

QUEST 2015 · VOLUME 20



INTRODUCING OUR FOUNDERS



Carole C. Abrahams

Stella Chase



Beverly Francus





Sandy & Al Gordon

Bob Hartmann





QUESTCarole Cronig Abrahams

we

flow together

some splash

away

as new runlets join

Quest

A JOURNEY

Beverly Francus

QUEST has been a wonderful journey for me. When I left the Institute for Retired Professionals to help form QUEST, my desire was to pursue learning in a relaxed, sociable environment. My life has been enriched by new friendships and stimulating courses.

I challenged myself by venturing into fields outside my background as an English teacher by doing research and giving presentations in courses on art and architecture. However, my great passion is theater. I am grateful for the opportunity to coordinate and present plays of interest to our vibrant community and to share with other presenters and readers over many years. Another strong interest of mine is the reading and discussion of the classics with fellow classmates and dedicated coordinators.

Serving on Council and also as vice president has been a privilege. Having been on the membership committee and acting as chair has enabled me to meet many new Questers. Thanks to our organization, life has been fulfilling and stimulating.

WHAT HAS QUEST MEANT TO ME?

Evelyn Good

WOW! Let me ponder the ways in which I might approach this question and the "trips down memory lane" this would engender.

First, I'm trying to remember in what year we joined. I could ask Sandy and Al Gordon, since we joined the following year. Anyway, it was a long time ago and the organization was called the Institute for Retired Professionals (sounds a little pompous), and it was at the New School.

One memory from the IRP: we were put into an orientation group. What did I learn there? Do not show pictures of, or talk about your grandchildren — nobody is interested — OK I could accept that. We met lots of bright, interesting people with whom we became friends. We also met an amazing woman, Ruth Proskauer Smith. She was one hundred years old, still coming to school by subway and making complex presentations in the Supreme Court class. Ruth attended the movie class that I coordinated with George Solomon and went to see all the assigned movies. What an inspiration for a young 68-year-old.

So time marches on — the New School didn't like us anymore, and a group of us broke away, moved to 99 Hudson Street and formed a new organization called QUEST. We were on a quest for knowledge!

Another thought that pops up in thinking about my years at Quest is back then I didn't have a computer and neither did most of the other Quest members. I remember going to the library to do the research when I gave a paper — all those little drawers with cards in them!

And there were no cell phones (wish everyone would turn them off in class)!

So here I am an old lady at 25 Broadway. QUEST has changed and grown in so many ways — I think mostly for the better. I'm so impressed with the new "young" members and the level of so many of the classes is truly awesome. I guess I would have to say, "I do love QUEST!"

23 YEARS AND NEVER BORED

Sandy and Al Gordon

Our vision of retirement was not to bask in the sun, or to win at games, but rather to expand our knowledge in the companionship of interested, enthusiastic, exploring individuals. We have had the opportunity to pursue our interests in depth, be introduced to new concepts, to new subject matter, and to develop greater insights, with the bonus of enriching friendships. With the variety of subjects, the input of members whose backgrounds are so varied and with innovation in presentation, every day is enriched.

Our cousin, Frances Klein, one of the founding editors of the *Q Review*, introduced us to QUEST. Imagine that shock, only two years after joining what we considered Nirvana, to find that the "grey-haired with walkers" were no longer valued by the New School. The pressure to remain stable while finding a new location was paramount.

Our "printing press" of revolt was edited by Gina Liebow, an experienced revolutionary who Al affectionately called "Gina Lollobrigida." Our president, Sid Rosenberg, kept civil negotiations proceeding, while Ann Braunstein and I wrote copy, and I made a disparaging speech during the open administration meeting. Committees explored venues at other colleges and, with the influence of two of our members, CCNY became our umbrella university. We returned to normalcy, having retained our independence!

Living at the New Jersey shore and commuting daily led to the rental of an apartment in the "City" and then to the purchase as a necessity for survival. Living in the City has allowed us full participation in QUEST, the joy of the New York "adult playground" in the evening and access to New Jersey to continue being active grandparents.

For the past 23 years, QUEST has enriched our lives and fulfilled our expectations in an atmosphere of intellectual stimulation, challenge and warmth. Achieving independence 20 years ago enabled QUEST to be even more creative and adaptive, with extraordinary members in leadership. As QUEST has grown, we have grown!

TIME FLIES

Robert Hartmann

Remember how our older relatives, maybe as old as 50 or 60, would warn us how fast time would pass? We didn't believe them for a minute. Summer was years away and birthday celebrations would never come. From my perspective, the departure of 140 disgruntled but undaunted senior scholars from the New School's Institute for Retired Professionals,

Why did we want to leave? The New School had its own agenda and the program, which at that time had endured for over 35 years, was seen as incompatible with their goals for expansion into other areas. Therefore, all sorts of restrictions were put on our program, including, but not limited to, fewer classes and attendance requirements. These were onerous enough for almost a third of the IRP membership to decide to create a new program modelled as closely as possible on the one we had enjoyed previously.

A core group of us would meet regularly to try to figure out what institution of higher learning would be benevolent enough to take us in. We tried Adelphi University on Varick Street. That didn't pan out. We visited Marymount on the Upper East Side. They were interested, but it didn't work for us. Many people were willing to rent us space for upwards of \$500 per classroom per day. That was out of the question. Finally, luck smiled on us, and the Graduate School of CUNY offered us a classroom, at least for the summer, so we could hold our summer session of 1995 two days a week. Maybe we could impress them sufficiently to make a reasonably permanent relationship for the following school year?

Alas, the School for Ophthalmology took over all that prime space on 42nd Street, and the Graduate Center moved eight blocks south without QUEST. But the Education Gods smiled once again, and through one of our QUEST members, Barbara Aronson, we were introduced to the Dean of the Center of Worker Education at 99 Hudson Street, Dr. Stephen Lieberstein. Steve immediately saw what an ideal fit our two groups made, and in the fall of 1995, we gave our first classes at QUEST's new home in Tribeca.

Did all this really happen 20 years ago? Where did that time go? It doesn't really matter — we're here at 25 Broadway and have a closer relationship than ever with City College and CWE. Let's celebrate our anniversary and look forward to a long and mutually productive partnership with both institutions.

WHAT CAN I SAY ABOUT QUEST?

Joe Nathan

When I joined the IRP in the New School about 20 years ago, I only went one day every other week to an excellent course on Shakespeare. Because the chief coordinator, Edith Seiden, was one of those involved, I followed her and about 140 others to leave the IRP and form OUEST at 99 Hudson Street in lower Manhattan.

It was one of the best decisions of my life. I can't think of what my retirement would have been without QUEST. It enabled me to learn so much, make so many delightful friendships and enjoy so many sessions.

This is a quote from T.H. White, a British naturalist and novelist, which I think was made to order to describe what QUEST can mean to all of us: "You may grow old and trembling in your anatomies, you may lie awake at night listening to the disorder of your veins, you may miss your only love, you may see the world about you devastated by evil lunatics, or know your honour trampled in the sewers of baser minds. There is only one thing for it then – to learn. Learn why the world wags and what wags it. This is the one thing which the mind can never exhaust, never alienate, never be tortured by, never fear or distrust, and never dream of regretting."

ANNIVERSARY EDITORIAL

Eva Shatkin

In an effort to recall the name of a former member, I looked at my old QUEST membership lists. I was overwhelmed by a flood of reminiscence. Each name evoked a face, a personality, an encounter. But reading the back issues of the *Q Review*, the contributors came alive more vividly. What they chose to write of their lives, their creative acts, their sense of the world around them, animated my memories.

The power of our words in print is their ability to outlast us. The person may be there in our fallible memory but the words they used to express their thoughts and feelings outlast even their demise. Re-readingthefirstissueofthe *QReview*, theyear 1996, therewas Frances Klein's difficulties in adapting to modernity, Henrietta Levner's imaginative account of a tailor's sojourn in Heaven, Bea Kalver's revenge on her husband's desertion, George Solomon's guilt on his mother's death and Iz Schwartzman's Holocaust patient. Poets, as always, revealed their emotions. Jean Feldman's brilliant collages were unfortunately printed only in black and white.

The *Q Review* has had seven editors: Pat Pelkonen, Frances Klein, Gabe Wilner, Joan Bonagura, Barbara Spector-Karr, Helen Neilson and me. Over 60 members' works are published in each issue. We are grateful for the generous donations from the estates of Jinx Herselle and Henrietta Levner.

We were a small group of 150 or so in 1995, housed on Franklin Street. For a time, we grew smaller as members became frail or died. Yet a core of just over 100 remained, faithful to peer learning and enjoying the company and contributions of each other. Bit by bit the mission spread and in time we've grown to over 218. Numbers don't count but the involvement of each member does. When I attend, I am refreshed with different viewpoints and fresh insights kindled by my colleagues.

Our *Q Review* carries on. Perhaps it's the freshness of material from the latest student corps that regenerates the stream of our endeavors. We welcome whatever impulse moves members to compose a poem, paint or tell a tale. "Keep the juices flowing." Thereon lives life.



THE CREATIVE VOICE OF QUEST

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WELCOME TO THE 20TH ANNIVERSARY OF Q REVIEW!

The journey with QUEST and *Q Review* has been a most rewarding experience in the company of an exceptional group of people. The magazine's organization has developed in an extraordinary manner, attracting a varied group of new people. We are fortunate to have so many of our original members with us still and doubly fortunate to have gathered diverse additions over the years. *Q Review* retains the same spirit that prompted its origin and the creativity necessary for its continued growth.

This issue reflects the contributions of current QUEST members along with backward glances by some of our original members on this unique voyage. We look forward to future editions featuring the works of our remarkable membership.

DEDICATION

This 20th issue of *Q Review* is dedicated to those members of QUEST who contribute to our mission and those devoted members lost along the way.

IN MEMORY OF

Peter Cott Paul Falvey Herb Rude Miriam Tenne

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



THE CREATIVE VOICE OF QUEST

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A PLEA FOR WELCOMING A MIXED MARRIAGE

David Robinson

Nan Robinson, a founding member of Quest, died November 14, 2013, after 59 years of marriage. She was a Unitarian and wrote this letter in 1954 after my parents had met with us separately to try to persuade us not to marry. My parents had been very active in the Montreal Jewish Community. After receiving this letter, however, they warmly welcomed Nan, age 22, into our family.

Dear Mr. and Mrs. Robinson,

A meeting like ours yesterday is a difficult situation in which to talk of things that really matter. What is most important is often most difficult to articulate – particularly when emotions are involved and reason is not functioning adequately. There were many things I wanted to say and didn't. Do you mind if I say them now?

I wanted to say first that our goal is really the same—we are both seeking Dave's happiness. If I am part of this happiness, and you are, too, then we are not basically at odds. What we hold in common is richer than the total of what we cannot share. A mature love is a bond that can survive the prejudice and trouble in this world, and Dave and I feel that ours is such a love.

I want you to know that I do not mistake your fears for a personal criticism. I deeply appreciate your sharing with me the wisdom that you have gained and the painful recollection of your experiences. Perhaps even someone who is not a Jew can share your feelings. Bigotry is an evil, bitter thing; where it has hurt you, it has hurt me, too. Hitler quite naturally brought the Jews together—but he united in opposition to him all men of good will. Hitler did not make me more Jewish, but he made me more sensitive to the anguish and meaning of human suffering. And isn't that somewhat the same?

The Jews have stood at the Wailing Wall for so many centuries, that they have become the symbol of group tragedy—and of triumph out of sorrow. No wonder they joined together to protect themselves and their children. No wonder they have considered themselves a group

apart—the Christian world has often sent them there—and worked to preserve their culture.

If Dave and I were to marry, I would want our children to be proud of their Jewish heritage. I would want them to know the beauty of Hanukah, the bounty of Sukkoth, the power and meaning of Passover. But I would want them to realize—as I am sure you would—that culture is an inclusive not a limited thing, and the more they learn about the rituals of the major faiths, the richer will be their lives.

I am proud of my culture. But I feel it does not destroy the value of one culture to add to it—any more than an individual is destroyed in the unity of marriage. If such things cannot transpire in the name of love, what hope is there for nations that fear each other?

I guess that all parents hope that their children will have a fuller, deeper life than they have had. That where they meet prejudice, their children will know understanding; that where they face segregation their children will live when and where people will need fewer defenses. I think there are grounds for hope that this is possible. Anti-Semitism is still in the world, but it grows weaker. I would not expect to be able to protect myself and my children completely from hurt—any more than my parents could protect me, or you could protect Dave. I would protect them in the only way I could—with the security of love.

It is not an easy situation that confronts us. I don't know that I have clarified anything. I can only hope that you will understand. It was a very real pleasure to meet and talk with you this weekend, and to share briefly the warmth of your family circle. I know of Dave's deep pride in your accomplishments and integrity. He would act only out of love and respect, and I would not want it otherwise.

Nan

THE WAVEY NAVY

Ellie Chernick

Yes, I joined the Navy Women's Auxiliary for Volunteer Emergency Service (WAVES) during WW II, and I swore I would stay in the service until approximately six months after the war ended. When Congress passed the GI bill with educational opportunities, I knew it was right for me, though no one in my family supported me. At that time, young Jewish girls didn't leave home until they married.

Boot camp was fun for me. We were located at Hunter College in the Bronx. I had been living at home with no siblings, so having a group of lively young women around from different parts of the country was exciting. We lived in a six-story building, one of many, around a reservoir. Though there were elevators in the building, we were not allowed to use them. Instead, every time we had ten or fifteen minutes to spare in our schedule, we had to walk up and down the six flights of stairs.

I was one of a group of forty, three lines of thirteen, and was chosen to be "right guide." That meant I marched in front of the first in line one, to set the cadence of our march. "Hup two, three, four, follow your left." I loved that. I didn't have to follow anyone else's pace; I set it. We also did some gymnastics and took classes to increase our understanding of the war.

