

Q REVIEW



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THE CREATIVE VOICE OF QUEST

***Q Review* 2016**

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A WORD FROM THE EDITOR

This issue of *Q Review* has brought together the exceptional talent of our poetry, prose and art editors along with their excellent staff of reviewers and proofreaders. Their expertise — coupled with the creativity of our contributors — have produced the excellent publication you now hold in your hands. You should also know that our *Q Review* staff has skillfully applied the latest 21st Century technology to produce this issue. We are proud of our publication and the enthusiasm our contributors and staff have displayed toward new technologies. In addition, we thank our former Editor in Chief, Helen Neilson, for establishing the footprint for the current publication.

– *Carolyn McGuire*

IN MEMORIAM

We note with profound sorrow those Quest members whom we lost this past year:

June Dwyer
Ruth Robbins
Marlene Sanders
Sonya Wetzsteon

We also acknowledge the generous contributions to Quest made by Steve Rubin in memory of his wife Carol Livolsi-Rubin and by Dave Robinson in memory of his wife, and fellow Quest member, Nan Robinson.

In addition, we thank Ellie Chernick, Robert Hartmann, and Michael Wellner for their contributions to Quest in memory of June Dwyer. Lastly, we wish to remember our colleague, Henrietta Levner, and express our gratitude to her estate for its generous bequest to *Q Review*.



Q REVIEW

THE CREATIVE VOICE OF QUEST

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MY BRIEF LIFE AS A MODEL

Dolores Dolan

When I got my first secretarial job after graduating from Erasmus Hall, I did what most of my friends who lived at home did: I spent almost all my money on clothes. I frequented downtown A&S, Russeks and Mays, looking for the latest fashions at low prices. Some of my friends said, “Dolores, you look good enough to be a model.” Well, I was tall, a size ten, which today would be about a size four. One day, I saw an ad in the *Times* help wanted pages for models, size 10 or 12, at Saks Fifth Avenue.

I had never been in Saks, but I subways there and went to the 5th floor for an interview. I was asked to try on two suits and walk around the small space. They were beautiful, expensive suits and fit me perfectly. My interviewer asked what my experience was. I said, honestly, “none.” She said, “Not even the Garment District?” I replied, “What is the Garment District?” No kidding. She asked me to fill out an application and since my family did not have a telephone, I gave my best friend Joan’s number. She lived around the corner on Flatbush Avenue. But as I left the store, I thought I had no chance.

The next day, breathless, my friend banged on my mother’s door about 5 PM, “Dolores, Saks wants you to call them.” So I went across the street to the candy store and called. I was told I had the job and asked if I would start next week. As excited as I was, I said, “No, I have to give my boss at least a week’s notice.” The Saks lady said, “Okay, I’ll see you the week after.” So began my modeling career where I truly learned on the job.

After about eight months of walking around the 5th floor in beautiful designer suits and coats — wearing pink satin pumps provided by the shoe department — for the sales people in the morning and the customers all afternoon, another model told me they were looking for models at Bergdorf Goodman. I had never been there either but heard it was even more expensive than Saks. I mentioned to Jimmy, a stock boy I had become friendly with, that I might try for a job there, but shared that I really did not have the best clothes for an interview. Jimmy said, “don’t worry” and produced a navy pinstripe Ben Zuckerman suit and a hat from the hat department. He had carefully taken off the price

tags and said, “When you come back, I’ll just put them back on.” I was 21 and foolish not to think that I was doing something illegal. Worse, I could be caught. I went for the interview on my lunch hour and when the woman from personnel interviewed me I could tell she knew I was wearing an \$800 suit (that was a lot in the late 50s). I got the job.

Some funny things happened to me when I was a model. One winter afternoon at Bergdorf’s, I was walking around on their 3rd floor in a trim, grey suit with a black velvet collar. A glamorous woman in a mink coat with two poodles, also in little mink coats, approached me and said, “I like the suit you’re wearing and the saleswoman says you’re wearing my size and it’s the only one. Come into the dressing room with me and take it off.” So I did, and we both undressed. I was wearing a bra and half-slip. I was surprised that she had on only a bra and panties. She put the suit on, looked at herself in the mirror and said, “I’m wearing this out; tell the saleswoman to get you another suit.” I subsequently learned that she was the actress, Dolores Gray.

After a couple of years I left the fashion world. There were several reasons: first, I wanted to go to college — I ended up going in the evenings — and second, I became bored with conversation about fashion, the only conversation I heard from the sales people and the models. No one seemed to even read the daily papers. The Hungarian Revolution was going on and nobody was talking about it. Of course, they read *Women’s Wear Daily*. So, eventually, I went back to being a secretary at interesting places: CBS News and later, *The New York Times*. I still love fashion, but not 24/7.

• • •

A FOOTBALL ADDICT

John Hood

While football is the most popular spectator sport in America, it is doubtful if many at Quest watch football on television. But I confess, "I am a football addict." Here is how it came about.

In the fall of 1942 I started my sophomore year at Twin Falls (Idaho) High School. Twin Falls was then a farming and ranching town of 12,000, and you could say it had a wild-west atmosphere at the beginning of World War II. Some of my classmates were on the football team, called the "Bruins," and they urged me to join. The attack on Pearl Harbor had occurred the previous December and some of the older players had gone into military service. I agreed to try out for the team. Our coach was Hank Powers, who also taught math at the high school, and he immediately pressed me into service on the team. I had no experience or training and only weighed about 135 pounds, but they were desperate.

We played our games on Friday nights under the lights at the high school football field and drew an enthusiastic crowd of a few hundred spectators. In small town America "Friday Night Football" was, and still is, a local tradition. My father did not want me to play football. I would come home bruised and battered on Friday night, and he was afraid I might be seriously injured. But I was determined to stay on the team even though we really weren't that good. I loved playing football. Something about banging into other young men, the physical contact of blocking and tackling, gave me a great deal of pleasure. And I survived unscathed.

So I played for three seasons and graduated in May of 1945. The next month I went into the Navy, served for fifteen months and entered college in September 1946. I went to the University of Notre Dame, where my father and uncle had attended. Notre Dame was, and still is, noted for its football teams. They are called "The Fighting Irish." The student body was then all male; it became coed in 1972. The football team had first achieved national attention under a famous coach, Knute Rockne. One of Ronald Reagan's notable Hollywood movies was "Knute Rockne, All American." The rise of Notre Dame football had become a matter of pride for millions of Irish Catholic immigrants and their descendants, like me.

During the four years I attended, Notre Dame never lost a game and was rated number one in the country. I first came to New York City in 1946 for the Army-Notre Dame game at Yankee Stadium that was billed as “the college game of the century” and ended in a scoreless tie. The many fans of the Fighting Irish were called the “Subway Alumni.”

With this background you might understand why I am a football addict, and if you assume that I especially watch Notre Dame games on television, you are correct. However, I have my own way of watching these games. Football games on television go on interminably, usually over three hours filled with commercials and time-outs. This is quite boring. My practice is to record the game on my DVR. If Notre Dame wins, I watch the replay, erasing everything but the action. If Notre Dame loses, I simply erase the whole game. I am used to them winning. After all, they never lost a game while I was there.

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DEUX CROISSANTS ET UNE DEMI-BAGUETTE

Jane Pittson-Chianese

Our neighbors' excitement was palpable as they left on yet another trip. "Our 144th country," they said, eyes alight. "Wow, that's quite impressive!" I responded. Their goal of visiting every country on the planet is certainly noteworthy, but what's next—outer space?

It got me thinking, though. I used to yearn to see the world, hit all the sights. I spent months in the late '60s touring Western Europe with two friends in an old van, dropping it off at a hostel when we felt like hitchhiking. I worked in France and Spain and then married and moved to the U.S.

I eventually made it to the U.N., another dream, and ended up in conference services, which involved a good amount of travel. Working in a foreign country is far different from vacationing there, but being hosted by governments does come with compensating privileges, so not too shabby an experience!

Nevertheless, there remain many countries I have not seen, and with the daily grind behind me—time to catch up, right? Well, not so fast; a funny thing happened on the way to retirement. Not so sure I want that kind of upheaval any more, which involves living out of a suitcase, getting up early, driving and constantly moving around. In fact, I say no thanks to all of that. What beckons now is staying in one place for weeks, settling in, walking round the streets and getting the feel of a place. And if there's a beach or a pool, I am one happy camper.

So that is how Dominic and I have been spending the last few Augusts. In 2014, it was in a tiny village in the English Cotswolds; the year before, a small pueblo in Majorca. This past summer, we spent a month in Carcassonne in Southwestern France. What a delight! We rented a lovely 19th century townhouse in the old part of town from where we could walk to everything, including the medieval *Cite*. The house was full of antiques and even included a pool in the surprisingly spacious backyard. Our landlord, Bertrand, was a sweetheart. He picked us up and drove us back to the airport, found a place where Dominic could rent a guitar, but was never intrusive. Unfortunately, I could not bring Bertrand over to my side in the regular battle I confront when in France—speaking French! As usual, I would speak

French and he would answer in English. This went on for the whole month. It's not like his English was good but, never mind, it's a lost cause — happens all the time. The only solution is to find someone who knows no English at all, not so easy nowadays.

Bertrand used to own a restaurant in the Cite, but gave it up ten years ago when his wife became mentally ill and had to be institutionalized. He visits her regularly, said she would never recover — although there does seem to be a girlfriend in the wings. (I don't think her name is Eyre.)

He has an extensive library all in French, unfortunately for Dominic, although it does include some amazing art and photography books. Myself, I found time to get through a couple of murder mysteries, simple, modern French and dialog-laden, just the ticket.

Every morning, Dominic would amble off to his favorite boulangerie. I coached him before he set out, so he knew what to ask for — “deux croissants et une demi-baguette.” He soon had it down pat. One day, I asked him to buy three croissants instead of two. He couldn't remember the French when he got there, so switched to English and nearly got eight of them. He had a good laugh with the old baker. Hey, he was already a “regular.”

Twice a week there was a marvelous farmer's market nearby where we would stock up on bargain-priced pates, cheeses and mouthwatering fruit and veggies, and every Saturday there was an everything else market right outside our door. This was run by Arab immigrants who seemed to fade away at the end of the day. I asked Bertrand where they lived. “Somewhere else,” he said.

We did venture further afield when friends visited, to the Mediterranean and the nearby countryside, and we took train trips to Montpellier and Sete (boat-jousting anyone?) and sailed along the Canal du Midi. But mostly, we soaked up the sights and sounds of old Carcassonne. Couldn't have asked for a better vacation.

So, what will we do next year — finally see India, Japan, Egypt — or look for another little town somewhere and just hang out there? I think I already know the answer.

• • •

HIDE AND SEEK

Gil Santiago

It's my turn to hide in this game of hide and seek. Each time in the past I find the perfect place to hide, my older brother finds me anyway. **It's my turn to hide.** I do not have a lot of time. My brother is outside the apartment front door that is ajar, and I can hear him counting very fast.

It's my turn to hide. Why not here? My bed is near and I fear I have no time, so under my bed I scoot to hide.

It's my turn to hide. No, not here. This is the first place he will look. It's quite near the front door, and he will look here first and it is my bed after all.

It's my turn to hide. My mom's bed is only a few rooms away down the long hallway, and there's lots of stuff under her bed to hide behind.

It's my turn to hide. My mom keeps this apartment so clean but not down here. Why is it so dirty behind these shoes, boxes and other strange things?

It's my turn to hide. I can hide in the hallway closet behind the coats. No, it's not deep enough; he will see my feet and the things I would have to move.

It's my turn to hide. The kitchen cabinet near the fire escape window is big enough. Oh no, too many pots and pans to move and the noise it would make!

It's my turn to hide. Without much thought I pop outside a hallway window. Between two window sills, I plant my feet and hold tight to the brick wall.

It's my turn to hide. I hold my breath, and look straight ahead. Now is not the time to look down at the concrete yard five stories below. I must hide.

• • •

MEMO FROM GRANDPA

Hal Cantor

As I approach my mid-eighties, I keep expecting some deep insights to emerge from the depths of my experience, pieces of profound wisdom that I might pass on to my grandchildren. But no, not the slightest trace of an idea to live by, nor the glimmer of a clever epigram rises to the surface of my mind.

No matter how I try, nor how much I concentrate, whatever I excavate from my deteriorating brain cells sounds to me like claptrap, clichés, and commonplace advice. Just when I want to sound profound and original, I fall back on the familiar and imitative. Trying to sum up your life with a philosophic aphorism is like... well, like pulling teeth.

All these years I have dreaded conventional remarks and bromidic conversations. I sought to twist phrases that hit my ear with leaden consistency into something less offensive. The result is that my friends misunderstand me and fail to regard me as a good speaker. Go figure!

So, children, my first piece of advice is do not become English majors. Do not fall in love with language, with words, words, words; you will become introverted and tongue-tied. Because everything that is interesting has been said or written before. To borrow a phrase from Harold Bloom, a prolific literary critic who seems to have read everything: "The anxiety of influence will paralyze you."

At first, this will not be apparent. That is because your *tabula rasa* fills up only gradually. I remember as a child of ten browsing through the red, fake leather-bound set of the Harvard Classics that my father had bought when he was still considering becoming a lawyer instead of a dress salesman and which my mother kept in a piece of furniture she called a credenza. I was enthralled by names like Homer, Ovid, and Emerson but when I browsed through the volumes, I was able to comprehend very little. But I did remember the word CREDENZA. I guess my second piece of advice is this: if words like credenza thrill you, you will probably excel at solving crossword puzzles, but don't expect to learn the meaning of life. For that enigma... well, words fail me.

