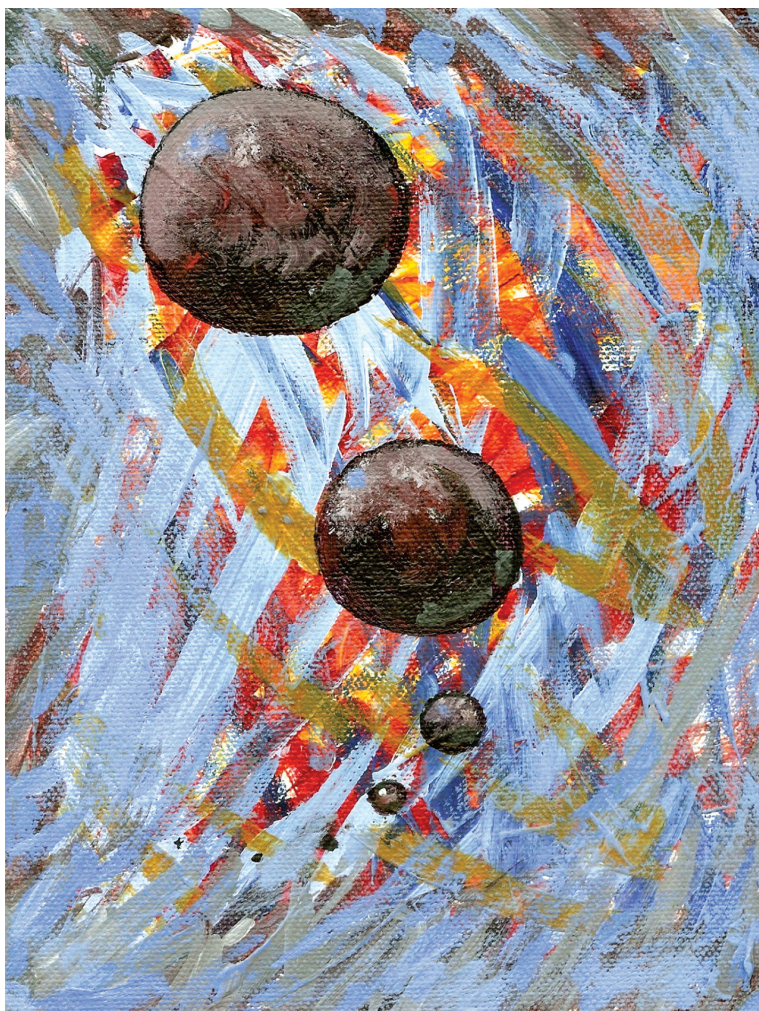


Q REVIEW

25TH ANNIVERSARY

1995 - 2020



QUEST 2020 • VOLUME 25



THE CREATIVE VOICE OF QUEST

Q Review 2020

Volume 25

QUEST

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A WORD FROM THE EDITOR

This year marks Quest's 25th Anniversary and the 25th annual edition of *Q Review*. Over the decades, the publication has remained remarkably consistent in shape, format and content, always featuring Quest's best writers, poets and artists.

As I conclude my fourth and final year as Editor-in-Chief, I feel fortunate to have worked with so many excellent editors. **Mary Ann Donnelly** (poetry), **Ruth Ward** (prose), and **Paul Adler** (art) have all helped make my job a pleasure. I am also indebted to former prose editor **Martha Drezin** and photographer and former art editor, the legendary **Lila Heilbrunn**.

Space considerations prevent me from thanking all who have assisted over these past four years, but please know I appreciate your efforts. And, of course, without the talented poets, writers, and artists of Quest, *Q Review* would not exist. Each year I am overwhelmed by the talents of our members.

Lastly, I'd like to congratulate Ruth Ward, our new Editor-in-Chief for the 2021 edition. Ruth is the perfect choice to lead *Q Review* into its next quarter-century.

– Wayne Cotter

IN MEMORIAM

It is with profound sorrow that we note the passing of Quest members **David Abrahams**, **Dolores Dolan**, **Jan Eisler**, **Leslie Fenchel**, **Joe Nathan**, **Stan Raffes**, and **Donna Rubens**, whom we lost during this past year. All seven were highly active members who made countless contributions to our organization. They are sorely missed.

We also express our gratitude to **Ken Leedom** for his generous bequest. Ken and his long-time partner **Peter Cott** were active Quest members for many years.

NOTE

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



Q REVIEW

THE CREATIVE VOICE OF QUEST

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25 YEARS OF Q REVIEW

To salute the 25th edition of Q Review, we offer the following poems selected from past issues.

1996 EDITION (VOLUME 1)

TO MAY

*Eva Shatkin**

I tried so hard my dearest May
To find the words with which to say
On this occasion what you mean
To us, your friends as you are seen.
First let us praise the outward show:
The daintiness in which you flow
Like music in the eighteenth century,
The decent order and serenity.
The colors blend, the shoes are neat,
The pin in place, the dress discreet.
But don an apron, heat the pan,
Weight Watchers has declared a ban
Against her latkes, crispy light,
A golden brown, a tasty bite.
To those in need, we often learn
She offers help; just wait your turn.
If you should have to move away,
She'll call, "I'll help. Just name the day."
And should you come down with the croup
Here comes May with chicken soup.
In our discussions she's not wordy
But, oh, her principles are sturdy.
She never fears to speak her mind,
Her values firm, her manner kind.
She may look gentle, but she's tough.
This dame's composed of sterling stuff.
And though this poem must have an end,
Not so our love for this dear friend.

**Eva Shatkin is a Quest founding member and served as Q Review's Editor-in-Chief from 2009 to 2011.*

2000 EDITION (VOLUME 5)

THIS JOURNEY

*Sandy Gordon**

Each brick beckons, just a bit further,
Their rough texture gripping my cushioned soles,
Demanding another step, and then another.
The path winds intricately, but in harmony with the gently bending
greens,
The winter flora, demure and reticent in their brownish hues,
Sparked by a cluster of gold, of rust and pristine white,
Coquettishly enticing this inner self, its petals to unfold,
To absorb each new fragrance, new vision, to seek the promise
beyond.
Greenery lines this path,
A living wall in contrast to the unyielding brick,
Intent that I go forward,
Presenting not a break in its visage to allow for a drifting step,
Nature seems in harmony in presenting its desire.
Even the rays of the distant sun,
Tho' low in the grayish sky,
Seem to grow in intensity as if to complete the setting beyond.
Again a bend, again a curve,
Each with a gift of sound or sight,
This unfolding, an awakening, a beginning to comprehend,
This experiencing, this journey will not merely yield
The grassy knoll or sun-soaked field, a perfect rose, or teeming lake,
Suddenly the mind's eye does see
That life itself is beckoning me.
Its circuitous path, the bends, the curves,
The thorny barbs, the unyielding ground,
The revealing of each season familiar,
Repeating, evolving, creating the maze,
Weaving the patterns into the fabric,
Life's fabric presented at Pearly Gates' end!

**Sandy Gordon is a Quest founding member and a frequent contributor
to Q Review.*

2005 EDITION (VOLUME 10)

ROUNDING THIRD

*Joe Nathan**

“Old men ought to be explorers”

—T.S. Elliot

*Oh yes, T.S.,
Old men should explore.
Of course old women too.
Childhood’s curiosity
Remains.*

And now there is time.

*To learn, to read,
To glean
The knowledge,
Poetry, plays,
The history,
Music, art
To gather it, grasp it.
Open the doors;*

*Ponder with the thinkers,
Thirst with the seekers,
Encounter the discoveries,
Celebrate creators,
Connect with those who came before.
Connect with what they gave us.*

*Oh yes, T.S.,
Old age is not a waiting room.
Old men should explore.*

*Run it out, Y.B.
It’s not over.
It’s not over ‘til it’s over.*

*It’s not over.
It’s not over.*

**Joe Nathan, who passed away in 2019 at age 96, was a Quest founding member and frequent Q Review contributor.*

2010 EDITION (VOLUME 15)

WANDERING

*Peter Cott**

Are my feet wandering aimlessly?
Is my mind wandering pointlessly?
Is no place to go, no thoughts to think
a way of life?

Wandering can be creative, useful.
On a path to nowhere lies discovery!
Seeing with new eyes,
The unseen becomes significant.

I shall wander in the City.
New streets will yield new wonders:
shops treasures I will make mine:
faces of people I might want to know.

I shall wonder in the Country
through fields of fluttering grass
through forests of swaying trees
seeing and sensing nature's bounty.

Wandering is not aimless
Wandering is not pointless
Wandering opens vistas
for the eyes to see
for the mind to ponder
for the hands to touch
for our lives to know.

**Quest was a special place for Q Review contributor Peter Cott, who died in 2014. We are indebted to Peter and his partner Ken Leedom, who passed four years later, for their generous bequest to our organization.*

2015 EDITION (VOLUME 20)

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 Zabars’ 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 deli-
cacies 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.

**Stan Raffes, who died in 2019, was a frequent Q Review contributor
and a beloved member of the Poets’ Workshop.*



THE CREATIVE VOICE OF QUEST

Our Founding Members

Carole Cronig Abrahams	Evelyn Good
Al Gordon	Bob Hartmann
Beverly Francus	Russell Good
Sandy Gordon	Eva Shatkin

Editors-in-Chief, *Q Review*

1996	Frances Klein
1997	Frances Klein
1998	Frances Klein
1999	Pat Pelkonen
2000	Pat Pelkonen
2001	Pat Pelkonen
2002	Joan Bonagura
2003	Joan Bonagura
2004	Joan Bonagura
2005	Barbara Spector Karr
2006	Barbara Spector Karr
2007	Barbara Spector Karr
2008	Helen Neilson
2009	Eva Shatkin
2010	Eva Shatkin
2011	Eva Shatkin
2012	Helen Neilson
2013	Helen Neilson
2014	Helen Neilson
2015	Helen Neilson
2016	Carolyn McGuire
2017	Wayne Cotter
2018	Wayne Cotter
2019	Wayne Cotter
2020	Wayne Cotter

WHAT'S SO FUNNY 'BOUT PEACE, LOVE & UNDERSTANDING?

Wayne Cotter

It began with the rumors in the spring of 1969 — a mammoth folk-rock festival in upstate New York called Woodstock would be held in the summer. The Who are expected; Jimi will be there; the Jefferson Airplane are scheduled. Maybe even the Beatles or Stones will show. No rumor was too wild; no speculation beyond consideration.

As details emerged, the excitement grew. This will be *the* event of the year, an opportunity for the multitudes to gather and pay homage to the pantheon of rock 'n' roll.

Five of us (including my future wife Susanne) send our checks in early and secure tickets for Saturday and Sunday. In a few months, the big day arrives — Saturday August 16, 1969. Despite parental objections and the media urging drivers “to turn back now because you can’t get in,” we head out early in my car from Bridgeport, Connecticut. We are new to this festival stuff, but our youth (all under 20), enthusiasm, and collective naiveté work in our favor.

After six hours of driving and a two-hour hike, we arrive. Approaching the festival grounds, I see my college roommate, Andy, looking bedraggled. “Turn back,” Andy warns. “It’s sloppy and wet and messy.” He had arrived Friday, but was throwing in the towel. Dismissing his remarks as the ramblings of a rock 'n' roll kvetch, we trudge on.

Within minutes, an unmistakably Latin sound cascades over the landscape: conga drums, Hammond organ and a haunting guitar. The sound is rhythmic, crisp and original. I ask the name of the group: “Santana,” someone says. Santana means nothing to me, but I make a mental note of the name.

After setting up camp (*i.e.*, laying out our sleeping bags) and locating the most convenient “Port-O-San,” we begin exploring. Headbands, tie-dyed tee shirts and faded jeans are *de rigueur*. People are helping each other, sharing food, passing joints. All around us is evidence of a kinder, gentler nation. For one weekend, we think we are glimpsing the future.

The next 24 hours is a blur of naked swimming, violent thunderstorms and sweet, sweet music. As the evening wears on, Susanne and I inch closer to the stage, enjoying memorable sets by Sly Stone and Janis Joplin. It’s now close to 4 a.m. Our three traveling companions

have, we assume, retreated to their sleeping bags, but tens of thousands of other weary souls are still standing, waiting for the next group — The Who — to claim the stage.

The Who had just released the groundbreaking “rock opera” *Tommy* and the crowd anticipates something very special this night. The band does not disappoint.

Soon after the set begins, The Who’s lead guitarist Pete Townshend’s right hand starts to rotate in large circles, his trademark windmill motion, while singer Roger Daltrey twirls his microphone high above his head like some deranged psychedelic cowboy. To their left, John Entwistle’s fingers are crawling spider-like up and down his bass guitar as drummer Keith Moon sits center stage, maniacally pounding out the beat.

The late hour and mythical environs provide a dream-like quality to the performance. (Did we just see Townshend rear-end a ranting Abbie Hoffman off the stage with his guitar?)