Once a week we had Captain's inspection of our apartments. The Captain, with her white gloves, went around looking for dust. During our preparation, if we found any lint, we had to hide it in our bosoms, because the trash containers were spotless and couldn't be used. The last day of boot camp was very stirring for me. President Roosevelt came to inspect the troops. Hundreds of WAVES marched in formation, and not a slip was showing.

We were ready to move to our next assignment. We were asked where we wanted to go. I said, "Brooklyn Navy Yard." They sent me to the naval hospital in San Diego. Typical military procedure!

At that time the war was raging in the Pacific. The corridors were filled with wounded returning seamen. Primarily, I carried bed pans, took temperatures, and made beds. I also gave bed baths to the bedridden. The nurse-teacher had taught us to wash the patient down "as far as possible," and to wash him up "as far as possible," and then to give him a washcloth and tell him to wash "possible."

Some of the returning sailors we met downtown claimed they had not been ashore for eighteen months. There were many bars downtown, and that's where most of the sailors partied. In general, morale was low.

After making inquiries, I learned that the way to get transferred, which I wanted, was to apply to a specialty school. First, in alphabetical order, was Dental Assistant. They did not call me for an interview. The next was Laboratory Assistant. I was accepted and sent to the naval hospital in Bethesda for a four-month course of study. This was quite rigorous. The students were either former science majors or pre-med. I studied a lot, learned the names of all 205 bones in the body, how to draw blood, and perform blood tests and urine analyses. When the lab course was over, I learned that I was to remain at Bethesda as a member of the staff. I spent the rest of my time in uniform there, going home every other week to see my friends and family.

I felt that through my work I was releasing a male member of the Navy to fight actively to bring the war to an end. Of course, I bemoaned the fact that we were at war, which caused thousands to be killed or maimed. However, for me, the Navy was a turning point for the good, and I suspect it was for many others. By enlisting in the Navy, I did have the opportunity to go to college and have a wonderful life.



THE WAGE EARNER

Joan Diamond

The sun sets early in the winter over the Lower East Side, and the sky above the tenements along the street was asphalt gray, smudged with red closer to the horizon. Henry huddled close to the gate pulled down over the shop window on Eldridge Street. He wasn't afraid of the dark—he was twelve already—or of the few passersby hurrying home to greet the Sabbath, but he was afraid to go home and face his parents and tell them that he had lost his first job. Just a few hours ago, his boss, wrinkled old Mr. Spiegelman the watchmaker, had handed Henry his weekly pay envelope, mumbling through greasy lips that looked as though he had been eating pastrami, about how he was sorry but it being winter he could not afford to keep a boy to run errands and clean the shop.

Henry pulled his father's old jacket tighter around his shoulders—it was still a loose fit—shoved the skimpy pay envelope deep into his pants pocket, and left Spiegelman's Jewelers and Watch Repair. He walked toward Orchard Street, where stores were closing, although a few late shoppers poked among the remaining pushcarts for bargains. He brushed against an old Italian woman wrapped thickly in layers of sweaters and shawls, and mumbled *Scusa mi*.

Their whole family had come to America only two years before from Bucharest; in Romanian he just would have said *scuzati-ma*. Their cousin Izzy Rubenstein had met them when they landed from Ellis Island, all weak with relief that no one had to remain in quarantine. Crowded into the Rubenstein's fifth floor apartment on Ludlow Street, there were so many people around the table that they dished up the main course of beans, spoonful by spoonful, to ensure that everyone had a fair share, going round and round the table until the pot was empty.

With the help of their cousins, Henry's family soon found an apartment of their own on Orchard Street, on the fourth floor. You entered the building up an iron staircase past a store that sold pickles. Their pungent smell clung under the pressed tin ceiling of the dark vestibule and persisted up the narrow, dimly lit staircase. Henry wished he were there right now, instead of wandering, shivering up Delancey Street

toward the new Williamsburg Bridge. Just a few months ago a fire had spread from one of the workmen's shacks on the not yet completed bridge; now Henry looked in vain for any signs of light and warmth near the base of the steel towers rising above the East River. The wind was colder near the river, so he turned back to trudge west.

He was not afraid. Even though he was not big for his age, he was quick and agile; he had to be to deal with his four little brothers. Father was busy all day repairing watches and mother had her hands full keeping all ten of them clean and fed, so Jake, Ben, Sam and Eddie looked to their older brother for authority. Molly was just a girl, so she saw to baby Joey, and to little Sol who slept in her bed and toddled unsteadily around after her. Henry had already completed two years at PS 20 in the new school building on Rivington Street, where at first he had been assigned to sit with the little kids in the first grade. But he learned English quickly, and by the time he had advanced to seventh grade, he had changed his old country name of Henech for Henry. Then, as the oldest of seven sons, he had gone to work as a shop boy for Mr. Spiegelman.

Right now he was shivering with cold and desperately hungry, but it never crossed his mind to take a few nickels out of the pay envelope and enter the little café he had passed half a block back. Tomorrow he could get word to Jake to come down to the street and get the money for the family.

Just then, a shout of laughter, warm as the red and yellow flames of kerosene stove, came from three men and two women approaching from the direction of Second Avenue, heading for the café. "Look at the poor child!" one of the women said in Romanian. Like her companions she was a swell dresser, wearing a satiny dress with a fur wrap around her shoulders. Henry realized then that they were actors from one of the Yiddish theaters on Second Avenue, going to the café for a late supper. "You're coming with us," the actress insisted, and drew Henry close to her warm, plump side and into the café. The light and warmth, the smells of garlic and chicken fat, were so delicious he could hardly think or mumble his thanks.

"What are you doing wandering around on such a night, boychik?" one actor demanded. "Are you running away from home? Did they beat you?" Shyly, stumbling over his words, Henry told his story, only to be loudly informed that he was a fool, that his family was probably

sick with worry, and that he should go home. It was one o'clock already, shouted the oldest actor! Henry would find another job, all right, and if he didn't, he could come and join the theater with them!

Henry intended to be a watchmaker like his father and grandfather. He was fascinated by the tiny, quivering, gleaming wheels and gears that drove each watch and clock. But about going home, the actors were right. They walked him home, calling encouragement as he stumbled up the iron stoop. When he opened the apartment door he saw Father sitting under the dim light of the kitchen lamp, reading one of his books as he often did at night. Molly was sound asleep in the little cot by the wall with Sol snuggled against her. Henry and Father exchanged a long look, and Henry drew the pay envelope from his pocket and handed it over. "I ran into Spiegelman on my way home," Father said, then turned off the light and went into the bedroom, where Henry heard him murmuring softly so as not to wake baby Joey. Henry crept into the living room where Jake, Ben, Sam and Eddie slept head to toe like sardines in a can on an old sofa with three chairs pushed against it each night. He folded his coat and put it over a chair back, then crept into the warm bed next to Jake, who moved over a little to make room. "Where were you?" his next-oldest brother whispered. "They didn't know how to find you, and Mother and Father took turns going down to the street to look for you, even though it was Shabbos. "I promise I'll tell you about it tomorrow." Henry whispered, "I won't forget." Then he fell asleep.

• • •

THINGS HAPPEN

Donna M. Rubens

It was a mistake, of course. In the darkness of her room, on some windy night when there were too many noises for comfort, she was sure that someone was coming to get her! She forgot entirely that there was a guest in the house, a dear friend from years past who had appeared in the day and asked to stay the night. Of course, she had said "yes," but then on this particular night she went to bed early with a bad headache and did not like the wind sounds from outside.

The cat had died the week before—so there was only herself and the iron pipe she kept near her bed. After all, a defenseless old woman had to take some precautions. The clock on the bedside table said—what—only 9 P.M.? How strange—she was sure she had slept through the night. Then, in the half-waking mist, she heard it—footsteps outside her door. Definitely footsteps, some tapping too. An intruder knocking!

At first, she was frozen in fear, tried to move, but couldn't. But she gathered all her strength, slipped noiselessly out of the bed, took up the pipe, went to stand by the door. Decided to take the initiative—of course, that was the thing to do. So she squeaked out, "Come in, come in."

BAM!

Oh she was sorry when she turned the light on and saw who lay there, dead on the floor. But what was done, was done. "I guess I'll have to call 911," she thought. "But it was just a mistake. Of course the police will believe me when I tell them how this happened."

So she put on her prettiest housecoat, fluffed her hair, pinched her cheeks to give them some pinkness and took up the phone. I'm so glad Pussy is gone, she thought. She would not have liked this one bit...

"There's a dead body in my bedroom, would someone please come?" she asked the operator who answered. "I really think it will disturb my sleep if it is not removed quickly." To distance herself slightly as she waited, she went to the kitchen and put up water for tea.

ADRIFT IN THE ARGOSY

Jane Pittson-Chianese

So, I needed a research book for an upcoming presentation. Nothing in Barnes and Noble, and I still prefer rummaging in shelves to clicking a button on Amazon. So off I went to the Argosy book store, close by, now that I live in midtown.

It was like stepping back in time, and what a miracle that such a place holds its own amidst the surrounding mayhem. The store is located in an old six-story brownstone hemmed in by skyscrapers, and run by three sisters who inherited it from their father. Each one claims a different area of expertise and should be consulted accordingly. Upon enquiring at the front desk about Spanish history, I was directed to the sister on the ground floor. Queen Isabella? Hmm. She thought I should proceed to the fifth floor where a gentleman would undoubtedly be able to help me.

Up I travelled in a small, creaky elevator run by an operator, apparently also the janitor, who gave me vague instructions on where I should go when we reached the fifth floor. The door opened, and he pointed me toward a desk at the end of a long aisle, where someone seemed to be hiding behind large stacks of books and maybe a computer screen. The floor was otherwise completely empty. I slowly approached in a manner befitting the hushed surroundings, and so as to give fair warning—as I sensed my arrival was causing more than a ripple in this sea of serenity. Gradually, a large, somewhat grim figure came into view, supposedly the gentleman who would assist me. As I got closer, he looked up, the weight of the world seemingly on his shoulders, but protected by the piles of books surrounding him. ACustomer!GoodLord,whatcouldIpossiblywant?Nottobedissuaded, I clearly stated my purpose, a biography of Queen Isabella of Spain. He peered at me and pondered awhile.

Hmm, and another Hmm—whereupon he punched a few buttons. Yeeees—there was one biography, also a history of the Spanish Inquisition. Would that suit? I said I would like to see both of them but had hoped for a larger selection. He looked up at me lugubriously. I felt myself being assessed as to whether or not I was a serious enquirer.

Would I possibly be interested in one further item, a bound academic thesis detailing the trials and sentences of ten specific prisoners?

Wow, that sounds like a jolly read—I said. I'll certainly take a look.

Mistake. Too lighthearted. He didn't even crack a smile. Obviously this was nothing to joke about. He bowed his head, (disappointed?) and informed me, without glancing up, that he would have it retrieved from the archive where it was housed and alert me when it arrived.

During the next hour or so, I perused the bookcase to which he had reverently directed me. Only one other customer made it to the hallowed floor during that time. (The other floors are not to be outdone, especially check out the first editions section!) Needless to say, that one customer needed the exact same bookcase as I—a travel book for an upcoming trip, apparently. He soon left, however, leaving me free once again to contentedly rummage. I began to wonder if I would ever be summoned. Happy at least with both of the recommended books, I made my way back to Good Cheer Central to see if the archived document had arrived. My new friend peered up at me sadly. A long sigh and an even longer pause—unfortunately, the document was no longer available. (Would he have ever summoned me?)

Oh dear—I said—what happened; has it been sold?

No—he said, looking around nervously, his dignity apparently severely ruffled—It appears that it is... er... LOST!

Surely not—I said, shocked. Such good bedtime reading—maybe someone has taken it?

Again, he was not amused, but evidently there was to be no further discussion. As he meticulously wrote up a ticket for my unlost purchases to be taken downstairs, he mournfully apologized for such a shortcoming (whose, God only knows, and what would be the punishment?). I gravely thanked him for all his help and beat a hasty retreat. Only problem was, I couldn't find the elevator down, it being at quite a remove from the up one. The poor soul actually had to leave his sanctuary to show it to me. I couldn't help feeling I had put a really bad dent in his day.

I have since found out that one of the sisters' sons is also a partner in the store, maybe the gentleman in question. Either way, I am happy for him—at sea with his dusty friends. And I will go back!

• • •

KNOTTY PROBLEMS

Eileen D. Kelly

Holly spent a lot of time in bars showing off her skill at tying knots in cherry stems. It was her greatest talent. She discovered it in college at one of the frat parties and was such a hit that she stopped going to classes and bought jars and jars of maraschino cherries for practicing. Of course she never finished college, but she was undaunted. It was a lonely life, though, just Holly and her knotted cherry stems, till one night at Bradley's bar in Greenwich Village, she met Peter, the love of her life.

Holly never knew he couldn't tie his shoes and never wondered why he always wore loafers, fancy ones at that. She didn't notice anything unusual either the day he was starting his new job as a Hazmat worker. They had given him his outfit, including a gas mask, white onesie suit and helmet, and told him to wear something other than loafers. If only Holly had looked at Peter's feet before he left that day wearing bunny scuffers, maybe he wouldn't have tripped over them and killed himself.

After Peter's funeral, Holly busied herself even more tying knots in cherry stems. She joined a meet-up group of fellow cherry-stem knotters and found them to be very ambitious young people. True, they mostly talked about what they planned to do and did little. They were all expert cherry-stem knotters and had the red fingers to prove it. But that was about it. Holly was hoping to do more with her skill than that but needed some ideas. A few in the group thought they could do a community project, such as planting cherry trees. This didn't go over very well with many members who didn't want to get involved with the cherry pits required for planting, since their skills had to do with cherry stems. They argued back and forth about cherry pits versus cherry stems, but the latter won out. Holly asked if there was something useful they could do with all the tied-up cherry stems they had; there were mountains of them sitting in a desert in Arizona.