• • •

TRANSFORMATION

Eva Shatkin

Jean was thrilled when her granddaughter announced her engagement party until she learned that her ex-husband Mel was also going to be there. He had made their divorce settlement so ugly that she felt she couldn't stand the sight of him again. He had refused to pay child support past their son's 18th birthday just when college tuition fees would clock in. Even about alimony, as a lawyer, he knew all the tricks and used provisions that considerably impacted that amount. Fortunately, her insight in choosing an expensive, excellent lawyer to plead her case aided in her settlement.

At first sight it was obvious to her that ten years had aged him. His hair was thinning; his brow was higher. There was a bit of a paunch in his posture. She wondered what he took away from her appearance, knowing that time had altered her as well. To her amazement, he greeted her amiably, somehow not like the ogre that had persisted in her mind, and she responded freely in kind. "How're you doing?" he asked, and she reported that she had just gotten her license to practice psychotherapy with clients. "Wow!" he exclaimed. "Did that require a doctorate?" "Oh, yes," Jean said. "Seven years hard work besides the exam for the license."

"That's admirable," Mel said. He confessed that his new wife, whom she held partly responsible for their breakup, was not well but able to paint at home. "She doesn't sell," he added, "but as long as she continues to enjoy herself..." Jean sensed the wife had probably pleaded illness to avoid coming to the party.

Acquainted with the guests from her family, she moved around, enjoying meeting up with close relatives and those seen but rarely. Then she made an effort to talk with the family members of her granddaughter's fiancé. On the whole, the affair that she had dreaded coming to turned out to be congenial.

"What was the difference?" she wondered when she had time later in the day. The sight of Mel when she learned he was leaving her, and after the deplorable divorce, had been curdling in her mind for ten years. Seeing him had been therapeutic. What had changed her view? Of course, her marriage to Leonard, a late love affair, which even after his death had left an aura of romance on their years together, had made a big difference. It had given her the tenacity to finish her

studies as well as fortifying her self-worth, which Mel's desertion had crumbled. She began to feel that she was lovable again and responded fully to Leonard's tender attentions.

She thought it was largely her opinion of her own stature that had changed. Mel's rejection had wounded and diminished her in her own eyes. "I'm my master of myself," she thought. "I don't depend entirely on what others think of me. My self-esteem doesn't rest any longer on Mel's perspective of me or of others, too. Perhaps Leonard's love fortified me, but my own efforts gave me confidence in my abilities and value."

• • •



THOMPSON GOES DOWN THE PLUG HOLE

Jennifer Jolly

Before I went to school, I had an imaginary friend called Maureen. She lived near the wooden swing my Dad erected for me in the yard. Carrying my favorite teddy, "Foster," I would sit on the swing seat and talk to Maureen. My brother, Giles, six years younger, also had an imaginary pal, "Thompson."

Maureen was quiet and stayed put, but Thompson went everywhere. He had an invasive presence, sometimes caused trouble, always seemed to have his watchful eye on you, and eventually became known to everyone in the neighborhood.

Dad sometimes took Giles to town with him on business and wherever they went, a typical conversation was:

"Good morning Mr. Brown. How are you? And what can I do for you today?"

"I'm very well, thank you Mr. Dunn. And how are you? I want to deposit these checks, and I've brought Giles along."

"Yes, of course. Hello Giles and how is Thompson today?" To which my brother would reply: "He's doing well, thank you." He might even say: "He's in the chair listening to you."

The grown-ups would exchange winks and get on with their business. If pressed, Giles told elaborate stories about Thompson and some grown-ups egged him on, laughing and saying: "Your Giles is quite a little talker, isn't he?"

Sometimes Thompson's antics were amusing but at times, to quote my Dad, "Thompson's doings are a damn nuisance." For instance, there was the time when Dad came in worn out from a day at work and slumped exhausted into a chair whereupon he was greeted by a loud shriek from my brother.

"Whatever happened? Did you hurt yourself?" asked Dad

"No," my brother wailed, "you sat on Thompson."

Dad cursed under his breath and vowed he would show Thompson "the what for" one of these days. One day the key to the china cabinet went missing. "Has anyone seen the key?" asked Mum. No one had, but Giles said Thompson took it. "Well where did Thompson take it?" asked Mum patiently. Giles wasn't sure but thought Thompson might have lost it.

“That’s all very well, but I need to get into the cabinet. Could you please ask Thompson to find it?” she said as Giles stared solemnly at her with his sky-blue eyes.

Nothing happened and for months there was no key until suddenly it reappeared as quickly as it was lost. Giles said Thompson had found it among the toy train tracks. My mother was so relieved that Thompson was thanked rather than blamed. I thought Thompson was a good excuse for getting away with all sorts of things and I resented him.

Dad continued to say he would give Thompson “the what for” and one day he would get “his come-uppance” and eventually things came to a head.

On this particular day Dad had had it with Thompson. He had caused endless problems and now my brother was refusing to go to bed because he said Thompson was bothering him. Dad became exasperated and took Giles upstairs with Thompson tagging along. At the top, Dad said: “Now where is he?”

“On the landing,” said Giles.

“I’ll get that blighter,” said Dad.

“You missed him,” said Giles as Dad grabbed into space.

Giles thought a minute and said, “He’s gone in the bathroom.” Dad rushed over to the bathroom door and shut it firmly. “Now I’ve got him,” he said. “He won’t bother you again.”

“Oh yes, he will,” wailed the small boy, “he went down the plug hole and is heading down the drain pipe so he can come in through the front door.” Dad didn’t know whether to yell in frustration or to laugh. Fortunately he had a good sense of humor and ended up laughing until the tears ran down his face.

“Can you believe that, Thora?” he said to my mother after he finally tucked my brother into bed. “How the heck did Giles come up with that one? We can never get the better of that bloomin’ Thompson.”

When Giles went to school Thompson disappeared, but Dad never forgot him. Even in his eighties, Dad would sometimes say, “Do you remember that bloomin’ Thompson, Jennifer?”

• • •

IS THE GOLDEN RULE THE BEST ETHICAL GUIDE?

Robert A. Bloom

The Golden Rule can be expressed as “Treat others as you would like others to treat you.” Versions of the rule appear in all major religious and most nonreligious philosophies. In Leviticus 19.18 “You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against your kinsfolk. Love your neighbor as yourself.” Jesus, in summarizing the Torah (as did Hillel) said: “Do unto others as you would have others do unto you.” Muhammad said: “Wish for your brother what you wish for yourself.”

Similar examples appear in ancient Egypt, Babylon, China, India, Greece, Rome and Hindu and Buddhist teachings. While it is not always clear how far the concept of “brother” extends — is it only to your co-religionists or members of your own tribe — no doubt is present in Jainism, which in its holy Sutra says: “Nothing which breathes, which exists, which lives, or which has essence or potential of life, should be destroyed or ruled over, or subjugated, or harmed, or denied of its essence or potential.”

There have been critics of the Golden Rule. One cynic, Barry Popit, said: “Whoever has the gold makes the rules.” Kant’s critique was that the rule was not sensitive to differences of situation. For example: Can a convicted prisoner ask to be released, claiming that the judge would not want anyone to send him to prison?

Another version of this rule is shared by George Bernard Shaw and Karl Popper: “The Golden Rule is a good standard, which is further improved by doing unto others, whenever reasonable, as they want to be done by.” I call this the Platinum Rule. Its superiority lies in the fact that, if properly applied, it restrains egotism, arrogance and aggression. It restrains egotism by shifting the emphasis from your values, culture and forms of action to those of the person you’re interacting with. It reduces arrogance because it shows you that your way isn’t the only way, and because of the first two factors it is less likely to result in your forcing your will on others even if you are motivated by the sincere belief that your action would cause desirable results.

There are endless examples of pain, death and cultural destruction because the traditional Golden Rule, rather than the Platinum Rule, was applied. A current example is the Iraq war and past examples

range from religious missionaries in Africa, Asia and South America to the worst aspects of *white man's burden*, ranging from colonialism to 100-year religious wars.

However, the Platinum Rule is difficult to apply because it is difficult to know how others want to be treated. On an individual level, it is difficult to understand another's values, wishes, world view, family and economic situation and all the other nuances that constitute how another person would like to be treated. On a group or national level the problem is more complex. Do you rely on polls, the media, the cultural landscape, public intellectuals and history?

In spite of these difficulties, the Platinum Rule, like the traditional Golden Rule, both aspirational, elevate the ethical quest to a higher level.

• • •



MOTHER TERESA

Linda Rothstein

“Bergdorf’s is having a sale on moisturizer,” I told Mother Teresa, hoping the idea of a bargain would get her to forget she had renounced worldly goods.

I wanted so much to repay her kindness, but like a true saint, she accepted nothing for herself. She smiled at me, sweetly. The folds of skin on her timeworn face were something a Shar Pei would give his last bone for.

I could never convince the poor dear of my wealth. The way I was bandaged from my neck to the crown of my head, she probably thought I had been torched on a funeral pyre or perhaps ingested by horrible flesh-eating bacteria from the River Ganges.

I imagine it’s human to see others in our own light but, can’t she see my diamonds sparkling in the florescent light? Can’t she see my thermal blanket is mink? Doesn’t she read the papers? Has no one told her my philandering husband is shamefully wealthy?

Mother Teresa only sees good in us all, rich and poor alike. We have become the unlikeliest of friends ever since she wandered into the hospital on a mission of mercy. There I lay, wrapped like a mummy. She was overcome with pity, a saint’s favorite emotion. She came to bless the injured and indigent. She didn’t know she took a wrong turn at the nursing station and wound up on the plastic surgery ward.

I was thankful from the first. My skin was pulled so tight I couldn’t get my silver soup spoon into my mouth. How I longed for vichyssoise or the chill of a gazpacho. All I could consume was consommé. This, Mother Teresa fed me through a straw.

Every morning Mother Teresa brought me hot soup in an earthenware jug that she balanced on her head. Winter storms were no deterrence. She plowed through the icy streets barefoot, shivering in her flimsy nun’s habit, threadbare and still soaking from the monsoons of India.

Day after day I lay in my hospital bed, patiently awaiting the healing and the ensuing unwrapping. I hoped the gauze would be removed to reveal baby-smooth skin, and that the features would be those of a lion, a panther or best of all, a leopard. I wanted to live again as a big cat. I needed this so — my husband is attracted only to the big game.

He cherishes the magnificent felines in his private jungle, but he has treated me like an alley cat with the mange since the day I hit forty.

Mother Teresa knew none of this. Soon she brought me heartier soups. I sipped chicken noodle from the spoon she held in one gnarled hand while the other hand counted rosary beads.

Day after day I wondered why this wonderful small saintly woman, dirt-poor from birth, cared for me so. She took an oath to work among the poorest of the poor and still had mercy for me, a socialite.

The truth remained an enigma until I saw my own chart. The nurse carelessly left it at my bedside. On that chart was written: "Patient has undergone elective surgery to look like a leopard."

Yes. Yes! To look like a yellow-eyed feline. To be once more stroked by my husband as if I were a sex kitten! Sex? Mother Teresa would not understand.

It turned out sex was not the only word absent from Mother Teresa's vocabulary. She had seen the word "leopard" and thought it said, "Leper." And so I realized what the truth was, but I did not have the heart to tell her.

Soon I could chew without fear of bursting my stitches. I took to snarling. Mother Teresa did not judge. She brought me a young gazelle, pink from the rotisserie. The flesh was delicious, but I burped on the fur.

The bandages were removed. I looked just like a leopard! I emailed my husband. All I got back was a postcard of him on safari. He had an eighteen-year-old tour guide from Somali who drove the Land Rover topless. No matter — some other big hunter would surely have me.

"I want to show you my gratitude," I told Mother. "How about a manicure or a day with my stylist? You'd look good with bangs."

"No, no," she protested. "I will someday be canonized and have a ritual beatification. What better makeover can there be for a saint?" A tear cascaded down her wrinkles.

• • •

THE WHITNEY

Harriet Finkelstein

For the umpteenth time, someone asked me if I had been to the new Whitney. My ready reply was that I planned to visit before summer's end. And, inasmuch as August was already in full blaze, I made an appointment with myself for August 13th.

West Fourteenth Street in Manhattan has always represented to me the dividing line between the proper organization of streets and confused walking around in circles. Better safe than sorry they say, so I googled 99 Gansevoort Street and noted that if I just walked a short distance south of Fourteenth Street on Ninth Avenue and made a right on Gansevoort, I would be at the new museum. Armed with that knowledge, I set out on the appointed day of August 13th for the big reveal. Opinions I had read as to the architecture of the new Whitney certainly ran the gamut — fabulous to flinty, they said.

Leisurely ambling along Ninth Avenue, looking for the Gansevoort Street sign, I realized that I must have missed it and had gone too far. Making an about-face, within a couple of minutes the Whitney came into view. And what a view that was — I couldn't have been more delighted. I had made a most fortuitous blunder. Had I approached the museum from its uptown side, I would have missed seeing the Whitney in its best profile! I had been worried that I might not like the new Whitney. *Au contraire*, I loved the look of the majestic spaceship-like building.

Nearing the Whitney entrance, I was very happy to observe that there were no lines of visitors. I was able to quickly pay my admission and cruise right over to the elevators. "Start at the top," said the sweet young thing guiding the grownups. A bunch of us bundled into the humongous elevator that slowly ground its way to the top floor — number eight.