After the band’s finale, Susanne and I are spent. The sun is rising. It is time to sleep. We hear Jefferson Airplane’s lead singer Grace Slick belting out “Somebody to Love” as we drift off to the ultimate rock ‘n’ roll lullaby.

On Sunday the five of us awake to threatening skies, free granola and a host of announcements: Watch out for bad acid! A baby was delivered on the grounds last night! We are the second largest city in New York! The music is scheduled to start at noon, but it is well past two when Joe Cocker writhes his way toward the stage. Unfortunately, the rain arrives about the same time. As Cocker’s voice booms across the rain-soaked fields, we reluctantly pull up stakes.

For us, the Woodstock festival is over, a fragile experiment to be remembered and treasured — an event not likely to pass this way again. On the ride home, my friend Fred begins to spread our reservoir of good feeling. With each passing car, Fred emerges from our rear window shouting, “We were there! We were *f***ing* there!” Who needs a bumper sticker when you have Fred?

Susanne and I arrive at my parents’ house in time for the 11 o’clock news. I still lovingly recall my father’s one-word reaction as his eyes moved from the TV images of 500,000 spaced-out freaks mired in mud to the two of us: sweaty, smelly, and dead tired. “Kooks,” he said, and then repeated it with a shake of his head and a trace of a smile.

GROWING PAINS

Ruth Ward

"Did you know that nerds are made, not born?" I was trying to convince our best wide receiver that I was more amusing than my coke bottle glasses suggested. The firm-jawed athlete had taken the spot next to me at Martin Van Buren High's crowded cafeteria table. I didn't want to miss this opportunity to impress him with my sense of humor, given that my hypersensitive face and skinny body were unlikely to attract his attention.

James O'Brien was tall and muscular. He could have drowned a girl in his dark blue eyes. No, he wouldn't be interested in the likes of me. He needed to be seen with the popular girls; heaven's sakes, he had his reputation to uphold. After only three months as a junior transfer student among the Class of '65, he had already dated several of the school's loveliest cheerleaders, though I was mystified as to why he didn't stay with any one girl.

"Are they?" he replied, glancing sideways at the mouse-brown bangs my mother had cut, a frizzy hedge that partially covered my probing eyes.

"Oh yes, it's true. I know from my own experience." I was afraid this focus on me would end our conversation, but he countered, "So are you some kind of nerd expert, then?"

It should have been obvious from the white, Peter Pan collar blouse that gawked over my lime green corduroy jumper that I would never figure among the school's fashion sophisticates. He seemed curious, but I couldn't tell if he was intrigued by the topic of nerds in general or by my specific case.

"Yes, although I can see my chic hairdo and trend-setting ensemble have succeeded in disguising my identity as a clueless nerd." I hoped this tongue in cheek approach might lighten his serious expression.

"So, what's it like to be a clueless nerd?" He again looked at me sideways.

Evidently, he wasn't used to having girls promote themselves, ironically or otherwise.

"Well," I said, "first of all, as a nerd, you have peace of mind."

"Oh really?" he asked, "and why is that?"

"Well, you never have to suffer the embarrassment of two boys asking you to a school dance, so you never face the humiliation of triggering a prom brawl between wannabe boyfriends."

I smiled at James as I waited for his response.

He ventured, "It's funny, but I never thought about things that way. I always just figured when it came to dances, girls got what they expected. The social girls got invited and the shy ones stayed home and watched TV."

Although he hadn't caught the irony of my comment, I appreciated his listening to me. I decided to introduce myself. "By the way, my name is Rachel Geller."

He extended his right hand. "Glad to meet you. I'm James O'Brien." As if anyone at Martin Van Buren didn't know who he was. Still, his humility was endearing.

"Oh, I know who you are," escaped from my mouth before I could contain it. "Everyone does." Wow, I really needed a save. "You Varsity football players are like a team of Elvis Presleys."

What kind of weird comment was that? I felt certain I had ended our chat, but he chuckled.

"Yeah, I guess we're pretty recognizable."

"So, are you ready for tonight's game against Flushing High?"

"As ready as I'll ever be."

"Well, I wish you luck. I'll be watching from the peanut gallery." I was amazed at my brazenness. It was a revelation that I would be, for the first time in my life, attending a football game.

"Cool," he replied. "Are you doing anything after the game?"

A volcano erupted in my chest, during which I heard my mother repeating, "You are definitely not pretty, but you're really smart, and boys may find you interesting."

Before my mind could catch up with my heartbeat, I heard myself say no not really and then James said would you like to go for a pizza at Joe's and then I said sure that would be great and then he said meet me outside the boys' locker room but give me a few minutes to shower after the game and then I said O.K. well I'll see you then and he said yeah Rachel see you tonight.

He pulled himself from the table, made an agile turn and sauntered from the room.

Do you believe in miracles? Because I do. If a plain Jane like me can, out of the blue, score an honest to God date with a megastar like James O'Brien, then I'm going to go back to Friday night synagogue services. At least, that will make my mother happy. The wondrous thing is that James was unaware of my homeliness and, as I left the cafeteria, so was I.

• • •

ONLY IN NEW YORK (aka A Quiet Dinner at Home)

Donna K. Ramer

It was after work in 1980 when we bumped into each other on the subway. Normally, we took different trains, but my husband had an unplanned client meeting a block from my office; he was about to get on the Lexington express to 14th Street when I surprised him by putting my arm through his. On our way, we decided to order in, again.

Nothing unusual at home. We picked up the mail, greeted the doorman, chatted with neighbors in the lobby and elevator. Once through the door, I quickly changed into sweats and my husband took off his tie while calling our favorite Chinese restaurant. He looked annoyed when he told me they were particularly busy and dinner would be over an hour, more than twice the usual delivery time. So he poured a vodka tonic for himself and a Coke for me. We settled into the sofa and turned on the newly launched CNN to catch up on the day's news.

About forty-five minutes later (and after his stomach very audibly complained about how long it had been since he had called in our order), we heard a commotion outside our door. We didn't bother to check it out; we just assumed it was the neighbors' pets playing in the hall.

Not long after, the intercom buzzed. "Food delivery," said the doorman. "Send him up," my husband responded, mouthing "finally" to me. Once again, he looked annoyed as he was told no deliveries beyond the 10th floor (we were on the 11th) and he would have to pick up dinner in the lobby. Hanging up the intercom, he grabbed his wallet and opened the door, only to be confronted by a Kevlar-clad policewoman. "Get back in the apartment; we're trying to arrest an armed suspect at the other end of the hall," she warned. With a pleading look, my husband explained that hot Chinese food was waiting in the lobby. The policewoman relented. "Crawl to the stairwell, walk down to the next floor and take the elevator from there. The officers in the lobby may not let you back up, but you can try." A true New Yorker.

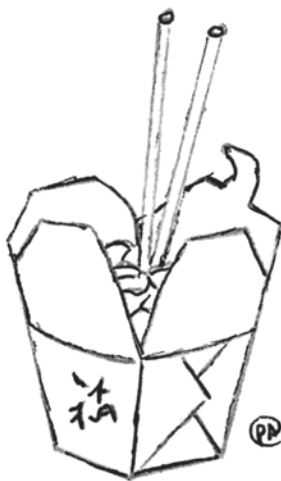
We were hungry enough to agree he should follow the obstacle course as instructed. While he was gone, I heard three gunshots. Assuming it was police fire, I cautiously opened the door (our apartment was around a corner at the opposite end of the floor so I felt safe) and

explained that the door to apartment 11J opened onto a small foyer, so you had to turn left to enter the living room; they were shooting into a blank wall. As it happened, it was the tenant, a member of the Hell's Angels, who was shooting into the hall at the officers. I liked my neighbor (he had always been very protective of us and made sure no one left garbage on the floor of the incinerator room), but apparently there was a side to him I didn't know.

My exchange with the officer took about thirty seconds, after which I closed the door and went into the kitchen to take out plates, bowls, spoons and chopsticks in anticipation of dinner. My husband appeared about ten minutes later and told me that things were quiet when he slowly opened the stairwell door to our floor, so the officers allowed him to crawl back to our apartment, which he did with the bag of food between his teeth. Forty years later, I'm still sorry I missed seeing that.

There was a knock on the door while we were spooning hot soup into bowls and our usual spicy chicken and peanuts onto plates. "It's over; we've got him, so you're free leave your apartment now," said the officer, who had holstered her gun. "Smells good," she added as she walked to the elevator. We closed the door, took our food to the couch and settled in for a quiet dinner and a movie on HBO.

. . .



I LOVE YOU VERY MUCH

Stella Gold

My mother was living alone in Paris. She was now eighty-three years old, not able to function independently any more. Through a Jewish social service agency for the aged I had hired a companion to stay with her part of the day, but she soon refused to open the door to let the woman in. They sent a physician to examine her, but she did not let him in either. After a conference with my brother, the social worker decided that mother should come live with me in America.

A friendly older cousin took her to the Paris-Charles De Gaulle airport, and she arrived alone and confused at New York's Kennedy. I was waiting for her with my husband. The plane emptied, but she did not appear. Finally, sitting in a wheelchair, she was rolled out by an airport employee. She was disoriented but very much relieved to have been found. It was a shock for us to realize how diminished she had become.

It was early summer. The community where we lived in New Jersey was off the main road and surrounded by trees. It was a quiet, peaceful place. I was reassured to have Maman safely at home with us, but also very anxious about the future.

I commuted to work in New York. There was nobody to stay with her while I was gone. After a few days, I thought I could leave her alone, but shortly after I left, a neighbor found my mother wandering on the road and kindly took her back home.

Maman did not speak English. She could not watch TV; there was nothing for her to do. Through the Jewish Family Service, I got the name of a French-speaking woman looking for work. She was only eighteen years old, a refugee from Haiti. I hired her, but things did not work out well. The young woman was very passive, never engaging *Maman* in conversation or any other kind of activity. Both women just remained sitting in an uncomfortable silence. I knew I would have to return to Paris with *Maman* and make arrangements for her to enter a nursing home.

During the early years of World War II, in my father's absence *Maman* had been amazingly resourceful in keeping us alive. After the roundup of Jews had begun in Paris, with the help of an underground Jewish organization she succeeded in sending my brother and me to the country.

After the War, *Maman* led a very solitary existence. Her few friends passed away, and she was too timid and distrustful to make new ones. She was by now afraid of new people and new situations.

One evening, still in New Jersey, I suggested we take a walk through the woods after dinner. Night was falling; the fireflies were starting to light up, and the air was filled with the scent of fresh-cut grass. *Maman* was enjoying our walk when I brought up the topic of her move to a retirement home. I was ill at ease to confront her with such a prospect and less gentle than I wished to be. We had stopped walking. *Maman* looked at me tenderly and said, "I love you very much, and I don't want to cause you any pain." It was the first time in my life that she told me she loved me. I was stunned. Slowly, hand in hand, we walked back home in loving silence.*

**Ten days later we left for Paris together. I had arranged for Maman to enter a Jewish nursing home in Aix-les-Bains, a town in Haute-Savoie near the Swiss border. We traveled there by train. From her new place she could see the peaks of the Préalpes. (She always loved the mountains.) I became an international commuter between New York and Aix-les-Bains. Maman remained there until the end of her life in December '87. She was 89 years old.*

• • •

HOW TO CROSS THE STREET

Pete Weis

... in London: Uh-oh, traffic in the UK goes the wrong way! But here in London there are reminders to “Look Right” embedded in the curb (or rather, “kerb”) at cross-walks. So, be sure to look down and read the reminder, then look right, a two-step procedure. Now you’ll be safe — until you walk into a quiet residential area where there are no such reminders.

... in Rome: By Italian law, pedestrians have the right of way. But the drivers, if they can avoid it, won’t slow down, let alone stop. So, when you step off the curb into the street, the first car or two coming along will swerve around in front of you. Now that you’re a couple of meters into the street, the second and third cars will swerve around behind you. So far, so good! But then another car, whose driver’s view had been blocked by those in front of him, will have to screech to a stop (if you’re lucky). If you think this is too risky, don’t go to Naples! Which takes us to...

... in Naples: Forget it! Napolitani drive on the sidewalks. Get your own car for protection.

... in Seville: Here, and in several other Spanish cities, there are Walk/Don’t Walk signs to guide you, but not quite like those we have here in New York City. The stick figures of a walking human are really animated. The figures’ legs are striding at a decent pace. But when there are just a few seconds left to cross the street, the stick-figure changes from Walking to Running. You had better start running, too!

... in Hanoi: There aren’t many crosswalks or traffic lights here. It helps to be in a large group, so get a bunch of potential street-crossers together, link arms and, when the traffic is relatively light, cross the street together. Safety in numbers! If you’re with a guide, he or she should be on the end nearest the approaching traffic, waving his/her upstream arm at the traffic.