"Maybe we could make a quilt!" she suggested. Everyone in the group jumped on this idea.

Some of them whispered to one another, "She's brilliant! A quilt! Isn't that what everyone does when they don't know what to do with

stuff?" *En masse*, they went to Arizona and dismantled the mountain of cherry stems, filling five hundred dump trucks. The group then unloaded all the stems into the Grand Canyon. Setting up their battery-operated sewing machines at the bottom of the canyon, they went to work.

A year later a handsome crib-size, cherry-red quilt was ceremoniously delivered to the American Folk Art Museum in New York City where it remains on display. A totally fulfilled Holly now works for the museum, repairing the quilt with freshly knotted cherry stems whenever needed.



LUCKY ME

Harriet Finkelstein

They were third cousins—she was eighteen, he was twenty-two. My father, Abe, wouldn't take no for an answer and my mother, Anne, soon realized she'd never find a sweeter guy. Brooklyn was their playground, and my two older sisters and I spent our elementary school years in the safe, sheltered, almost cloistered streets surrounding Eastern Parkway.

We had lots of aunts and uncles and some of Momma and Daddy's close friends were also our "aunts" and "uncles." Nobody knew that my favorite aunt was actually one of my mother's closest friends whom she had met in the hospital when they both gave birth to their first-born daughters on the same day. Aunt Lena, of course, wasn't really my aunt, but in my child-eyes, she was the best. All the others were nice, but nobody was as warm and kind as Aunt Lena. During our childhood, many visits to one another's homes were exchanged, and we always had such a good time. One day, when we returned home, my mother told my sisters and me that Aunt Lena's husband, "Uncle" George, did not earn very much money but that we must never, ever, do or say anything about that. My mother explained to us what really counts about people. Looking back, I see how lucky I was to be taught that early on.

Daddy was not ultra-religious but rather of the traditional school of thought, which meant, at the time, that the household had to be kosher. Mom was definitely not of the traditional school of thought and couldn't care less about keeping kosher, but she had a good man as a husband and to keep him happy, she went along with the kosher stuff. My mother had renounced formal religion at age eleven when her adored older brother was denied a *bar mitzvah* because the family couldn't ante up the fees the Rabbi demanded. We learned early on that Mom's religious creed was "do unto others as you would have them do unto you." It was simple and made a lot of sense. So, although I was not a child of a "mixed" marriage as they called them in the old days, my parents, similar in core values, did have different religious beliefs—Daddy was a believer, Momma was not. But, I thought all of this was absolutely normal. Years later, when I could focus and articulate what I had learned from each parent, I knew

that I had been the beneficiary of much. My mother and father were decent, kind people, and I like to think that whatever good qualities I have are totally the result of the examples they set for my sisters and me. A religious person would say we were blessed.

Dad loved referring to my sisters and me as his quarter-of-a-dozen girls. And, whenever someone raised a question as to which of us was the best at this or that, he would always stifle any discussion with the same words, "They are all the best." How lucky can you get!

There is not a great deal of resemblance between us, and we have three different personalities; yet when it comes down to fundamentals, my sisters and I are practically identical. We often laugh together when we use our parents' oft-repeated little sayings — axioms that we all said we'd never utter when we were grown up. My folks have been gone a while now, but whenever I think about them, I know I am lucky me.

GIFT

Carole C. Abrahams

Two babies
came from hunger times
infants wrapped against the cold
so tightly
they could be leaned against the wall
My parents
who then came to an unlikely place
at an opportune time

They gave me the gift of a house
A house designed by my father outfitted by my mother A house on a beach a healthy playground for well-fed descendants warm in every way

LOSING A FATHER

Helen Saffran

I can see my Aunt Bessie going to answer the phone with a grim look on her face. It was a call she had been waiting for. It was April 1947, and I was a very tiny five-year-old staying with her without my mother or my brother and sister, both older than me, who were at home. Aunt Bessie went to the wooden box in the living room which enclosed the telephone.

I knew the call had something to do with my father who was in a hospital that I had gone to with my mother. Because I was too young, I had to wait in the lobby and couldn't go up to see him. I remember sitting by myself in the lobby, feeling that something important was happening that I was not a part of. I don't remember crying, just feeling left out, which I was. Maybe my mother asked someone in the lobby to watch me, but I only remember sitting alone, except for the times a relative came to the hospital. I don't remember anything I said to my mother or anything she said to me during this time.

The call my Aunt Bessie took was probably from my mother or one of her siblings. I don't remember it being a long call; it was more like it just confirmed the news of my father's death. Aunt Bessie looked sad when she got off the telephone. I don't remember exactly what she said or who else was in the room. I think she said, "Muddy's gone"—using my father Milton's nickname.

I remained at her house for what seemed a very long time. It must have been almost two weeks because I didn't go to the funeral, and I only came back home after the eight-day *shiva* mourning period.

I have no memory of anyone talking about my father when I returned home. No one was crying. It was as if nothing had happened, and we were just going on as usual. My mother told me when I was older that she didn't cry for three months after my father died, so I think my feeling that we should just not talk about his death was probably true. My sister Betty, who is twelve years older than me, told me when I was an adult that no one in the house cried.

I once told my mother that I remember sitting on her lap when she told me that my father was in heaven with the angels. She denied this ever happened and said she didn't believe in angels and would never have said anything like that. I may have imagined it, and maybe I needed to believe it to comfort myself.

A few years after he died, I remember seeing in a cabinet with pots and pans a few miniature, empty jelly jars with colorful tops. I knew they must have been given to my family during the *shiva* as part of one of those big, cellophane-wrapped gift baskets and wondered how my mother could have kept these jars when they reminded her of my father's death. Wasn't the idea to throw away all traces of him so that we could pretend nothing had really happened?

For many, many years after his death, I had dreams that he returned, and I felt that I might see him on the street if I looked hard enough.

I tried to imagine my father smoking his pipe when I opened his silver humidor, which still smelled of tobacco. But time had stopped for everything that was his. My father's books, which had his comments in the margins, or insurance forms from his job as an agent, were lifeless. I have never forgotten inhaling the musty aroma of these insurance forms that were in the seldom-opened family desk. In the bottom of my mother's closet was a two-toned pair of his shoes, white shoes with brown tips in shoe trees. Those large shoes scared and saddened me.

My only memories of my father include sitting on his lap and reciting the advertisement for Lucky Strike cigarettes for him, feeling very proud that I could say, "LSMFT" and know that it meant, "Lucky Strike means fine tobacco." I also remember lying on a bed with my father with my arm under his head while he slept, and not wanting to wake him even though my arm was numb.

I tried over the years to gather new information about him, asking relatives what he was like. Most said he was handsome and witty. Over the years my mother would tell me various things about him: She told me he liked blue and yellow ribbons in my hair and that he liked to hear me sing. She said that I was "the apple of his eye." She told me that he graduated from college and wanted to be a writer, but because of the Depression he had to take a job in insurance. She told me that he had two nervous breakdowns and she had to drive him from customer to customer, often with me in the car.

My father died of Hodgkin's disease, a type of cancer. At that time the word "cancer" was so feared that it was only whispered. This translated for me into a shameful death, a death that needed to be kept secret.

It wasn't until seven years after he died that I was able to reveal the cause of his death to anyone. I remember exactly where I was sitting — on the steps inside my best friend Jane's apartment building where we would talk for hours at a time—when I finally shared with her my long-kept secret about the cause of my father's death. I don't remember her reaction.

THE LAST DANCE

Stella Gold

Without fanfare Fall has taken possession Of the trees. Wind, still gentle, Plays with the leaves Slowly turning Crimson and golden brown. He plays a game Of seduction. First making them Tremble slightly Then returning With more passion Forcing them to dance Faster and faster. Shaking them To exhaustion, Until, with enduring grace, They flutter to the ground.

SUBWAY COMMUTING

Eneida Cruz

Subway commuting is altogether different from the bus. The hustle and bustle of its daily travelers can make you feel uncomfortable. The things you would love to miss and escape from are sometimes impossible to avoid. These are the shocking ones.

A woman in her early 30's, with her daughter of mixed ethnicity. The child, around the age of seven, took out a book to read. The girl asked her mother about a word she was trying to decipher. The mother pressured her to figure it out herself. The child exclaimed after a few tries, "I'm only a child!" The woman with a voice of disdain shouted, "Shut your mouth up, before I smack you." She is one of those parents, who with her self-centered attitude, ignores the importance of the childhood development phase.

A young man so repulsive, selling his candy on the A-line train. He exclaims, "I sell my candy so I won't have to rob or be in a gang, so buy my candy before the police gets it. God bless you." I shake my head every time I see him.

Those people who appear to be mentally ill or homeless. At times their distasteful demeanors, use of foul language, and bad smell make me want to disappear, saying, "Calgon take me away." I have had to scurry out of the train to avoid stinking like a skunk and get as fast I could to the next car before the odor smothered my breathing.

And the menacing passengers. These are teenagers and the substanceabusing adults who take pleasure in intimidating passengers. Commuting brings out the frustrations, stress, and shows the difficult times in which we live.

But finally there are also pleasant rides:

Musicians, who play an instrument or sing without harming your ears. Certainly the *out-of-towners* energized with the expectancy of sightseeing New York. And most of all, *the woman who might have been a tourist, sitting with her spouse.* As I hurried to get on the A-line train, before the doors closed, she gave me the sweetest smile one could receive.

KEISHADeborah Yaffe

When I remember the feature in *Reader's Digest* "My Most Unforgettable Character," I know that it's Keisha for me. Her strength made her unforgettable, and even though she was tiny, something under 5' tall, she was a role model for anyone facing tough challenges.

I met Keisha when I was tutoring adults going for their GED diploma. She had cerebral palsy. Her mouth muscles didn't work very well, so it took time to get into the rhythm of her speech to understand what she was saying. When she walked, she was bent in different directions like a corkscrew. To outward appearances, she was pitiable. But inside was a spirit that couldn't be defeated. She was independent as hell; the only things she would let you do for her were things she couldn't do herself, such as buttoning her coat.

She had a smile that lit up the room. And she had an active insightful intelligent mind. She read a lot, and almost always she was the first one to answer a question, no matter what the subject was—and sometimes with a little look that said, "I feel proud of myself for knowing the answer." She also knew if someone was having trouble or feeling down, and she tried to help.

Why was Keishagoing for a GED? Despite her own physical problems, this lovely woman wanted to be a counselor to the disabled, to give other people the benefit and encouragement out of her own experience. And for all of us, she is someone to remember when we try to overcome life's troubles.



THE SAGA OF WRINKLES

Jennifer Jolly

I've wrinkles here I've wrinkles there I've wrinkles growing everywhere I've wrinkles formed around my nose The wrinkles go down to my toes My hands are white and paper thin With lines criss-crossed upon the skin The veins appear transparent blue While soft brown spots add to the hue

I once was a babe with skin so fine Soft as silk without a line The strange thing is as time goes by And all the years begin to fly It's hard to see the wrinkles grow And yet they're there for all to know How old you are if left alone Without a surgeon's knife to tone

My wrinkles mark the march of time
They started even in my prime
They're etched more deep as time goes by
When others form I look and sigh
And gravity has pulled me down
My eyelids droop I seem to frown
My bust has slipped my bottom too
I'm getting pear-shaped through and through

Is plastic surgery now for me? Will plastic surgery set me free? Suppose it lifts my thighs and face Will my insides keep up the pace? I sure don't know, so here's my plea If wrinkles go, who will I be? My character's contained therein So here's to wrinkles in our skin To show we're old and wise and free No, plastic surgery's not for me.

CAN YOU PROTECT A BUTTERFLY?

Stella Gold

Years ago in Canada
In the warmth of summer
In a lush rose garden
Air heavy with the scent
Of colorful blossoms
A monarch butterfly
Weary of fluttering
From flower to flower
Perched on my hand.
It remained immobile
As if wishing
To convey a message.

I was looking
At the magnificent creature
With a sense of wonder
When thought of my mother
Surged forth.
She was daring, yet so fragile
During her life
A fearful immigrant
Eager to protect me.

Could I protect my butterfly?

Was it his fate

To migrate with the tribe

To a family tree

In a forest

In Mexico?

Farewell my butterfly May the sun and the wind Be kind to you on your journey.

UP-STANDING: IN THE PARK

Eva Shatkin

The locusts are shedding ephemeral bloom; their yellow wisps scatter the walks. A saxophone's wailing from under the arch imploring pedestrians for alms, while wrens contrapuntal twitter away foraging food from the lawns.

I, on my walker, spin down the paths daily engaged in a quest re-claiming the power that I used to have to walk on my own with the rest.

Up hill and down I go on my way; at a green sward I encounter a child. Just learning to walk she totters away. Her efforts have me beguiled.

We are both struggling to be on our feet, to walk our way upright and free. For humans that gift we strive to maintain; the task will be harder for me.

THE AUTUMNAL EQUINOX

Helen Neilson

The moon is full and nuts fall out of trees to be picked by humans, walked on by animals.

Leaves change their hue dancing when the wind whirls. Squirrels bury their nuts as rodents prepare for the cold winter solstice.

September, when the day and night have equal length, the sun crosses the equator to see the other side.

Water changes direction and moods flare in a blaze of light.

THE TURTLE?

Helen Neilson

From a distance it looked like a turtle still, as if frozen to the spot and lost, not in its proper space.

As it stopped there on the cement did it remember its old home, the muddy pond where it was born?

Did it dream of standing in the wet sand to cool its feet and rest a while or drift and swim to snip at flies?

My daydream faded as I neared a shape of tan which had no feet nor nose nor shell — paper bags seldom do.

CONSEQUENCES

Sy Amkraut

Albert Einstein wrote the following verse. "God does not play dice with the universe."

He then explained what he meant. This is the message he sent.

Every action will result in a specific reaction. Try as you might, never will there be inaction.

