a good time for Communists), membership attained by destroying 200 records.

So we attacked the stacks with hammers and blows. Some leather-gloved, some bare-handed. Cassette tape streamers swiftly snapped from capstans festooned the room. LPs, 45s, and 12-inchers mostly in jackets, flexidiscs and cassettes, and the odd 8-track. Handfuls passed down the aisles of the Gallery as more and more onlookers became Capitalists. Cracks, crackles and smashes made their own music.

I giggled watching a dark-haired guy flop a copy of *Muswell Hillbillies* over his head like a sun hat in frustration, RCA's flexi-groove disc refusing to crack, so he slammed it on a table, the center hole landing on the edge, six sharp hammer cracks finally ruptured the disc in a crack radiating out from the center. I gulped at the devastation brought to rare dance remixes even though I was guaranteed they were already scratched beyond play.

Feelings of terror, sadness, liberation swirl within me at 33 1/3, 45 and 78 revolutions per minute. Joys of the forbidden, terror of the destruction. I feel my own collection turning to shards and dust. Laughing and crying and brushing black dust from my Marc Bolan curls.

Pushing the brooms for clean up knowing I'd be back next week to buy at least a dozen discs.

QUEST

Joe Nathan

In the beginning
it was beguiling
inspiring
these old people
showing up
no matter the weather
with their canes and hearing aids and indigestion.
wanting to learn
willing to teach.

And now?
So suddenly.
Young likeable people
quick-walking the hall
participating
governing
looking at us old guys
with that quizzical look.

THE CLOTHESLINE

Helen Neilson

It hung atop apartments
draped mostly in black
except for one red garment
longer than the rest.

The five pieces frolicked
and pranced in the wind.
They may have danced.
They did twist and turn.

The clothesline thought,
if there was such a thing,
“What folly! And it’s such a strain
on me, holding their hands
to keep them from flying!”

SUN JOY

Hilda Feinstein

I love watching
the sun rise,
especially
on early winter
mornings —
before the world awakens

a fiery red glow
hugs the horizon,
inching upward
into the distant
pre dawn darkness —
a golden, molten orb
emerges —
unhurriedly
deliberately
splendidly

a harbinger —
transforming
opaque black night
into transparent day —
upward
westward —
higher
higher
higher
into the a.m. sky

obscured momentarily
behind
a solid recalcitrant mass,
detracting
from a view
that offers exquisite pleasure —
only the tease
of a flaming halo
projects outward

then—

boldly
insistently

entering my room —

glorious
vibrant
shining
rays

how did they ever
find my window?

yellow wonder
dispersing
in all directions

brilliant
brightness
blinding
powerful
steady

long, bold strides of balm
soothe and caress
soft porous waiting skin
warm
my welcoming face
molding hope
melting doubts
mooring confidence

fancifully
tickling my eyelids
heart and soul
ringle
and single
and jingle
with joy

VALUE

Isidore Schwartzman

What are you looking at?
This painting
Why?
Someone paid 70 mill for it
So
I'm wondering why
It must be worth it
You think so
Sure. It's abstract
Do you like it?
I admire it
But do you like it?
I'm impressed by the 70 mill
But do you like it?
Well — sure
How come?
Well — Look at that color
OK. What else?
It has power
What else?
It has value
How?
Someone paid 70 mill for it
You said that before
Is it ART?
Sure
Does it have beauty?
Well —
Does it have emotion?
Well —
Does it have soul?
Is it a work of ART?
OK wise guy
You tell me. What is ART?
I'm not sure I can define it
But I know it when I see it

DARK DAY IN '77

Vivian Oliver

A neighbor lowers his eyes as he runs past
with an unopened Sylvania box.
A night of fiery frenzy
gives way to manic accession
of possessions.

Window gates obstruct my way,
spread wide across the walk.
Glass crunches beneath as
mobs move from Panasonic
to Puma to Pop Tarts.

Latecomers search vainly
for something, anything
seen as a prize worth the effort.
The dejected empty-handed
toss trash into gaping storefronts.

I witness the mentality of madness,
unable to process what I see.
Demented mothers release tiny hands
to search beneath debris.
For 25 hours, insanity reigns.

MISSED ELECTION

Carole Cronig Abrahams

Mother and father
Immigrant parents
Proud in the voting booth
Said, "Vote"

I do vote
Except for the time
I bore a babe (a future President?)
On election morning
Without an absentee ballot

MONEY DIDN'T MATTER

Betty Farber

You never showed distress,
when I purchased a new dress
or coat or hat.
Money didn't matter.
You never asked what I paid.
I would parade
in front of you in my new clothes
and you would never impose
your opinions on my taste
or suggest I bought in haste.
I loved that about you
although I admit it's also true
that when we shopped
for you, I never stopped
you from buying suits
at Brooks Brothers. You were absolutely
great at choosing ties
that went well with your blue eyes.
People may think it odd
because money was not our god.
Buying things was pleasurable we found,
but it was love that made the world go round.

