



# REFLECTIONS

2022-2023





*Reflections is the literary and art annual of the Renaissance Institute, a learning community of older men and women affiliated with the Notre Dame of Maryland University. Writing and artwork are created by members.*

*Further information may be obtained from the Renaissance Institute, 4701 North Charles Street, Baltimore, Maryland, 21210; by telephone at 410-532-5351, or online at [www.ndm.edu/renaissance](http://www.ndm.edu/renaissance), where this edition will be posted.*

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FACING PAGE ART: *Bailey Spring, Photo, Nadine Yorimoto*

BACK COVER: *Moon on the Lake, Photo, Kevin Schnupp*

# *My Ghostly Father*

*Your image in my head is clear  
Wrinkled skin, skeleton-like form  
Wan smile, smokey eyes*

*In the cemetery where your ashes lie  
Close to the surface  
It's not too much to ask you to emerge*

*Your mom and dad lie just below  
Your wife lies elsewhere  
You know why  
I can't forgive you that*

*If I see you now, I'll tell you so  
You didn't or couldn't understand your son  
So unlike you  
In paths strange and incomprehensible*

*Perhaps in spirit form  
You'll find a way to grasp  
My course in life  
And tell me now what you think*

*I'm still not sure I want to hear  
Although your voice I can't refuse*

*Phil Fretz*

# *faith*

*faith is a gift i never asked for  
generations of faith dwell in me  
faith is best worn close to the heart  
without faith who would I be*

*generations of faith dwell in me  
faith is an ever-present sparrow's chirp  
who would I be without faith  
faith will go to the grave with me*

*faith is an ever-present sparrow's chirp  
faith is best worn close to the heart  
faith will go to the grave with me  
faith is a gift i never asked for*

*Michael Reinsel*



*ICE-Land, Photo, Nancy Caplan*





## *Guernica*

*Was it Prado or MOMA  
Where I saw you?*

*So long ago.*

*I was dwarfed by you,  
Confused by a horse and  
a bull.*

*A screaming woman  
Holding a dead baby.*

*You speak to me now.*

*Sheila Scriggins*

*Young Cellist in the Park, Watercolor, Sharon Rabb*

# *Tea Break*

*leaves watch as summer warmth ebbs  
red silently creeps into green  
squirrels work in high branches  
crickets create the soundtrack  
bumblebees buzz the goldenrod  
black-capped chickadee entertains  
black-eyed susans losing their shine  
crows caw in towering oaks  
splotches of blue dot low clouds  
daylight inches toward equinox  
northern air brings energy  
would that this moment remain  
unchanged—until I am ready*

*Michael Reinsel*



*Official Greeter at Portmeirion Village, Wales, Photo, Bill Bennett*

# Preparations for College

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Elizabeth Howard (Letter to my Great-grandson)

Graduation was coming up! My father had the “college talk” with me early in my senior year. It seems I was sentenced to higher education by the Court of Parental Expectations. I learned from Connie and Sally that the Scholastic Aptitude Test was required for entrance to most colleges. Therefore, I applied to take the SAT, given in Galveston at Ball High School. I did great on the verbal parts of the test, thanks to English grammar and my store of Latin words and word parts. However, the sections that included mathematics were torture. Remember, Connor, I skipped the multiplication tables and long division.

For the entire time I spent on mathematics in the SAT, I thought I had wandered into the first circle of Dante’s Hell: “Abandon Hope, All Who Enter Here.” There were questions about planting how many beans how many inches apart in a garden with how many rows ten feet long. Who cares? I thought, just buy a bunch of beans and plant them until you run out of either beans or rows. Easy problem to solve. I felt a migraine coming on.

One question told of a plane and a train leaving at the same time from New York both heading for Chicago, the plane flying over the train at some point in the trip. I think the question asked us to calculate how far they had gone when the plane was over the train. My first thought was, who would want to go to Chicago? Then a consideration of trains and planes further derailed my focus. I couldn’t figure out why someone would choose the train, since obviously the plane would get there faster. However, you had more room on a train, even a bunk to sleep in, so maybe trains were better after all if you weren’t in a hurry. And besides, I was kind of scared of flying. I think I left that question blank.