It can be very little or very big. That was his view. The reaction is predictable so you know what you should do.

To predict the reaction that is the goal. If we do not succeed there can be a heavy toll.

It can be very important to predict the result. Weigh the pros and consider everything to avoid an insult.

The response has its own response which has its own response. Do it well. If not it will go on and on until you end up in hell.

We can point to any incidents that are happening now. Read on and keep an open mind and you will see how.

When we target a terrorist without worrying about the innocent people that are around.

We start a response that is not only inhumane the reasoning is not sound.

Relatives and friends suffer economic loss and mourn. Very sad. Some seek revenge become terrorists because they are very mad.

The cycle of violence is again on its way. It is a terrible answer that's what I say.

Learn this lesson that resulted in so much loss of life. Carefully consider your option and you will avoid strife.

RISE AND SHINE

Hal Cantor

Waking this morning I found with joy
What was gone is never wholly lost.
Storms pass—grizzled men search the beach
And find nuggets that shine—mementos unearthed
That make me catch my breath.

Venice, the Hotel Americana: "Move your ass, I want your body against mine. Have I ever told you I love you?" Only a thousand times. The Motel Six...

But it was always more... the way we two Laughed together. The beach boy, Calyados, Who never brought the drinks we'd paid for at the Hotel Caleta And became a legendary dream we waited for.

I see your face pressed up against the window of our Cape rental Tears in your soft-brown eyes. "It was *too beautiful*," you said. The moments when you were too beautiful—lamplight softening The anguish of your illness... your tight grip of my hand.

Now time shifts... you are soon to be a mother Telling a startled restaurant waiter "I'm in labor, you know!" Then the speed of your mind; amazing how your fingers danced Over the typewriter, the piano, the food, How quickly you left the shower, no modesty, no make-up, Only a little lipstick to set off that magnificent, magnetic smile That said "I get it!" or "I like that" or "How nice to meet you" Because you truly believed "Life was with People."

I take inventory of those golden nuggets you left in the sand To sustain me as I wake And remember, as I face the pitiless day.

FIRST TRIP TO VEGAS

Mary Ann Donnelly

I am in Vegas Baby striding down the strip bedazzled by the neon wearing cat's eye sunglasses and rhinestone studded sandals. Would've worn gold lame capris with four inch heels if I were fifty years younger, seventy-five pounds lighter. But I am ready for my close-up as I make my grand entrance into the casino.

But wait "Cut"!

Why are the crap shooters decked out in Dockers? Why are the Black Jack players wearing denim? Why are the slots of fun being pulled by grey-haired grannies in elastic waist pants and Easy Spirit sneakers? Why are there baby carriages!

Where are the long-legged blondes with beehive hairdos and sequins?
Where are swarthy hitters with slicked back hair in their mohair suits and iridescent ties?

I knew the Rat Pack was dead but I didn't know Glamour had departed too. All my *Viva Las Vegas* visions up in smoke. Which, by the way, you can still do here – INSIDE! The last sin left in Sin City.

A MEMORY

Trudy Owett

There is something so sad when there is no one left who remembers your childhood.

I felt so connected when my older sister and I talked about the time when I was maybe three and took an egg out of the fridge and dropped it on our linoleum floor.

Delighted with the result, all yellow and so gooey, I gathered all the eggs I could, and one by one, threw them on the floor.

My sister thought it was miraculous and laughed and laughed and laughed.

But then our Mother came into the kitchen, and to our surprise, didn't think it was so funny.

Too bad. It was so worth it, because it became one of my most treasured memories.

GUNSMOKE

Stan Raffes

I am crouched low like a sniper hiding in a thicket of maple and cherry trees in Flushing that will be bulldozed, in ten years, to make way for a Waldbaums and three 24-story high-rise apartments.

A trembling seven-year old lying in wait like a cat for a mouse.

Waiting for the eight-year-old sheriff to ride through Dodge City.

Swaggering, in his white cowboy hat, shiny silver badge; his tall white horse tied to a tree.

Scouring the woods for me with his assassin eyes brandishing his pearl-handled six-shooter, waiting for our showdown at the OK Corral.

He's momentarily distracted by the premature crackle of July 4th firecrackers.

I pounce out of the shadows, take deadly aim with my nervous trigger finger.

Jubilant in my guilty pleasure: I have just shot John Wayne.

HELENA—PAVLOVA OF 14TH STREET

Hilda Feinstein

Helena, your scissors, your hair blower and you dance together and perform a magnificent ballet of the tresses.

When your clients recline in your chair in an old-fashioned beauty salon on an un-hip, lo-tech street in lower Manhattan, they trust you implicitly.

They know your performance will not waver and will be worthy of a grand standing ovation.

Your talent is innate, rich and robust.
You are not just a cutter of hair (which is your specialty)
not a mere barber,
but a designer, a creator, a stylist

You are an "artiste"!

Your violet eyes sparkle at the opportunity to work at what makes you happy.

They rejoice at each possibility to make someone else feel beautiful.

The prelude to the performance is the assessment; the main attraction, the haircut, and the grand finale—the precise, loving, meticulous, glorious comb-out.

Each client is individually nurtured with your concern and focused attention to need. A pas de deux transpires between you.

Anything less than perfection is unacceptable.

The triad,
scissors, blower and you
become one,
a transformative instrument.
Your poise makes it look so easy.

Hair rises, curls, twists and twirls – pirouettes, bows, and alights intuitively into precisely the right position.

You are a hair impresario.

I think you know it.

But you prefer to ply your talents
on a run-down stretch of street
than to ascend to upscale uptown
with its fifty-seven varieties
of suits and snoots with bling and bucks.

Pre-gentrification provides you
with tranquility, equanimity, freedom, and flexibility
to do it "your" way.

As you say "three months in Europe every year
and 'I can always come back here'
are a good deal."

You are humble, Helena; you do not gloat but how you gleam and glisten when someone expresses pleasure at the results of your "master class."

"It brings joy to my heart."

Bravissima Helena, prima ballerina assoluta!

The curtain falls; the audience rises applause applause.

Encore

ODE TO MY ELECTRIC TYPEWRITER

Jeanette Himmel

Impassive, acceptor of my moods, impartially dispensing them into an even line of type. Using a monotonous, steady tone, when some words cry for a crescendo, you respond in a staccato rhythm. Leveler of my efferent nerve responses, denying my erratic rhythm, ignoring my hypertense reactions. The steady ebb and flow of your electric current dehumanizes my individuality. There is no angry release in pounding your keys, there is no grace in lightly touching your keys, it all comes out the same. And if it doesn't, if my individuality survives, you are traded in. Your predecessor had difficulty with spaces so that a sentence looked like a mouth with missing teeth. The letter L limped along and the letter C looked like it would rather be an O. My fingers refused to conform for a year, and they finally sabotaged your inner workings so that your outer workings underlined minor points, and you made the major mistake of being unpredictable and unique.

GRANDMA'S RING

Betty Farber

It was my habit to lose things: Keys, pencils and schoolbooks, But when I lost grandma's ring I cried all through dinner.

The ring was mine to keep. It was made of onyx With a tiny diamond chip Exactly in the center.

At bedtime, my father whispered, "I hocked the ring. Needed money. Please don't tell your mother. She would divorce me if she knew."

Overjoyed that I had not lost it, I promised I would never tell. He kissed me and thanked me. And I never saw the ring again.

My father played the horses With money he didn't have. He knew I loved him And gambled that I wouldn't tell.

Was it out of loyalty to my dad, Or out of fear that I kept the secret? I never talked about my innocence And my parents stayed married to the end.

Have I forgiven him? My jewel box holds a myriad of rings, Of every shape and color. But not one is made of onyx With a tiny diamond chip Exactly in the center.

HATS

Eileen D. Kelly

Ann's Dad wore a hat when he went out. On Sunday, it was a fedora. He'd take it off
At the door of the church and
Like all the good folks
Dip a jaunty knee in the aisle.
Men, hats off was the rule there
And women, hats on.

For work he had his motorman's cap
With a badge on top, the number all his own.
A skullcap, white, he put on
For Ann's wedding
Strolling arm in arm with her and her Mom
Down the makeshift aisle in their home.

In winter his Irish cap with its brim Gentle like him Kept the sun from his eyes. A skullcap, somber and black He donned with respect That time when Ann's Bob died.

THE OLD WHEELBARROW

Donna M. Rubens

The old wheelbarrow is broken. It lies on its side rusted and useless waiting to be discarded along with the window guards circa 1950, torn baby pools, congealed house paint, cans no longer revealing colors, indoor or outdoor use things of that nature.

Suddenly we too are old. How did that happen? When?

It seems such a short time ago he took the scythe and cut down the quarter acre of foot-high grass. When a neighbor kindly passed on an aging lawnmower so he could finish the job, he bellowed "Thank you."

But I knew he preferred the swish, swish of the hand-tool as he moved through the undergrowth, still young enough to imagine we would both live forever

A VISIT WITH EL GRECO'S ST. JEROME

Cece Wasserman

St. Jerome creates A divine presence. Housed in elegance His is the essence Of ecstasy.

St. Jerome captivates
In red, white and black,
In cloak, beard and back
Aphrodisiac
Byzantine style.

He saturates Color. Cardinal In red. A signal Of beneficial Power.

He notates Image in the text Of the Bible. Next, In Latin context, Translation.

He radiates Devotion. Yet pain Projects with a strain Within the domain Of his eyes.

St. Jerome dictates A passionate spiel Thus he can reveal The secret to heal. Penitence.

PIANO PLAY

Cece Wasserman

A sweep on the keys In tonalities Up the scale and back Keys in white and black.

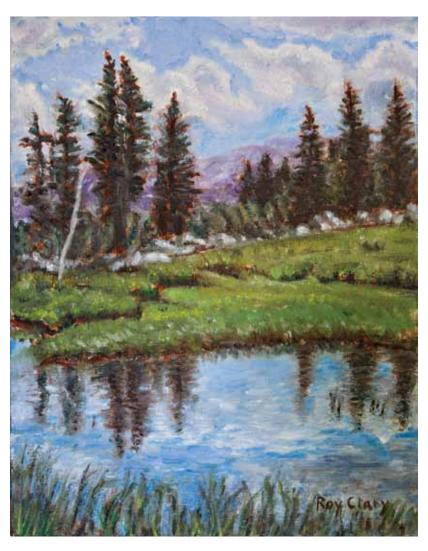
Arpeggios, chords By yesterday's lords Chopin sonata A Bach partita.

Fugues. Variations.
Virtuoso combinations
Glissando Legato Tranquillo
Harmony
Peace.

A sweep on the keys Tonalities cease Harmony must fight All in black and white.

The blends of Faure The brash of Boulez Dissonance the rage Stravinsky, John Cage.

Rhythmic aberrations Exotic explorations. Agitato Furioso Con Brio New sounds War?



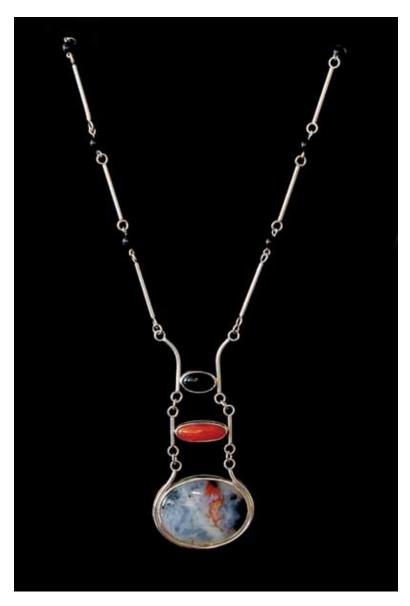
Reflections, Oil on Canvas | Roy Clary



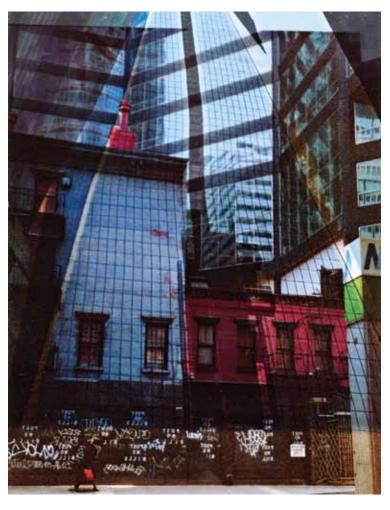
It's Just Us, Multimedia Collage | Marilyn Weiss



Reflection, Oil on Canvas | Roslyn Schachter



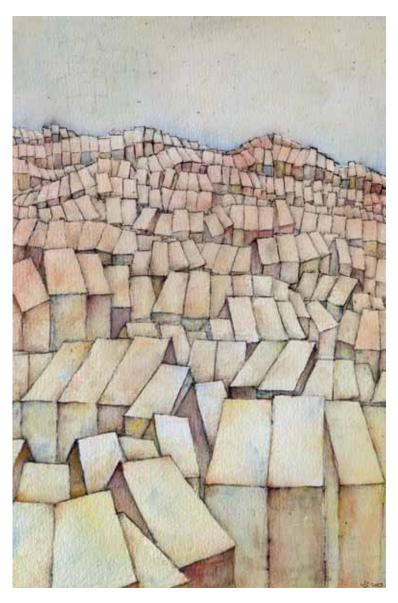
Swinging Stones, Sterling Silver, Semi-Precious Stones | Diane Figueroa



53rd & 3rd-Before & After, Photo Collage | Jeanette Himmel



Mussolini In Boca, Clay | David Lewis



Brussels, Colored Inks on Paper | Liora Salter



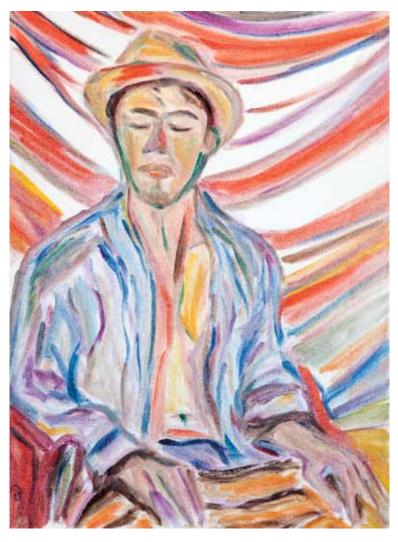
Paris Memories, Paper Collage | Yona Rogosin