Emerging from the elevator on the perfect cloudless, sunny day I had chosen, the bountiful light of the space totally enveloped me. It just so happens that I love bright open views so my first move was towards the large, slightly scary terrace with its interesting view of the Hudson, New Jersey and the surrounding lower Manhattan area. I stood there for a while, not too close to the edge, grinning away, feeling exhilarated and in the moment.

When I finally emerged from Mr. Piano's topmost High Line embellishment, I started my survey of the interior eighth floor. Just about all of the work on display was familiar, but everything seemed to look better in its new location. Undoubtedly, the new architecture impacted on my thinking. The Whitney uptown was never my favorite, but I was always satisfied with my visits even though I didn't exactly love everything. I'm looking forward to seeing if and how the exhibits may change in the future. Working my way down, my last stop on my inaugural visit was the fifth floor outdoor terrace, which rewards you with capacious, comfortable chairs. So thoughtful. I really do believe that the new Whitney is a wonderful opportunity for the planners and a great gift to the community surrounding the museum.

For me, the icing on the cake was when I realized that when you exit the Whitney there is an elevator directly adjacent that takes you up to the High Line. By heading uptown on that glorious park in the sky, in no time at all I reached 28th street and meandered down the block to my very own apartment building. It is so nice to be a senior citizen living in one of the hippest parts of town. Who knew what was coming when I chose my apartment in Chelsea over twenty-one years ago? I love New York.

• • •



55TH YONKERS HIGH SCHOOL REUNION

Helen Saffran

Andy Silinsky, who organized the 55th Yonkers High School Reunion, does not have a way with words. When he was recruiting people to come to the reunion, he made it clear that this would be “the last hurrah” for the class of 1960. We had had reunions at 25 years, 40 years, 50 years and now it was time for the 55th reunion. After this, the abyss?

I had missed the 25th reunion because I was in a tumultuous relationship and it seemed impossible to go. There was no money for one thing; for another, I wasn’t psychologically up for meeting and greeting. I wasn’t married and didn’t have children, so I felt a sense of failure. I remember looking at the list of the women in my class and I was the only one who didn’t have parentheses next to their maiden name with their married name inside. There was Jane Weinstein (Brandeis), Rosanne Siegelbaum (Ehrlich), Margaret Gogliormella (Cohen) and on and on for about 150 names. Everyone, even those who were most unlikely to wed, like Janet Elias — a jock who used to punch a volleyball so hard I had all I could do to get out of its path — had parentheses after her name.

Technically, I was married. By common law if you live with a boyfriend for ten years, which I did, you’re legally married. But I didn’t want to acknowledge that. I did go to the fortieth reunion. I was in better shape and I could afford it.

I was no longer in a difficult relationship, had the money for the shindig and got involved in the planning. There was a reunion copy of *Broadcaster*, the school newspaper, and I wrote the entertainment column I had written in high school, “Where Did You Go? Out. What Did You Do? Plenty.”

I’m getting ready for the last hurrah, which is next weekend at a Westchester hotel. I’m rooming with a woman I shared an apartment with when I was in graduate school. There are five of us who have remained friends over the years and we’ll be sitting at the same table. Andy Silinsky told me that I was very popular and a number of people wanted to sit with me.

I feel very comfortable with the whole reunion thing.

• • •

COUNT ON A MIRACLE

Roberta Curley

It's not my style to believe in something, given no proof, or to profess hope in a faceless, bodiless, all-powerful superhero that single-handedly controls the universe. Yet, I dwell solo in Manhattan, and after extensive analysis of my own dilemma and the dilemmas of others in this concrete jungle, I've concluded why I am no atheist and why no atheist can exist in a single-occupant apartment.

Showers of friends may call, schedule dates, share secrets and joviality, yet they struggle with their own stresses and invariably dummy up if and when I bemoan that dreaded word — loneliness. Most people I know freak out thinking about the “L” word. Nests of camaraderie sometimes wash in like waves but when the phone stops ringing, the computer won't ding and you lie in bed with a whacked-out back plus sciatica down to your toes, a bell goes off reminding you that you live alone and feel lonely. (Thank god for deli delivery of self-emollients like chocolate-almond crunch ice cream.) Living solo often means functioning without a partner's commiseration, concern and coddling or even the caring offer of a consoling cup of cocoa.

Several of my single-occupant apartment friends claim they're happier in a solitary habitat minus the baggage of a roommate. Maybe they have concerned neighbors; I don't. To me, sharing company is half the battle in jousting life's emotional roller coaster. It's tough summoning up a companion in a city of steel. Dating services and dance clubs exist, but entreating a higher power, i.e., God, to help you land a personal hot cocoa bearer seems the most astute solution to combatting the lonely living loop. Keep praying, exert faith and count on a miracle!

• • •

WATERWAYS

Roberta Curley

You didn't pound
from the beginning
you glided cautiously
like an L1011
circling LaGuardia
for the 37th time...
we meet by our bench
dangle our toes
under the rails till
Security catches us
Henry Hudson's
river ripples
summer air scarce
night falls
overlaps shore
with reassuring fluidity
sky eats itself up
I click on auto-pilot
we finish each
other's sentences
you guide me like
a tango-master
life's damages
whoosh away
we skirt each other
slowly
crossing shorelines
high tide embraces us
like old pilings
...as Tony and Lady Gaga
buoy channel 13's ratings

• • •

TILTING TWOSOME

Roberta Curley

Our love is scoliotic
it curves
dangles
sometimes it reclines
droops
but it always leans
on an angle
we're built that way
ineffectual at upright love
we glorify 'twisted'
we slither
snake-like,
to discordant rhythms
jazz stalwarts
our music is arrhythmic
atonal
we metamorphose
in music
swirling, revamping
an interstellar collision
of chords
you spy my angled
torso
I savor your sexy slants
we stoop rhythmically
erupting in a
jazzified tango

• • •

ON THE RIVER

Stella Gold

On summer Sundays
The bank of the Hudson
Near the pier at sixty-eighth
street
Transforms itself
Into a groovy beach

First to arrive
Young girls in bikinis
Have set their towels
on the lawn
And lie immobile
Anointed in oil
Converted into worshippers
Of the Sun God.

A single man
Settles into a hammock
Hanging between two trees.

The grassy space
Between the path
and the river
Is the domain of young
children.
They love to watch the ducks
And collect polished stones
While their mothers socialize.

A middle-aged couple
Carefully open beach-chairs
And set out containers
For their picnic.

On the path
A serious young father
Pushes a baby carriage
While his wife follows him
On roller skates.

On the river small boats
Float peacefully
Till a tourist vessel
Disrupts the calm water
Forcing them to quiver and
bounce.

Across the path
Tall ornamental grass
undulates
And dances with the wind.

In New York City
By the Hudson River
On a summer day.

• • •

RED THREAD

Beverly Wasserman

The last time I saw her
A colorful scarf was wrapped around her head

Perched jauntily atop the scarf was a Panama hat
A fashionista statement by a stunning young woman

Hanging from a gold chain around her neck
Was a small charm shaped like a hand

And her mother had stitched a red thread
Into every piece of clothing she wears

Red thread I learned that day in July
Was meant to ward off the evil eye

Yesterday I was told
Oh so bold!
The evil eye had taken hold

• • •

THE THRILL OF A SMILE

Helen Neilson

She and I became friends
 due to a smile,
 not hers but mine.
She taught me how to smile,
 only a simple task.
 She said to me,
 “You have a good, nice smile.”
No one had noticed this before.
The thought came to me then,
 I should try smiling more
 and so I did.
Nice or not it lights up my face
 and makes me feel better
and makes people think I’m happy.

• • •

A BUMP IN THE ROAD

Jennifer Jolly

Now listen up said Edward Bray
Your hearing loss leads you astray
I asked if you'd like tea my dear
You said, 'Oh, no I don't want beer'
I said I planned to buy some bread
'It's good to have some meat,' you said
You misinterpret lots of stuff
And I repeat things 'til I'm gruff

I'm running out of patience Dot,
I'm sick of hearing you say, "What?"
Hearing aids are what you need
Then you might get up to speed
On all that other people say
Instead of guessing every day
Some device may help you out
So that I don't have to shout

Poor Dot went off for hearing tests
She tried some aids but they were pests
In fact she cried out in despair
'They hardly help I do declare!'
Who would have guessed that Dotty-dear
Once had hearing oh so clear?
She's hit a bump along the road
Just one more stage in getting old

• • •

I DREAMED I DIED

Linda Rothstein

As you watched on
As if I were a stranger on the street
Or was it that you thought
I was so strong
I could do it by myself?

I slipped away to where
In the dark the demons laughed
At how my arms flailed in space
And how my fingers quivered
As if grasping for a ledge
To keep me with the living

There was no ledge
No hand
No help

I felt the furry paw of
The ink black blob who
Crawled on eight legs
Across its spider web
Poison dripped from
Fangs poised above my head

To shun the sting
I plunged deep
Into my own eyes now lachrymose
And rocked myself to sleep

There'll be another death for me someday
A death within reality
Will you reach out as though
Hands can do what hands cannot?
Or will you let me slip away as if
Death is no more than the untying of a knot?

• • •

THE BILTMORE

Martha Drezin

When I was 16, I met Marlon.
I, wedged into a nap-flattened goo-coated mock velvet
seat with an armrest ashtray.
He, misunderstood cyclist, running wild,
upending a provincial town.
My foot, gumstuck, on a bed of popcorn and candy wrappers.
His, sleek, in snakeskin boots with spurs.
My fingers, sticky, clutching Raisinets.
His, sliding along handlebars, generating terror and lust.

We settled in for the ride, me and my sidekick Eileen.
She, indifferent to Marlon, but not to my Raisinets.
After the movie Eileen called him a *shmutz*,
She only liked boys with jobs.
But I imagined myself crushed against leather and zippers,
backed up hard between his cycle and jacket,
buckles inscribing exotic tattoos.

I, only, alone and lonely,
had the insight to pierce that sneering veneer,
Born to die for Brando then, there.

• • •

MY NEXT LIFE

Mary Ann Donnelly

In my next life it won't be the 2 train
Taking me through life.
In my next life I'll be strapped to a Harley.
Helmetless.
Letting the wind blow through my hair.
My hands on the bars.
Not wrapped around a man.
Following blue highways
To wherever they take me.

• • •

PORTRAIT

Donna M. Rubens

Staring out at me,
deep in youthful despair,
but broad-shouldered,
with a head of curly hair.

You, oil on canvas,
surviving half a century
in reckless hiding –
God knows where.

I took you home to fix you –
Ears, chin, neck not right,
Took out the aging oils.
Smeared away the blight.

Now I have you hanging
in full and heavy view.
Imagine, just imagine
that we could start anew.

I might talk with you along
this line, but you will hang
there mute. Yes, I'll gab,
in frantic wishing.
You will not follow suit.

A wild portrait really,
pictured as I saw you then,
oh, my lovely lover –
most beautiful of men.

Should I say I miss you,
each and every day –
Please change "gab"
to "scream." But still you'll
hang there, silent –
nothing but a dream.

• • •

SAFE HARBOR

Art Spar

The sailor returns from distant shore
To the home he'd chosen long before
From troubles past through water like glass
He slowly slips into her safe harbor

Wind and rain have weathered his frame
The passage has left him altered yet same
A well-worn path through water like glass
He slowly slips into her safe harbor

Temptation conspires to keep him away
The Sirens entice him blinding his way
From obstacles vast through water like glass
He slowly slips into her safe harbor

Enwrapped in her arms
Safe from life's harms
One final pass through water like glass
He slowly slips into her safe harbor

• • •



I ALMOST WASN'T BORN

Barbara P Gordon

born sickly and underweight
reluctant to nurse
she could barely raise her head

there were five other children
food was scarce

with winter near
dry leaves covered the hardened ground

in a stern maternal triage, grandma
abandoned her child in those leaves
in a hollow behind the well

Aunt Rose, a spinster, came that day
hearing her mewing feebly
she wrapped the child between her breasts
and stole her away

she dripped strained soup and sugar water
onto my mother's tongue
warmed her with her body's heat
for months from winter's chill

by day she walked her
by night she held her
she never let her go

by the sheerest force of will
she saved that baby's life

for two more years
she kept her
and grandma didn't mind
until pneumonia took poor Rose

they gave my mother her name
now healthy
she was a beautiful child
so loved, she was loving in return

she became the family favorite
and survived to become my mom

• • •

SMALL CREATURES IN THE GARDEN

Barbara P Gordon

a butterfly
dries his wings
in the morning sun

a leaping toad
scatters the dew

white foam
follows the dragonfly
across the pond

a powdered bee
sips from a violet

in the shadow
of a daffodil
a beetle labors

a sinuous mosaic
parts the grass

an unseen ant
carries away
a fallen crumb

a foraging lizard
rustles the leaves

a spider spews
just enough silk
to reach the branch

• • •

HAVANA MAY 2015

Cece Wasserman

Heat hangs heavy.
City sizzles. Sun dries clean white sheets hung
from rusty balconies. Ghosts climb stairs to
nowhere. Peeling art deco curlicues.
Windows of empty holes. Gangsters. Garbage.
Gargoyles. Grandeur. Neglect. Debris. Flaky
paint. Here and there, nail by nail. Hammer by
hammer. New pipes, holes, in old cobblestones.
Industrious artisans at school, workjune.
I stumble on streets.