RAIN ALONG MAIN STREET

Carole Cronig Abrahams

When heavy rains gushed downhill, tumbling noisily,
a little wooden bridge was put across a street

swirling torrent
leaves bubbled around,
misty, moisty, dripping air
moldy smell
as drops came down
and water splashed up

We were saved by that little bridge across a street

FLU

Carole Cronig Abrahams

Go with it.
Support protesting bones
where aches hit.

Haze through
Zen flu.

A POLITE PROTEST BY A NEW YORKER

Betty Farber

(TRAVEL+LEISURE Poll: New York Voted Rudest City in the U.S.A.)

When you think of rudeness, don't think of us —
I am given a seat on the subway or bus.
Riding calmly through traffic, I'm satisfied
When folks thank the driver for their ride.

In the subway, a MetroCard machine
Made me feel grim and a little green,
But I had to buy one for a guest.
A young man saw my urgent request.
As a New York City Samaritan
He showed me the steps so that now *I can*.

On a bus, met a friend and with a smile,
I was talking to her across the aisle.
A passenger stood to change seats with me
So my friend and I could talk easily.

Home from a show, Playbill on my knee
Fellow riders will ask, "What did you see?"
"Oh, yes, I saw that performance too.
What would you give it in your review?"

On a bus, the man in the driver's seat,
Told me where I could find a particular street.
He joked, like a caring chaperone,
"Be sure to call me when you get home!"

It's not a secret! You can shout it.
Rudest City? Fuhgeddaboutit!

SKIPPING BACKWARDS

Eileen D. Kelly

No not serious said he
A little pain the cold air
Here I'll blow
In your mouth said she
On their way to a Broadway show
A freezing cold night in January
She put her mouth on his
Blew warm air in
And hoped the pain
In his chest would stop
Blowing and laughing
Face to face skipping backwards
What a sight they were!
It worked
She wasn't there when
A really bad pain
Took him.

I'VE LEARNED ABOUT AGING ALL MY LIFE

Barbara Spector Karr

as a teen-ager I recited William Blake to myself at night
to keep my mind from racing Blake taught me that
hypocrisy was really the way the close-minded adults
of the world operated

my parents' friends had both retired Sara to cook
all the recipes she had accumulated during her working years
her husband Johnny to travel the world to see its wonders
suddenly Sara became blind their plans were changed
they spent their time visiting those they loved

since 9/11 more people offer seats to the elderly on bus or
subway
more strangers are amenable to hold conversations
with their seat mates more feelings of community

I've learned from my colleagues at the lifelong-learning program
I have attended for many years how grit and determination
can keep one going even when pain and unexpected problems
of aging arise just laugh about the weird situations
you encounter in your daily life *what else can you do*

A PRIVATE CELEBRATION

Barbara Spector Karr

ten years ago I carefully read the dates for family members
that my mother had entered into my grandmother's prayer book
the one she had so proudly carried
down the aisle at her wedding

on September 17, 1903 among my great-grandmother's
descendants no woman had ever lived to reach the age of 79
in my 78th year that thought was racing around in my brain

I was pleased to achieve the age of 79 and even
the age of 80 and in 2012 I intend to reach the age of 81
pushing the boundaries a little further

SURVIVOR

Barbara P Gordon

all winter she lay
pale against the coral sheets
taking no color from their tint

as the wind sighed
tentacles from a naked branch
scratched her window

below the family whispered
nursing homes and wills
and the cost of funerals

but all the while
silent signals from a
now-awakened gene

summoned aid
hormones coursed
enzymes cut and mended

the longer stronger rays
of spring
furred the caressing branch

glowed waxy cheeks to life
nature's alarm clock
summoning her from bed

TWILIGHT ZONE

Mary Ann Donnelly

Each day the face in my mirror
morphs into my mother's.
Not her young face from the 1940s
"movie star" photo with her auburn hair,
Greta Garbo eyebrows and red lipstick.
Not even her 60-year-old face smiling in Amsterdam
reflecting her satisfaction with life so far
and enthusiasm for what was yet to come.
But her 89-year-old face with the pursed lips
and turned down corners of the mouth
advertising her unhappiness.

Even her memories threaten to supplant my own.
The more she forgets the more I remember
her version of life:
the "gospel according to Margaret".
She has told her stories over and over
and always the same words
and always in the same order
and always with same vocal inflections
as if she were reading a script.

As her body turns to bone
mine takes on flesh.
As she fades
my resentment grows.
No longer an inspiration
but a warning.

GARAGE SALE IN THE HAMPTONS

Stan Raffes

Garage door of the white colonial
thrown wide open.
Inside, moody shadows fall,
cardboard boxes of old toys,
Raggedy Ann dolls with smiling faces.
Rusty bicycles, unused electric coffeemakers.
Blenders still in their original unopened boxes.

In the master bedroom,
piles of Laura Ashley comforters,
Egyptian cotton sheets.
An oversized gold-framed oil painting
of gondolas gliding across Venetian canals.

A middle-aged woman in black enters,
solemnly unfurling
an ornate 1940s hand-sewn wedding dress
worthy of the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Whispered negotiations:
“It was mother’s,
European embroidered silk satin.
I have to charge you \$150 —
the fabric alone
is worth that much.”