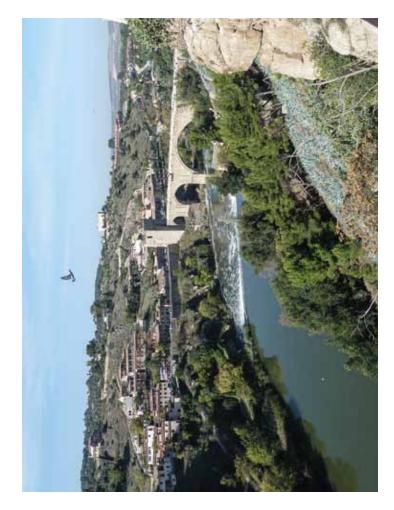
Night, New York City, 1978, Photograph | Helen Goodman



Faces of Bhutan – Woodsman, Photograph | Pete Weis



Santiago, Oil on Canvas | Paul Adler



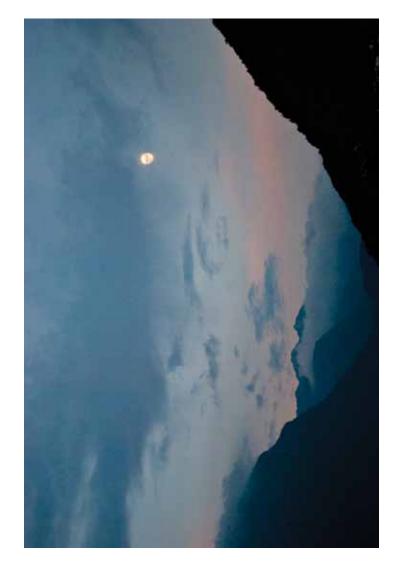
Tagus River, Toledo , Spain, Photograph | Michael Wellner



Reflections, Brooklyn Botanical Gardens, Photograph | Lila Heilbrunn

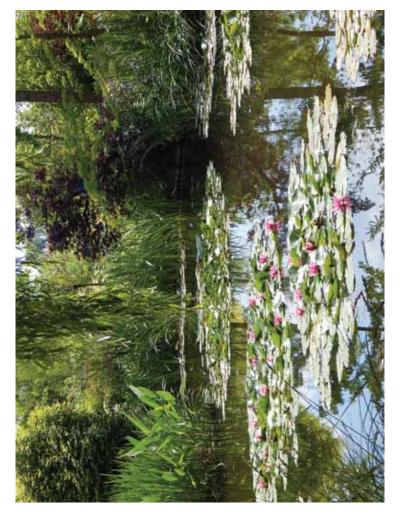
In Old New York, Collage | Helen Neilson

Greed Amidst Mass Misery, Collage | Mary Buchwald



Alps, Lugano, Switzerland, Photograph | Beverly Francus

Gabriella & Bubbles, Photograph | Janise Bogard

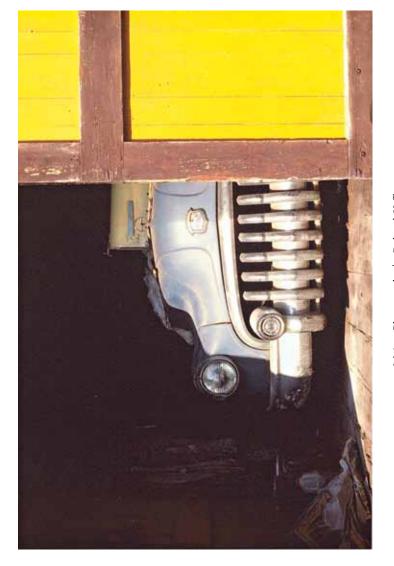


Monet's Water Garden at Giverny, Photograph | Doreen De Martini

Beets, Watercolor | Margaret Di Piazza



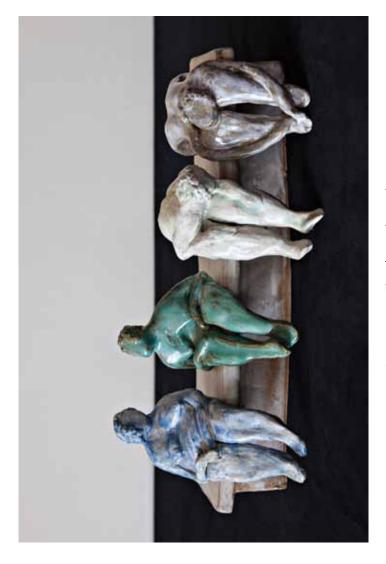
Hydrangeas, Oil on Board | Sondra Lipton-Sahlman



Maine, Photograph | Deborah Yaffe



Mysterious Dunes, Collage | Stella Gold



Conversations, Clay | Rosalie Regal



Summer in San Miguel de Allende, Photograph | Ruth Kovner

WINTER ON A CITIBIKE

Art Spar

December

The low December sun looks me in the eye as I gain on the jogger Her dark pony tail bouncing rhythmically against her back Occasionally cresting the horizon of her shoulder Pierced by the sun it turns honey blond Before falling back into shadows

January

The whitecaps on the Hudson sparkle in light Like dancing ballerinas leaping off the water But the wise mariner knows that Angry wind and powerful currents spit black swans

February

The Duane Reade shopping bag half trapped in ice Its plastic skin flapping, flapping, flapping As if it were a bird with a broken wing Fighting the inevitable

March

The prickling points of pain on my fingertips Bear witness to winter's firm handshake As its icebound grip tightens Long after it should have relaxed into spring

WHEN LIFE WAS LIVED IN BLACK AND WHITE

Mary Ann Donnelly

The old photos are all in black and white. But I can see the hot pink roses and pale pink netting surrounding the fancy hat my aunt is wearing on Easter Sunday 1955.

I can hear the swish of my mother's emerald green taffeta dress and smell the lingering scent of Arpége as she leans over to kiss my father resplendent in his silver and maroon tie holding my brother in his pure white christening outfit - January 1954.

And there's me grinning on Christmas Day 1951 wearing a black Hopalong Cassidy cowgirl outfit complete with black boots and a silver six-shooter standing against the oversized magenta flowers on the wallpaper in my grandmother's dining room. Reminding me I was happy once.

CHAMPAGNE FOR TWO

Donna M. Rubens

Newly committed, what better way to celebrate than with champagne, a great extravagance, but with that flair that was his alone—money be damned—he showed up for the home-cooked dinner with both the wine and the special glasses to make the sipping really momentous. Lovely glasses, crystal with a cut design. One for him, one for me. Old, obviously a thrift shop find. We clinked our goblets, drank the bottle, ate whatever it was I put on the table. It was early love, therefore the importance of the present commanded great care as moves were made—Uptown to Downtown, Midtown, Lower East Side, Queens, Brooklyn all around our town – always the two special gifts carefully wrapped and packed. Until, one day, one of us broke the pair—it must have been him. Exact memory stops here, when there was only one. What good is one, when it was the twoness that mattered—one was a leftover. One day it broke too.

Who drinks champagne alone?

THE WEDDING

Beverly Wasserman

When Mary McLaren married Bruce Bartlett In Montclair New Jersey in December 1960 Everyone in our office on Union Square Was invited

Mary was tall and slim with dark curly hair Her teeth were perfect and white Long before special pastes were sold in drugstores And to me, she was a most exotic creature... Because Mary, like Jane Eyre, was an orphan! But unlike Jane, Mary's boarding school Had been in the Connecticut countryside Where she had learned to ride horses!

The wedding took place late on a Saturday afternoon In the candlelit Episcopalian Church Snow was falling and it couldn't have been More romantic

After the ceremony
The guests walked in the snowy twilight
To her uncle's home for the reception

The house was a large stone mansion And we were amazed at such magnificence The furniture had been cleared And a string quartet was playing soft music In the background

Passing through the many rooms Crowded with guests Were waiters carrying trays of crystal goblets Filled with sparkling French Champagne

The bride and groom arrived shortly And after a multitude of toasts The many-tiered cake was cut And more waiters circulated With trays of dainty slices on delicate china My friend Sylvia and the rest of our office-mates Were trying our best to appear sophisticated But we were hungry And wondering when dinner would be served

And that was the evening we learned That when you are amazingly rich You can take a lesson From Marie Antoinette And let them eat only cake

THE OYSTER

Beverly Wasserman

I love the oyster Its shell is its cloister Just saying the word Makes my mouth moister

The oyster rests upon its shell But on its appearance try not to dwell Pearl of the sea, its home is jagged Opening one can rip your hands ragged

The best ones reside in the Atlantic Ocean Pacific varieties taste like hand lotion

Blue Points, Malpeques, Salt Pond Bays A bucket of oysters will brighten your days I love the oyster so briny and plump A half dozen Wellfleets will make your heart thump

Squeeze of lemon, dollop of radish Will cure whatever's making you saddish

So consider the oyster... One of life's joys And did I mention... they don't make noise

TIMES' FLOW

Eva Shatkin

Seizing time is like holding water in my hands. I cup my fingers tightly still it seeps out.

It's dribbling away; there's little time left. The full stream of spring has trickled down to an almost dry bed.

In early days
I used up
its lavish flow with
profligate abandon.
It was fun.

And what if I had miserly squeezed each drop? Would time abate its course?

THE ODYSSEY

Eva Shatkin

The infant bursts forth claiming to be clinging for care cleaving from me

Together we pair together we grow locked in each day what can we know

Gathering strength away she will go on to a journey I took long ago

The spin of our time has altered the way not even and simple as seemed in my day

Now on her own vying with fate hers is the task good to create

A STRUGGLE WITH DEPRESSION

Art Spar

Despair descends on consciousness A fog enshrouds my way Hand-in-hand with loneliness Gloom's locked upon the day

In deep recess of memory Unwelcome guests reside Lost on paths to history Are scars engraved inside

I wake with fear indelible Re-living failures' pains A young man irresponsible Filled the world with stains

A long lived mind sees highs and lows Mistakes we must endure But tender mind perceives life's woes As cancer with no cure

The failures of those days seemed vast Yet long since flown away But fright felt in those moments past Tastes just the same today

The dreams that end in troubled nights I banish from my mind Successful thoughts I do invite More peaceful sleep to find

But undertows can leave no trail To walk my way back from Depressing moods become a jail As hopeful thoughts go numb

VIENNA ON MY MIND

Trudy Owett

It has never been the City of my Dreams. But last December, the Christmas Lights like giant chandeliers, lit up all it's streets. And Vienna was a wonderland.

I took my grandchild to familiar places, the school, the parks where I had played, the many places that had cast me out. No, it was not a gift to have been born there.

Pointing to the third floor windows of the ornate building on Mariahilfer Strasse, I said "that was our apartment", and it was here, that a small girl had tried to comfort her despairing Mom and Dad.

But now the Viennese were welcoming and kind. And so I thought, that maybe this time, I'd be able to reconcile the pleasures of the present with the memories of the past.

Home of Opera, Mozart, Klimt, and Schiele, Vienna remains a place of poetry and inspiration.

Awed by the wealth of its beauty, we loved every minute of our stay.

But those who deceive can be beautiful and charming. After all, it took these people fifty years to concede that they were guilty of the crimes.

Perhaps the smiles and pleasantries conceal remaining evil underneath.

And so, the doubt returns.

This story has no clear beginning, middle, or an end.
I will never understand how I feel about the city of my birth.
It's time to stop the thinking,
It's time to let go.

COMING TO TERMS

Helen Neilson

The dream was when this time had passed and things were calm again, you and I would walk, talk once more, remembering all of it with love and different views and remain at peace together.

That dream has faded for you and me.

When "past" becomes "hindsight" and the brain rules the heart, sorrow and lost joy become one, a single thing that rests lightly and peacefully upon the mind. Treat the sorrow you feel kindly... as kindly as you treat lost joy.

BUTTERFLY IN THE CITY

Betty Farber

A teenager crosses East 61st Street With a white butterfly Circling around his head.

He opens his hand Palm up, not to catch it But to give the creature A large landing field.

A white-haired lady Crossing alongside him Notices the butterfly And smiles at a memory, "Yesterday, one landed on my shoulder and stayed there for an hour."

They both smile in shared wonder At the city's surprises.

EVERYDAY BRAVERY

Betty Farber

You must be brave to climb a subway stair Slushy with snow that salt does not erase, Or walk half-empty twilight streets, aware That one behind you will not show his face. You must be strong to walk on wintry roads On ice that's slippery and smooth as glass. Your final trace of bravery erodes Waiting for the gusts of wind to pass. You need a hero's courage when your key Opens the door of your dark rooms alone Or when you read a bloody mystery Sure that you hear next door a chilling moan. And you must be a valiant poet indeed To clutch your heart and hold your every breath And take your pen in hand to fill the need To write a poem that scares you half to death.

TOMORROW IS ANOTHER DAY

Jennifer Jolly

The little old man hauled himself from his chair Ran his clawed hands through his thin strands of hair Then easing frail shoulders and stretching his toes He noticed a drip on the end of his nose

Wiping it off with the back of his hand He grabbed his tweed cap from the peg on the stand In the hall where it hung with umbrellas and canes And his coat that's quite speckled in places with stains

"But what do I care?" he said under his breath
"If I get to the pub, I'll again defy death
Though angels of God may come out to greet me
I fear Satan lurking as dark as can be."