Smiles, smokes, cigars.
Strangers solicit. Outstretched palms. Money
matters now. Amigo, amigo, sway
with the beat, da da da. Vroom, vroom away
in candy coated slick convertibles.
Popsicle pink, lime green, lilac, cherry.
Vintage autos show face and chassis lifts.
Red black polka dots in old Cadillac.
Aching taxi. Coughs. Chokes. No combustion.
Three strong men push hard.

The water beckons.
Stroll the Malecon. Everyone at play.
Yesterday hijacked ferries. All despair.
Furtive fleeing families. Here today
artists, stories, messages, images,
welcoming, questioning dollars. Si? No?
Sound. Salsa with Cuban cacophony.
Repairs, renaissance. Oshun leads. Bueno.
When does the sea part? In Cuban time?
I wait for mañana in Havana.

• • •

DIBUJO CHILANGO (MEXICO CITY PORTRAIT #1)

Steve Koenig

In the district next to Zócalo
filled with print shops and
antiquarian bookstores
I'm standing in shorts and T
my usual drag in all countries.
She is late for our appointment to the point
I wonder whether I have
the right address, the right name for this café.
This has been surreptitiously arranged
thanks to info left on a tag on her work
in the museum gift shop.
A blue Volkswagen beetle skids
to a halt. A small, intense redhead
comes to the rear of the Bug, opens the trunk,
and I introduce myself.
Finger to her lips she says,
"Business first. We talk later."
I love these works, nearly abstract
but abstracts tell stories too,
and the whooshes and swirls
have both fluid and concrete meaning.
So much color, each one making its own reality.
The one I like most is nearly all white,
some grey and off-white,
the most passionate, but is also
the one most likely to disappear
on the white wall of my bedroom.
I am drawn to purple,
a conflict to the white I love,
but money changes hands.
The trunk is closed.
We open the lock to her brothers'
café and art gallery, have a three-hour talk.
My arms barely surround the
newly wrapped print in my possession.
I now own a piece of art
and conscripted a new friend.
This is why we travel.

• • •

DUST

Trudy Owett

I tend to think that we had this ideal
relationship. But when the dust clears
I can see that we were far from perfect.

Was it your fault, or was it mine?
You didn't understand me, no matter
how hard I tried to explain. And then,
you raged that I didn't understand you,
and never would.

There were those days and nights of
tears, often followed by days of silence.
And the effort not to throw things,
scream or shout, because the children
might hear, which they did, anyway.

But making up was like falling in love
all over again. Touching, talking, and
resuming to share a million things.
Laughing, and sometimes crying,
but this time, in a good way.

No one understood me like you did,
And we both knew that I understood
you better than anyone else ever
could, or would.

And the kids would breathe a sigh of
relief, knowing that we wouldn't
divorce, not this time, anyway.

Sometimes I have this dream that we
can, and will, do it all over again.
Then I wake up to my sinking heart
as reality sets in.

• • •

COVER

Carole Cronig Abrahams

Cold
Cold
Cold shoulder
Chill skin
Arm warm
One shoulder, cold,
Poking out
As he turns,
Wrapped in sheet and blanket
Pulling
Uncovering
Baring
Her shoulder
She feels a sweep
Of brisk air
On her cold, cold shoulder,
As she tugs back
To warm sleep

• • •

HOLIDAY WINTER VACATION, 2015

Carole Cronig Abrahams

Holiday,
meant to give us time to play
then no way
indoors we stay
as illness has its sway
and ice slicks threaten every day
of our Holy Holiday

• • •

WHAT SHE KNEW (FOR JUNE DWYER)

Betty Farber

She knew
How to ask questions
And how to listen.

She knew
How to teach
And how to inspire.

She knew
How to do research
And how to write,

How to lead
And how to laugh...

She knew all this
And so much more.

But I wonder
If she knew
How much she was loved.

• • •



L.H.



Roy Clary, *Cesar*, Oil on Canvas



Diane Figueroa, *Barber Shop Necklace*,
Sterling Silver, Rhyolite, Glass Bead Crochet



Roslyn Schachter, *Windows*, Embroidery Sampler



Helen Neilson, *Monkey's Choice*, Collage



Yona Rogosin, *Rotation*, Mixed Media Collage



Carole Cronig Abrahams, *Masks*, Ceramic Hand Built



David Lewis, *Breakfast Of Champions*, Clay



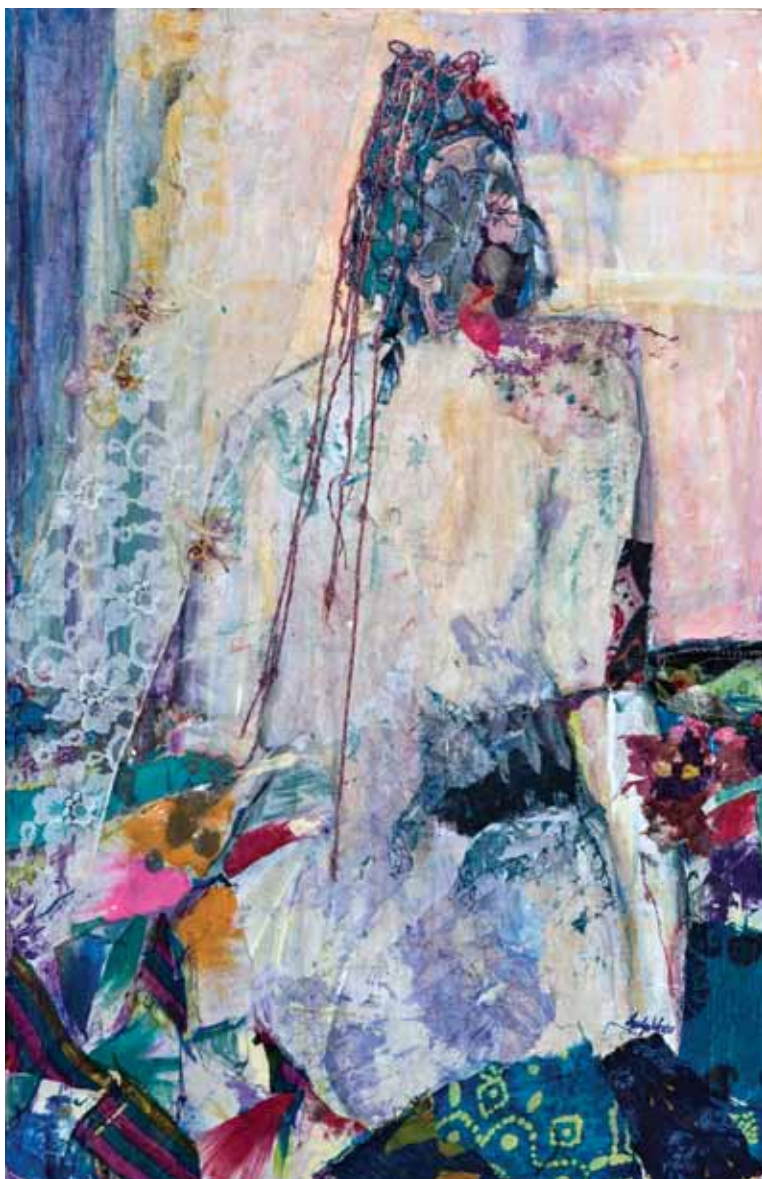
Stella Gold, *Flower Pot*, Collage



Lila Heilbrunn, *Visiting The Old Neighborhood*, Photograph



Donna Rubens, *Blue and White Lovers*, Oil on Canvas



Marilyn Weiss, *Annie's Place*, Multimedia Collage



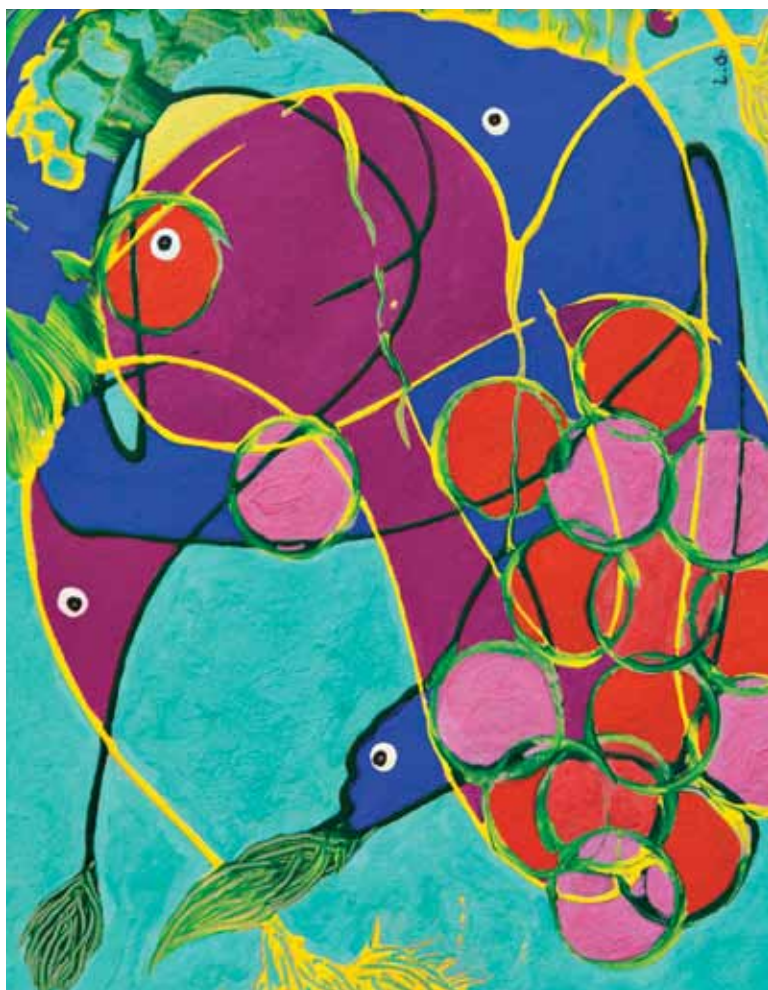
Howard Einbinder, *Into The Depths*, Photograph