... in Ho Chi Minh City (formerly, Saigon): Unlike its counterparts to the north, this city has frequent traffic lights and they are observed by the zillion motor bikers. But there are some places where you might like to go that aren’t protected by traffic lights. For this, there

are uniformed “tourist police” available to help you. If one of these green-uniformed men sees you hesitating with one foot in the street, he will take you gently by the elbow and, waving his free arm at the traffic, escort you safely to the other side of the street. The system works!

. . . in Cairo: The traffic is terrible, and if there’s an opening ahead, the goal for each driver is to fill it quickly before someone else does. A two-lane road will have three or even four lanes of traffic in it, as the drivers contend with each other to get ahead. There are many traffic lights here, so you would think that crossing a road at an intersection with a traffic light would get you closer to your destination. But red lights are irrelevant to Cairo drivers. Uh-oh! So, if you’re out hoping to explore your neighborhood by foot, you had better limit your sight-seeing to the block containing your hotel.

. . . in New York City: Ah, here we pedestrians rule! Not only are there well marked crosswalks with Walk/Don’t Walk lights to help you get safely to your destination, but there is also a culture that encourages ignoring these signals, as well as jaywalking, waiting in the street several feet beyond the curb, walking-while-texting, and a general disregard for the countdown on the Walk/Don’t Walk signal. If there are just three seconds left, don’t worry — there is still time to cross the avenue, but be sure to wave your arms at the waiting traffic, and if you use a cane, wave that, too! (I unkindly think of this as the “geezer-walk”). Fortunately, pedestrian-vehicle interactions in NYC are relatively rare. However, be sure to look the wrong way when crossing a one-way street, because the delivery-by-bike guys tend to ignore both signs and red lights. Taxi drivers tend to be in a hurry and don’t hesitate to swerve into your crosswalk. As with the delivery cyclists, for cabbies, time is money. The only New Yorkers I know who were hit by cars were in crosswalks, observing the traffic lights. So, remain cheerful, but stay alert, New Yorkers.

• • •

ADVENTURE IN EVIAN

Bob Reiss

Back in the early 2000's, Debra and I spent three weeks in southern France, capped by a memorable encounter with the French gendarmerie. The "incident" occurred on the last day of our vacation. We spent the eve of our planned departure from Geneva airport at the Hilton in Evian, France. On our last afternoon, we decided to amble over to the once famous *Casino d'Evian*. We were no more than thirty steps from the hotel, when I felt a sharp pain in my neck. Debra checked and saw a bright red spot there. I looked down on the sidewalk and saw a tiny yellow ball; someone had shot me with a BB gun! The pain quickly subsided, but we thought we should inform the hotel staff that their guests were under attack. So, we returned to the hotel, told our story, and re-embarked on our walk to the casino. After a couple of unfruitful hours at the penny slot machines, we returned to the hotel, having more or less forgotten the incident.

However, awaiting us at the hotel were two French policemen who wanted to talk. Michiko, a hotel clerk, served as interpreter. She was Japanese and seemed equally challenged in both French and English. I said "OK, can we talk here in the hotel?" But Michiko told us they wanted to talk at the police station. I said, "Not OK." It was almost dinner time, and we wanted to get to bed early for our morning flight. They insisted we come to the station and said they would provide us with a car and driver. Reluctantly, we were off to the police station with Michiko.

We were greeted by what seemed to be the entire Evian police force, at least a half-dozen men. The chief politely asked where we were from and when we said New York, he lit up and exclaimed, "Ah, Giuliani, Giuliani, *formidable* !" — apparently a hero of his in the anti-crime department.

With my approximately 10% comprehension of lightning-fast French and Michiko's rudimentary English, we learned the following:

Two boys had shot at me from across the street with a BB gun.

The boys were staying with their family at a condo near the "BB gun nest."

And here's the kicker: the boys were sons of a Saudi diplomat on vacation. Now we knew the reason for all the attention to this seemingly minor infraction.

The chief then reached under his desk and revealed a *pistolet*, the alleged weapon. He asked me to identify it. Of course, I couldn't, but I said I could possibly identify the ammunition. (Remember the tiny yellow ball I saw at my feet?) He then aimed the gun at the wall and pulled the trigger. I immediately felt a sharp pain in my cheek, not unlike the one I had felt in my neck. Yes, the shot from our latter-day Inspector Clouseau had ricocheted off the wall and found me as a target once again. The claque of police, having witnessed this bizarre scene, concealed their embarrassment with gales of laughter. Sure enough, another tiny yellow ball lay at my feet.

Having now properly identified the weapon, I think I was asked (through Michiko's limited understanding of French, French law, and English) whether I wanted to press charges. This would involve appearances over the next few days in a French court and the preparation, in French, of a complaint. Our flight home was now less than twelve hours away. The answer was obvious: no. I indicated I would be satisfied if *ils jetaient le pistolet dans le Lac*, i.e., if they threw the gun into Lake Geneva (on whose shores the town sits). "*Non, Monsieur, c'est impossible. C'est une propriété privée.*"

The preservation of private property rights in France impressed me but did not relieve me of any further responsibilities. The chief evidently had to write a report justifying non-prosecution of the dastardly deed. He said he would write it with my help. For some reason, Michiko was busy talking with Debra, so it was just the chief and me composing the report. He first wanted my *coordonnées*, i.e., my full name and address in the States. I was loath to supply these details, as I did not want to appear on a Saudi hit list for snitching on the ambassador's brats. I reluctantly complied, though, and the rest of the report consisted of the chief's converting my broken narrative into what I assumed was proper French.

Satisfied, the police drove us back to the hotel. Hilton did provide dinner on the house, I guess feeling some guilt for allowing random violence to guests on their property. Our saga ended the next morning when we left behind the dangers of Evian for the relative safety of the Geneva airport.

• • •

MY FAVORITE TEACHER

M.B. Yakoubian

In June 1967, I was standing in the middle of the gym at Hunter College. The periphery of the huge space was lined with long conference tables, each manned by staff representing the school's various academic departments. I had a year to go before completing the requirements for a B.S. degree, and among the core requirements I still needed to take was Music. I found the Music Department table along the far wall of the gym, manned by a single person. As there was no line of students waiting there, I walked right over and began questioning the man seated behind the table. I was a tiny bit uncomfortable talking to him as he seemed terribly shy, plus he was really nerdy-looking. He was probably only around 30 years old, but he was prematurely bald, which made him look even nerdier. I explained to him that I needed to sign up for Music 101. He noted there were several sections of the course listed, and the one that fit my schedule met on Tuesday and Thursday. It would work perfectly.

After signing me up, he looked at me and grinned, "I'll be teaching that class."

"Oh, great," I replied. "See you in September." As I walked away, I rolled my eyes and thought, "Yaay! This is really going to be boring."

Come September, I had the surprise of my life. Prof. Griffel turned out to be the very best teacher I had in four years of college. He knew his subject thoroughly and prepared each class so well as to be unique and actually fun from beginning to end. But that wasn't the life-changing part. About two months into the semester, Prof. Griffel announced that the next topic to be covered would be opera. That announcement didn't exactly excite me, but I figured it wouldn't be too awful, given his way of making every topic interesting.

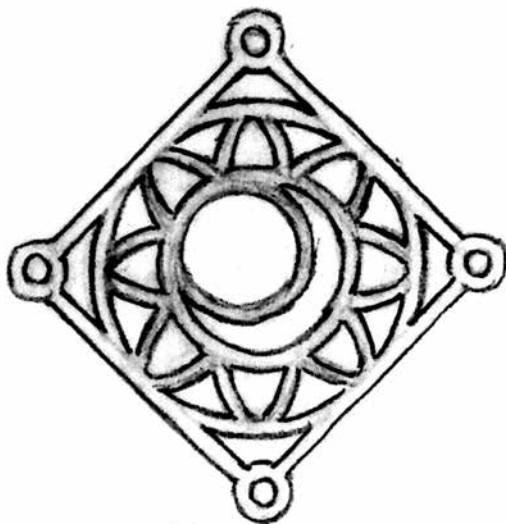
So, in the following three weeks we learned about the world of opera; I was hooked from day one. Opera, where have you been all my life? Prof. Griffel brought every work to life, relating the plots like a master story teller and spontaneously banging out the major arias on the piano. Even before the three weeks were over, I began cadging tickets in front of the Met. I soon learned you could get standing room tickets for a few bucks. And better yet, just hang out in front a half hour before the

show and you could easily land a great seat for a bargain from someone whose date didn't show up.

I finished the semester of Music 101 with an unquenchable love of opera. After graduating, I began traveling around to many of the world's great opera houses, usually to see those of the Bel Canto composers not often staged in New York City.

For 35 years I taught Physical Education in a New York City public high school. About half way through that period of time, I wrote and had accepted a course proposal to teach a full-credit opera class. Once the class was instituted, I took my students to final dress rehearsals at the Met and often had professional singers come to my classroom to perform live. Yes, I eventually met my husband, Dan, at the opera, and our life together has always been filled with music. Thank you, Prof. Griffel.

• • •



GS

CASEY

Roy Clary

Her name was Casey, Casey Jones. Her real first name might have been Mary or Martha or Jill or Janet, or even Daphne or Deborah, but when a fellow first grader dubbed her Casey because he had just heard about the train engineer of song, the name stuck. From that time forward, she was Casey Jones.

I met her at a church camp; we were both sophomores in high school. It was a week-long camp set in a secluded meadow. We met on the first day. We sat next to each other on the second. On the third day, we gazed into each other's eyes. On the fourth, we held hands. On the fifth day, we kissed. On the sixth, she guided me to a secluded area and opened her Bible. She had me read what she had underlined: "Be ye therefore followers of God . . . and walk in love. . . . Husbands, love your wives as your own bodies, for he that loveth his wife loveth himself . . . a man shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh."

The references to joining with the wife's body must have been pretty heady stuff for a 15-year-old. Casey seemed to be both mapping out directions for spending the rest of the day and forecasting a future of continued "one flesh" activity.

However, at the time, all was innocence. For Casey, the words of "love" were about being bathed in "Christ's love." A love of purity. A love without blemish. A love that cleansed and nourished. After the reading, we were very serious and thoughtful. As we walked back to the other campers, I was filled with wonder and gratitude toward the girl walking beside me.

On the seventh day, we said goodbye, exchanged addresses, promised to write every day, and planned how we could visit each other.

At home I told my parents about Casey and started to read them the Biblical passage. By the time I got to "walking in love" I was sobbing. My parents, of course, were stunned. My dad had no idea of how to handle the situation. My mother wailed, "Son, we love you."

At first, Casey and I wrote to each other every day. After a month, the letters arrived on a weekly basis. By the end of the summer, the last letter came. School was starting. There were new friendships to be made, new beginnings to be experienced.

Today I am not a religious person; in fact, I am an atheist. An Eden-like camp is a distant memory. Casey is a distant memory, but a memory I will cherish forever.

• • •

QUEST BECKONS

Wayne Cotter

Quest beckons, and
We heed the call
Climbing
Each pockmarked stair
On Rector
On Wall
By subway or bus
Uber or Lyft
We draw a deep breath
And then
Heed the call

Over history's sidewalks
Past the bull's
Watchful gaze
Through canyons
Where ghost-heroes
Still hear shouts of praise
Beneath sunshine towers
And shadowy walls
We stand on the doorstep
And then
Heed the call

So Helpless
So Yielding
Before Quest's siren song
Footsteps follow
Footsteps
On pathways, well-worn
Stumbling in darkness
Through luminous halls
We stop and we listen
And then
Heed the call

• • •

BE A POET

Art Spar

Write words that make us feel
The wind in your face
The freshness of the air
The fullness of this autumn day

Words that bring us inside
The place you inhabit
Words that capture
What you the poet perceive

What dreams float through your mind?
What energy fills your lungs?
What emotions permeate your being?
What makes your heart flutter?

A blank page is your canvas
Letters become your palette
A keyboard is your brush
Paint the mystery of your soul

Compose us a song
Sculpt us a collage of sounds
Adorn the page with images
That fill your imagination

Then you will lose yourself
You will drift beyond time
To the place you always knew
That you the poet belong

• • •

PRESENTS FOR MY SISTER

Eileen D. Kelly

I'll pack in my bag all the flowers I can gather
In a jeweled wrap Margie can unfurl
And a red silk dress to go with her olive skin.
She'd like steak from the grill
And garlic mashed potatoes
Plus an Old Fashioned
And then a cigarette – I'll bring all that.
A new gullet I'll give her, cancer-free
To ease the food going down.
I'll bring her back porch, where she can sit
And see hummingbirds sipping the flowers.
We'll walk together and I'll clasp her hand,
If only I could.

• • •

THE UNMARKED BOXES

Eileen D. Kelly

They say whatever you lose
comes round in another form.
You know it's true that the gone
are never really gone
but hidden before your eyes
in unmarked boxes
you walk past every day
on your way to supper.

Every so often
the boxes break open
and out leaps joy!
It bursts into private corners
of your heart
with smiles and hugs and love
so intense
it takes your breath away.