So he donned his old coat with his hat and black shoes Plus his grey woolen gloves and then set out to booze Leaving behind his fusty old room For the pub with its fire giving warmth in the gloom

Grabbing his stick just to steady his gait Hoping to get there by quarter to eight He picked up his pace as his stick hit the floor Stepped to the cold outside closing the door.

Once there he relaxed as he sat among pals Talked of his past and his way with the gals Drinking his pint he would think up some more Adventures and stories to tell by the score

At eleven they're closing, it's time now to roam He took his last sip then weaved his way home And happy was he when he tottered to bed Many thoughts from the day were now crammed in his head

"Thanks for the fun" he'd shout to the skies "Another day's gone and I've told a few lies When tomorrow comes round, he said with a grin "I'll hope for more gossip and tipple and sin"

WANDERING JEWS

Art Spar

Wandering winding medieval trade routes Embedding our fortunes wherever allowed Mourning expulsion from homeland Judea For culture a suitcase we carried around

Trying to fit-in with Christians and Moslems But never accepted, a thorn in their side Society's scapegoat for every misfortune Apart, locked away, from life lived inside

In peacetime the hatred is capped from exploding A pogrom like a steam valve lets pressure subside Occasional flare-ups, a riot, a murder There's trouble ahead that will not be denied

But weapons perfected obliterate humans Toward holocaust festers a hatred-lit fuse When wartime revisits this planet we live on Return to our homeland the redoubt for Jews

AFTER DINNER ON THE CRUISE SHIP

Stella Gold

The four young musicians
Of the Bellissima String Quartet
Had started playing
Some old romantic tunes
When she appeared.
An aged petite woman
Clad in black
A shriveled face with bright lipstick
And a broad smile.
She started dancing with gusto
As if lost in a dream,
Arms extended, turning slowly
In front of The Bellissima.

Sitting nearby
I felt surprised
Rather disapproving
Of her eccentric behavior
Till I suddenly realized
Her dance was an offering of joy
A response to the gift
Of peaceful luxury
Bestowed upon us.

Her companion
Had been waiting for her
She was still smiling
As they left quietly
Holding hands.

EMMA'S HOUSE

Hal Cantor

Emma is a beauty.

No doubt whatsoever about that.

Her body is lithe and supple,
(Gymnastics and ballet helped).

Her smile is dazzling and sudden

Like a break in the clouds when the sun shines through.

Emma lives in a house with her parents
And her siblings, a brother and sister.
But only Emma lives in the house that Emma built.
It faces the house of her parents
With windows that only she can look through.
No one can enter the house that Emma built
Unless she opens the door and lets you come in.

Come out, Emma, and join the game. It's fun to play hide and seek
And listen to those who beat at your door.
But I know where you are hiding and why
In the house that Emma has built.
My heart goes out to you there
When you listen in silent despair.
And sullen and stubborn as you may be
My heart goes out to you there.

SIBERIAN SUNDAY

Stan Raffes

"Like Siberia out there – more snow tomorrow My worst winter since I came from Kiev". Ida Kapinsky, her lilting voice flavored with spices of Eastern Europe, her colorful broken English flying in the air over me.

Dramatic hands yellowed from years of smoking French Gauloises in her Bohemian youth. Her delicate neck wrapped with several ornate wool shawls; her respectable warm cashmere coat from City Opera thrift store. She wandered around Zabar's aromatic wonderland on this freezing March Sunday, marveling, still enthralled by American decadence, overflowing glistening shelves, pungent with decadent aromas – Italian sausage, flowers, fresh Columbian coffee.

Lonely, a widow, she began whispering to me like I was her long lost grandson.

Carefully counting her change, she tottered out with a bag of delicacies leaning on her walking stick, 85 years, 95 pounds.

Jewish survivor of Hitler, Stalin, two strokes, artificial hips, trying to carefully navigate the icy side streets, bustling Broadway, now eerily deserted after the storm.

I followed her, trying to help as she walked towards the park. The only sounds now on icy Columbus Avenue,

warm sounds of choir practice under the stained glass in a gabled Greek orthodox church.

Struggling two more blocks south. Entire length of Central Park covered in a pristine blanket of Winter.

Ida paused, silently as though quietly praying, gazing at the children on their red sleds.

She, the determined survivor of an unimaginably difficult life, now, alone, in New York, warmly dressed in cashmere, carrying a bag of groceries from Zabars, still thankful for her life during this, the most in brutal Siberian Winter in New York.

LOVE LETTER TO A GARDEN

Hilda Feinstein

I have discovered a spot more lovely than the words available to describe it. Despite my many visits to the Brooklyn Botanic Gardens, this particular view on the western side of the park is a new and inspiring one for me. It shouts out to be photographed, but with only pen in hand, I shall do my best to transfer my images onto the written page. I write to the tune of a gurgling brook, senses overflowing with pleasure.

It is a temperate spring day in May. The softness of velvet greenery contrasts sharply with the hard gray concrete just beyond the exit to the street. The crush of pebbles shuffles beneath my feet. It is Saturday afternoon. Relaxed conversational tones reflect a calm that does not exist beyond the park's boundaries. As a small stream rushes toward an awaiting pool, I listen to the curious voices of children at play. One characterizes the nearby pond as a fountain "for" youth. Sweet voices harmonize with the breeze's gentle hum and the cadence of water.

A young couple investigates the strong scent emanating from the narcissus nestled beside the rock on which I sit. A tour guide educates tourists on the finer points of indigenous flora and fauna as an eager boy interrupts the guide to exclaim that he has caught a bug. Comments from visitors speaking many different tongues meld into a universal language of appreciation for this charming, intimate garden nested within the larger garden—of nature's bountiful gift to the residents of Brooklyn.

The pollen burns my eyes and I sneeze. But, I am not deterred. The sweet fragrance of lily-of-the-valley excites my olfactory sense with a redolence—potent, yet so gentle. The aroma cannot be ignored.

Unexpectedly, a scraggly, brown duck eagle dives out of the sky and lands directly into the pond that rests at my feet. He startles me with his noisy, wet splash and muted honk. He swims about—comfortably at home in this small, circular pool, but suddenly flies off as unexpectedly as he arrived, ostensibly frightened away by the curious who had surrounded him.

A fiery flash catches my eye as vibrant colors vie for attention. Blazing red and pink rhododendrons and azaleas contrast stridently with the many shades of green surrounding them. White shasta daisies and yellow, purple and white impatiens peek out in greeting.

Stately trees reach up toward a cloudless sky, pale blue complementing the other colors in a warm and unobtrusive way. I breathe in the fresh, clean air.

On an uphill slope about two hundred feet away is a majestic umbrella of pines and cypresses, not quite in full dress since it is only May. I gaze up at a wide green staircase—dimensionality, its most striking characteristic. Silhouetted against the open sky, they suggest a unique, natural skyline. The deep green foliage appears black and chiseled into the background sky.

Shrubs and bushes of many varieties move down a descending staircase that proliferates with ivy. Boulders of many shapes and sizes produce a diversely textured rock garden. Varied hues of green meet and mesh with earthy tans and the gray-brown of rocks creating a symphony of texture. I feel compelled to run my fingers through silky, soft flower petals, to feel the roughness of boxwood shrubs, to massage the smoothness of gneiss while avoiding thorny cotoneasters. I laugh at the tickle from the reeds and contrast the hardness of the rock with the resilience of the bouncy, pebbled pathway. All integrate well, each respectful of the territorial integrity of the others.

The narrow path separates me from the small pool into which the rushing brook will finally rest. I must inquire as to why the pond doesn't overflow as it is continually fed by the brook. The water is murky. No fish have been attracted to this space and ripples are few.

As I continue to write and absorb the warm rays of sunshine, a park security guard saunters past. He instructs me in an officious manner to move from the rock upon which I am sitting, stating that I was crushing a plant. I move, but am annoyed by his acerbic tone. He startles me with the loud shrill of his whistle, further interrupting my contemplation. Jarred out of my reverie, I try to regroup, but it is difficult.

My mood has been broken, but not destroyed, since I have, for the most part, satisfied my task. I now possess a clearer understanding of why the flowers which surround me are called narcissus. Clearly they have a right to be prideful—situated with a front row view of nature at its finest. The entire garden has a right to be prideful. The willows here stand very tall; there is no reason to weep.

The little duck has returned, appearing content to be back floating on the water. The curious have gone, as has the guard with his whistle. I imagine the duck will stay as long as he feels safe and at home.

• • •

ONE MISSTEP, CORRECTED

Hy Gold

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

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

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

They sat on a bench, and she asked, "Why were you in such a hurry?" "I have an appointment I don't want to be late for" was his response. Pete realized she might want to know more but was hesitant to be intrusive, so he continued, "I've applied for a job at a medical group, and the medical director there wouldn't take it kindly if I was late." "You're a doctor," she said matter-of-factly.

"Yup," went Pete, trying not to be stuffy. The woman became lively and told him she worked as a statistician at the Department of Health. "Wow," he said with obvious admiration. "We had some lectures on statistics in medical school, but I didn't understand it very well." She tried to be helpful with, "It's not hard. I teach statistics part-time at Teachers' College." "Wow," again from Pete.

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

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

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

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ODE TO SENIOR DATING

Marlene Sanders

Where are the good men? Where have the good ones gone? This issue is endlessly debated among single women. The men who are missing are those suitable for women of a certain age, as the saying goes. Some of us never married; others are divorced or widowed. We are, one way or another, looking around.

The first thing you learn when you have reached this stage is that it's not like it was when you were young and everyone was single and there were plenty of men around. There must be a cache of newly divorced or widowed men somewhere. Perhaps they are hiding out on the Internet on those sites for seniors. Some women I know have found men there. Others complain they are all dentists from New Jersey. And they lie about their height, age, and just about everything else. For those of unfettered optimism, there are options on the Internet. Others, who want to find someone with shared values and interests, must look elsewhere. But where? If available men are hanging around bars, this is no help. The women I know would not look for men there. I suspect these elusive men work late, buy dinner at a take-out place, go home and watch television. Others marry so quickly they never become visible. These are the men who divorced wife number one because of a relationship on the side who often becomes wife number two.

The briefly single ones appear to be friendless. I tested the friendless male theory on several men. When I asked whether they needed a woman in order to go to the movies, or out to dinner, or to a ball game, they appeared shocked by the question, but admitted that yes, that was true. Then why not find a male friend until the right next wife reveals herself? Silence. One said, "What would I do with a male friend? Sit and gossip?" Yes, quality is in short supply.

Plainly, they are unlike women who seek out other women for companionship, trips, dinner or movies. Even married women have friends. While men are terrified of being alone or doing anything on their own, they don't know how to have a real male friend.

They have had no close male friendships since childhood or college, beyond the camaraderie of the office or the poker game, or the casual relationship with the male part of a couple befriended by the ex- or late wife. Same-sex intimacy is unknown to them. Only a wife can fill the vacuum. My unofficial survey found men totally at sea having lost their spouses. Even those who divorced women they ended up hating are left floundering. Women filled the social vacuum and made male friends unnecessary.

One of the factors working against us is death. We outlive men, and the older we get, the worse the situation becomes. Until the age of 50, there are about an equal number of men and women. Between 50 and 59, men make up 48.4% of the population, most of them probably married, and by 60, men's numbers have slipped to 46.5%. After 70, forget about it.

The 60-something man with grown children seems to prefer to start a whole new family. Or at least his nubile wife does. The obituary notices report many such arrangements. The second wife, they note, survives, along with children in the single-digit age group. Children from the first marriage, who are as old as the new wife, are also listed.

What my research has failed to turn up is the whereabouts of intelligent, mature, cultivated men who are looking for female counterparts of their own generation. And there are such women who are still attractive, energetic, wise, and maybe even affluent. Men who would make such daring choices would have to be free of the illusion that a young wife would magically make them young again. As I said in the beginning, these are the missing men.

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MY LIFE IN THE MOVIES

Jerry Wiesenberg

First off, let me set the record straight: I never acted in any movie, but I went to them for many, many years. Actually, I should expand on that statement. In the late 1950's I did go to a night club in San Francisco where they were shooting a film about night life in various places around the world. I happened to be standing in front of the stage as they began the filming. The lights and the camera faced the audience for a very short time, and I wondered if I would be in the film. Since I did not know any of the details—film name, producer, director—I soon forgot about the incident.

Some years later, I saw that a local movie theater was going to show something similar to the title I thought it might have had. I went to the theater and watched. It was the film I had seen them shoot. There was the scene of the San Francisco night club, and I thought I recognized myself right up front. It was actually a terrible movie, but I sat through it to the end, and then waited to see it again. There was no doubt, it was me! I shouted, "That's me!" and from the audience came, "Who said that?" And someone said, "Who cares?" and then, someone else said, "Shut up, we're watching." But there I was—an actual contender (sorry, Marlon). And sorry for you readers, no autographs will be given!

The first movie I ever saw was *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*. My father took me to see it. It was 1937, and I was five years old. In the beginning of the movie I was ecstatic, and the Seven Dwarfs were fascinating. But then there was the scene where the wicked stepmother prepared the poisoned apple to give to Snow White. That woman scared the daylights out of me, and I cried so loud and for so long that my father was forced to pick me up and take me out of the movie theater and bring me home. Come to think of it, I never saw the movie again, ever! Did *Snow* eat the apple? Did she die? And I guess she never married the handsome prince either. Maybe now that I am much, much older I would not again be afraid if I viewed the movie.

I recall that in 1945 my mother took my sister and me to California to see her sister and family. We often dined at the Brown Derby and Lucy's where many film stars were also lunching. I never did see the "names," but there were plenty of also-rans, whom my mother recognized, and I asked for and got autographs from, which I think I still have. If you ask nicely, I will show you the signatures of Zazu Pitts and John Loder, among others!