She finally settles for \$100.
Then the Vivien Leigh wedding dress,
meticulously wrapped in its original ornate box,
is heading East spread out across
the back seat of a blue Toyota
in a gentle rain.

KEEPING IN TOUCH

Stella Gold

I received an e-mail
from Joseph, my grandson.
It was the first one from him
and filled my heart with joy.
Joseph lives in Tokyo
and is now nine years old.
“I was doodling,” he wrote,
“and came up with a ship
which has forty windows.
Its American flag
is blowing in the wind.
I do hope you like it.”
Of course I do, Joseph,
as well as your ending.
“K.I.T.” you write. “Keep in touch.”
Such fun to learn from you
A new language.

DUCHESS

Frieda Lipp

She was a mutt. We got her so long ago I had forgotten where she came from — black and white, chunky, medium size, short-shiny-nappy-haired, maybe part spaniel (I remember she had spaniel-type droopy ears), maybe some poodle. I can't remember her tail although I know she wagged it a lot whatever it was.

She came to mind last semester when we read a beautiful short story in our Human/Animal Connection class — “In The Fall” by Canadian writer Alistair MacLeod. It was about a hardscrabble family that lived in the Canadian boonies. The parents have to sell their beloved horse, now too old and enfeebled to earn its keep. When the horse is finally loaded on to the truck taking him away, the youngest boy, heartbroken, reacts violently by killing chickens his mother has been raising to sell for much-needed money.

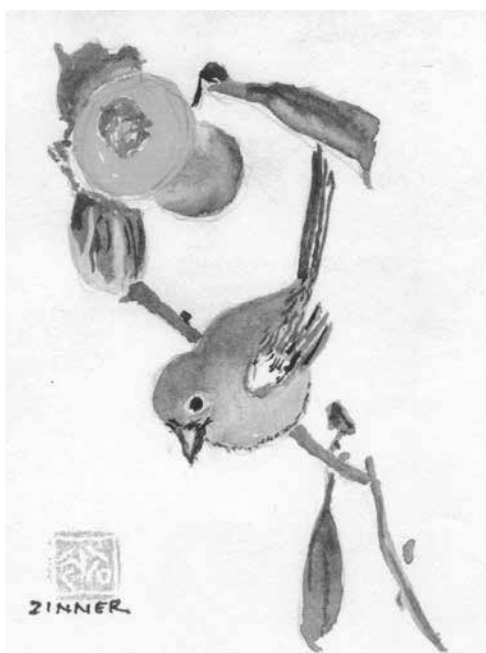
The deal for my brother and me was we could have a dog only if it didn't cost money to keep. We were pretty new to farming and money was scarce. The way I remember it, I was the chief caretaker. I loved that dog, played with her all the time, 'kitselled' her and fed her which was no small task. Several times a week after school, I'd settle in the barn surrounded by the wild cats that hung out on our farm and Duchess. I would pluck, boil and feed them all this witches' brew I concocted of cooked chicken (chosen from 'poddles' as my parents used to call dead chickens) and its innards. What I could not understand was that with all my loving attention, Duchess loved my brother so much more than me, or so it seemed. He was then, and is still today, a person of few words and not very demonstrative. She loved me okay but she really loved him.

And she was smart. In the spring and summer when the chickens were grown enough to live outdoors but not yet old enough to lay eggs, we would move them to our open range until they began to produce eggs. The range was perhaps the size of a large city block. The north side was ringed with trees and the south side was ringed with tall grass. Throughout the middle area were perhaps a dozen or more sheltered roosts where we would house the chickens at night. Otherwise they freely roamed the range where there were feeders and watering cans. Now I don't know how this happened — I know I never consciously trained her — but every evening at dusk my chore was to get all the pullets into their shelters for the

night to protect them from roaming dog packs and crows. With a long stick, I had to poke some of them off the low hanging branches of the trees and run up and down the expanse of the north end of the range until darkness fell and they all went into the shelters. Somehow, Duchess began to do all the running and herding for me. She literally trained herself.

Another day when I was feeding the chickens, Duchess was nosing around in the tall grass. She comes to me, gingerly carrying an egg a young hen had apparently dropped in the tall grass. I held out my hand and she carefully dropped it in my hand. "Good Dog! Good Dog!," I remember telling her, amazed. Thereafter she did that over and over, never cracking the egg in her mouth.

Came the time when Duchess was in heat. Perhaps a half-dozen dogs would park themselves outside our house at night and proceed to howl for hours. No matter where Duchess was, the dogs found her. Finally my parents decided Duchess had to go. When the ASPCA came, I was heartbroken and I remember my brother ran into the coops and didn't come out for a long time. Many, many years later, my mother and I happened to remember Duchess and she ruefully told me my brother Leon had called her a murderer.



HAPPY SAILING

Ruth Kovner

You can learn a lot about people when traveling with them. And we can learn about ourselves as well. Janie was a friend of mine. We had met through a mutual friend. It was a pleasant relationship but not very deep. She was fun to be with and, I discovered, had a million stories — well-told, I might add. What I found out about myself is that some people can be impressed by wealth, others by celebrity. Me? Just tell me a good story and I'm yours.