• • •

DARKNESS

Linda Rothstein

Anger
Like a tornado
Sucks up my love in its vortex
And spits it out far at sea
Once you were the tide
And I the shore
You were the surf pounding its heart out
And I the sand slipping out in the undertow
Always rolling in once again at high tide
Like eternity

Back then the sun
Always came up in the a.m.
I never guessed how a cloud
Like a cataract
Could occlude the sun
How the earth could be
A dim disk that sank in the west

Am I low?
Not as low as the time
I wished for death
Like a dark patch of a spreading melanoma
The darkness passed this morning
I woke early to see
The sun peeking through the blinds
The moon was still in the sky
As if it could not find its way home
And suddenly I saw what it all means:
The darkness must be nature's way
Of preparing me
Should you be the one to go first
And I be the one to be left here alone

• • •

CHILDREN'S CRUSADE

Leonard Leventon

From Stockholm to Sydney, to New York City
To Rio, Johannesburg, Singapore
Every Port, Mountaintop and Global Shore
The children; our Planet's children
Raised their voices, spoke the truth, stood up tall
Banged on our doors:

Protect us; save us from your ways
You have numbered our days
We're your offspring; we're the future
That you still have in your control
Don't deny us the full life that you enjoyed

"For our children; for our grandchildren!..."
Your fathers sang
For you they voted, they emoted
For us we march
For you they built a better world
For us you watch
Please don't deny us; act on the science
That would save our lives

. . .



A RAIN SHOWER

Jennifer Jolly

As a child I loved the rain
Falling on the window pain
Soaking through the luscious grass
Bringing flowers out en masse
Falling gently on the trees
Forming droplets on the leaves
Catching all the rays of sun
Making rainbows, bringing fun
To the children in the street
Jumping puddles with their feet
Grown-ups huddle wander by
Umbrellas open to the sky
Standing by the open door
Sheltered I would watch it pour
See it splash up from the ground
Making such a spitting sound
As it gathered force I waited
'Till it gradually abated
Like the sound of music rare
Floating through the now fresh air
Notes that burst like a refrain
Bringing peace and joy again.

• • •

REAR-ENDED

Jennifer Jolly

There once was a woman named Marge
Whose rear-end was shockingly large
She caused such a fuss
When she entered a bus
She ended up traveling by barge

• • •

QUESTION

Barbara P Gordon

I walk into the night
shadows lengthening before me
cold wind whipping flecks of
paper, dust, white scraps
into the thick air
stinging my cheeks
blurring eyes

I wrap my coat tighter
hear fragments of
conversation in and out
as my feet carry me
forward
slippery thoughts
muttering
where am I going?

passing voices
who is she
should we ask

but they don't ask
and I couldn't tell them
I used to know
but I forgot

A bar of light from the
doorway
fragment of music –
beckons
there you are
a whisper
am I home?

• • •

FAREWELL TO A ROSE

Stella Gold

Returning home last night
I was saddened to find
The lonely rose
In the corner garden
Beaten down by the wind
Flat on the ground
Its delicate petals
Bruised and lifeless

After the torrid heat
Of the last week
We had welcomed the rain
But the heavy downpour
Killed the fragile flower
Whose pale color
And modest scent
Was offering
A subtle gift
Of loveliness.

• • •

PAPER AIRPLANES

Betty Farber

The floor under the tree is covered with toys:
Robots, Legos, puzzles and games,
Coloring books, sticker books, story books,
Crayons, paints and brushes.
So why are the children
Ignoring them all?
Watching their Grandpa
Take a large sheet of paper
And turn it and fold it
And hold it in a way
That when he thrusts it in air
It flies across the room
To the star on top of the tree.
Or over the ceiling fan,
Getting stuck on the blades.
The children, the pilots
Have to turn on the switch
So the fan will dislodge
Its resident airplane.
It is so much fun
The grownups fly too
Restoring their memories
Of a long-ago life.
Grandchildren's memories
Are now newly born
On the day that they gladly
Neglected their toys
To explore outer space
With Grandpa's creative,
Mystical, remarkable, life-affirming
Paper airplanes!

• • •

DILEMMA

Yona Rogosin

A deadline-driven decision looms.
Move or stay?
Flight or fight?

Sitting with paper and pencil
I make my lists
in two neat columns
of pros and cons
and costs and savings.

Enumerating, examining
dissecting every issue
I evaluate
the possibilities for success
the probabilities for failure.

For good measure
I use a numeric scale
to rate the importance
and consequence of each item
and total the columns.

Oh pooh!
There's little difference
between the two.

Baffled and bewildered
panic jolting my aching head
anxiety seeping through my gut
I face the dreaded deadline
that now is up.

What to say? What to do?

I toss a coin.

• • •

SEASONS OF LUST

Judy Winn

Lust came in summer
A blaze of chemistry
Exciting and frightening
In its encouragement
Of risk and bad decisions.

Lust dragged my thoughts
Away from the mundane
To linger over replays
Upending a constructed life
With its trickery.

Lust sometimes reappeared in fall
A surge of almost forgotten desire
That masterminded sensibility
Turning on a spigot
That rushed out of control.

Lust appears on a movie screen
Intertwined bodies watched
With dispassionate envy
Wishing I still felt that way
Winter has stolen the heat.

• • •

A 25TH ANNIVERSARY HAIKU

Yona Rogosin

*Pen produce perform
Friendships horizons expand
Spirits soar hearts sing*

• • •

MOLASSES IN THE RAW

Byrd

our kisses stretch
across continents
and time zones
where have I
loved you before

the soft smell
of your lips
tickles my
inners

the sweet sound
of your touch
lubricates my
patella

the warm taste
of your eyes
makes my esophagus
boogaloo

when have I
loved you again
Meet ME AT OUR
PRIVATE SEA SHELL
2-11-17 6:00 a.m.

• • •

GREEN

Karen Neuberger

– after Jasper Johns, Green Target

Green hears me singing the blues and intervenes.
She follows me into my dreams posing as curtain,
as cycle, as movie star. She offers a bottle of herself,

mint julep. Smitten, I am, and swamp haze.
Until I come upon my fear of the snake in her.
Of the lizard tail she can release and leave

dangling in my grasp. Spiraling her concentric
swirls around my wrist, I cogitate heartbeat
and conception. In retrospect, she remains

forever at my childhood side, protean, pliable,
and perfectly plausible. When I break away
to pursue my other love—blue—she reminds me

I can simply add the yolk of sun to summon her return.
Now if I can just omit fear from my life,
I'll be young again, full of bull's-eye & whirligig.

• • •

IN THE DEEP

Mary Ann Donnelly

What it must have been like
For a farm boy from
The middle of the country
Far from an ocean
Far from a sea
A day's ride to a river
To find himself
In the middle of the Pacific
In a war
Against a people
He had never seen.

What it must have been like
For a farm boy
Used to the wide open
Of a treeless prairie
To find himself on a ship
In a sea of hammocks
Peopled by more men
Than his town could count.

What it must have been like
For a farm boy
Who swam each summer
In a horse tank
To cool off
From the day on a tractor
To find himself in the middle
Of an ocean
Torpedo shot
Treading water
Waiting for rescue
Wishing himself back
To dry parched
Dustbowl Oklahoma.

What it must have been like
The farm boy never told
But each anniversary
He sat in the dark
Remembering.



Marilyn Weiss, *My Gal*, Acrylic, Multimedia



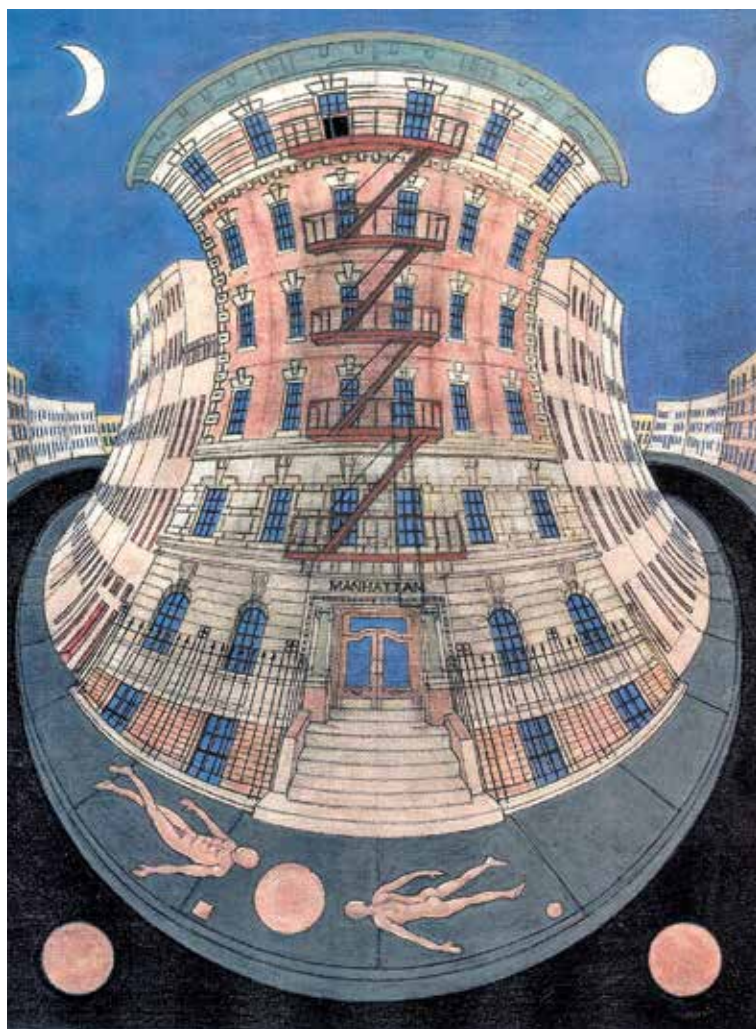
Diane Figueroa, *Study in Blue*, Sterling Silver, Semi-Precious Stones



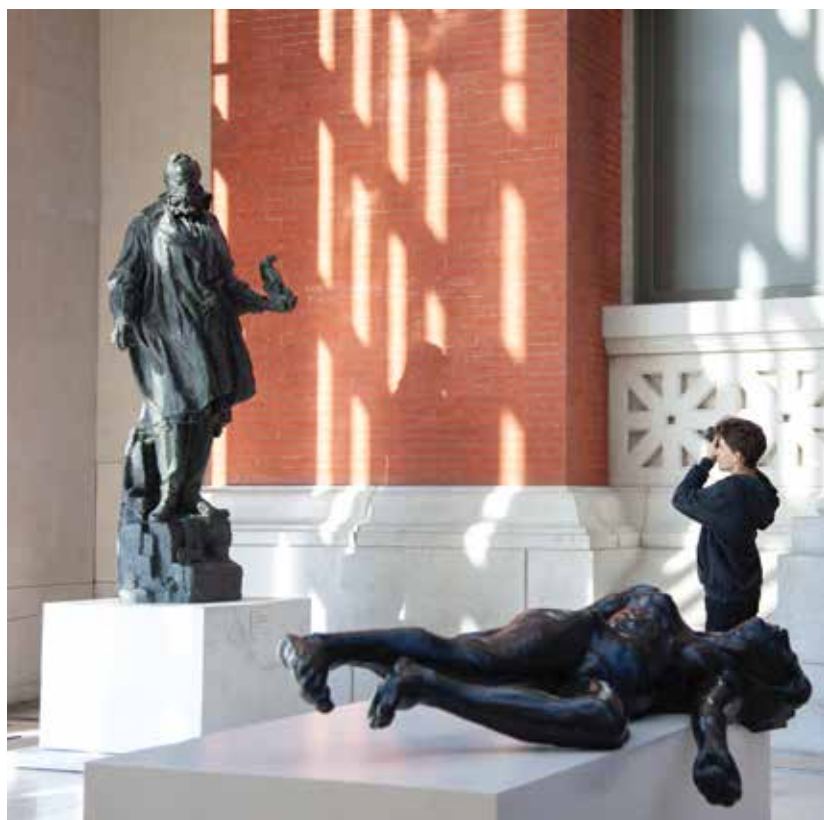
Sondra Lipton Sahlman, *Silenced*, Alabaster



Paul Adler, *Lady in Blue*, Oil on Canvas



Gil Santiago, *Crime Scene*, Acrylic on Canvas



Lila Heilbrunn, *Shadows and Figures*, Photograph



Rosalie Regal, *Solidarity*, Clay



Helen Neilson, *The Morning Waits*, Collage



Sandra Abramson, *Les Huîtres*, Photograph



Jeanette Himmel, *Clearing the Abstract Forest*, Watercolor



Deborah Yaffe, *The Golden Bowl*, Mixed Media



Stella Gold, *Exotic Travel*, Collage



Leonard Gold, *Urban Landscape*, Gouache



Roy Clary *Vermont Landscape*, Oil on Canvas



Helen McMahon, *Battery Park, South Cove*, Watercolor



Pere Weis, *Male Frigate Bird, Galapagos*, Photograph



Yona Rogosin, *Planned Spontaneity*, Paper Collage



Hilda Feinstein, *Table Top*, Pencil Drawing, Colored Electronically



Michael Wellner, *Chincoteague, VA*, Photograph

HIROSHIMA, MON AMOUR

-for Alain Resnais

Steve Koenig

Film

I am too fat.
Last week Kleber died.
With one stroke.
With one strike
a war was ended
and fear of a different kind took
its place.
Hiroshima, mon amour.