But my real exposure to movies was in 1939, since when I was seven, my family moved from the Bronx to Jackson Heights. My new friends on the block were more sophisticated because they went to the Boulevard Theatre every Saturday afternoon. Living in the Bronx, no mother would ever let her seven-year-old children cross any of the streets and avenues. But Jackson Heights was country-like. I think most mothers there were happy to get the kids out of their houses, which at the same time kept them off the streets where they played their various games. The local Jackson Heights movie theater was only seven short blocks from my house, and walking there did not require the crossing of any major streets or avenues. It was safe indeed.

We became addicted. The Saturday afternoons at the movies became our weekly routine. In those days every movie theater employed a "matron," who made sure we all sat in the "Children's Section." The time was pre-World War II, and we knew nothing about concentration camps and their guards. However, as I look back at the presence of the elderly grey-haired matrons, I think anyone of them could have filled the role of a camp guard, even if they did not speak German. In my opinion, they, too, probably would have been tried as war criminals if they did speak it. Often my friends and I would continue our conversations and noisemaking throughout the various films. And more than once the matron, after shining her flashlight on our group of friends, would stop it on me. Then she would call the manager and have me thrown out of the theater. Worst of all, they didn't even give you back your ten cents admission fee.

Going to the movies on a Saturday morning was the beginning of a long adventure. It necessitated bringing lunch to keep up our stamina for the long morning, afternoon and often early evening in the darkened theater. My mother would make me a sandwich. I think it was always the same: mostly three slices of baloney, which I bought for 10 cents in the local supermarket, on two slices of Silvercup white bread with

a little mustard. We would see newsreels, chapters, Lew Lehr animal documentaries ("monkeys are the kwaziest people"), Three Stooges comedies and numerous cartoons. Plus, a double feature consisting of two "B" class films. The "good" movies were shown after the expected emptying of the children's section. However, many was the time when we stayed to watch the beginning of the feature film, after all of the other stuff. Then, I would look up and see that my mother would be walking down the aisle, looking in each row for me. It was time to come home for dinner. In the summertime, the theater also gave us ice cream and comic books, all for the admission price of 10 cents.

Movie-going in those days was fun. And I miss it. So,if you are too young to be able to remember those days, look at what you missed!

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WORDS

Marilyn Weiss

Words are for sadness Not for sorrow Sorrow is something else

Tears help Sometimes they even work

But words are different Even when unspoken, and Just racing through your mind

They grab
They touch
They hurt
They get you

SELF PORTRAIT

Marilyn Weiss

There was a time I wrote When the sadness was too much When the sadness had to air When I had to breathe

And then I painted When the anger was too great When the anger had to explode When I had to find myself

> And now I paint So I can breathe So I can explore So I can express joy

FULL CIRCLE

Dolores Dolan

In a news story last September, a gravedigger survived a fall into an eight-foot deep open grave in a Queens cemetery. The story brought to mind that my grandfather—my mother's father—came with his new wife from Ireland to Brooklyn in 1910. The trip was a wedding present from his family, who hoped the young couple would have a better life in America. But my grandfather had been a farmer in County Cork and had no other skills. He was, my mother said, a tall, husky red-haired man who was used to hard work. A friend who had come over years before to Brooklyn got him a job in Holy Cross Cemetery as a gravedigger. The pay was very little, but it included a small caretaker's house located on the cemetery grounds. The cemetery is a very beautiful Catholic one, dating back to before the Civil War and is filled with stately oaks and well-tended grassy areas on many acres in an area not far from the heart of Flatbush. Some famous people are buried there, including Gil Hodges and Sunny Jim Fitzsimmons, as well as politicians and some criminal types, like the brother of Al Capone.

My father's grandfather was an architect and a lover of the sea. He settled in Brooklyn in the 1860's from Dublin. When a member of his family died in 1869, he commissioned a stonemason to make a unique tombstone on the several adjoining plots he purchased. No doubt this was not so expensive in those early years of the cemetery. This tombstone in Holy Cross Cemetery stands out from the other standard vertical tombstones around it because it is a limestone five-foot ship's mast with an open scroll melded to the center of the mast, with names of the dead inscribed. Most of the names are now faded. At the bottom of the mast are carved flowers, ferns, rope and an anchor.

When my father died and was buried in the family plot, I noticed my mother looking around as we left the cemetery. I asked her if she was looking for some particular tombstone, and she said, "No, I am looking to see where the old cottage was. My brothers and I lived in it for a few years before we went to school." She said her father got another job, and the family moved to a larger house a few blocks

nearer the Catholic school they attended. When my mother died, about twenty years after my father, she, too, was buried in the family plot. A few weeks later, I was going through some of the papers and photographs that she kept in an old cloth pocketbook. I found her yellowed birth certificate, which gave her name, date of birth, and place of birth: Holy Cross Cemetery. My mother had come full circle.

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SNOW: THE STORY OF THE SADDEST DAY IN A YOUNG MAN'S LIFE

Linda Rothstein

Our teacher said Eskimos have fifty words for snow. That's what comes to mind when I think back to my worst winter ever, a winter when the winds blustered across Lake Michigan with the vengeance of Indians on the warpath. Being a teenage boy, I had but one word for the blizzard, and it wasn't nice.

I learned those fifty words for snow boiled down to different ways of phrasing the same old white blanket that covers our planet after a storm, the white that blinds us, the white that glides a toboggan down a hill and the white that holds delivery trucks hostage on highways. Fifty phrases covering the range from pure white to white blackened by tire treads or to white speckled with gray garbage.

I imagine it started when some Inuit chief awoke, looked out, and said to his squaw (if Eskimo Indians called their women squaws), "Snow Falling." When the wind blew the white stuff across the plains, he said, "Snow Drifting." When the igloo collapsed from the bulk, he said, "Snow on the Roof." I imagine they bathed in the snow and used it for drink. When he saw a wolf taking a leak, the chief said to his papoose (if Eskimos called their kids a papoose), "Don't eat the yellow snow."

I know my way around snow. I have shoveled it, plowed through it, and, once as a child, made it my bed and wished I could die there.

My life has been like snow, sometimes the quiet after the fall, sometimes the storm. Once, when the snow piled up in our yard, my father made a snowman. So he wouldn't be lonely, I made a snowmoman. On her head I put my mother's kerchief. She had two coals for eyes and a carrot-stick mouth. She didn't last any longer than a snowflake on a griddle. I dreamed I grew up and married the snowwoman and that she melted away after one night of passion.

It is true that no two snowflakes are alike, and they are symmetrical. In that, they are like us. Snowflakes can be as beautiful as we are, and as dangerous when they come out in numbers. I was glad we were a family of three, and sad when our meager numbers dwindled.

It is true that the Indians cast their women out into the cold when their teeth grew too old to chew raw hide or their fingers too feeble to stitch moccasins. It was hard to believe a man could treat a squaw any differently than my father treated my mother.

When I was thirteen, my mother's uterus dropped. How far, I do not know. What I do know is that it was far enough for her to go to the hospital, a world shrouded in white. Days passed. The trees shook off the last leaves of the season.

She never came home. Snow buried our home like a crypt. Ice crystals covered the platters in cupboards, and frost spread on the windowpanes.

Snow and silence were what I remember. One night I went outside, leaving the front door swinging on its hinges, wishing for my ghost to follow. He did not. A ghost knows to stay inside in hopes the fire still smolders. I took the shovel from the tool shed and dug a ditch in the snow. I lay there staring at stars until my father appeared clad in rumpled pajamas. "Why are you out?" he asked, as if he did not know. "You'll freeze stiff as a popsicle."

He must have known that sounded horrible, for soon we were together in the kitchen. He removed a large plastic container from the fridge. I recognized the rich brown, caribou color of the special oxtail soup my mother made. I liked that kind of soup, but to eat it, I always had to forget what it was called.

I remembered how once, when I was little, my mother took me to the butcher for the oxtails. I asked her, "What, exactly, is an ox?"

"It's a male cow, a bull, and it's been castrated," she answered with a straight face.

"And how does the butcher know that tail belonged to a bull and not a cow?" I asked, not entirely sure what castration meant, but certain about the difference between a bull and a cow.

She roared and held me to her.

I will always remember the aroma of the soup simmering, soup thick with carrots, potatoes and seasoned with celery salt. I will always remember the hug from my mother—the lingering scent of her perfume on an old woolen coat, warm enough to wear when it snows.

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The following two pieces, written by Wayne Cotter and Sheryl Harawitz, describe a series of encounters between two fictional characters, Mike and Karen. The first is from Mike's perspective; the second from Karen's.

LOVE AT FIRST WORD?

Wayne Cotter

That hoary phrase *Love at First Sight* always baffled me. How could anyone believe that one dewy-eyed gaze could possibly ensure a lifetime of bliss? Yet many do. These same folks would surely recoil in horror if asked to choose a career based on such sketchy data. Love at First Sight? *Give me a break*.

But what about *Love at First Word*? What's that? It seems an odd, somewhat awkward expression. What does it mean? Not much to most I suspect, but to me ... well, let me explain.

First, some background. I work as a mid-level manager for a large, colorless Manhattan insurer. About two years ago my boss informed me I would be responsible for one more boring task (my words, not his). He wanted me as the company contact for the latest Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) study on employment practices in the insurance industry.

In the past, when a BLS survey arrived, I would conduct some minor research and complete an online form. *Piece of cake*. This time, however, BLS would be collecting data entirely through phone interviews. How 20th Century, I thought.

Later that week a nameless BLS staffer called. "Expect a phone call the third Thursday of every month, at 11 A.M.," she said. "Your contact will be Karen, our research assistant."

So precisely at 11:00 on that third Thursday, my phone rings. A woman asks for me. I pause a moment, then say "Karen?" She chuckles and says "You remembered!" She introduces herself, explains the survey, and we begin.

With those first few words, she had me. It was something about her voice, dignified, but casual; cheerful, yet professional—exhilarating, but as familiar as a trusted friend. I began to tremble, at least a bit. Love at First Word?

Within the confines of my stark cubicle, I was lost in the poetry of her voice. It was lunacy—I knew that—yet that voice had somehow

transformed each mundane survey question into electrifying verse. I was infatuated, *infatuated with a voice*.

On the day of Karen's third call, I was drained from a series of work frustrations. Feeling sorry for myself, I confided to Karen I felt much like Bartleby the Scrivener. "He's a Melville character," I said. "I've always identified with him."

Laughing, she said "Bartleby! That's one of my favorite short stories. Did you know Herman Melville worked in the Custom House—right here in Manhattan?" I confessed I did not. I was inching closer to believing in Love at First Word.

Soon, that third Thursday was the highlight of my month. As time passed, Karen and I made modest discoveries about each other. For example, we learned we both hate zombie movies, but love Vampire Weekend, a New York-based rock band.

And when it comes to sports, baseball is our game—a passion nurtured by our dads.

In the survey's ninth month, my phone rang at the usual time. "Hi there Karen," I said. "This is Lisa," a toneless voice responded. "Karen's not in the office today, so I'll be conducting this month's survey." My heart sank. Would I ever hear from Karen again?

But the following month, Karen was back. "Sorry about that last session," she said. "Ideally, only one interviewer—me— should conduct your sessions. I won't miss another one." Great, I thought, and smiled.

Between these monthly calls, my imagination ran wild. How old is Karen? What does she look like? Could she possibly live up to her voice? I knew I could probably access her online photo, but wouldn't that spoil the mystery?

Many times I toyed with the idea of asking Karen out. After all, her Federal Plaza office was just a short subway ride away. For seventeen months, I resisted. Why mess with a good thing?

But on the final call, I made the plunge. Nothing to lose, I figured. Taking a deep breath, I asked: "Do you think we could finally meet face to face—maybe for lunch?" "Of course," she said, "that would be terrific." We set a time and place.

Arriving a few minutes early, I paced, checking and rechecking my watch. She arrived right on time. We ate and, of course, talked. In fact, we talked so much we both took the afternoon off.

Months have passed since that first lunch, and it's been a wild ride. We saluted Herman Melville at his old downtown stomping grounds, cheered ourselves hoarse at a Yankees-Mets game, and got slightly buzzed at a Brooklyn Vampire Weekend show. Through it all, that oddball expression—Love at First Word—kept bouncing around my head.

Karen certainly lived up to her voice, so I guess Love at First Word is real. And if Love at First Word is real, how could I doubt Love at First Sight? So thank you Bureau of Labor Statistics; I learned so much from your survey.

BUREAUCRATIC LOVE

Sheryl Harawitz

I feed at the public trough as a mid-level government bureaucrat at the Bureau of Labor Statistics. By using electronic collection devices our office has been able to quickly gather gigantic quantities of data on everything and everyone.

A while ago, however, my agency took a step back in time. My supervisor, whom we have nicknamed the Brain Trust, announced we would be revisiting the 20th century and gathering information by actually telephoning people and asking them questions. After mumbling something about customer service, she handed us a list of contacts at insurance companies, several pages of questions to be asked, and specific call schedules. She left so quickly I was unable to impart my contempt for her ridiculous plan.

The thought of talking to clients stunned us, and we spent the next few days discussing how to foil her proposal. In the end, we relented and decided to make our calls the third Thursday of the month. On that dreaded morning I perused the list and dialed the first contact, Sally at AIG. I introduced myself, explained the procedure, making the simple complicated. The result—Ms. AIG tells me she doesn't have time for this and wants the questionnaire emailed.

"Honey, I would if I could, but it has been deemed from above that the information must be gathered by phone." Well this is going well, I thought, and marked her name with "refused to cooperate." Only three more on my list.

After my extended coffee break, I called the next three names and repeated the routine. The second person could not answer the questions, and the third was downright rude. The fourth person, however, was different.

First of all he used my name, Karen. Hearing my name took me by surprise, and it was a few seconds before I could recover and resume the script. To my amazement, he answered without a hint of hostility, anger, or annoyance, a rare occurrence in my world. He had a calm, soothing tone, with a hint of enjoyment and a splash of mystery.

"There were 26 people hired this month, 14 left the company. I am not sure if 3 or 4 were fired, but I could check and call you back with the exact number," he said.