Janie had been married more than once. The first was not a happy one although she had great kids, a son and a daughter. Her second marriage to Charley was joyous. She had two children and he had four. One by one his kids came to live with them. Quite a crowd. She was a demanding mother and required that all of the children study music and devote themselves to one instrument. It mattered not to her which instrument it was. She had studied piano throughout her childhood and was a concert-level pianist.

They lived in a compound on an island in Miami Harbor. Charley came home one day and announced that he had seen a boat he wanted to buy. It was a large sloop and it was for sale. It was okay with Janie. So he did and a-sailing they went. One time, they were sailing down in the islands and as it was getting late in the afternoon, they decided to find a mooring. They settled on one, slid into place and made their arrangements. As they thought about plans for dinner, they noticed a dark shape approaching the mooring next to theirs. This shape maneuvered into place but kept coming and coming ... and coming. It was a *huge* yacht. It far overshadowed theirs, it seemed, by a mile. They had no idea whose boat it could be.

Their dinner plans decided upon, they were getting ready to leave when a face appeared at their cabin window. It was a glamorous face. It was a well-known face. It was Frances Langford, a popular movie star and singer at the time. She was wearing a colorful turban around her blonde hair and a turquoise print skirt and top. It was very fitting for the tropics, Janie recalled. Of course, they asked her into their cabin. As a new neighbor, she invited them up to her "boat" for a drink.

Charley hesitated. He was having some difficulty with the engine. It had been giving him trouble for days, and he was determined to do something about it. He was wearing an oil-stained pair of pants,

since he had been working on it. After they docked, he'd spent considerable time trying to determine the problem and correct it. Truth be told, it had been a headache since he had bought the boat. Ms. Langford waited for a response. She said she and her husband would be so pleased to have them aboard. Charley relented. He thanked her for the gracious invitation and went to change.

Once on board they were awed. Frances gave them a tour of the really beautiful yacht. The gorgeous brass fittings shone and teak gleamed from the walls, bannisters and floor. Her husband had not as yet appeared. The three sat down in the lounge and drinks were served. Finally Ms. Langford's husband appeared and they were introduced by first names. Everything was delightful, amiable, even jovial as they exchanged stories of their adventures while sailing. As they were chatting, a steward approached and wondered if Mr. Evinrude would like some more hors d'oeuvres.

"Evinrude?" interjected Charley. "Why that's the name of the engine on our boat and it's been giving me trouble since I first bought it. Frankly, Mr. Evinrude," he said, "your engine is a piece of shit!" There was complete silence. Then, after a minute or two, Mr. Evinrude said loudly, "GET OFF MY SHIP!!!"

Janie and Charley left hurriedly. On the way to their boat Janie quietly asked, "Did you have to say that?" "Yup" was his reply. They had dinner, went for a walk and then went to bed. Not another word about the incident had passed between them after his one word reply. The very next morning a large package, a box, was delivered to their boat. It was a brand new Evinrude engine. "See" Charley said "honesty pays." Janie couldn't help but agree.

SWIMMING WITH THE MOON

Eileen D. Kelly

Those nights when the moon was full and very, very low and the tide so high that the moon got a dunking? Well, those were the nights Pompi wanted to go swimming. Last night he actually did. What a treat to dive into a wave with the whole sea lit up! The pale blue water effervesced; it bubbled and fizzed around him, making his body into a phosphorescent lamp. He was naked; how else to swim with the moon? At times he tried to touch it, but each time his hand landed in a moon crater which had no bottom. He tried for the crater's slopes and top, but the moon's magnets repelled him. Hoping to beat that force turned into a game. Pompi tried diving right into a crater, knowing there was no bottom to it, but wanting to play with the moon. It worked; the moon pulled and pushed as it did with the tides and Pompi whirled around in the swirling sea.

Suddenly, the moon lifted itself and flew back to the sky, leaving Pompi startled. The light receded and cast its usual rays onto the water's surface. The sea calmed down and held Pompi gently. He floated back to the beach and wondered if anyone would believe him.

He lay down in the sand to rest before going home. He knew once he got there the events of the night would disappear from his mind. He wasn't even sure he could tell his wife Sylvia about it. She might think he got drunk, went for a nighttime swim and imagined it. Pompi lay there thinking; he looked up at the moon and said, partly to himself and partly to it, "How can I prove this really happened?" If only there were something I could show them, he thought, but there's nothing but water.

As he stretched and mused, his hand touched something rough and cold and hard. He could feel it under the wet sand. A shell? Pompi dug it out. It was a rock about the size of a fist, only rounder. He washed it off in the surf and glanced up at the moon. "Is this yours?" he asked. No answer, of course, but as he tossed it around in his hand, he noticed it was now warm and getting warmer. And then it glowed. "A moon rock!" cried Pompi as he ran home to show his family.