Poem

I am too old.
This week Steve D. died.
Ischemic stroke
strikes again
and his never-ending
rage against the winds is
left in his archive with Yuko
who is not from Hiroshima
but Nagasaki.

Memory

I am too neurotic.
Opportunity died
because fear struck
that my first love
would cling to me as
I cling to memories
that explode my
mushroom-shaped head
until spores travel
as far as Kyoto
where I also have
dreams
since Dad brought me
forty large picture postcards
of Kyoto
when I was ten.

• • •

WOODEN MATCHES

Carole Cronig Abrahams

I snuck
the rectangular box
out of our kitchen

I hid under a leafless lilac bush
in a lovely sheltered space
along our side yard
away from parents sight of sparks and fire,
the smell of sulfur dioxide

I crouched away from the bare branches
so the wood would not burn
and sometimes snow arrived,
quietly enclosing me
as I struck matches

daring detection
I watched flares and danger
moving down the little pine handles
toward me
In my wintry, browned, lilac cave

• • •

ALBERT EINSTEIN, ROCK STAR

Stephen Rosen

There'll never be another one like him
Who had great thoughts while other's sights were dim
His modesty, simplicity were obvious for all to see
His uber genius was luminous and free

Has physics gotten smaller or have men?
Herr Einstein seems much larger now than then
Will there ever be another one like him?
There'll never ever be another one like him.

• • •

MAY BE STARS

Helen Neilson

Inspired by Michael Hamburg's "Across the Universe" course

Radio waves waive "Good bye"
then say, "Hello" again.

Gas changes colors like
a fingerprint pollutes to kill fruit
and dilute a device or de-icer.

Doppler effects change the hue.

Newton made optic colors
with refracted light.

Frequency grabs the light
and tells us what to see.

Light waves or maybe winks at us.

Laser may make things seem large
and Moon reflects all its own light.

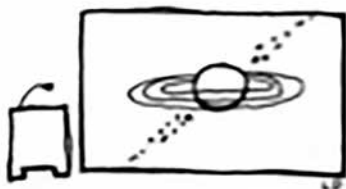
Somewhere every dark light,
views deep or shallow,
could be stars or disappearing Mars.

Some travel at the same speed,
reality or the unreal,
tangible not identical.

Waves of light heat small infrareds
while ultra violet blackens radio rays.

Magna relay waves from a gamma ray
are the shortest small microwave,
the invisible light and
the invisible protozoans, too.

. . .



MOTHER/DAUGHTER

Mary Ann Donnelly

She said she loved me
Do anything for me
To make up for the times
She yelled or ignored me
So why did she leave me
To sort through this -
Six shopping bags
Seven shoe boxes and
Eight albums of pictures.
Who are these people anyway?

Add in ten travel bags of
Assorted ephemera
From foreign climes
And what's with
All these ribbons
And wrapping paper
Cash was all she gave
Not presents.

She did love me
She gave me freedom
She bit her lip
Whenever I blew it
She never said
I told you so
She's in my head
So I can let it go
All her stuff
She'll understand.

• • •

SHE TRIED

Ruth Ward

At six years old I skipped down to Zack's store
To buy my mother a pack of cigs.
"You're such a big girl, buying smokes for your mom!"
"I'd rather be reading 'The Three Little Pigs.'"

Dr. Dabrowski told Mom to quit,
"It's bad for your lungs and the lungs of your child."
At twelve years old I trudged down to the store
'Cause by Nicorette gum my mom was beguiled.

"Your ma doesn't buy her smokes here anymore
"No, Mr. Zack, now she chews gum instead.
She says some day she won't chew or smoke,
But it's tough for her to do what she said."

I told her to try alternatives
Like nicotine patches and nasal sprays.
She got a prescription for bupropion
And lozenges to last for days.

When Mom tried running up and down stairs
To make her cravings go away,
I trotted right along with her
To keep her hankerings at bay.

But squats, deep knee bends, jumping jacks,
They never worked for very long,
She'd flash a feeble, toothy smile
And sing her unconvincing song:

"You cannot say I didn't try
From a hat to pull a rabbit!"
But through dry eyes I plainly saw
She'd never kick the habit.

So, when doctor D. called me at work -
I'd proudly turned eighteen that year -
He said Mom's stage four lung cancer
Proclaimed her future loud and clear.

"If only she'd tried harder,"
Futile hope fought with my fear
As my body shook and folded
Within one gigantic tear.

• • •

WHAT I LIKE TO WEAR

Jennifer Jolly

I started out a corporate dame
With tailored suits and to my shame
Wore crisp white blouses like my peers
Put cultured pearls into my ears
Wore silk bow ties, designer shoes
But inside me I'd often muse
"This isn't me I must away
To casual clothes not corporate's way"
And now that many years have passed
I'm old and take a different cast
To all my friends I do declare
This is what I like to wear

Floppy shoes that are not laced
Nothing tight around the waist
Slacks I wear and sometimes skirts
Loose fitting tops but rarely shirts
And I love to wear large beads
Made of stones or rocks or seeds
But my favorite thing is this
A necklace that just brings me bliss
It's brought from Egypt when I went
Reminds me of the days I spent
Near pyramids, temples and bazaars
Away from scooters, trucks and cars

It brings me peace when round my neck
With it I never feel a wreck
Its turquoise, lapis, coral, gold
Beads and lucky scarabs hold
I wear it, dream of worlds gone past
With Pharaohs mummies made to last
I ponder Egypt's ancient lands
On fertile Nile through desert sands
The sphinx outlined with sun's gold rays
The wondrous tombs from former days
So in my necklace I'm serene
And feel like an Egyptian queen.

SHAWL

Helen Saffran

I never wore a shawl at all
Never could get the effect
Though I always envied others
Alas I had a shawl defect

Then one cold day
I took my shawl
And tried again
And gave my all

How creative
I became
I now found it
A wondrous game

Flip it this way
And look dashing
Flip it that way
And look sweet

How the fringes
Go a-dancing
How the patterns
Flow and meet

Ah, the warmth
When wrapped
Around me
What a cozy, tender treat

• • •

AGING: LOSING

Howard Seeman

Parts of me are leaving me.
Like friends leaving my party,
But they will never come back.

Friends who have been with me all my life:
My hearing, my knees, some carings,
my so-easily-bending-down-to-pick-up-things.

And they are taking my other friends with them:
laughing when we all hear something funny;
my tennis single's power;
my able to say: "I'll get that for you."

I can only sit down,
as if I'm handcuffed to the chair,
and watch them leave.

I am sliding down a hill.
The scenery is getting smaller.
My world that once was a big living room
is becoming a corridor.

Now, can I bear these goodbyes
without getting depressed and thus closing them even faster?
Can I? without hurting the ones I loved
who have made all this so meaningful?

• • •

A GOOD-BYE DAYDREAM

Helen Neilson

Sitting here all alone,
I daydream just to look at you.
When all the dreams surface,
you are no longer alone
and your smile speaks to me,
wishing me well as you turn and
walk out into the night.

• • •

MY HARD DRIVE

Linda Rothstein

My mother always said
Be sure to wear clean underwear.

What if I got hit by a truck god forbid?
And they rolled me in on a stretcher
And my skirt rode up and everyone saw my underwear?

My mom fretted so much over my lingerie
It's a blessing she could not have foreseen
The pitfalls of today.

What if the hard drive on my computer crashed
And the technician saw how it was littered
With the emails I sent while in a fit?

What of the people I googled
Out of prurient interest?
Or just plain snooping?

Haven't you heard it said
You should never fear your technician
There's not a thing on your computer
He hasn't seen or at least heard mentioned?

Bosh! I bet most of them never heard of the kind of site
I click on when alone in the dead of night.

Not to mention the artful way I've learned to use Google
To do my searching which some call snooping.
Why shouldn't I know everyone's date of birth and net
worth?

What if it became common knowledge
That I never empty my mailbox?

And what about my contacts app?
Once your name is there that is that
And should you have the bad luck to die
I can ring you up in cyberspace and say hi.

• • •

black tie balling dark city style

Byrd

williamsburg winos use thunderbird and g-rose
to radiate intelligence artificial
and to warm body parts
society long ago chose to neglect
telling lies about being donald the big mac
living in a white castle
fantasizing about being king of all burgers
and bouncing little wendy's big butt whopper style
sonny boy missed the night train
he lost the pickle by
focusing too much on the mayonnaise
he wonders why the lettuce
is always in someone else's salad
as he gawks at rotten undressed tomatoes
7-12-01 9:50 a.m.

• • •

HEAT ADVISORY

Betty Farber

This heavy wall of heat
Separates me from the world—
Days of loneliness
Lasting through the night.
Never thought I would imagine
That snowy streets in July
Would be a dream come true.

• • •

ANNA'S TRASH

Judy Winn

Changes in life are reflected
In the detritus thrown in bins.
The trash tells our daily stories,
Anna's seen in our shared trash room.

I knew when Anna stopped cooking.
Packages from frozen dinners
Appeared in the fourth floor trash room.
Secrets of her aging body
Betrayed by the Depends wrappers.

Aides soon came and went day and night,
Frozen meals replaced with Ensure,
Empties in the recycle bin.

The super told me Anna passed.
I never heard them take her out.
Her daughters came and the bins filled,
Overflowing with trash she left.

The fourth floor bins now half empty,
A vacuum left by absent trash.
Anna was one hundred and one.

• • •

THE ICE AGE

Leonard Leventon

Frozen thunder creeping along
Rapturous wonder singing its song
Blue, white capped mountains pointing the way
To all that surrounds us
to all we depend on
to us we all say

Sing with the rivers
The frozen raging rivers of ice
Stop them from crying
From drowning us and dying

There can be no more denying
The frozen rapture isn't really trying
To encapsulate us all; it's shining
Its last bright rays of hope back our way

• • •

IMPRESSIONS

Leonard Leventon

Gelato, sorbet, frissante
Corner café

French music fills the air
Amongst the blowing white seeds

Like snow falling gently
In a soft springtime breeze

Morning in Santa Fe, NM
5/16/18

• • •

THE FINISH LINE

Barbara P Gordon

When I retired I thought
I knew that many years
of reading, meeting friends,
attending concerts lay ahead.

Of course, someday, my
eyes would dim, kidneys fail
or legs would falter, but
that would be okay as all
around me I'd be seeing
wondrous things.

I expected exploration--
underneath the sea or far in space,
or perhaps a new philosophy
of understanding,
miracles of modern medicine,
maybe even lasting peace.

I never thought the heart of earth
would stutter, the breath
of cities fail, that I'd be
reeling through the streets,
from a boiling sun,

that my world would beat me
to the finish line.

• • •

RESPIRE

Diana Bloom

Cutting into my filet
the day
after surgery
I feel the fibres part
and startle me.
Against my will
the catsup
transubstantiates.
Raking the plate
of its debris,
the severed fat
discarded in black plastic,
reveals to me
that that
serrated knife
is poised
over disposable parts
and may well
slice again

• • •

The plant in the bathroom
has grown seven leaves
since you left.

Diana Bloom

• • •

WHEN I WAS A JERK

Carole Cronig Abrahams

My friends worked at a five-and-ten as clerks,
among the buttons and bows, needles and notebooks,
laid out on open countertops

When I joined them, though, I wasn't put "on the floor,"
I was behind a wide, shiny counter, flanked by glasses,
backed by mirrors and menus.

Stools on the other side, rectangular napkin dispensers
waiting for expectant, thirsty, customers
straining to see treats coming from me

I, master of the levers I pulled toward me for
the delights coming—sweet syrups, bubbly water

I, master of the machines that shook milkshakes,
stirred ice cream in—and malt, powdered malt

I topped off ice cream floats and put in extra chocolate syrup
for the friends who led me to the best job ever
for a high school girl
In 1950's New York City

• • •

CATS' BIRTHDAY PARTY

Helen Saffran

Birthday party
For Maggie and Jake
Fudgy the Whale
Ice cream cake
Emmett wore
Four party hats
Missing were two
Sleeping cats

• • •

ON FEELING

Marc Kouffman

Some say life has meaning
Life is very real
I say it's all feeling
Feeling flogs the wheel
The air in the cup half empty
The wine in the cup half full
The collision of feathers and sinew
When the swan deflowers the bull
Ripped are the still life roses
That embroider the hospice wall
Quipped the drugstore Moses
I'll redeem them one and all
To believe in magic
When the world is so askew
It's comic and it's tragic
When white spawns black and blue
For life is now or never
There's nothing more to see
When I am touched by you
And you are touched by me
And if the strongest silence
Vibrates in us all
And if the strongest mast
Splinters in a squall
Then love will find a crevice
Work its way in deep
Then a thousand worldly purposes
Will fall down in a heap

But you and I my darling
We will be the same
As long as we refuse
To play the mating game
And as long as
We give more
Than we ever plan to take
And as long as life itself
Is what we have at stake Why look for meaning
In the root of every tree
Feel it in my gaze
Feel it inside me
And I will do the same for you
Until we are no more.
Because if there is a purpose
That's what we're here for

• • •

REGRET

Karen Neuberg

—after Lucille Clifton and Daibai (d. 1841)

You cannot tell regret
not to, nor explain its taste;
but while I was in the middle of the night,
I came upon its table set with steaming bowls
and platters filled.