I told him it was unnecessary; after all I did not want to turn this task into a mountain of unwanted callbacks. An approximation was sufficient for this archaic form of data collection.

When the call ended I could feel a smile trying to emerge. I've been a bureaucrat for ten years, and in that time my disposition had turned to charcoal.

I submitted my report, slid back into the grey cave I call work, and filed this task in the mindscape I reserve for petty annoyances. It was only brought back to my consciousness the following month when the pop-up on my calendar informed me it was call-up time.

I completed the first three calls quickly; the contacts were a bit more forthright with the information, but the fourth was unlike the others. Mike not only remembered my name, but said he looked forward to helping me with the research. He even remembered a casual piece of trivia from our last talk.

On the third call to Mike, our relationship changed. He talked of Melville's short story where the phrase "I would prefer not to" is repeated throughout. That statement, I said, is the worldwide rallying cry of bureaucrats. After all, Melville was a civil servant, like me, and he preferred not to, like me. I told Mike that Melville worked at the Custom House, and he patiently listened as I continued my historical descriptions.

This story should have ended half-way through the survey period when we were called back to our supervisor's office to discuss the results. Predictably the project was a dismal failure. The information gathered was incomplete and the process labor-intensive. Of course the Brain Trust laid the blame on us and the people we had called, and not on her plan. We were told to make one last round of calls and that would end the project.

While my co-workers were relieved, a wave of sadness swept over me. Rather than say good-bye and suffer through that last dance, I called in sick. Lisa took over my list and completed what was supposed to be the final data call.

I asked Lisa how Mike had reacted to hearing the survey was over. "Oops I forgot to tell him," she said. That's how it is with us civil servants; we ask for information, but never give any out.

The following month I called Mike as if the project was still ongoing. I could not bear to part with that little bit of sweetness in my life. Our conversations had taken us into the woods, where Viennese waltzes are born, and I wanted to dance. I continued calling Mike as if nothing had changed.

Finally, during what Mike thought was our last survey month, he asked me out to lunch. I wanted to tell him at lunch that the survey had long since ended, but we were too busy laughing and enjoying ourselves. Someday I will tell him, but right now "I prefer not to."

. . .

NOT YOUR STANDARD CHINESE TAKEOUT

Robert Reiss

Let's see. Assuming I started eating regular meals at about age two, in the last 74 years I've consumed approximately (wait, I'm working my calculator) 80,000 meals. Yet, believe it or not, one stands out as my most memorable. In 1994, I made a semi-business trip to China with Victor, a native-born Chinese engineer in my firm. Although the avowed purpose of the trip was new business development, gluttony turned out to be the major activity. Evidently, Victor's parents, both engineers, enjoyed fairly high positions in the state bureaucracy. At government expense, they seemed focused on impressing Victor's boss (me) with China's fine cuisine. On the other hand, I seemed to impress them with my aggressive appetite, especially for the (let us say) unusual (for Americans) gourmet dishes.

It seemed that each day of the trip, the main issue entailed finishing the luncheon banquet in time to get to the dinner banquet. However, of the many meals I was treated to, one in particular stands out. It was in Victor's home town, Hangzhou, at the Lou Wai Lou restaurant. One-hundred-fifty years old, Lou Wai Lou is generally regarded as the oldest and most authentic restaurant in the city. At the side of West Lake, it enjoys a stunning view and an outstanding reputation for its food.

Squeamish Alert!!! I know that not everyone shares my predilection for eating "Fear Factor" type weird foods, so please skip to the next story if your digestive system might be offended.

We started with *Songshao* fish soup; it's comprised of sea cucumbers (marine animals with a leathery skin and an elongated body containing a single, branched gonad), local fish, *jinzhengu* mushrooms (*enoki* in Japanese), black (shitake) mushrooms, cilantro, and egg white in a rich broth. (Ever since I read that mushrooms ward off heart attacks, I love just about anything made with mushrooms.)

Next came the *Drunken Prawns*. First the waiter filled a Pyrex bowl with live prawns so feisty he had to cover the bowl so they didn't flick themselves onto the table. However, when he lifted the cover to pour in some high-proof Chinese rice wine *(bai jiu)*, one of the critters jumped right out of the bowl into my lap. (I swear!) Never, ever before had my food attacked me. Startled is an understatement.

I don't know what actually happened, but I found myself about ten feet away from the table before little prawny was recaptured by the waiter and reunited with his doomed friends. (My only comparable prior experience was when I touched the wrong side of a 550 volt transformer in engineering school.) I tried to regain my composure while my Chinese hosts laughed uproariously. Anyway, after a few minutes, the rice wine got our little pals plastered, and they calmed down markedly. Mr. Waiter dispensed a few more shots into the bowl, ignited it, and my inner pyromaniac admired the *flambé* we were about to devour. He tossed the little darlings for several minutes until they were pink and cooked through (maybe), then served them piping hot. Not all the alcohol cooked off, so I got a little buzz from eating these boozy crustaceans. Sublime.

I forgot to mention a common Chinese custom at these banquets. They supply copious amounts of alcohol of various strains, and someone makes a toast after each course. "Gam bei!" (dry glass) is the call to empty and then refill your glass, and one is expected to comply. Being used to maybe one glass of beer with a meal, I explained through Victor that I prefer to gam bei with food. (I'm a charter member of the Clean Plate Club.) This was somewhat grudgingly accepted as an explanation for my western wimpiness.

The next noteworthy dish was *Beggar's Chicken*. Tradition has it that this dish was first made by a beggar who somehow got a chicken but couldn't cook it for lack of a stove and seasonings. In desperation, he wrapped the chicken in lotus leaves and pond mud, enclosed it in a clay pot and baked it for many hours. To his surprise, the result turned out to be a very tender and tasty chicken.

At Lou Wai Lou, the waiter ceremoniously placed on the table a warm clay vessel completely enclosing something. He then smashed the pot with a large mallet, unveiling a scrumptious looking whole chicken. I've never had chicken like this before or since. It was completely infused with spices, and the juices just squirted out into your mouth after each bite. What an epiphany that chicken can taste this good.

We dug into another Hangzhou specialty, *Dongpo Pork* (braised pork belly named after the Song Dynasty poet Su Dongpo). The pork is cut into two-inch squares and consists of half fat and half lean meat. It is first braised; Chinese fermented wine added, then slowly stewed on a low heat. The result was oily, but not greasy, with the fragrance of wine. Awesomely delicious.

Finally, the most memorable dish of this memorable meal was the *Ying Yang Fish* (also called dead-and-alive fish). It consists of a deep-fried whole fish that appears to remain alive after cooking because the head has been wrapped in a wet cloth and held out of the cooking oil. Chinese chefs claim they cook this dish to prove the freshness of the fish to the customer (one of several ways the Chinese obsession with freshness was manifested during our trip). At our banquet, the waiter served the carp with its body deep-fried and covered with sweet and sour sauce. When we picked at the fresh meat with our chopsticks, the fish's mouth opened and twitched. When did you ever have fish fresher than this?

Okay, okay. I don't want to hear from any animal rights activists. In China, this practice has already been criticized nationally due to its apparent cruelty. I promise I won't order the dish the next time I'm in China.

But I will go back to Lou Wai Lou.



ADVENTURE IN SICILY

Rita Post

I love to travel and do so often. As I have grown older, I frequently go on tour because it is more convenient, more structured, and safer. However, the downside is that there are fewer opportunities for adventure.

A few years ago I went with some friends on a Road Scholar trip to Sicily. We spent the first ten days in a charming little town called Mondello, near the big city of Palermo. Every other day, we would take a trip and visit churches and museums and ancient ruins of all descriptions.

We had one free day, and five of us decided to take the bus into Palermo—to spend the day on our own. We were informed where to buy bus tickets and how to check them in a machine on the bus. The bus driver's job was to drive—not to collect fares. We visited some new museums and found a cute place for lunch. We experimented with our limited Italian.

We had a fun day. Around 4:00 in the afternoon, we arrived at the bus stop and bought our return tickets in a nearby kiosk. When the bus arrived, we entered and began clicking our tickets until someone in the bus called out and said in English: "Today is International Women's Day, and you don't need to check in." We were very pleased and sat down.

Several minutes later, as the bus stopped for a traffic light, there was pounding on the back door, and two inspectors arrived in full military regalia to check on whether everyone had been good citizens and clicked their tickets. The inspectors were very loud and very intimidating. One young Italian woman was caught and began to cry. They wanted each of us to pay them \$25 (dollars—not lira). We were shocked. After all, we were tourists, and this was unacceptable. We did not speak Italian, and they did not speak any English. We refused to pay. We demanded that they take us to a police station. We wanted to contact the American Embassy. One of the inspectors pushed one of the women, and she pushed back. There was shouting. In response, the inspectors reduced the fines to \$15 each. We continued to refuse, so the bus stopped, and we all descended with the two inspectors, looking for a bystander who could translate for us. We found an Italian who spoke English, but everyone was speaking at once. Suddenly the inspectors decided to forget the whole matter and began to leave. My friend Adele suggested I take their pictures with my point-and- shoot camera.

So I yelled: "Photos!" and the two inspectors and the bystander returned and grouped themselves together, and I took their picture. I still have it somewhere.

The Road Scholar authorities were very annoyed at us for making a scene!

Actually, the second half of the trip was a tour of the rest of the Island, and we thoroughly enjoyed it all. I highly recommend the trip.

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A VOICE FROM THE PAST

Yvonne Kress

A few years ago, I was meeting my friend Irene at Avery Fisher Hall; we had tickets to the New York Philharmonic. We had a spare ticket and she had invited her neighbor who lives down the hall from her to join us. The two ladies were already seated when I arrived. Irene turned to her friend and introduced us by saying "Peggy, this is my friend Yvonne Kress." Before Irene could continue, this woman, whom I had never seen before, said "Isn't your name Yvette Kress?" Surprised, I answered, "Yes, but only my family in Switzerland calls me Yvette." Unfazed, and looking at me with amazement, she continued, "Weren't your parents' names Walter and Yvonne, and did you not live in Rye, New York?" I answered, "Yes, yes and yes."

But how did this stranger know all this? We lived in Rye in 1933, and this was 1995, and my parents had left America in 1935. Who was this stranger, and why did she know so much about my family? Before I could recover, Peggy continued, "My maiden name was Peggy Park. Our parents were good friends, and we often wondered what had happened to you and your family. We thought that you might all have died during the war." At this point the concert started, but I could not concentrate. I tried to remember what my father had told me. Thinking back to my family, I realized that I had heard the name Peggy Park before; in fact, I have a photo taken on my first birthday, and this girl Peggy is giving me a beautiful stuffed rabbit. In the photo she must be about 5 years old, and I am in a high chair. I also have a photo with Peggy and my parents on Rye Beach. Could this be the same person, and how did she remember after all these years?

We eventually figured out that our parents did stay in touch until the beginning of the war. The last letter Peggy's parents had received was sent from Paris in 1939. Soon after that, my parents returned to Switzerland as refugees. By 1942, my mother had died, and my father was left bringing up two small children. The thought of America or the friends left behind just became memories, and it was hard to get my father to talk about this period in his life. I know he considered those years the happiest time of his life, but he found talking about it painful.

Peggy and I have become friends, and from her I have learned some of my early history when we were living in Rye. Perhaps you are wondering why my family calls me Yvette. My mother did not like the way Americans pronounced Yvonne; it sounded more like Yvaane, so she started to call me Yvette and it stuck at least in Switzerland.

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AIN'T IT FUNNY HOW TIME TICS AWAY

Steven Koenig

I was just having a talk with a Tourette buddy about some other Tourette buddies. He said to me, "It's sad how our buddy has not accepted his tics and learned to love them the way you and I have."

"Whoa," I said with mixed but strong emotion. It was great that he thought I had accepted my tics into my life, but damn, they are mightily unwanted guests. I've accepted that I have them; they are a part of me, and probably will not go away for the rest of my life (actually, I have not accepted that one yet), but I have not befriended them. What have they done for me?

My visual tics have made me feel as if I were a blind man, a person out of control, a walking disaster area, a target, and a danger to myself. If not exactly feeling like a "conehead," I have felt out of place, obvious, nonfunctional, etc.

Maybe if my tics were "cute" or "interesting," but no: they simply have interfered with my life. I would personify them as a bully.

What do we do with bullies? Show them that they can't take over—hence medication. I am pleased that many friends do not take medications and are able to live with their tics without feeling a need to suppress them. I don't have that choice; my visual tics were making me unable to see. Without suppression, I could not work and earn my salary. Without suppression, I walk into fence posts and moving bicycles.

Medications are hit and miss. They are all a balance, a trade-off, a freakin' nuisance. How much suppression versus how much side-effect. Dizziness, mood swing, nausea, lethargy, insomnia, seizures. Additionally, since TS waxes and wanes, how can you tell how much is the medication and how much is the TS? How many medicines can you try to see which works best? I finally started keeping a TS journal so I could keep track of what I was taking and the various reactions and reliefs. Why did the doctor who started me on drug X not tell me that getting off it would not be easy and that it might possibly be my partner for life? Why do my side effects not match those listed in the *Physicians' Desk Reference* or my doctor's experience? The "whys" never end.

My Tourette has become my side-kick, my quirk, my partner, and I have learned to live with it. Do I have a choice? Sure, I could be miserable all the time. Instead, I'm cranky. My friend who has befriended his tics still utters, "This is a terrible disease." You won't die from it, but it takes a lot of work to keep out of malaise. Actually he did die from it, with help from bone damage from a lifetime of tics and medications. My medications do not make me high. I still find it hard to make or take jokes about my tics. The feelings are too raw.

Me and my side-kick. I've asked it for a divorce. It said no, with all seriousness. There's nothing left to do except keep on this road together without killing each other. Stay on balance. Talk with my TS buddies. You, too.

For Don Donin



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