JUDEN HUND (JEW DOG)

Ilse Hoffman

The year is 1969. It's the first parent-teacher night of the year at Nassau High, the school of which I'm the principal. I remember the evening, with a crisp, perfectly clear autumn sky, unusual in the suburbs where the lights from the nearby mall are always on full blast, so that one can barely see anything in the sky. It's a Monday, two nights after the weekend time change, and it's been dark since 5:30. Business is slow at the mall on Monday nights, most of the stores are closed, and only the security lights are on. As I make my way from the parking lot, I look up at the sky and can actually see some stars, though I don't have time to identify any of them.

School security is not much of an issue. Promptly at 7:30, the custodians open the double doors, and parents begin streaming in, separating so that each can follow the signs directing them to their kids' various classrooms where teachers are waiting. I, and the assistant principals, man the main hallways to greet parents and answer general questions. A woman stops suddenly to speak to me, the man behind her bumps lightly into her, she drops her purse. As if choreographed, both of us bend over to pick it up. I can still hear the thwack as our heads collide. Straightening up, I feel a stab of pain in my right eye so excruciating that I have to concentrate on controlling the nausea which rises in my throat. The last thing I remember is wondering how those stars got from the sky to the school hallway. When I come to, I'm being propped up by two custodians who hustle me to the parking lot and drive me to the hospital. Groggy, I wonder why no ambulance. I'm thinking that it can't be so bad if they haven't called 911. In the emergency room, the eye specialist on call has been sent for. He makes no comment as he spots the prosthesis in the left eye. He gently gives me the diagnosis, a detached retina in the injured right eye. I'm blind!

Suddenly, the trauma from that night in 1937 comes roaring back. I'm ten years old. From my great, great grandparents on down, my family has lived in our small town in West Germany. Everyone knows everyone else. The Nazis have somehow concentrated on the smaller places in their daily acts of persecution. Storekeepers have signs in their windows, "*Wier verkaufen nicht zu Juden*" (We don't sell to Jews). My parents are unable to buy in these stores because they are well known as Jews, but not all proprietors

recognize Jewish children, who after all look like all the other town kids. The solution all parents have come up with is to send their children to buy bread, milk or whatever else is needed.

This particular autumn evening, my mother orders me to go to the bakery and pick up bread and some pastries. The baker recognizes me, but serves me anyhow. I walk out the door, and suddenly a tall, burly man steps up to me, punches me about the head and face again and again and again, not letting up until I go down, all the while yelling "*Juden Hund*" and all the other anti-Jewish curses to which we've become accustomed. I'm still conscious, and from the ground, I see his high, shiny, black boots. He's in civilian clothes, but those boots are obviously part of a Nazi issue uniform. He makes sure that I'm not about to run away, then walks off. A woman on her way out of the store has seen the beating. She helps me up and walks with me until I'm able to make it home. By the time my father gets me to the hospital, it's too late to save the eye. The surgeon implants the prosthesis, a perfect match to the shade of blue of the remaining one.

In 1938, just before Kristallnacht, we make it out of Germany. The real eye serves perfectly well, and except for my wife and children, no one except my ophthalmologist ever finds out about the prosthesis.

Back to 1969. I'm in bad shape, with one glass eye and a detached retina in the other. Several surgeries, heavy steroid treatments, and four weeks later, I'm out of the hospital. In five months I'm back at school. I've missed one parent-teacher night, but the last one of the year is coming up. That evening, I stand well behind one of my assistant principals as we greet the parents.

ONE MISSTEP, CORRECTED

Hy Gold

As Pete approached the station, he heard the train overhead nearing and slowing down. He had to catch the train, he just had to. So he bounded up the stairs, taking two or three steps at a time. He got through the turnstile, swiping his card, thankful it hadn't held him up this time. He took the next flight up, also two or three steps at a time. Just as he approached the platform level, he saw the doors of the train still open, and knew they would soon start to close. On the platform, he tried to push off to the last bit of distance to the door. But instead of gaining the traction he needed, his foot slid on a wet spot and he tumbled to the floor. He was right at the feet of a woman who saw all this, and apparently fascinated at the race between the man and the door, didn't go in.

With the doors closing, she saw the painful frustration on his face. "Are you all right?" she asked. Pete was taking inventory of his body parts, found nothing amiss, and answered, "Yes, nothing broken." As he began to get to his feet, she reached down to hold his elbow in the cup of her hand. Pete didn't need the help, but did nothing to dislodge her hand. As they stood there for a moment, he noted she had the three features he always admired in a woman, as he had in his late wife Ruth: petite, dark-haired and a pretty face. Not Hollywood-pretty, but an honest, symmetrical facial structure.

She also noted that he was taller than she, but not too tall, and with a straightforward though not Hollywood-handsome face. She saw he was smiling, and the mirror neurons in her brain produced a smile on her own face. So they stood there, each not knowing how to proceed, but already not wishing to disengage. She spoke first, "Why don't we sit down? You really must have bruised yourself." "Good idea," he answered, relieved she had the idea.