• • •

ON TURNING SEVENTY WELLFLEET 2019

Art Spar

Worn wooden boards
Bone-bruised feet
Wellfleet house and me
Aging in unison

Patching my house
Is an act of love
Nurturing the place
Where moments collect
By the ocean
Whitman's old crone
Endlessly rocking
The cradle of life and death

I patch my soul
To endure
The down-hill trajectory
Of an aging body

The moments here
In this familiar place
Are healing patches
For all that is lost to time

As an adult I have lived quickly
Now at seventy I slow to linger
As I did in childhood
In moments of imagination

A spring field of yellow wildflowers
Stops me
A thousand flowers dance in unison
To the music of a sea breeze

A midsummer wall of roses
Proclaims red's regality
Overpowering
Blue and green

An autumn canopy of trees
Undulates light and shadow
Forming a sheltered pathway home
To the woman I have loved for 50 years

An early winter sun
Sets beneath chalk-grey clouds
Followed by a pair of gulls
Descending into darkness

So I patch
My house
And my heart
Holding eternity at bay

Each patch a story
Narrative upon narrative
Weaving a patchwork
Of a life by the sea

• • •

TWO HAIKU

Mary Buchwald

SUMMER

Fireflies ... dots of light
Flashing in the heat of night
Twinkle ... Twinkle ... gone!

CHORUS

Sparrows tweet loudly
On branches high on tree tops
Hidden from the eye

• • •

EUPHORIA

Jennifer Jolly

Etched in my memory is a day in 1945. I was almost six, attending an infant school in the north-east Midlands of England. Built in Victorian times, its small arched windows were set in greyish-yellow granite walls. In back, a small concrete yard had toilet stalls way at the bottom. Bullies lurked behind the wall of privacy. Down the side of the school and next to the railroad lines where engines carried coals to the steel works was a playing field. Anderson air raid shelters had been built on it to protect us during German air raids.

On this particular day, we sat on hard wooden benches set up on either side of wooden trestle tables in the lunchroom next to the kitchen. Food was rationed and usually consisted of potato, watery greens and a small piece of beef or mutton, followed by rice pudding. The smell of cooked cabbage pervaded the air. There must have been fifty of us in there, eating and chattering away, when the door was suddenly flung open and our teacher, Miss Simpson, burst in.

Miss Simpson was generally a very serious young woman with a pleasant though somewhat nondescript face. She had pale skin, a regular nose, straight teeth and brown hair in a bob. Average in height, she wore the standard pale blue woolen twin-set, a tweed pleated skirt and sensible brown lace-up shoes. Miss Simpson had kind blue eyes. We liked her because she didn't threaten us with beatings, cane our hands with the ruler, or shout insults, like some of the other women teachers. That day, Miss Simpson looked different: her step was light, and a huge smile lit her face. "Children, children," she yelled, "Quiet please." This uncharacteristic outburst caught our attention, and the chatter of little voices abruptly stopped. We put down our knives and forks and looked up in silence. Something momentous must have happened.

Then she told us, "The War is over!" She almost sang the words. We cheered and clapped. We had waited anxiously for World War II to end throughout our formative years, though we didn't grasp what exactly this would mean. Now Miss Simpson told us: there would be no more air raids, no more bombs, no more frightening gas masks or blackouts at night. I realized I could sleep in my own bed and not in a bunk bed in a damp air raid shelter with my terrified mother. Dad would no longer have to do air raid duty at

night. Maybe I could now have one of those things called bananas my dad had told me about. But I couldn't fully imagine how our lives would change. All of us in that lunchroom had been born just before war broke out. Although constantly exposed to fear and anxiety throughout our young lives, we were too young to understand deeply the pain, grief and suffering of others.

Soon afterwards, the street parties started. Neighbors rejoiced together, Union Jacks were waved, brass bands so typical of northern towns paraded along the streets. In that euphoric moment we forgot the country was broke, that cities reduced to rubble would have to be rebuilt, that many young widows had lost their husbands in the fight for freedom, that some children would have no fathers and many were orphaned in the bombing, that food and clothing would be rationed for years.

All we knew was that this was a moment of joy. We sang, "God Save the King" and "Rule Britannia."

. . .



DEAR CAT SITTER

Helen Saffran

Dear Mauny,

I've left \$44 dollars in the white drawer of the cabinet next to the table for the two days you'll be taking care of Maggie and Jake.

I've changed the litter today so if you scoop the poop, that should be okay until I come back on Monday, but you decide whether it needs changing. One of the cats sometimes pees and it mysteriously gets on the bottom of the litter box and on the floor. Just ignore it if that happens, I'll clean it on Monday.

No need to water the plants, but please check the mail. Sometimes the mail carrier leaves important correspondence on the floor under the mail boxes. I'm expecting a new Visa card.

Enjoy the pussycats and send me an email so I know you came and my mind will be at ease.

Thanks, Helen

Dear Helen,

Here's a photo of the cats. I've been playing with them for a half hour. Maggie insists upon my throwing a small ball with a bell in it but after she chases it, it inevitably winds up under the couch and I need to retrieve it. Jake only wants to sit on my lap and be petted. But there is one strange thing I wanted to tell you about. I thought I heard Maggie and Jake talking to each other. Jake was licking the top of Maggie's head for a while and then I distinctly heard her say, "Enough" and Jake responded with "Okay" and then stopped licking her. You can imagine my astonishment. Are you aware of this behavior?

Confusedly, Mauny

Dear Mauny,

Yes, I am aware of this but I'm so used to it I hardly notice it anymore. Sometimes I join their conversation. I realize this seems strange but it's harmless, and I actually look forward to it because, as you know, I live alone and I get lonely sometimes. Can you believe that the cats can also laugh and cry? Actually, they have a good sense of humor. So, relax. I doubt they'll say more than a few words to you, because this is your first time with them and they're really quite shy around strangers.

Thanks, Helen

• • •

EDIBLE

Linda Rothstein

I was new to New York, and the rents were bad news for me. I had no extra cash and no social life, so I was a prime candidate for an extra job. A friend of a friend told me about a shrink who needed someone on Saturdays.

I called the shrink. "I'm writing a paper for publication," he said. "I need someone to do the typing."

"I can't type worth a damn," I said.

"Not important. Did you go to college?"

"I did go to college — a lot — but it didn't improve my motor skills. I'm still a klutz."

He laughed. "The last girl I had was a dumb bunny. I need someone smart."

"Look," I said, "even a dead bunny can type better than I can."

"Would you believe that every time I wrote 'Oedipal' she typed 'edible?'"

I laughed. "An edible complex? Maybe she thought you were a diet doctor." He liked that. "You're hired," he said, "and you can't say no." He said how much he'd pay me. He was right — I couldn't say no.

Turned out he had one of those old-fashioned portable typewriters and he needed five carbons — five sheets of paper and five carbons shoved into a tiny carriage. Can you imagine the struggles of a bad typist correcting every typo five times? All I produced were smudges and crumpled pages I shot at the wastebasket and missed. On the second Saturday, I ran out of whiteout. "You should fire me," I told him. "I'm no good at this."

"Let's knock it off for today," he said. "Do you know how to play tennis?"

"Yes, I do. I even know how to keep score. 'Love' means zero. I know that because 'love' was always my score."

Despite all evidence, this did not faze him. He drove me to New Rochelle, where we played doubles in a fancy indoor court. Every ball I hit crashed into the net. After the second set, our opponents looked like first-rate applicants for anger management therapy.

"Maybe the balls are dead," he told them apologetically. He tossed me a fresh can of tennis balls. I couldn't get it open. Finally, he got it. He saw I was not being modest; I had no manual dexterity whatsoever. He drove me back to Manhattan in silence. It was over.

Have you ever heard of an edible complex? If you have, it means he finally published his scholarly paper. And further, it means that, after he fired me, he asked the dumb bunny to come in and finish the job.

**THE MAN WHO REFUSED
TO HOP, SKIP, STEP OR FETCH
(From the Files of the Peanut Butter Man,
Chapter Infinity)**

Richard Byrd

He strolled casually along Monroe Street until he reached the other end of the block. He made a right on Tompkins Avenue. He crossed the border at Myrtle Avenue, where Bed-Stuy begins and Williamsburg ends. His real name was never spoken or alluded to in any shape, fashion or form, word around the barbershop being that about thirty years past, he quit some dinky-rink southern town. He had to good-foot on the get-out, having left some cross burning, beer belly, crimson neck cracker drowning in his own hemoglobin.

The Falcon family gave him sanctuary at their 399 Monroe Street brownstone. He was known as the Peanut-Butter Man. Women found him sweet and creamy; brothers saw him as smooth. He was a chocolate city style Mensa magician who had used his wits in many a situation to benefit the community he loved.

Today he was on another mercy mission. A few weeks prior, his platinum heart, in concert with his ultra-intellect had enabled him to design a makeshift generator. This prevented a lot of families from being stuck in darkness or dying from frostbite. Today he had a shopping cart — one of many he had delivered in the past few weeks — full of food to ensure the residents weren't claimed by malnutrition. How he was able to acquire these items was, as the Peanut Butter Man said himself, one of life's Bermuda three-way angles.

He dropped off the care packages and decided to check the roof before leaving. Just as he suspected. The roof needed to be tarred before the first serious snow storm hit. He would take care of it this weekend. For now, he headed up Ellery Street to 178 Throop Avenue, the dwelling of his main squeeze, Jelly Welch. For all things being done and said, to keep his texture, the Peanut Butter Man needed to be squeezed and spread.

• • •

NOSE IN A BOOK

Anonymous

I hate talking about myself, so I will talk about my dear husband, henceforth known as DH.

DH loves to read; he loves learning about most things. His mother said that once he started reading, his nose was always in a book. His family often told me how, from his earliest youth, he would read at the breakfast table, in the school bus before school, in the kitchen after school, during family TV viewing, and prior to going to bed.

As a child, he shared a room with his younger brother. They slept in bunk beds, with DH was on the bottom. Their bedroom had an overhead light fixture with a bare bulb that glared into his brother's eyes when DH read. When his sibling complained, DH quietly moved himself into the closet and read by flashlight.

DH also has younger sisters who loved to hold tea parties, as most little girls do. I was told that these hostesses would line up all their stuffed animals and invite DH to participate in their festivities. He came, he sat, he ate their cookies, and then he read. It was not long before he was permanently uninvited to these functions. You get the idea that DH loved reading and eating cookies, although not necessarily in that order.

Fast forward to his grown-up years: he continued to read, learn, and take a variety of adult education classes. Fast forward again, to retirement: DH is still reading and learning. Plus, together he and I joined Quest.

Quest offers so much to our community of learners: social interaction during coffee and lunch, monthly parties, off-site dining, and travel to locations near and far. The arts, literature, film, philosophy, religion, science, politics, history, foreign affairs — there are so many classes inviting our participation. What a perfect fit for both of us!

As Charles Schultz said, "Try not to have a good time . . . this is supposed to be educational."

— DH's wife

• • •

DRESSING WITH ZACH

Nina Dioletis

You may wonder who Zach is and why I dress with him. Well, Zach is my eighteen-month-old mitred conure parakeet, and I get dressed with him because I really have no choice.

Zach, one of the larger of the many types of conures at thirteen inches (five of which is his tail), entered our life last year after our 36-year-old Amazon parrot suddenly died. The silence in our apartment was so deafening, there was no question in our minds that, at some point, we wanted to open our home to another bird. After doing research on the Internet, I decided a conure would be a good choice. Conures, which are South American parakeets, were described as affectionate, playful, and intelligent. Little did I know I would be getting the equivalent of a two-year-old on amphetamines. With wings.

After a brief period acclimating to his new surroundings, Zach came to the conclusion that Shakespeare had it all wrong. The world is a playpen and everything in it is fair game. Zach plays with anything he can get his beak on, rolling it around and watching it drop to observe the effects of gravity. (Maybe I should have named him Newton?) Closets are places to explore and paper is there to shred. Clutter for Zach is heaven, and our house is full of it so that he can explore, shred and drop. Favorite activities include climbing (up and then under my clothes and towels, and inside the medicine cabinet), removing buttons and vocalizing (sometimes quite loudly). People often ask me whether he talks. Zach has learned a few phrases, but the one he most frequently hears — “no” — he hasn’t picked up. Maybe he just refuses to learn it so he can continue his mischief.