Jeanette Himmel, *Stairway*, Photograph



Margaret Di Piazza, *Lavender Nude*, Wool Hooked Rug



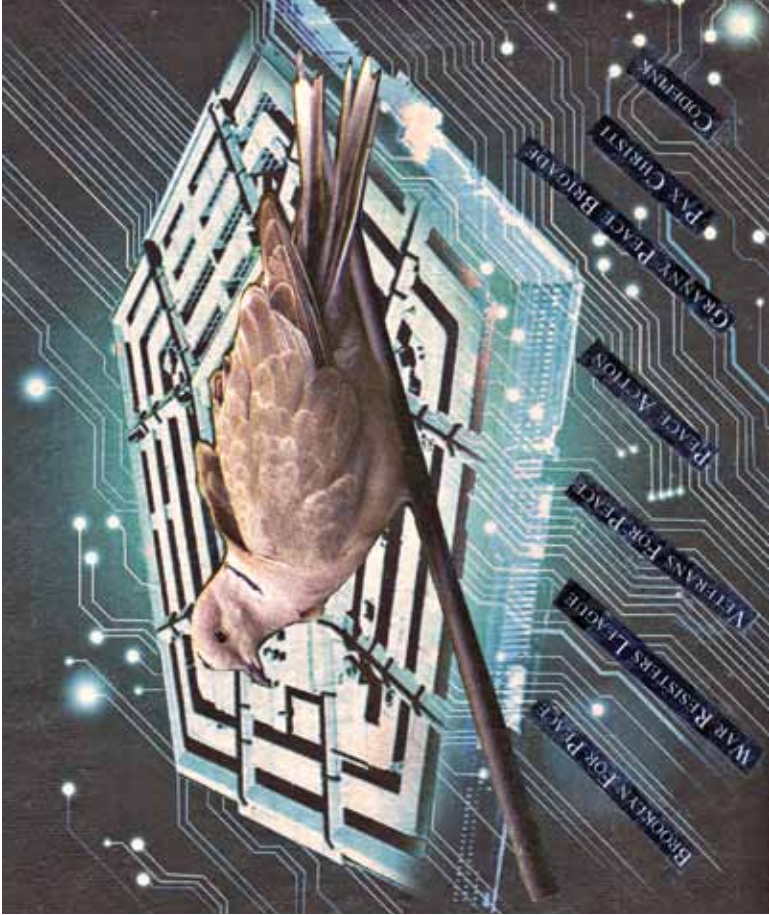
Leonard Gold, *On the Lookout*, Tempera



Ruth Kovner, *Park Avenue Paper Chase*, Photograph



Rosalie Regal, *Reclining Woman*, Clay



Mary Buchwald, *Peace Gathering*, Collage



Deborah Yaffee, *Joe's Cabin*, Photograph



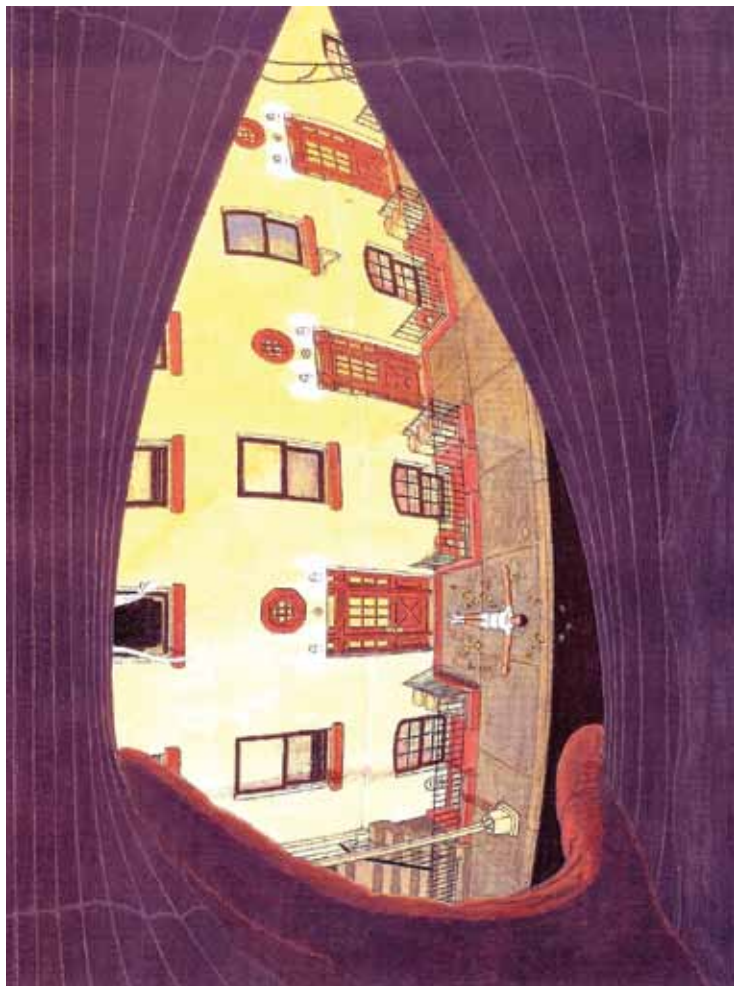
Barbara Oliver, Ethiopian Amber



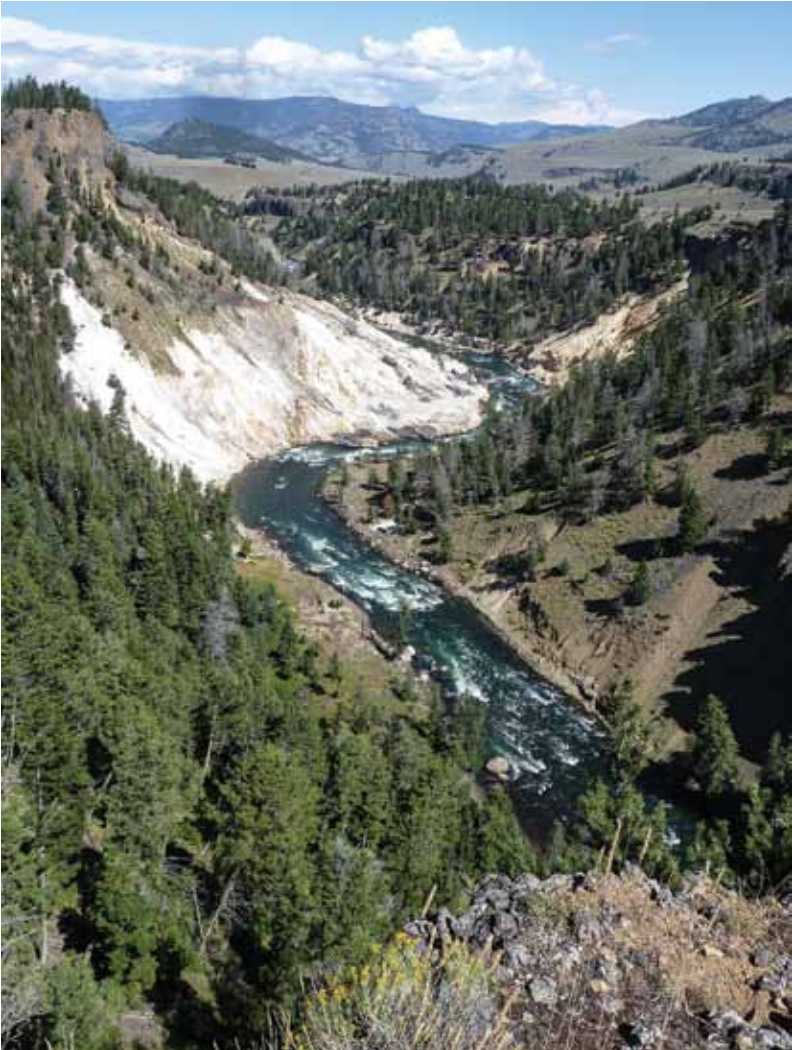
Sondra Lipton-Sahlman, *Basket of Lilacs and Peonies*, Oil on Board



Pete Weis, *Teenage Girl Hoi An*, Photograph



Gil Santiago, *Bad Dream*, Acrylics



Michael Wellner, *Grand Teton*, Photograph

LOVE LETTER

Betty Farber

Opening the title page
of a book he had given me
years ago for my birthday,
handwritten words I didn't remember.

We had said our final goodbyes
so long ago, I could only assume
that a love letter, newly written,
had traveled through time to me.

"I knew you would be
even more wonderful at 60
than you were when you were 20.
Love, Love, Love, Forever."

So we are still connected
through words and memories...

This much I have learned –
nothing is final, even goodbye.

• • •

YEATS REVISITED

Eileen D. Kelly

That is no country for old men or women
Who lie in each other's arms and love
With bursting hearts and hot bodies
The young cannot imagine
They cling and murmur and tell their passion
With the long, long story of filled and vacant cups
Of desire, yearning, brimming, flooding
That country is cold for them
This one's alive and warm and smart and loving
It knows all and had it all. It wants more.

• • •

WHAT'S A GIRL TO DO

Ellie Chernick

1941: War's on
Guys gone
What's a girl to do?

Write
Share their plight
What's a girl to do?

1944: Enlist
Be in their midst
Wounded mount
Do blood count
That's what a girl must do!

1946: Go home
No need to roam
Find a buddy
That's what a girl must do!

1949: Marriage
You know that's what a girl must do!

1950: Babies
Three boys
Lots of noise
That's what a girl must do!

1960-2000 Graduations
Weddings
Babies
Must knit
Babysit
That's what a girl must do!

2000: Not too late
Relocate
New friends
Love of old friends
Never ends
That's what a girl must do!

Be there
Hold a hand
Hold a heart
You cannot part
Because that's what a girl must do!

Friends
Becoming few
Nothing new
Now what's a girl to do?

• • •

COLD SPRING HARBOR

Ellie Chernick

The Royal Highness of Birds
Has returned
Sailing Majestically
Down the harbor
If you're heaven bent
Seek no farther than
Cold Spring Harbor

• • •

SNOWFLAKES

Ellie Chernick

Snowflakes
One of a kind
Unique
Where do you find
An Elliot Feld
Of wind patterns
Leaves me spellbound!

• • •

URBAN GREETINGS

Hilda Feinstein

sun rise yellow disguise
ubiquitous noise shakes poise
hum of trucks collecting trash
clank of gates closing fast
honk of horns filling ears
drone of news
stoking fears

greetings to a new day

din for dinner breakfast lunch
brain on overload begins to crunch
time flows unlike a sonnet
wearing stress like a bonnet
shakespeare flinches cinches pinches
all this noise
i do not want it

search for quiet neurons riot
will some calm feed my diet
peace elusive
reaching high
inconclusive
sigh
oh my

country thoughts
cannot be bought
here in clamorous
loud loud loud
loud
new york

• • •

DREAM

Enaida Cruz

As she closed
her eyes
to find herself
in a vast field
of green magnificence
the heavens
cloudless

She turned round and round
to an imaginary
sound of music
only her ears
could hear

Her arms
stretched out in the air
feeling a soft cooling breeze

As she danced
her long A-lined
white dress
gently touched and swayed
around her legs
her feet ecstatic
with each spin

There was no menace
of captivity
solely
seize the moment's
exhilarating ambiance

• • •

THE VISITOR

Art Spar

Death added me to her mailing list
Then she friended me
Her tweets come in a live feed
I can no longer imagine her away

I closed my Facebook page after she LIKED my
Broken foot
Twisted knee
Arthritic thumb
Aching back
Popping Shoulder
Bronchitis
Vertigo
Sinusitis
Tinnitus
Cataracts

She left the abstract zone of my frontal cortex
Walked through the foyer of my consciousness
Entered the anteroom of my meditation
And moved into the living room of my heart

She watches and waits
As my body slips from the apex of the bell curve
Sliding down the maladies of age
That heal slowly or not at all

Once I was Superman
Later I just wore his costume
Till the edges wore thin
And the footprints wouldn't wash off the cape

I feel her crawling around my psyche
Cataloging me for recall
My "sell by" date has years to go
But only if my tamper proof seal isn't broken

• • •

**TO ARI
(ON HIS 14TH BIRTHDAY)**

Helen Neilson

As a four-year-old boy,
you held my hand to cross the street
and asked me questions I should not answer.

We shared movies of your choice
and ice cream sodas at Circles.

That was ten years ago.

You've grown into a fine young man,
tall, handsome and so very smart,
with a heart kind, good as gold.

Now, I ask the questions
and you have most all the answers.
The movies have matured with you
and we eat Japanese when we dine out.

Age four or fourteen,
it matters not to friends.
We share many things from food to opinions
and you cross the street alone.

• • •

**BIRD OF PARADISE
(FOR MY WIFE VALLI)**

Stan Raffes

Singing
in my ears
the songs of the gypsies
camped under the stars
in the Carpathian Mountains,
the songs of the Black Sea.

You flew into my heart
near midnight,
elegant, smiling,
totally unexpected
rubbed your soft wings
against my cheek
and invited me to dance.

• • •

I AIN'T DEAD YET

Linda Rothstein

I ain't dead yet.
Don't say I'm done.
I still like sex
And you're a bum.
Until I'm pushing up the daisies
Chastity can go to blazes.
So are you game?
No more maybes.

There's nothing new beneath this sun.
I've liked it a lot since time begun.
Though time has passed for making babies
It's not yet time to push up daisies.

Should I get a guy with a gun?
Or perhaps one who's young?
Should I shower you with praises
To get you to raise what raises?
I ain't dead yet.
Don't you speak to me of daisies.

• • •



LENNY AND ME

Trudy Owett

Ages and ages ago, I think I was twelve,
my life changed when I saw the original production
of "On the Town."

To me, it was magical, and so were the images of
the twenty-six year old brilliant, Jewish and handsome
Leonard Bernstein.

I fell madly and hopelessly in love. Then
it occurred to me that it needn't be hopeless.
Because I knew that once he saw me
he'd know that we were meant to be together.

I searched for him near the places he might be.
It wasn't stalking; I was simply following my heart.
Which took me to a seat high up in the balcony
of Carnegie Hall, where the love of my life was conducting
Tchaikovsky's Pathétique.

The concert ended, and lost in the depths of this
historic hall, I climbed down endless hidden stairwells,
and wandered through doors marked danger, exit or
no exit, as well as countless utility rooms.

Amazingly, I found myself backstage, where
in the midst of champagne, people and flowers,
Lenny was holding court. Without a word, I thrust my
program toward him. Mechanically, he signed it
without a glance in my direction.

It was as though I wasn't there!
Dismayed and disappointed, I left the room,
breaking up the relationship then and there.

Soon, I was in love again. With Perry Como.
Not my type at all. I don't understand what
in the world attracted me. But that relationship
didn't go anywhere, either.

• • •

THANKSGIVING

Beverly Wasserman

Late in the afternoon
Of a golden November day
As the sun began to fade
In a violet sky
A platoon of leaves
Smeared in autumnal war paint
Of mahogany, chestnut and chili-pepper red
Surged skyward
And began a windblown war dance

And on this day
One family
Separated by a half a continent
Fractured by greed
Divided by envy
And broken beyond redemption
Refused to consider
The possibility of healing itself

• • •

NOVEMBER

Mary Ann Donnelly

November is so New York
Wrapped in dark hues
Punctuated with flashes of color
Harboring the last vestiges of summer
With still-red roses and blue-violet petunias
Keeping alive memories of its past
Recalling Thanksgivings
With the now departed
Suffused with nostalgia
Brushing aside lean years
And angry words

• • •

CITY MOON

Barbara P Gordon

city moon
tarnished like an old coin
teasing craggy face
peeping between buildings
competing with neon
completing your nightly arc
burdened with our wishes
carrying our dreams across the sky
into the southern hemisphere

• • •

WIND SONG

Donna M. Rubens

The wind blows in, gusty, cold
On bright October day.
How glad I am to get inside.
I am growing old.

Hang on tight to walking cane,
If I fall—there's wind to blame.
How glad I am to get inside.
I am growing old.

Surely this is but a fluke,
Like early frosty day—
With new legs I'll show that wind
I still know how to play.

Tomorrow maybe—
Not today.

• • •

ATLAS T. YORICK

Hal Cantor

Hiding from life isn't easy –
You begin
By hating squirrels that beg
Standing up on their cute, little paws,
Showing squinty, glinting eyes that implore –
Pass them by.
Also, the cripple ignore with his busted leg
And his cap full of guile. He's a fraud,
Helping him is a sin.

As a child, you were told to stay inside.
You had a Faustian vision of savagery waiting
In the streets.
Heard gibes and taunts
And pretended to be immune. And you vowed
That someday you'd write a book about kids' deviltry.