They sat on a bench, and she asked, "Why were you in such a hurry?" "I have an appointment I didn't want to be late for," was his response. Pete realized she might want to know more but was hesitant to be intrusive, so he continued, "I've applied for a job at a medical group, and the Medical Director there wouldn't take it kindly if I were late." "You're a doctor," she stated matter-of-factly. "Yup," went Pete, trying not to be stuffy. The woman became lively and told him she worked as a statistician at the Department of Health. "Wow," he said with obvious admiration. "We had some

lectures on statistics in medical school, but I didn't understand it very well." She tried to be helpful with "It's not hard. I teach statistics part-time at Teachers College." "Wow," again from Pete.

By this time, it seemed awkward to be discussing their work without knowing their names. Once again the woman broke the ice: "What's your name?" "Pete," he answered, at which he noticed a friendly smile crossing her face. She offered, "Mine's Peety." "Really!" he said, now with a wide grin. "Yup," she mimicked. "Actually, my given name is Patricia, but I've always been called Peety. It's how I said my name when I was young. I've always liked it." Pete took a plunge, "I like it, too." This time they both smiled broadly.

Pete opened up and began to tell her about intending to go into public health and population research. While he was talking so enthusiastically about his plans, she stole what she hoped was a quick glance at his left hand, and noticed the wedding ring. But with his medical training, he did notice the glance. He now felt it was okay to explain that he was a widower, that his wife had died in a car accident, that they had been married for two years and hadn't had any children. He saw her relax with these words, and decided to take a deeper plunge: "And you, are you married or engaged?" "Neither," she answered, and felt relieved.

The train was approaching his station, and Pete didn't want to lose her, so he asked if he could see her again. "Yes, I'd like to know how you make out with your interview." "Great," said Pete. "Give me your number and I'll let you know." "I'm sure you'll get the job," said Peety as she wrote out her number. When Pete got out at his station, his step was lively, his face was smiling and his heart was pounding as it hadn't done in years.

LABELS

Harriet Finkelstein

I think I am in trouble. Someone labeled me a ‘maven.’ I never sought to be a maven and I don’t want to be known as one. Am I inheriting my Father’s maven mantle? Over sixty years ago, when Daddy bought Mom a beautiful, made-to-order mink coat (the Save-the-Mink movement had not yet evolved), he officially became the mink maven of our very large family circle. They said he could pick “skins” like no one else. And, for years, whenever someone was thinking mink, the call went out to get Abe (my Dad). He wore this mantle humbly and did his best. Honestly, he did have a great eye and great taste and an appreciation of quality. My sisters and I learned at an early age how to take advantage of Dad’s appreciations, and we could rely on him to slip us a little extra above and beyond our Mother’s conservative allocation of cash when we went shopping for spring coats and the like.

Actually, I consider myself a maven on absolutely nothing. I know a little about this, a little about that, but an ‘expert,’ never. But if I apply myself, maybe I can learn how to be a maven of sorts. I told a friend about my dilemma and she suggested we go to Kutscher’s Tribeca. Maybe we’ll find a maven there who could give me some lessons. So off we went to Kutscher’s. Sadly, there was not a soul there who remotely resembled a maven but we did have a delicious brunch.

Being labeled a maven is like dragging a hundred-pound stone around. What do you do when somebody asks you a question and you don’t have a clue as to the answer? I could study night and day but memorizing stuff isn’t as easy as it used to be. I certainly don’t want to be called a ‘false’ maven. Maven is a Yiddish word. Come to think of it, Leo Rosten wrote a book, *The Joys of Yiddish*. I bet Leo could help. No luck, I checked the book and found not a word about mavens.

Perhaps Wikipedia will come to my rescue. Ah, hah! Wiki says Malcolm Gladwell used the term, maven, in his famous book, *The Tipping Point* to describe those who are intense gatherers of information and impressions, and so are often the first to pick up on new trends. Well, that is certainly a relief. It is much easier to be a gatherer than an expert.

Wiki also says Michael Chabon’s novel, *The Yiddish Policeman’s*

Union contained a pivotal character called ‘The Boundary Maven’ whose knowledge of orthodox Jewish rules regarding the ability of people to legitimately walk within their own property on the Sabbath allowed him to use string between lamp-posts to create “personal” boundaries for those willing to pay him.

Am I on to something? Should I become a ‘gatherer’ and get some string? Or, should I just string together whatever I gather? And, if I’m ever labeled again, hopefully, it will be something like info gatherer. I think that label would be just fine.

AWAKE

Betty Farber

Can’t fall asleep.
Breathe in and out.
Monkey mind jumps
from thought to thought:
money, health,
family secrets.
At 2:00 A.M. I panic.
Drink a glass of wine?
Take a pill or two?
Don’t give in.
Breathe in and out.
What is that sound?
The end of the world?
No. The alarm! Morning!

ONE STEP UP

Hilda Feinstein

I stood there alone waiting, one step up, under the door jamb at the entrance to the red brick school building. The winter wind bit my young face as I paced back and forth. Monday had arrived — finally. This twelve-year old anticipated anxiously the sight of the familiar black and white tweed coat cloaking my six-foot-two object of admiration. He never wore a hat over his wavy, brown hair regardless of how cold it was. A well-used, brown leather briefcase would be swinging from his arm as he strutted confidently down what seemed to be an interminably long city block. I wished he would walk faster, for the later he came, the shorter the time we would spend together. At times, a pipe rested on his lower lip, adding to his distinguished look. I assumed he came from the subway station, but had no idea where he lived and I never asked — probably somewhere in Brooklyn, probably in a neighborhood much better than the one in which I lived and waited for him.