Since Zach attaches himself to me like a piece of Velcro (Who knew a seven- ounce ball of feathers could be so difficult to extricate?) we do *everything* together: daily showers, making the bed, preparing meals, washing dishes, brushing my teeth, during which time he empties the top of the vanity, and eating (Yes; he does try to grab the food from our mouths).

You’re now wondering what all this has to do with getting dressed. Well, imagine this: Zach’s button removal rate has steadily increased so that he can now take one off in the blink of an eye. He also removes bra closures and the plastic ends of shoelaces (they seem to remind him of feather shafts he has removed while preening). And he poops

on clothes (don't worry, it doesn't smell and is easily removed). After a period of experimentation during which I lost buttons, was nipped trying to tie my shoes, cleaned off poop and caught him in the process of removing a bra closure, I came up with a method of getting dressed. Of course, I constantly need to modify it as Zach figures new ways to circumvent my changes.

First, get pants and put them on a chair in darkened corner so Zach doesn't notice them as underwear is donned. Then, put on pants half-way so he doesn't see the button. Next, put on shoes, making sure to change the position of my foot as I tie the laces, thus preventing Zach from getting the chance to bite as he tries to grab them. Finally, shirt. There, finished! But where's Zach? Of course, under my clothes!

You may be wondering whether all this is worth having an avian toddler on amphetamines. It is. Just imagine my pleasure when Zach cuddles under my neck while I read and he rests up for the next round.

• • •



A MOVING EXPERIENCE

Arlynn Greenbaum

I lived in my old apartment on 24th and 3rd Avenue in Manhattan for over forty years. It started as a rental, and I bought it at an insider's price when it went co-op in the early 1980's — easily the best investment I ever made! It was a one-bedroom on the seventh floor, facing Third Avenue, so it was very noisy and very sunny in the morning. While I was working, the noise didn't bother me, as I was out all day. But when I retired in 2016, I decided I could sell my apartment and move up-town to one that was quieter, nicer and closer to Central Park, which was always my dream. When I first moved to New York from the Midwest, I was amazed to discover a bucolic oasis in the middle of a bustling city. To me, having easy access to Central Park was the best of both worlds — I could enjoy the beauty of nature without having to travel to a country house. But now, needless to say, I was nervous about making such a big change.

I retained the services of my real estate broker friend Joyce and, at her suggestion, put my apartment on the market at the same time we started my search for a new one. After the first open house, we had an offer for the asking price, which she encouraged me to take. As I hadn't found anything of even remote interest, I started having nightmares about being forced to move to a rental if my co-op board accepted the buyer. Luckily, they turned him down. I told Joyce to take my apartment off the market until I could find one I wanted to buy.

I began my search on the Upper West Side and eventually discovered an apartment complex I loved on 96th and Central Park West, right near the tennis courts. However, very few apartments were available, and the prices were out of my range. So, I expanded my search to the Upper East Side (since you can get to Central Park from there, too), where the prices were more "reasonable." In time, I found a lovely, quiet one-bedroom on 63rd and 3rd Avenue facing north with open city views and the Q and F trains right at my doorstep. I was looking forward to reading, listening to music and watching TV without hearing sirens, motorcycles and the honking of horns. Plus, it was a short walk to the number 4, 5 and 6 trains to get to Quest. I bought it!

I decided my new apartment warranted a total makeover, so I contacted a decorator a friend highly recommended. I had never worked with a

decorator before, so that was also a bit scary, but it turned out to be fun and a learning experience. She introduced me to everything from showrooms to art to bathroom fixtures. It was quite a splurge, but wonderful to have everything exactly to my taste. In fact, I didn't really know what my taste was until I worked with my creative and insightful decorator. She helped me discover a new, improved version of myself — more relaxed, more creative, more optimistic.

At the same time, I began purging and cleaning out forty plus years of clothes, books, papers, and photos — everything I thought would spark joy per Marie Kondo, author of *The Life-Changing Magic of Tidying Up*. I further streamlined my possessions when the tech guy I used recommended getting a Sonos sound bar so I wouldn't need my CD and tape player, turntable, radio, or speakers. I donated my records, tapes and CDs to Housing Works. It was all quite an ordeal, but also quite liberating: I now have an apartment that is both stylish and practical, where everything has a place and doesn't appear thrown together.

I moved in late May, 2018 and never looked back. I love everything about my new living space, and I feel proud of myself for creating the perfect perch for my “last chapter.”

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THE AGONY OF THE FEET

Hilda Feinstein

It is the end of August, and the summer limps to a close. I will call this the summer of the feet, since my lower extremities have played a large role in my experience of this year's hot season. Normally taken for granted, perhaps feeling neglected, my feet decided to scream out.

I am a person of simple needs and do not opt for manicures or pedicures. So, my feet, by design, are usually covered by leather or canvas and are not, as a rule, on public view. Sandals are generally a no-no. Parenthetically, have you ever sat across from the sandaled in the subway and seen the grossness of the feet of your fellow passengers? Hmmm. Need more be said?

They're just feet after all, I reasoned — ten toes and a bunch of bones — and they indeed have been just that: ordinary appendages that at size seven and a half have done good work on surfaces hard and soft for the past seven plus decades. They have, without much complaint, carried my substantial weight, walking companionably with me through the years. As I attempted to lighten up with innumerable diets, they sighed with relief during the losses and groaned only in moderation when the pounds returned after copious spasms of gluttony. But the complaints were never disproportionate, never too loud or abrasive.

Except for the time, I now recall, when I fractured the fifth metatarsal on my left foot and was in a cast for the good part of six weeks. How in the world did I ever forget that? Well, for the balance of this story, let's pretend it never happened.

They say, if your feet aren't happy, chances are, you're not going to be happy either. But until the summer of 2019, having experienced relatively little discomfort, I gave my feet minimal thought. Always reliably attached to my two legs, they had been stalwart partners. That is, until the summer just experienced, when a dreaded bone spur reared its ugly head and shouted "gotcha!" While treating me for the bone spur, the assiduous podiatrist suggested what he called a "simple" procedure to modify an intransigent hammertoe. He would "simply" snip the tendon, and the protruding hammertoe would be miraculously straightened. He assured me I would soon be able to wear shoes with a hard top without pressure to my second toe. Sounded good at the

time, and the procedure was performed. Months later, the jury is still out with respect to its success.

I shall not go into any more depth regarding the discomfort and inconvenience caused by my foot problems this past summer. To avoid poorly chosen puns, such as corny and calloused, I shall, with due deliberation, exercise restraint. I will end on the optimistic note that my feet seem to be healing, the soreness has abated, and my ability to get from point a to point b has now improved considerably.

• • •

A.I. BLUES

Wayne Cotter

Like an impatient spouse
My gmail now offers
To complete my sentences.

My past writing preferences,
Vocabulary use,
Syntax
Scrutinized, analyzed
In micro-seconds.

Sadly,
More often than not,
I accept its choices.
Saving a few keystrokes
At the expense of my brain.

• • •

THE LAST TIME

Susan Diehl

The last time I saw Mother was the Thursday before she died. She was slumped sideways in her wheelchair, as though she didn't have the energy to right herself. It made her seem even smaller than her 5'2" frame. There were dowels in her hands, held in place by Velcro straps to prevent the fingernails of her now-permanently-clenched hands from biting into her palms. She was dressed in lightweight sweatpants and a bright red sweatshirt zippered up the front, and was, as usual, immaculate. Her clothes were freshly laundered, her gray hair newly washed and set. Even her pink slippers seemed new.

I knelt down beside her stroking her hand. "Hi, Mom. It's Susan. I've come from New York to visit you."

Her blue eyes were clouded and empty, but when she heard my voice, she attempted to rouse herself to track where the sound was coming from. Her head bobbed as she lifted it in my direction until she finally found my face. Vacant eyes stared fully into mine with no expression, no registration. Her focus drifted off again as her internal world regained control.

It was lunchtime in the facility where she resided, and my father had wheeled her into the dining room at her usual table. Although the staff was well equipped for this task, my father insisted on feeding her himself and managed the routine with efficiency born of long practice. He retrieved three cups of liquid from the kitchen and arranged them on the table, tied a towel around her neck to catch any drips, and pulled his chair up close.

"She can't eat solid food anymore" he said, even though I already knew this. "This one is a protein drink, this one is milk, and this is water. Sometimes she just wants water."

Although they were both 82 years old, my father looked much younger. It was the alertness in his eyes and the agility and grace of his movements that took the years off. In contrast, Mother's infirmity placed her in the realm of the ageless elderly. She could have been anywhere between 80 and 100. Alzheimers does that to a person.

"Hi, Honey. Are you ready to eat?"

No response.

I watched Dad's face as he attempted to get Mother to drink. His entire nervous system seemed focused on this simple act. His mouth opened slightly in concentration as he attempted to hold the cup so that the liquid flowed into her mouth at a manageable rate. Dad lifted the cup while her jaw moved around as though she was fighting for the memory of what she was supposed to do with a mouthful of liquid.

"How much does she drink?" I asked, thinking that if it took this much time for her to manage one swallow, how much time it must take to get through a meal.

"Well, this morning she drank two cups of the protein drink and one of milk. That's a lot for her. It can take her an hour to drink that much."

Other residents were wheeling themselves into the dining room, and the staff scurried around the dozen or so tables, helping them to their places. I watched a tall nurse with high, too-blond hair and a nametag proudly proclaiming her to be "Patty" chat brightly to the man she was helping to a table.

"Stay right here, Manny," she said, as if Manny had a choice. "Your meal's coming — it's meatloaf today."

Manny didn't look too pleased about the menu. I looked past his slumped shoulder and out the large window to watch a cloud momentarily block the sun. It looked warm and pleasant outside.

One of the residents I had met before, Mrs. Asher, maneuvered her wheelchair to her customary spot at Mother's table. She wore a bright printed blouse and clip-on earrings that looked as though they pinched her ears.

"Your father's such a dear," she said, leaning in my direction. She thought she was whispering, but her hearing loss turned it into a shout. "He's so nice. Usually gets here early to help us with our coffee."

If my father heard this, he did not respond. His concentration was completely focused on encouraging Mother to drink.

I smiled at Mrs. Asher and probably said something nice in reply, but in truth, I was getting antsy. I was not looking forward to being there for the hour it would take Mother to finish. I did not want to smell the meatloaf dinners that would be delivered momentarily, and I did not want to watch people eat that soft, bland meal. But mostly, I did not want to remember my mother this way. I excused myself, headed to the bathroom and cried.

• • •

ROSIE

Michele Mackey

I was very lucky with my mother-in-law, Rosie. She did a good job raising my husband. She was also very memorable. Rosie was colorful — widely described as “shot out of a cannon.” One of ten children, she grew up in Bay Ridge, Brooklyn. Her parents were from Calabria, so she was first generation. She loved her relations and felt family was the most important thing in life.

I first met Rosie and my husband’s entire family at her apartment in Stuyvesant Town at Christmas. In Kevin’s family, which included his parents and four siblings, everyone merged together through New Year’s Day. We spent more time talking and eating than I ever remember doing before. Certainly not in my home. When it came to food, my mother’s idea of a salad was cutting an iceberg lettuce in quarters, combining it with peeled carrots, throwing into a bowl and — voila! — salad.

We arrived early for her famous Christmas morning frittata. Then we hung around together all day, either in the house or visiting friends, all of whom lived in Stuyvesant Town, of course. When we came back for dinner, the table was beautifully set and there was always music, from Pavarotti (her favorite) to Sinatra, to more contemporary artists.

Rosie always had enough food for a crowd. If you called her at the last minute to say you were coming for dinner with a few other people, she wouldn’t miss a beat; she’d just answer, “Wonderful!” During my first Christmas with the family, I was overwhelmed by everything, especially how much they laughed and enjoyed themselves at the table. When I got up to go home at about 10 p.m. after at least 14 hours, she said, “Leaving so soon?”

She was the most social person I ever met. When my father-in-law Ed died, there was a crowd at his wake. He was well known in the community, having worked for many years for MetLife, which owned Stuyvesant Town. He had also helped many people experiencing hard times to get and retain their apartments. As we were leaving the group, Rosie turned to me and said with gusto, “That’s why I just love wakes. You get to see everyone.” You really had to know her to fully appreciate this comment.

For my mother the glass was always half or completely empty, but for my mother-in-law, it was always at least half full. One year, both Rosie and my mother visited us at our weekend house. As we were getting

ready to go shopping at one of the premium outlets, Rosie put on her cape, brimmed hat and high heels. My mother and I put on our comfortable clothes and flats, then looked at my mother-in-law as if she were nuts for wearing heels. Needless to say, Rosie flew around in and out of every store of that shopping center, while my mother and I rested on a bench.