So you did, making sure
It was properly dense and obscure
So that only a few could grasp its intent –
The product of years and years of reading alone
In Barnard's stacks. Your stomach would gurgle and vent
Embarrassed that others might hear it.
You took pills that made the world seem pristine and pure.
Then you spent days, endless days with doctors –
With CT scans, ultra sounds and cardiograms.
While the book languished, You withered away.

In the end, when all was said and done,
Neighbors remarked you'd been ill for a long time
But hid it very well.

• • •

ON FIFTH AVENUE

Eva Shatkin

Seated on my walker, I appraise the scene
of passersby on our busy street,
preoccupied with errands of their fancy
varied in their paces on the way:

The Village walkers swing their many leashes
attending dogs of varied breeds and sizes;
the baby strollers gently flowing by;
the NYU students in a hurry,
late for class or gleeful leaving.

Tourists seated, piled on buses
attending someone at a mike
directing their attention up the street:
“That’s Washington’s Arch ahead of us.”
Before the bus turns on Eighth Street,
they flash their cameras to stash the sight
to look at later where they’d been
How much will they remember?
How often will they look?

A balmy breeze here on the corner
stirs the flags atop the crosswise building.
Another day, another scene
has flashed by me in a moment
for now these sights will have to do.
Contented, rested, I get up to leave
to reach the haven in my house.
How much will I remember?
How often will I look?

• • •

A HISTORY LESSON

Stella Gold

At age seven
At school in Paris
I was taught
My first lesson in History.

Our teacher told us
That a long time ago
Our country was called “la Gaule”
And its inhabitants, “les Gaulois,”
Were our common ancestors.

They were fearless in battle
Yet terrified
That the sky
Might one day
Fall on their head.

I liked the thought
Of a well defined Past
Yet already knew
I was the product
Of a different myth.

My forebears
Came from another place
Far away in the East.
Running from a tyrant
They crossed the Red Sea
Seeking the Promised Land.
Seeking...

• • •

FLUTE

Cece Wasserman

I have six circles
On my belly and below
I can breathe in and out
thru each circle...
I can control sounds.

I can chant in lyric coloratura
croon in tenor and countertenor
shriek in loud bass sound waves.

I summon the mountain sheep
the soaring falcon.
warn them of the
Apocalypse.
The owl responds,
Beware.
The gods are angry.

The shaman oiled my wooden body
In the sacred valley of Peru.

• • •

COVERS

Helen Neilson

So many things are done under cover.
Some on the sly like spies
who cannot come in from the cold –
and undercover cops
always sneaking around in alleyways
looking for perps that prowl –
and back door lovers creeping from bed to bed
looking for one more thrill
under anyone's covers, day or night –
and cooks hiding covers for pots and pans
in kitchen cabinets
away from germs and out of sight –
and family jewels safely under cover
sparkling for owners' eyes only.

• • •

THE GREATEST GENERATION: ONE STORY

Mary Ann Donnelly

It wasn't the call to duty
But the desire to flee his world
Of endless chores and unbroken vistas
Seen from the seat of a tractor.

He thought he would see the world
But his view was now the open sea
Seen from the deck of a Destroyer
Soon to be destroyed.

He thought he'd have a girl in every port
But between the prairie and the South Pacific
He stopped in Brooklyn where he met his love
Who changed his sights from farm to city
From windmills to water towers.

A new world to return to
Where he declined the hero's mantle
Went to work, bought a house
Loved his children.

• • •

INSPIRATION

Betty Farber

On the balcony of a cruise ship, I saw
A vision, rising gracefully out of the fog:
Lady Liberty blessing New York Harbor,
A shadowy grey, with her lamp shining brightly.
Is that how she looked a hundred years ago
When a little Russian girl, hugging the smokestack
Of a different ship, gazed at her?

“An inspiration to us all,”

I used to say. Not speaking of the statue,
But of that little Russian girl who lit my way.

• • •

THE COMMUTER'S FINAL ROUND

Wayne Cotter

Weary and wobbling,
Our grizzled commuter
Mumbles, stumbles
Crumbles
To his seat
One last time.

Beat up, cut down
Well past prime time,
His glazed,
Blood-splashed
Eyes
Stare unseeing.

No more bobbing
Or weaving
Ducking
Deceiving.

No more underlings
Or overlings
With big mouths
And short counts.

Doors snap shut.
The ultimate journey
Begins.
Eyelids droop,
The arena fades,
A cheerless bell rings.

• • •

MAGIC MEMORIES

Roy Clary

I remember sitting on the deck of my summer house,
Having just returned from the beach.
It all seemed so unreal
That I, who as an actor,
Once created magic
Out of the written word,
Was now far removed from all that
And found instead
Magic created for me
By water, sky, and sand.
Wands appeared
As son and daughter.
Two who
Saw to it that
I joined their stage in things to do
Their magic was everywhere
Building castles and moats,
Sailing popsicle stick boats,
Finding images in clouds,
Seeking shells and skipping stones

Today, in the mind,
There's
Magic
Still
In memories,
Echoes,
Ripples,
Sighs

• • •

WHEN I GO WALKING

Jennifer Jolly

Now I'm old and go out walking
To myself I do some talking
Sometimes trudging through the rain
Snow and sleet and back again

Walking's good I say to me
Helps my back and gammy knee
Helps my heart to pump quite well
Clears my lungs so I feel swell

I wear my earphones, hear a song
Then whistle as I go along
Like Jiminy Cricket I'm okay
I'll live to see another day

I hit my stride go up a hill
At the top I take my fill
Across the sparkling river wide
With gentle waves that move the tide

A marvelous vista comes in sight
Of skyscrapers in all their might
While metal spans of bridges high
Reach on up towards the sky

Then I walk beside the waves
Wander by the Sybil's caves
And I dream of other lands
Vast green oceans, desert sands

Now that I'm beyond my best
Walking's great and gives me zest
I'll press my lips and hum a song
To keep the beat and stride along

That's how I go walking

• • •

SILVER VS. GOLD

Eva Shatkin

As an old adage has it
we have often been told:
speaking is silver,
while silence is gold.

For most of my life
I've strained to withhold
the tarnishing notes of silver
with restraint shown by gold.

Somehow I revel in talking;
others may think I'm too bold,
while I find those who are silent
an enigma leaving me cold.

What is the happy median
that beckons us into the fold:
one who will tell you nothing
or one whose talk is old?

The better part of wisdom
said my father in our household
is to say what is consequential
and avoid what has been twice-told.

• • •

QUEST

Sy Amkraut

Quest is the place for long-term learning.
Under its roof you satisfy the need for this yearning.
Want to live a happy life that is long?
Stimulate brain and body to keep them strong?
For Questers, long-time learning is reality not a yearning.

• • •

DREAMING OF PROGENY

Eva Shatkin

Dreaming of progeny:
bronze, yellow, black and white
bubbling from my being,
strangers yet my own.

She comes to study; he's in the Peace Corp.
He travels for business; she lives in that town.
The first words are idle but as the day goes
their sense of humanity turns upside-down.

When wedded together, the children to come
evolve in a manner that cannot be schemed
far from the family that they descended
in manner and semblance that one never
dreamed.

The farther that issues stem from the line
more distant the outcome seems to grow
until to the forbears the lineage coming
results in a distance they'll never know.

The cultures are blended, the colors, too,
the cohort descended resembles the world.
The ties that bond one to another
range far and wide throughout the globe.

I am sooner a memory
when from me flow
generations to come
strangers, yet my own.

Cultures are blended
Colors are churned
With the tide's flux
Where will I be?

• • •

AN AUGUST AFTERNOON IN CHAUTAUQUA, NY

Wayne Cotter

From the street you may notice the multicolored Victorian home, not unlike dozens of others adorning the Chautauqua community. Your eye may then drift to the welcoming porch, shaded by stately elms. Look closer and you may see three old friends in overstuffed chairs, talking, laughing and, yes, imbibing their drink of choice: Chardonnay.

Two of them – Dolores and Anne – are long-time residents of Chautauqua. The third, Karen, has flown in for the community's annual lectures and to catch up with her two college friends, a yearly tradition. And today these friends are whiling away an August afternoon at the home of Anne and her husband Byron.

Dolores: It's such an idyllic life in Chautauqua. When you're here the world's problems seem a million miles away.

Karen: I know. I can't imagine anyone getting sick or losing their job in Chautauqua.

Anne: Oh it happens, believe me (*lowering her voice*). In fact, Byron nearly lost his job last year, but he latched on to a great support group and now, well, he seems OK.

Dolores: You're kidding! Byron? What was the problem? Was he (*sipping her wine*) an alcoholic?

Anne: No, but he was addicted.

Karen: Addicted! Addicted to what?

Anne: (*softly*) Reading. (*Karen laughs*)

Dolores: Don't laugh Karen, around here that's serious business.

Anne: Yes it is. He would start around midnight. He'd claim he was doing a little light reading. Next thing you know he was up all night, reading books, magazines... junk mail. He was going to work dead tired, ignoring our kids, even reading on the job. But through the help of Authors Anonymous, he managed to wean himself off novels and nonfiction.

Dolores: Authors Anonymous – that's a great organization, but what about short stories? Can he at least read short stories?

Anne: Are you kidding? The short story is considered gateway fiction – it leads to all kinds of expanded literary forms. He's allowed only haikus, sonnets, and some newspapers – USA Today and stuff like that.

Karen: You're serious, aren't you?

Anne: Oh yeah, when he was hooked, he was like... a piece of furniture. He'd never leave home.

Karen: And now?

Anne: Well, now he's got his weekly poker game and he's actually joined a bowling team – although I'm a little suspicious of the league. You know there's a lot of downtime in bowling and I hear some of the bowlers read between frames.

Dolores: Incredible! So where do you hide your books?

Anne: They're all in storage. I only read outside the home now – in libraries and coffee shops. I can't read here.

Dolores: And you may not know this Karen, but Chautauqua is the worst possible place for a reading addict.

Anne: Absolutely! It's like an alcoholic living next door to a brewery. This town is devoted to reading. They sell reading pins and magnets here. In fact, some say Chautauqua residents are – pound for pound – *the most literate people in America.*

Karen: But... it seems so... unreal.

Dolores: Karen, this town actually holds parades to honor reading! All those people marching in support of the written word as you sit and watch... totally bookless. Can you imagine a parade honoring drinking?

Karen: Well, yes. Ever seen the St. Patrick's Day Parade?

Dolores: Touché.

Karen: (*pause*) So your husband can never read serious literature again. He's done?

Anne: No, no. We have an agreement. Once he's retired and the kids are out of the house, he can read all he wants. Of course I'm hoping he sticks with poker and bowling, but who knows?

Karen: Well, perhaps he could...

Anne: Shhh! Here he comes now. How was work, dear?

Byron: Oh, hello, ladies. Work was just fine, but I'm beat. If you'll excuse me, I think I'll go inside.

Bryon goes to the refrigerator and grabs a beer as the three friends peek in through the porch window. They watch as he flips on the TV, settles into his easy chair, and takes a long sip. Anne smiles tenderly.

. . .

A DREADFUL SCARE

Eileen D. Kelly

When I walked into Bob's hospital room and saw the look of terror on his face: eyes huge, popping like a deer in the headlights; skin ashen; mouth, a perfect O in horror, I knew something terrible had happened. Even his chemo-thinned, chemo-gray hair seemed to stand on end. "Don't tell them I'm a Roumanian Jew!" he whispered as soon as I came near. "That guy and the other one, over there, they're speaking Roumanian," he said, lowering his voice even more, then mouthing, "*He's a Nazi!*" He broke the toilet seat in the bathroom so I'll fall off and get hurt!" His voice and eyes were petrified and pleading, like a child with a nightmare. A dying man scared he'll get hurt. Nazis trumped cancer that day, the Holocaust casting its heartbreaking shadow.

With a kiss and a hug, I said, "We'll get out of here," and pulled the curtain around the bed to shelter him. Without looking at the new roommate, listening to hear Roumanian, or checking the toilet seat, I went out to the oncology head nurse, Sheila. She grasped the situation right away and agreed when I asked for a private room. Immediately she had Bob, in his extra-long bed, rolled out and into a small single room. Regina, the ward manager, had gotten that bed for him after seeing his huge feet dangling miserably over the edge of the first bed.

I gathered Bob's few belongings: the *NY Times*, his reading glasses, a small tape player and tapes of his beloved Mozart, a pen, his slippers, a few dollars for the TV, a comb and toothbrush; such paltry possessions for this giant of a man. He hadn't brought his pajamas and briefs; the tender tumor in his belly couldn't bear the slightest pressure of elastic. At home he no longer wore the sexy black briefs that he wore to the hospital a year and a half earlier. That time the briefs and his flirty good looks had earned what one grinning nurse called an "X-Rated" warning. Bob delighted in this label.

The private room was so tiny that to get from one side of the room past Bob's long bed to the other side, you had to suck in your stomach. That became a fun conversation topic the next few days; not everyone could suck in enough to make it through.

When I sat down next to Bob that day I saw that he was doing what I was doing: taking a deep breath and blowing out a quiet "whew!" We smiled at each other the way couples do sometimes, when they've

done something really courageous and creative, and gotten away. I thought of the time we were out biking one summer evening and were about to return home. Suddenly we saw Bob's parents' car pull up in front of our apartment house. We knew they'd be inviting themselves in. Bob signaled me to keep going. We went way over to the west side of Greenwich Village where no cars were welcome. He was laughing when we finally stopped.

I almost wished he'd laughed that day in the hospital, till I realized he was deadly serious, even through the mental cloud of anemia and pain medication. His fright was very real. And, having a Roumanian father, Bob would know the language when he heard it. It was Roumanian all right.