He would sit at an aged, yellow, wooden desk. He looked very important to me as he corrected papers which demanded unquestioned skill and expertise. Sometimes he would gaze up and speak to me, but generally he would sit quietly, seriously puffing his pipe or on a Winston while he worked on plans for the day. I fantasized long, interesting conversations with him, but since I was so shy, in awe of him, and afraid of saying something wrong, I always responded tersely when he spoke to me. I would check the barometer, wash the blackboards, smack the chalky erasers clean against the wall of the school building and file papers. No task was refused nor too servile for me. If there was no work to do, I would daydream waiting for the other students to arrive and for class to start.

Sometimes my friend, George, would arrive early and stand and wait with me. George was my classmate. Although we were very different, he dark as coal and I was as pale as milk, we genuinely liked each other and had been friends since kindergarten. When George was there, the waiting was more bearable. But, George didn't often make it to school as early as I did, so I generally waited alone for my tall, handsome and revered teacher. Reliably every day he would arrive regardless of the weather, and I too was there every day, day after day, waiting restively for him that final-sixth-grade year at P.S.25K. Always a nearly palpable sigh of relief would

escape my lungs when I spotted his graceful form and warm smile approaching in the distance.

I strained my eyes, searching hard before forcing myself back to reality — for although the very same eyes, looked down the very same street, on the very same step, of the very same building, it was now 48 years later and that lovestruck, awkward, twelve-year old was today celebrating her sixtieth birthday. This milestone brought me physically back to my Brooklyn of the past, to relive a memory of entrenched importance, a recollection which generated feelings and thoughts of a time when I was treated in a kind and respectful way by someone I adored and still remember vividly and with affection.

FRIENDSHIP

Dolores Dolan

Friendship has anchored my life from my earliest years. Perhaps because my home life was so dysfunctional that I sought respite in my friendships from the pain of my family. The word “dysfunctional” was not a word I ever heard growing up in the 1950s in Brooklyn. The word commonly heard was “unhappy”.

I read a line somewhere recently: God gave us friends as a reward for first having given us families. Of course, many people have happy homes and many happy friendships.

Over 40 years ago I read an article in the magazine, *Commonweal*, about my favorite filmmaker, Federico Fellini. It was written by John J. Navone. I saved one paragraph from the article, which is as follows: “The desperate anguish to be with, the desire for genuine friendship, is one of the most pressing problems of our times and provides part of the theme for all my films,” Fellini has said. For him, friendships are not interludes in our travels, but rather our travels are interludes in the comradeship and joy of our friendships. In a world where so many live as if friendships — the communication of ideas, ideals, dreams, hopes, joys and experiences — were mere incidents or side issues to the main problems of human existence, Fellini proclaims that reality is quite otherwise: “We live our lives for our friendships; they are the goals, not the means.” The striking of a human spark is Fellini’s truest joy.

A friend is someone who is happy when you’re happy and sad when you’re sad. Years can go by but if you meet after a long absence, conversation picks up as if you had only seen each other the day before. Friendship, like flowers, has to be nurtured and appreciated. An interesting thing I’ve learned about having a friend is that you don’t always have the same interests, don’t always agree but somehow you just feel comfortable and happy in his or her presence.

I have been fortunate in having long-time and even new friends. Sadly, as we get older, we lose some of our dear friends. But we count ourselves lucky to have known them.

My husband of 40 years was many things to me, but as I look back over the time we spent together, I think our friendship was the deepest part of our relationship.

I close with an Arabian proverb: “A friend is one to whom one may pour out all the contents of one’s heart, chaff and grain together, knowing that the gentlest of hands will take and sift it, keep what is worth keeping and with the breath of kindness blow the rest away.”

DISCONNECTED

Stella Gold

Sometimes
I find the words
To express my own truth
And they sing in my head
And mellow my heart.

Will those words cross the bridge
Between you and me?
Will you hear them
Yearning to be recognized
By you the dreamer,
Lost in your own quest?

Or will you let them escape
Into the vague murmur
Of dissonant voices,
Dissipated
By lack of acceptance?

FATHER AND SON: A SINGLE STEP

Hal Cantor

On Father's Day, my son usually phones me. He's done that ever since he moved away from home at eighteen, but last year, his company sent him on a combined vacation-business trip to Milan and an acquaintance offered him his apartment so he was able to take his family along. I suppose the excitement of settling in a foreign city must have preoccupied him, and he forgot to call me.

I was disappointed when no card or e-mail arrived, but I knew I was being too sensitive and that it was merely an oversight. After all, we all know that Mother-Father Days are commercial contrivances meant to benefit retailers and mail order merchants. Maybe in Italy they didn't have the same day, or only celebrated Godfather's Day.