Rosie touched my heart . . . and our son Eric's. He was her first grandchild, and she gave him his own room in her apartment. Since I worked, she always sewed Halloween costumes for him and took him to the annual Stuyvesant Town Halloween extravaganza in the playground.

She also taught him how to paint, as she was artistic and exhibited her own work locally. A talented woman, she acted in community theater and loved to tell the story of how Jose Ferrer came backstage after one of her performances to say he wanted to work with her. She loved every holiday and celebrated big time: my husband called her "the human party."

My son and my husband loved Rosie as much as I did. At her funeral, our young man spoke lovingly about his "nanny" as he recalled their annual visits to see Santa Claus at Macy's, their dunking for apples, and their hunting for Easter eggs. When the pall-bearers carried her casket down the aisle, my husband led the congregation in singing and clapping "When the Saints Go Marching In." As Kevin said, "She was someone who mattered."

We all miss Rosie; she is gone but definitely not forgotten. For me, she exemplifies the saying, "What you leave behind is not what is engraved in stone, but what is woven into the lives of others." I would add, ". . . and into their hearts."

. . .



THE MEMOIR CONSORTIUM

Stephen Rosen

There are three phases in our lives: youth, middle-age, and you-look-great! I'm in the third phase. Maybe you are, too.

This third phase, at eighty-five, has earned me tenure in an institution I now recognize as old age. Thus, I can render free advice. Freely. "Old men delight in giving advice — as a consolation for the fact that they can no longer set a bad example." (La Rochefoucauld) But I can also supply a good example: writing my memoir.

My dwindling memory, declining energy reserves and inhibitions — plus a stroke — scared me into writing a chronicle. I wanted my children and grandchildren to know things about me that they didn't already know, before I myself forgot them. So, I researched other people's memoirs: I examined the narratives of friends and contemporaries who were writing their life stories. I also availed myself of an assortment of memoir advisors, seminars, and support-groups. Maybe they could help me capture good news about myself I could share. Woody Allen wanted to achieve immortality, not through his work, but by not dying. I wanted to achieve immortality through my memoir.

Writing a memoir was not something that came naturally; it was more like building my first tree-house and my second marriage. I had to struggle to learn how to "measure twice; cut once."

I disciplined myself to reflect on what was important in my life and thereby what to exclude and include. This soul-searching revealed how essential my father and mother, friends, work, and mentors were in forming who I became. I discovered that each of us has three unequal parts: the part that's our father, the part that's our mother, and the part that's neither.

The women in my memoir support group treated me as if I were their equal. We would read our works in progress, and then listen to polite or savage critiques of our efforts. Very few facts are both true and interesting, yet I was able to learn what was fascinating in people's lives.

Enter an informal group of friends who were eager to listen attentively. We lightheartedly called ourselves "The Memoir Consortium." One of its members was Quest member David Z. Robinson.

David Z. Robinson and I had been friends for almost fifty years. David, a splendid Dutch uncle and considerate big brother, is modest about his very impressive accomplishments. With a brilliant career in

public policy, a well-lived life, a warm personality, and a lively wit, he is admirable to all who know him; from every angle: a “spherical mensch.”

A born storyteller, Dave enchanted us with accounts of his role in the Cuban missile crisis, the hotline between Moscow and Washington, chimps and monks in space, nuclear particle accelerators, presidential politics, and other tantalizing morsels. His provocative recollections sparked freewheeling table talk and camaraderie.

Yet, despite his distinguished career and intellectual bandwidth, David was reluctant to write his memoir, insisting he had no *sitzfleisch* (chair-glue) to write his life story. He insisted that I had to lay bare my own life before he would lay bare his. Pointing at me during lunch with friends, he later declared, “I wouldn’t have done any memoir writing if it hadn’t been for this guy. Inspired by Steve’s energy and persistence, my memoir really snowballed!” My irrational exuberance and my memoir’s personal revelations finally overwhelmed his resistance and convinced him to do what I had done, but with the help of audio technology.

Our group met every few months, audiotaping hours at a time in our homes. We became invested in Dave’s mesmerizing memories and his natural *joie de vivre*. He told us with a polite, faintly ironic smile that when he listened to his stories on tape and typed them into his computer, he was able to clarify his spoken ideas, add forgotten material and, as he said, “make myself look a little bit better.” This isn’t necessary; his colorful career stories are splendid without such grace notes. As Kierkegaard said, “Life must be lived forwards, but can only be understood backwards.”

Our consortium friendship has flourished. Over the years my mentor has enriched my life and inspired me to become better person. An immense bonus has been the replication of our “consortium model” of an ongoing oral history by my family members. Because we taped Dave’s memoirs before a small intimate audience, my family now tapes our own intimate memories. I can just imagine our great-grandchildren eavesdropping on the family stories that bind us. The “me” in memoir and the “me” in mentor live very well together.

Dave has also been helping his friends write their memoirs. So, my good deed for my mentor became his good deed for his companions, for myself, and for others. Even though I mentored my mentor, at age eight-five I still need a mentor: my brilliant, 92-year-old big brother.

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THE YELLOW PERIL

Eileen D. Kelly

As Sadie and her boyfriend Noah climbed into the big yellow ark, the Ann Hedonia, she complained to him, "I thought we were going to use the yellow submarine. What's with this ark business? You turning yellow about going underwater?" She looked at him with a jaundiced eye.

"No, I'm not, my Honey Lemon. But I changed my mind. I just want to be sure we have everything we need when we get to Yellowstone Park. You can't fit much into that little sub," replied Noah.

"How're we going to get this damn boat inland to that park?" she asked, twirling her stringy golden hair.

"That's the little secret I've been keeping from you. I read in that yellow rag they call a newspaper that there's going to be a worldwide flood, worse than Katrina, and the whole earth will be covered with water," said Noah, smirking through his ugly yellow teeth. "So, we'll just sail right into the park on the Yellowstone River."

"You rotten yellow dog! If I had known that, I would have gone on that new ship, the Titanic. Now there's a boat!" said Sadie.

"Oh, now who's showing a yellow belly?" retorted Noah. "Sure, go on a luxury ship decked out with solid gold doorknobs. All the comforts of home and then some. But you can't eat doorknobs, no matter how much yellow gold they got in them."

Noah had chosen the theme of Yellow, to get away from the other primary colors, red and blue. These colors had been taken over by various states in America to signify their allegiance to the Republican and Democratic parties. He envisioned a promised land devoid of blue and red, and the coming flood was the perfect vehicle. It would be like a wet nuclear winter. He and all those he carried in his ark would be the only living survivors, he mused.

Sadie was not his first choice to take aboard, but she was the only woman willing to go with him. All the others laughed at his plan and shielded their eyes from his gruesome amber incisors. Sadie was colorblind, except for yellow, and she liked Noah's tarnished teeth. She jumped at the chance to live in a world where everything would be golden and sparkling. Actually, that was all he told her about their destination. She didn't know till now about the flood, nor did she realize that Noah would be permitting the color green, necessary for the vegetables in their diet. To colorblind Sadie, green looked like a

yellowish gray. Noah decided he'd worry about that when his ark was safely ashore in Yellowstone Park.

He proceeded to load his ship with all the yellow animals, male and female, he could find: yellow warblers and finches, yellow-throated and yellow-legged wading birds, yellow monkeys, yellow furred lions, llamas and camels, and yellow-tailed game fish. Next Noah hauled on yellow birch, poplar, pine and cypress trees. Lastly, he brought bushels of lemons and his favorite, yellow squash. This should be enough to propagate and cultivate the new earth, he imagined.

Suddenly he thought of the burden he had taken on himself of propagating the new world with humans. With Sadie? Only Sadie?

"Oy vay," said Noah, and climbed aboard.

• • •

MY LOVE — THE COUNTRY

Marshall Blas

In the 1920s and 1930s, my family, like many city dwellers, was very concerned with summer illness, polio being their main fear. So they often rented a room on a working farm in the foothills of the Catskills, far away from the travails of New York City. I spent my summers milking cows, eating corn fresh-picked from the fields, and swimming in the local swimming hole. I grew to love the country and even today I consider myself a “country kid” although I was born in East Harlem and spent the major part of my formative years in the Bronx.

The Catskill summers from my pre-adolescence through my twenties were wonderful: I learned to drive, had my first kiss, and developed lifetime friendships. But in time, my summer friends got married, moved, or felt too sophisticated to spend their vacations in the mountains. By the time I was in my mid-twenties, my parents owned their own modest bungalow and I still loved to spend weekends with them in the country.

But I was in a quandary. I was single, in my late twenties, and I wanted to meet my future mate! I knew she was somewhere near a beach, not in the woods. So, I joined beach houses on Fire Island and in the Hamptons. I still loved the country best and, at every opportunity, I went to my family’s house in the mountains. Wonderful ambiance, but alas, few if any females.

The Catskills of the early ’60s had many “fancy” hotels with first-rate entertainment, which attracted female guests. Just what I was looking for!! But how could I meet these young women? The hotels were closed to non-paying outsiders. They offered top Hollywood and Broadway performers and, to ensure that only guests attended, they stamped their hands with invisible ink as they left the dining rooms prior to the Saturday night shows.

I circumvented this security precaution by sidling up to the night club entrance where personnel checked the hands of the incoming guests. I’d peek at the stamp of the evening — star, square, crescent, etc. I’d then go to the men’s room and, using rubber erasers, a razor blade, and an ultraviolet invisible ink pad, cut my own star, stamp my hand and my friends’ hands, and enter the theater. We usually sat at the bar in the rear of the club.

I made it my goal to gain entry to every big hotel — the Concord, Grossingers, the Nevele (eleven spelled backwards), as well as countless smaller venues. All illegally, of course. Sometimes I entered through a service entrance, sometimes I climbed a fence (in my suit), and sometimes I'd cross a field at night leading to an unguarded entrance. There was no hotel I could not enter.

Did I ever get caught? Yes, but only once in the many years I played this game. I was giving a tour of the Concord to two of my buddies who must have looked guilty, because the head of security stopped us and we had to admit we weren't hotel guests. In questioning who we were and where we'd come from, I mentioned I had served in the Marine Corps. The security guard was a former marine and, as there is a strong feeling of brotherhood among marines, he gave me a quick "semper fi" and said, "Find your way out of here and go home." We left immediately.

Well, I didn't meet my wife in the Catskills; I met her at the beach on Fire Island, and we have been happily married for 43 years. I did, however, see hundreds of top-line shows while I was searching for her in the wrong place. Today we own a home deep in the upstate woods with bears, large cats, turkeys, deer and other wildlife for neighbors. And, although I finally met my mate at the beach, the country is still my favorite place.

• • •

ON FRIENDSHIP

Caroline Thompson

I recently lost my very dear friend, Jan Eisler, to a two-year fight with cancer. Her death has caused me to think a great deal about friendships, particularly very close and treasured friendships — how they come about, what makes them work, and why they are so important.

Good friends are special people with whom we share confidences, common interests, and life experiences. They may come and go over the years as they move, their circumstances change, or we ourselves change as we grow older. How do we answer the question, “How many friends do I have?” This depends on how we define a friend, given that such relationships are varied and complex.

I want to focus on “special friends,” the few we may have over our entire lifetime, those whom we love, admire, and respect, who feel like an extension of our good self and who improve us as people because we’re more interested in them than in ourselves. What are our relationships with these treasured people like?

First of all, the feeling between us is entirely mutual. Both we and our friend are supportive, with no need to impress or compete. Secondly, we share values, such as who and what we respect, as well as how we spend our time, both when we’re physically active and when we’re at rest. Thirdly, we engage in compatible conversation: we each give the other the opportunity to speak, and we’re equally interested in what the other has to say.

But perhaps the most important aspect of a deep friendship is trust. We know our companion will empathize and advise but never judge, so we can confide in one another and count on a compassionate response.

Life is fleeting. Good friends, like good fortune, come and go. How can we make new friends? Although we can’t replace those we have lost, we must continue, as we age, to seek out meaningful associations. Chance may play a role, as when couples experience “love at first sight,” but we must also work actively to make new relationships flourish. This means striving both to make new connections and to nourish their potential.

Solid bonds may take a long time to form, and tender ties may be cut short. So, treasure your friendships — acknowledge them to yourself and, perhaps even more importantly, to your friend. We all hold dear the experience of feeling respected, valued, admired, and loved.

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A POEM A DAY

*Donna M. Rubens**

The other day,
In a burst of naiveté,
I declared myself a poet.

A poem a day,
That was my aim, glibly
I set out to do it.

Foolish woman
Forgot inspiration
Goes with perspiration.
The Score
One good one,
Three to throw away,
Who was it who warned
“be careful what you wish for?”

• • •

**Our friend and long-time Q Review contributor of poetry, prose and art,
Donna Rubens, passed away in late 2019. We miss you, Donna.*

– The Editors

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