The day before all this, the doctor had given us the somber verdict that nothing more could be done for Bob's cancer, that from here on all treatment would be palliative. The thing is, what we really needed that awful day of the Roumanian roommate, was a good hearty laugh, not getting scared to death by Nazis.

• • •



NEW YORK CITY SUBWAY

Hilda Feinstein

The subway is a great equalizer. Everyone pays the same fare and jockeys for the same seats. No special privileges are afforded regardless of status above ground. Ridership is almost as diverse as New York itself — almost — since the well-heeled rarely pass through turnstiles. Although not exactly “a trip to bountiful,” each excursion can, however, include a patchwork of memorable experiences, that is, if you look beyond the obvious.

Most of the time the subway takes me efficiently and quickly to where I’m going. I frequently arrive at destinations sooner than my bus-bound and more flush taxi-riding friends. I am even sometimes entertained and/or educated along the way.

Television news last night depicted a rat sharing the subway car with mortified rush hour passengers. The smallish gray rodent literally climbed up the leg of an unsuspecting, sleeping male passenger. Fortunately, the man awakened quickly and separated himself from the unwelcome interloper. No damage beyond the shock of the moment ensued. Fortunately for me, after many years of underground travel, I have never encountered a train rat — mean and ratty people sometimes, but no authentic living, breathing rat. I suppose they keep a guarded distance of their own.

The subway passes through New York City’s dark underground caverns, adhering only to the dictates of safety signals that control traffic below teeming city streets. Steel wheels grind and reverberate against concrete trackbeds. The noisy din dulls the senses yet stimulates silent thoughts of passengers. Judging from facial expressions, thoughts range from the darkly serious to the sublime. Despite the clamor, musicians with a full range of talents and beggars with a full range of appeals vie against the competitive cacophony.

The oppressive graffiti-scrawled cars of the eighties are long gone. Ironically, the same subway cars, once the informal art studios that displayed identifying graffiti tags of artists like Keith Haring and Jean-Michel Basquiat, then maligned to criminal status, are now considered nearly mainstream. Recognizable and respectable, their works posthumously adorn the walls of fine museums.

Station platforms remain crowded, hot in summer, cold in winter and mostly uninteresting. Voices, unclear and faceless, roar through choked up speakers, jarring passengers' ears with static(y), garbled words.

The Japanese designers of many fleet cars have squeezed and scrunched us into small shared spaces. This close proximity periodically results in conflicts between prickly passengers. On the NYC subways, however, everyone seems larger than life, and everyone seems to be in his or her own oversized world.

Colorful and vibrant advertising papers every available space. Messages may be explicit, cheerful, informative, invasive, appalling or sad. You may find it personally distasteful to be encouraged to consider having your hemorrhoids removed (without pain) as you make plans for the day.

Most third millennium commuters have their brains and noses locked into electronic gadgetry, behavior akin to hi-tech meditation or perhaps, more accurately, hi-tech mindlessness. The objective: to get to destinations with as few interactions, lumps, bumps and as little angst as possible.

Having traversed through years of grime and crime statistics, I am glad to say that this is no longer the case, and I feel safe traveling alongside myriad local commuters and tourists who gawk with awe and confusion while moving about New York.

Some subway experiences have been funny. Once, while seated on a crowded train during morning rush hour, I noticed unexpected movement in front of me. Three young twenty-somethings in heavy winter garb dropped large rectangular sheets of paper on the floor and calmly proceeded to carefully pin an oversized dress pattern onto the sheets of paper. The funny part is that after noticing them, the passengers casually returned to whatever they were doing and quickly became disinterested. This is after all New York — whatever!

Although most travelers try not to touch the subway, if you use it, the subway will touch you. It is a rare traveler who doesn't have some subway story, and many are filled with passion or emotion. If you remain alert, you may be surprised and even delighted by the activities of its diverse ridership.

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THE DINNER PARTY

Mary Beth Yakoubian

So the six of us got together at our place on a Saturday night for dinner and drinks. I had gone all out and prepared several Middle Eastern dishes, including my mom's "fancy pilaf." I took out the set of gold-trimmed dishes and Dan, complaining bitterly, won his battle with the extra dining table leaf.

I was relieved when Jim and Sandra showed up in perfect health; I wasn't ready to listen to another litany of improbable exotic symptoms. When Walt and Carol arrived, Walt, of course, was already half in the bag. Then, while the rest of us were chatting in the living room, he went back and forth into the kitchen where he opened the liquor cabinet and helped himself to half a bottle of Ketel One Vodka. By the time we sat down to dinner, he was nearly incomprehensible. Oblivious to my culinary efforts, he focused on turning every topic of conversation into something he could expound on by virtue of his superior knowledge.

I tried changing the subject, asking Jim, "How often do you practice your Aikido?" All right, not a very subtle switch. Sandra rolled her eyes and made a face, but Jim was happy to go on about his favorite activity.

"Every day," he said. "Well, almost. I take Sundays off because my best partners don't go on Sundays."

"Hah-hah," I responded! "You're even more driven than Dan. He goes to the gym five mornings and then crashes at home all weekend. Never alters his routine."

Dan said, "Hey, I like working out at the gym. You can just work on your own; no partner needed."

But, per usual, Jim and Dan couldn't resist bringing up politics again and the latest Republican outrages. Walt became even more animated at this and insisted on expressing his informed opinion on the subject.

"Eezzah-fahkknn-ahsssohh!" he loudly pronounced.

Not even his wife Carol could respond to this bit of wisdom. I felt obligated, as a host, to pretend I understood. "Well, a lot of people feel he doesn't stand a chance in the primaries."

Walt bellowed with laughter, rocking forward and back in his chair. On his third forward rock, one hand swiped the edge of his wine

glass, knocking it over. Not too serious since the glass was only half full and didn't make too much of a mess. I jogged to the kitchen, tore off a few feet of paper towel and mopped up the Pinot.

Then it was rave reviews for my apple clafoutis and the party was over. As Walt and Carol were getting ready to leave, Walt began heading in the wrong direction, so Carol gave him a tiny nudge to point him the other way. Down he went, nearly hitting his forehead on the corner of the wall. "Oh, Walt!" she said with exasperation. She bent down on one knee by her husband, reached her hands out and grabbed his to help him stand, a move that she appeared to have had some practice using. "Come on baby, how about I drive us home."

I caught Dan's eye and mouthed, "This is the last time." I turned to Jim: "Would you help Carol walk Walt to their car? I think they're parked nearby but she might have trouble with him on her own."

Jim replied, "Sure, no problem. C'mon buddy, it's getting late." I stared at the messy, abandoned table and then plunked down on the nearest chair. I wondered if maybe we should just leave the extra table leaf in place, ready for next time. I said, "My mom would have loved the pilaf."

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MY FATHER, PVT SAMUEL WIESENBERG, US ARMY

Jerry Wiesenberg

My father was quite the soldier, but I know this only because I was a detective. He did not readily share information about his time in the army. Samuel Wiesenberg was born in Janow-Lubelski, Poland on May 10, 1893. He arrived in New York City on March 5, 1914 on the Kroonland, which had sailed from Antwerp, Belgium. He was soon drafted and served in the United States Army.

When I was quite young, I found a WWI medal and other memorabilia that he had kept in a drawer in his bedroom. I asked him what he did in the war, and his humorous response was, "I won it!" My sister also remembered asking him what he did in the war and he replied that he "got to France when the war was over!" Later, I learned that was untrue. We never further questioned him about his army service when my father was alive and he offered very little personal information. Perhaps the combat experiences of his wartime involvement were too horrible for him to remember, as it is with many returning war veterans today.

Later on, compiling information for a family tree, it took a lot of patience, time and research to unearth letters, documents and photographs related to his service in the US Army during World War I. I attempted to research his official army records but learned that they were destroyed in a 1973 fire in the Army Personnel Records Center in St. Louis, Mo.

The scant information I did find indicated that in May 1918 my father was drafted and entered into the US Army. Assigned to Company F, 51st Pioneer Infantry Division, American Expeditionary Forces, he took basic training in Camp Wadsworth, New York. At the completion of training, the troops left the camp for France on July 29, 1918, sailing on the Kroonland and arriving in Brest on August 8, 1918. Although he had never mentioned it, it was quite a coincidence that he sailed to America and returned to France on the very same ship!

According to some other historical records I found, Company F, 51st Pioneer Infantry Division took part in the St. Mihiel, Meuse-Argonne and Defensive Sector campaigns. Through correspondence with the US Army Records Division in Ft. Knox, I learned that his service in

those campaigns had been verified and a replacement WWI Victory Medal with three campaign bars attached was sent to me. After the armistice was declared in November 1918, the 51st was assigned to the occupation of Germany forces. (I later found family photographs, showing my father in uniform, wearing the armband of the Military Police.) The army also told me that an Occupation of Germany Medal, which he should have been entitled to, would be sent to me. My father returned to the United States and was honorably discharged in Camp Upton, NY, on July 7, 1919.

As a result of an accident, my father suffered a stroke and was confined to a Veterans Administration Hospital for a number of years until his death there in 1980. One detail he shared with me was that the only fight he ever had was while he was in basic training. It was there that a fellow soldier attacked him in an act of anti-Semitism. I am sure he took many memories with him to his grave that his family and others would have appreciated learning about.

It was a year ago when I came across an item on the Internet, requesting information about Jews in the Service during World War I. I wrote my father's story and sent it in. Quite recently I received a letter stating that the story was included in a newly published book, "Jews in the Great War: Family Histories Recalled." The upshot is that I was published and got a free copy of the book. But, I will always regret not getting more information from my father when he was alive.

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MY MANY HOMES

Sandy Frank

Why Quest? For me, learning is an ongoing process that keeps my mind young. One of the greatest gifts we can give ourselves is to learn — read, associate with smart people, find a good teacher, experience life, question, analyze, discuss and explore. There is a quote from Thomas Huxley that resonates with me: “Try to learn something about everything and everything about something.”

When I first met my future husband, Glenn, he was pursuing his second master’s degree. When not working he was studying. Glenn told me that with his schedule he only had time to date me once a week. Was I upset? No, not really. I was impressed because he loved learning and he loved reading and he also called me every night. Glenn is a professional student with two masters, certificates, continuing education classes, online study, etc. Since childhood his nose has always been in a book or magazine.

Glenn and I take long walks and I ask him to tell me something interesting and his breadth of knowledge just flows. We discuss/argue politics, religion, current events, history, art, books, film, etc. Let’s face it, smart is sexy.

As for me, I love to read. I don’t watch television; never turn it on because I feel it numbs the brain. I am addicted to Scrabble/Words with Friends and various other word games. I am spellbound by search engines such as Google and Bing. Wikipedia is amazing and the Internet is my friend. My tablet is beside my bed along with a handful of hardcover books. Some of my best memories are being read to as a child. I always give books as gifts to young and old alike. Since getting my library card at age four, my second home has been the New York Public Library.

Both Glenn and I were fortunate to be able to retire relatively young. We love to travel and spent over four months traveling last year. Travel broadens the mind and enriches the soul, whether it is studying the history of Europe, geology of Iceland, laughing over penguins in Antarctica, or examining the culture of the Polynesians in the South Pacific. But man cannot live by travel alone. What to do when not travelling? There’s Quest — an answer to our prayers.

Belonging to Quest is an honor and a privilege. I am awed by the knowledge and experiences of my fellow learners. The presentations are first rate and professional. The environment is warm and welcoming. The people are interesting. The subjects covered in class are eclectic and informative and have introduced me to some new areas I had never explored before. Guest speakers give interesting and new perspectives on a variety of topics. Members can go on field trips and even vacations. The student lecturers encourage participation and discussion. Technology is supported and taught. As the philosopher Descartes said: "I think, therefore I am." I hope to grow/learn/explore for many years to come and I believe Quest will be my third home!

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S'AMAS CÉRAMICA ©

MEA CULPA?

Robert Reiss

Brussels, the traffic congestion capital of Europe, launched its first car-free Sunday 15 years ago, an example followed by Montreal, Jakarta and other cities.

This lead in a recent New York Times story resulted in pangs of guilt surging through my psyche. You see, for the first time, I realized that Brussels is the traffic congestion capital of Europe. Could I, Robert Reiss, have even a scintilla of culpability for poor Brussels garnering its dubious honor? Well, you be the judge. This is what happened.

At the May 1960 New York Auto Show in the old Colosseum on Columbus Circle, I ordered a Volkswagen bug that I would pick up in Brussels. For that would be the second stop after Paris on the European honeymoon that Eva and I were planning. So during the second week of June, we traveled by train (way before TGV) from Paris to Brussels and arrived at the Volkswagen showroom on Chaussee de Louvain (Leuvensesteenweg if you're Flemish). A very urbane salesman guided us in perfect English through the necessary paperwork and accompanied us to the garage where our shiny new blue bug looked forward to escaping to the open road.

I had at first neglected to mention to the salesman that I had never driven a manual shift car before. I had learned to drive a few years earlier in my parents' '56 Plymouth in which you pushed buttons to change gears on the automatic transmission. I thought this would be a good time to bring this gap in my driving skills to someone's attention. The salesman didn't see this as a deal breaker and indicated that a mechanic would instruct me on the car's operation.