Then I thought about the bond between my son and me and wondered why I was so certain it existed. Nowadays parents and their offspring are often widely separated, oceans apart geographically and culturally. A spouse may encourage a weekly phone call, but as time passes, visits and stayovers become less frequent. A loyal son or daughter tries to avoid a guilt trip, but what can you say to a 70- or 80-year-old voice on the phone besides how-you-doing? Often the talk becomes a litany of maladies and bores you to death; other times it is as funny as a Mike Nichols-Elaine May routine. But that never happened between my son and me.

My own father died on a Thursday in 1964 in Brooklyn where he had lived most of his married life. The cause was cardiac arrest, but he had been ill for several years with Parkinson's disease and a broken hip. He was only 67 but he looked years older.

When the news of his death reached me, I was teaching at a college in upstate New York more than 350 miles from New York City. I was married with two children, a daughter, 9, and a son, 6, and we had just bought a house in the suburbs. Because of my father's Orthodoxy, his funeral had to be held Friday before the onset of the Sabbath. To my dismay, I found that there was no scheduled plane or train that could get me to the funeral parlor by 3 P.M. Luckily, there was a bus which could get me to Brooklyn only a half-hour late. My wife and son drove me to the bus station. (My daughter was away on a sleepover.) I had hastily packed an overnight bag, and, as I strode to the bus — it was a Greyhound in those days — I looked back and there was my wife and son faithfully

seeing me off, like in a drawing by Norman Rockwell. As I climbed the stairwell, I looked back again and it happened. My son had followed me toward the bus and moved away from my wife. He gave another little hop and stopped, looking startled and upset. His father was leaving without him.

How do you know that someone loves you? I suppose there are many ways but for me, a grandfather now, the knowledge came from my son's single step. I took that image with me as I made my journey to see the father whom I, too, loved and who sadly now could not take me with him.

POOR

Barbara P Gordon

is not a color

it's lost inches
the clench of a stomach
callused feet
a runny nose

unimagined opportunities
no expectations

THE STREAM

Marie Bacigalupo

Before she was old, she was a poet in her dreams. A child asleep, she heard the whispering stream, the sweet strains enchanting her. The next day she said, I'm a poet. The teacher smiled and patted the little girl's head. That night she told her parents about the stream in her dream. Not real, they said. After that, the girl kept her dream secret for many years.

A high school senior, she said to her father, I want to be a poet. Wrinkling his brow, "You're nearly a woman now," he said, "Major in science or math. Write poetry in your spare time." So the woman became an investment counselor and kept a spare time journal for her dreams. She listened.

When it came time to marry, her fiancé said they would need her salary to buy a house. Later they would need it to start a family. Some days the woman forgot to write in her journal. Some days she revisited her dreams. While rocking the baby, she paced the room reciting aloud from Cavalcanti, *perch'i' no spero di tornar giammai*, from Shakespeare, *So long as men can breathe or eyes can see*. Still she dreamed of the stream swollen with song. But before long there was college tuition to consider, then a wedding.

Years passed. The woman and her husband retired. "I want to be a poet," she said. "Oh, act your age!" said her spouse. "Why, Mom?" asked her daughter. "This is your chance to see the world." So she flew to Rome, cruised the Mediterranean, rode a camel. She listened.

The husband died. The woman said, "Now I'll do it." But the pen in her liver-spotted hand, scratching the paper, made only noise. Every day she sat at her desk, straining to hear the stream, its whispers now inaudible to her aged ears. So she waited for an image, *palpable and mute, motionless in time*. Her eyes grew heavy as she waited. One night the old woman slept, and in her dream she heard the echo of the stream. *Sounds and sweet airs*, she recalled, *that when I waked I cried to dream again*. Soon all the day long she slept. Still she sleeps.

A MUSE BY AN OCTOGENARIAN

Sy Amkraut

It is well into evening. The night will surely descend. When? Now is the time to reflect on the past and relive its joys. The fruits of my labors and the icons of my past are before me. It is Thanksgiving at Cathy's home. Our tribe is assembled and everyone here is of blood.

Heirlooms of our past decorate the walls, sit on shelves and stand on the floors. Treasures that remind me of the history that is us, our family. We will feast this Thanksgiving on the cherrywood table that held the food, that heard the laughter and witnessed the tears of children and grandchildren on Thanksgivings past.

The houses may be different. The home is the same. It brings us back to those many winters past, sitting around a roaring fire. Numerous photos adorn the walls and record our past ... a journey that Joyce and I embarked on over 60 years ago. Then there is a myriad of antique teapots, netsuke, Hakata dolls and other reminders of the past that fill each room.

Some men seek fame and love applause. My love comes from real humans, children I have nurtured, sharing a lifetime of love and devotion.

ACCEPTANCE

Barbara P Gordon

she rose to offer me her seat
this fresh-faced girl
a college bookbag
slung across her shoulder

easily she balances
swaying with the motion
of the train

what awkward gesture
fraught with all my years
betrayed me
converted me into an elder?

grateful and annoyed
I can't repudiate her generosity

and so I sit

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