Going to college didn’t scare me. I was always thinking of some way to get away from my sister and her proper husband, my parents and Godawful allergenic, asthmatic, humid, air-polluted Galveston County. I wanted to go to an Ivy League university because of their beautiful campuses. Tall and thin, I would wear woolen clothes to keep me warm. I could picture myself walking into an ivy-covered library. All winter I would slush

through snow, a tortured and unhappy soul, enjoying dark, depressing literature. However, putting a blow torch to that fantasy, Daddy said I had to stay in Texas for in-state tuition.

Connie said she was going to the University of Texas. She seemed so sure of herself and certain of everything that I decided to stick with her; after all, she had been a huge influence on my high school performance. Unfortunately, not everyone agreed UT was a good fit for me. Some of my teachers thought I would just be a number at UT and lose much of my personal identity. I liked the sound of that.

My parents were delighted with my choice, but the University of Texas registrar was not. In fact, since I was in the second quarter of my graduating class with a 92 average, UT advised against it. I figured my mathematics scores on the SAT betrayed me and prejudiced the admissions people, but I was willing to give it a go anyway. I just wouldn’t take any math courses. Besides, if I flunked out, it would at least be from a top-tier university.

Toward the end of my senior year, the high school counselor, Mrs. Williamson, talked with me. Her office was small and sterile, neither bookshelves nor books, nor bulletin board, in fact, nothing of interest in the room, including her.

“What are your plans after graduating, Elizabeth?”

“I’m planning to go to college,” I said.

“Which one?” she asked.

“The University of Texas.”

Taking a deep breath, and most likely looking at my SAT score and second-quarter grades on her desk, she said, “Why not go to a junior college?”

“My daddy won’t let me.”



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“Then a smaller state school like Sam Houston State Teachers College?”

“I’m going where Connie is going, to Austin.”

She looked at me over her glasses. Then squinting as if she’d been reading a cloudy crystal-ball, she said, “You won’t make it.” I said nothing. To a girl who’s embraced her own pitiful self-image, failing at the University of Texas isn’t all that scary.

When I told my friends I planned to go to Austin, some said, “It’s so big you’ll just be a number.” I thought about that a lot. I was not convinced that being just a number was a bad thing if you were me. I liked the idea of going to class and remaining an unknown, judged only on achievement, and not on my pitiful self. I could accept it if I failed to achieve. I just didn’t want anyone else seeing my other deficiencies.



*Laundry Day, Photo, Nancy Caplan*



*Partners, Photo, Howard Saltzman*

## *No Choice*

*Not for me to choose  
Which way he parts his hair  
Or how long he lets it grow  
He told me that the day we went  
On that riverboat trip to New Orleans*

*Said he wanted to hear  
About as much from me  
As he wanted a bee  
To get stuck in his ear.*

*Not for me to choose  
Just how I should embrace him  
Or whether to embrace him at all  
No more than the duller  
Of a pair of green-winged teals  
Could select the current  
On which the pair flew.*

*Not for me to choose  
Should I love him or leave him  
Yet that choice was Cleopatra's  
More than once. Till the asp  
Came along, put a stop to her thing  
Turns out after all  
should you think otherwise  
It was Antony planned the snake's  
sting.*

*Kathy Stone*

# For the Birds

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Eileen Gallagher

I'm not a serious birder, like a dear, departed friend of mine was, but have always enjoyed seeing these small creatures flying around on their daily rounds – graceful, alert and intent on their missions. And I love watching seagulls in summer, swooping over the ocean, diving and soaring, often landing to eat a snack on the sand.

Lately, I've become even more fascinated, and now have a squirrel-proof hanging bird feeder and a bird bath in my backyard. I've found it's far more entertaining and soothing sitting in my kitchen doorway, sipping a cup of coffee -- watching sparrows, doves, cardinals and others eat and splash - than getting riled up watching the latest bad news and endless commercials on "Morning Joe." And I've enjoyed the bonus of seeing adorable chipmunks, squirrels (they've got to live, too) and now and then a little rabbit scurrying for seeds on the ground.

Now that I think of it, this interest has been building for some time. Several years ago I decided to decorate my four-foot Christmas tree with only a colorful, sparkling array of various bird ornaments. I'll need to replenish my collection soon, since at Christmastime my grandchildren each pick one to take home to their own tree.