A clean, neatly dressed mechanic got in the car with me and, as promised, began to describe the car's features... in French. At this point I felt that my choice of three years of Spanish in high school had been ill-advised. After about 15 minutes of his earnest coaching, I understood where to turn on the heat (*la chaleur*) and that's about it. He handed me the keys and we were off. Well... not quite off. We lurched forward as I tried to actualize what I had read about operating a clutch. This is akin to removing your own appendix based on an anatomy text. I was able to move about 10 to 15 feet between lurches and

exited the showroom's driveway onto the heavily trafficked Chaussee de Louvain. Distracted by the car's acting like a bucking bronco, we soon realized that we were headed in the opposite direction to our intended destination, Ghent.

Not thinking too lucidly, and believing that my American passport would explain my irrational behavior, I decided to execute a U-turn on this major thoroughfare. It was only one lane in either direction despite serving as a main artery in Brussels. After the first part of the U-turn I was completely obstructing both travel lanes. But I planned to quickly get into reverse so I could finish the maneuver and get out of everybody's way. Wrong.

As I later found out, VWs of that era were legendary for their difficulty in getting into reverse, especially when new. I struggled and struggled and could not get the gearshift to cooperate. Meanwhile the car was serving as sort of a Checkpoint Charlie effectively blocking both lanes of traffic on this critical link in Brussels' road network. The queues in each direction were getting longer and longer and the horns started honking. I was too panicked to even be embarrassed.

Stuck in the traffic, a bus driver got out of his vehicle, approached me and asked, I think in English, if he could be of assistance. I explained my difficulty and he suggested that I get out of the car and he would slide in and complete the U-turn. Which he did. I was extremely grateful. A few more minutes blocking traffic and there would be scores of angry drivers storming our car like it was the Bastille.

Now headed in the right direction and with at least a half-hour's experience driving a manual transmission, I was ready for our ten-week tour of Western Europe.

But, and this will haunt me forever, did I contribute to Brussels' becoming the traffic congestion capital of Europe?

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TINKERBELL

Donna M. Rubens

My name is Tinkerbell, Tinkerbell Casey, and please don't laugh. I have a little brother, Peter, and I'm waiting for him to come home — not through the window — oh, come on! Our parents were hippies, so it's no surprise they were taken with the story of the boy who would never grow up. Given their youthful approach, that was their gift to us, the names Tinkerbell and Peter, to carry proudly throughout our lives.

When I got to school, first grade, I found out that my name was not exactly what you could call “regular.” From the first day at recess I was an outsider, the brunt of a good many stares and admonitions. After ten minutes all I wanted to do was run away back to the pot-infested hovel we called home. I stuck it out, returning to school the second day, kicking and screaming, determined that my name from then on would be Belle. The teacher was kind, even to urchins like me. I became Belle and the bullying and name-calling subsided to a normal level.

This worked until 4th grade, when a stickler of a teacher looked at my records. “Young lady,” she said, “your given name is Tinkerbelle. We use given names in my class.” I won't go into details. I don't think I have to. By that time Peter was in school too and since bad news travels fast, we became the favorite school joke. It was suggested that I fly away so frequently the idea has been imprinted in my mind. As a matter of fact, that is what I am planning to do now. Life, this life, is too treacherous; maybe there really is a Neverland. Maybe I can find it. But first I want to say good-bye to Pete. He has had an easier time of it — there are lots of fellows named Peter. He can live his life in an ordinary way. I don't want to stand in his way.

Why, you might ask, didn't I change my name when I came of age? By then, believe me; I was so shy I did not even want to go to court and rename myself. To be honest, I had gone through a stage where I just did not care and actually did a (short) circuit as the living breathing Tinkerbell, the whole enchilada. I told the audience, “If you believe in fairies...” They either clapped or booed. I am no good as a fairy — I'm really a klutz — and that was always the finale. I played in hidden away basement and attic dumps, the air rife with the smoke

from pipes, cigars, and cigarettes and, of course, weed, grass, whatever name that substance went by. Payment was a fag or two, maybe a drink of something lethal. As a fairy I did not need money or food, right?

So this is my swan song, my last hurrah. If Peter doesn't come soon I'm out of here, and this paper is what he'll find. The window is open. Down below, the city street is doing its number; the neon sign across the way blinks its happy message, "Playland," and my old ticking clock is moving to the time I set for my exit — midnight. Pete is late, I have to go. Remember, if you believe in fairies...

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Tink – Tink – I'm sorry I'm late. The train was delayed at Newark, then there was a commotion on the street below and I had to wait to get through. Hey – Tink – where are you? TINKERBELL!!!



WHAT A DAY

Leonard Gold

We rushed into the classroom. Mrs. Befeler, the teacher, and Miss Kaunitz, the assistant teacher, were already helping children wriggle into their green-dyed Doctor Dentons, pulling the leggings up over the crepe soles of their rhythm slippers. It wasn't an easy job for three- and four-year-olds. Finally, all in green, we were marched, two by two, across the street into sunny Prospect Park.

A section of meadow was roped off. Folding chairs had been set up, and they were already occupied by parents and grandparents and Mrs. Neumann, the director, and Miss Rutledge, the principal. Mrs. Schneider, the accompanist, was seated at a portable organ pumping out the day's theme. When all of the classes had filed into a circle and were seated on the grass we burst into song: "Forth to the Festival/Children of Ethical/We will dance and sing today/Green branches swinging, everybody singing/This is the way to welcome the May..." This song, set to the melody of Percy Grainger's "Country Gardens," was to accompany us throughout elementary school.

Then it was time for the classes to perform. Since we were the pre-kindergarten, we were first. At a cue from Mrs. Befeler, we all got into squatting position and began to sing: "Little green frog by the river, what makes your voice so... something, something, something." At the concluding words, "spring's here, spring's here," we all began to leap about in paroxysms of frogginess. The only other performance I recall was the sixth graders dancing round the maypole. I had never seen anything of the kind and was fascinated by the many-colored ribbons weaving into a pattern.

Then it was back to school and into normal clothes. Mommy and Daddy were both there, and the next item on the agenda was lunch at a restaurant. Of course, by that time, only two months shy of my fifth birthday, I had a very clear idea of what a restaurant was supposed to be. It was called "The Automat." But this time my parents took me to a cafeteria that was not the Automat. No creamed spinach, no macaroni and cheese, no Harvard beets! I was bitterly disappointed. I at least hoped for some chocolate milk. I have the most incongruous recollection of my father going up to the counter to fetch me a glass, coming back to our table empty-handed and telling my mother: "They only have goat's milk." Did I make that up? If it didn't actually happen, how would I have contrived such a memory?

Once we were through with lunch, it was down into the subway and on to the New York World's Fair. I remember an animal freak show billed as "Mistakes of Nature" that included a cow without hair and a pair of monkey Siamese twins. We took an escalator into the Trylon and Perisphere, where, from a balcony, we could see a model city. And we got up really close to a steam locomotive. This scene was immortalized by a photo of me and my father standing in front of the engine and another of me and my mother in the same pose.

But the real sensation came after sundown. For the first time in my four and a half years I witnessed fireworks. Wow – my soul wanted to soar up with the light! Sensational! I couldn't get enough. At the same time, being who I am, part of me was afraid the fire would fall on us. To this day I recall my fascination with the colored lights shooting into the air, seeming to hit an invisible ceiling, curving round upon impact and bursting into new showers of light.

Then back to the subway. I remember the train slowing down and me rubbing my eyes as I opened them. It was time to get off. My father told me it was eleven o'clock. Can you imagine? We were pulling into the Church Avenue station, in those days the final stop on the F train. We were almost home. What a day!

The memory of that day stayed with me throughout the years, but it was only last spring, when I set it down on paper, that I began to wonder whether the story had a deeper significance. The same answer occurred to me every time. I believe that was the day my parents chose to tell me a new baby was on the way. And the following October my brother Charles was born.

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WHERE ARE THE GIRLS?

Pete Weis

We were in the last stage of a Sierra Club adventure that involved hiking and flying through Panama, visiting the Kuna Indians, a semi-autonomous group of indigenous Panamanians living in the San Blas Archipelago off Panama's Caribbean coast. The Kunas are organized into 25 tribes on more than 50 tiny islands. The tribe we visited had built a half-dozen thatched roof guest huts. This "seaside resort" was our reward for having survived an ill-conceived trek through a rain-forest, complete with fording waist-deep, rain-swollen streams and dealing with a group member's broken leg, followed by a few days in the Darién, a large isolated wildlife-filled national park.

The small plane that picked us up in the Darién put us down on a mainland airstrip and we walked a few steps to waiting canoes. Now, our group, a dozen gringos ages 20 to 70, could relax, snorkel, buy *molas* (the local specialty handicraft of colorful reverse appliqué decorating clothing and tote bags), and visit the chief. On our first day we visited the tribe's other island, where the longhouse was, and got introduced. The chief told us about his people, his role as tribal leader and invited us to a coming of age ceremony the next evening in the longhouse. One dollar per person, *por favor*. We all obliged.

We spent the rest of the day snorkeling around our temporary home — lovely shallow water filled with colorful fish — followed by dinner in the dining tent. Our hosts were halfway decent cooks. We were joined by the community pet, a scarlet macaw that flew over to our table, said "*Ola*" and walked over to the nearest guest's plate to help himself. After getting pushed away a few times, he finally got the message and didn't bother us at mealtimes. The next day was more meals, more snorkeling and buying *molas*. Then it was time for the big event.

The coming of age ceremony, the *inna suid*, celebrates the 12th birthday of a Kuna girl in which the whole tribe gets invited to a grand party. This ritual had fallen by the wayside in these days of larger tribes and greater expenses and expectations. But now there were *two* girls coming of age at the same time; furthermore, it was New Year's Eve! Altogether, a fine excuse to reinstate the tradition

At dusk, we ferried over, walked to the party and found the entire tribe — perhaps 200 people — in the torch-lit, overheated longhouse. The quiet buzz of conversation was overwhelmed by the beat of bongos to which a half dozen people danced. The dancers wore pelican bones necklaces. Hollow bird bones make decent rattles.

At one end of the longhouse sat a dugout canoe into which several buckets of *chi-chi* had been poured. *Chi-chi* is a homebrew made in huge cauldrons from sugar cane juice with corn squeezings added for flavor. The women in charge initially spit into the juice to provide bacteria that will ferment the brew and then stir it with canoe paddles for two weeks. *Chi-chi* is the main attraction at any social event. Behind the canoe-cum-punchbowl were two men scooping out the brew with coconut half-shells and handing them to two men on the other side of the canoe. These designated drinkers would drink from the coconut shells as fast as they were handed over. Eventually, they fell down drunk, were dragged away and their places taken by two more partiers. Later, it would be the women's turn to get falling down drunk. This celebration might go on for days.

Meanwhile, coconut shells of *chi-chi* were also passed around to the rest of the crowd, including us gringos. We could have as much as we wanted — you can interpret that however you wish — and we did. How should I describe it? Imagine the cheapest mass produced “lite” beer sweetened with Karo and tasting slightly of used corncobs. For color, imagine dilute saliva — murky, grayish stuff. Needless to say, we gringos did *not* get falling down drunk. Not even close. In fact, after a half hour or so, we'd had enough of the heat and crowd and, wishing everyone a *Prospero Ano Nuevo*, retreated to our canoes and beds.

Meanwhile, *where were the birthday girls?* They were locked up for a week in a special cabin, where their grandmothers gave them their first haircuts and told them all about Life.

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WHY I LOVE STREET VENDORS

Frieda Lipp

It was Sunday morning after Christmas; the weather was humid, cloudy and too warm for winter. One of my Sunday rituals begins with watching “Sunday Morning,” one of the few consistently civilized network programs. That morning the show featured an interview with a former convict, a forger and embezzler who had turned to crime to support a heavy-duty drug habit. Now he’s an artist whose works command a serious price.

He honed his art in prison, tattooing inmates, and freely admits that art saved his life. His medium is ostrich eggs.

I had seen painted eggs in Cape Town, most of which seemed like typical tourist products, similar scenes that were duplicated and ubiquitous everywhere tourists roamed. But this artist’s work was of a different order. Each egg was meticulously carved (not painted), individually themed and most depicted people, events and stories from his prison time. They were breathtaking and had the feel of fine lacework. What does any of this have to do with street vendors? Bear with me.

Another of my Sunday morning rituals is visiting the Columbus Avenue farmers’ market. That cloudy morning one vendor was selling ostrich meat and eggs. I picked up a display-type egg shell and mentioned the wonderful artist’s work I had just seen. The vendor knew all about this genre and proceeded to explain how eggs were used in the African desert many moons ago. It seems that eggs were emptied, filled with water and buried. Then the surface of each egg would be graphically mapped to direct the desert traveler to the next water-filled egg — an ostrich egg water oasis. Who knew!

A bit of useless information you say! Not in my book. And it’s why I love the eccentric, the demented, and the crazy hidden passion that it takes to make a farmer or flea market vendor. So many of them are the keepers of arcane and wonderful tidbits of information and stories they will willingly share with strangers passing by. Just scratch the surface and there’s gold.

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MEMORIES OF JUNE DWYER

Art Spar

June began summer
By winter – gone
She was a flower commanding her fields
To sing bright colors in harmony
In every valley and meadow she called her own

Imagine a fortune where fortune hunters never look
She was ours for the taking
And we feasted
We savored
She gave and gave, again and again

With the enthusiasm of a young girl
A scholar's depth and breadth
She was a lioness
Who loved life and all alive

Such a feast could not last
We planned to dance till dawn and beyond
But the music ran out
And Cinderella disappeared
Leaving only a glass slipper of memories

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