And I have three-dimensional bird suncatchers in my front living room windows, as well as a parade of bird figurines on my kitchen windowsill – the most treasured is the one my son gave me when he was about four years old, after shopping with his dad. When he came home, though the gift was for my birthday, Kieran pleaded with me: "Mommy, open the bag. Open the bag now!" Of course, I did, my heart filling with love and joy.

Back in the 60's my friend, Sue Levine, and her husband Max

were enthusiastic birders, exploring varieties of species, walking miles with groups of fellow aficionados, carrying serious binoculars. Sue used to say she couldn't believe in a God who would allow the Holocaust. I tried to convince her that disturbed inhuman beings were the cause, not God. When she was dying of cancer, Sue asked me to pray for her. I know her soul soared high.

Another friend, Eleanor Glazer, claimed she was agnostic, but I know God believed in her. A gentle, soft-spoken fellow librarian, she had an array of bird feeders, including suet, hanging from her second-floor balcony – until her downstairs neighbor complained to the apartment management that droppings were ruining her patio. I still miss Sue and Eleanor, think of them fondly, and remember them when I feed my birds. I'm

getting low on birdseed now, so will strew handfuls of oatmeal tomorrow 'til I order more from Amazon.

By the way, when I'm munching and drinking coffee at an outside table at Starbucks, I've taken to scattering crumbs on the ground to attract the sparrows. They gather quickly, pecking away, cocking their heads, watching for any danger. I sit as quietly as I can, not to disturb them. We're blessed to be in the world with such amazing beings. Let's hear it for the birds!



# Shelter

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Peter Whedbee

When I was a boy, growing up on a small farm of pastures and woodlands in the Western Run Valley, honeysuckle played a large part in my daily wanderings along the fence lines and hedgerows. Each season of the year had a place for honeysuckle, with sunshine and wind its constant companions. We plucked the yellowing blossoms of early summer and pinched the back with our thumb, just enough to pull the stamens through, carrying drops of nectar to tease our tongues. In the heat of late summer, we sought out the shade of the hilltop woods, climbing up into hammocks of vines draping themselves over the smaller trees at meadow's edge.

My favorite time was winter into early spring, when chill winds sweeping in over the western slope scoured the high pastures. I often visited a solitary black walnut at the edge of the woods, its squirrels hunched, tails fluttering. Then, to the south side of the hilltop fence with its cape of honeysuckle, leaves hardened by the cold are almost purple. Our Irish setters taught me to burrow back into the canopy. My retreat then, knees drawn up against my chest, faded green canvas coat zipped shut, gazing over the valley with its wandering streambed and distant hills, the sun finding me in the snug cove, wind barred by the sheer mass of the vines. I could rest and daydream, warmed by the nectar of undiluted sunlight, the life within me floating to the surface of my upturned face.

At the age of sixteen, I experienced firsthand, although barely consciously, the shattering of family and evaporation of home, when my parents were killed in a plane crash.

A few years later, I found solace visiting the Dominican House of Studies in Oakland, California, where my brother Michael had entered the novitiate after graduating from Stanford. In a time of intense personal fragmentation and distraction, I caught a closer glimpse of the interior life that had been hinted at throughout my childhood by the cloistered life of my mother's sister, Jacqueline, who entered the Dominican monastery in Buffalo, New York, just before the end of WWII.

By the time I was twenty, I came face to face on the streets of Portland, Oregon with the life of those who sheltered in doorways over the winter and in city parks over the summer. Theirs was an existence that demonstrated unequivocally the physical, emotional, and mental depths of human contingency. Providing for others enabled me to defer providing for myself.

My first attempt to fabricate family life began before I was 23 and unraveled within 5 years, as only families with young children can.

The world of photographic images had budded much earlier for me, with the gift of a Kodak Instamatic 100 camera on my 14th birthday. The real life of this science of metal, glass, paper, water, and light bloomed for me in the darkroom. Here was a way into a world that would hold still for me, a world I could unfold and descend into at will, always a mystery, at my fingertips. Shadows drew my gaze.

*What was hidden here?*

There was no need to explain. What a person saw was unique to them. I began the process of creating my own world, print by print, over a 15-year period. Later, I would make a career of repairing the machinery of photography.

What seemed to work best was the solitary. Yet, I had to wonder about community, why it appeared so fruitful for others, yet elusive for me.

Today, I draw like Picasso in the cave, him with a torch, and I with language. Somehow, he could pull it off, making recognizable images.

I, on the other hand, leave behind, not imaginings, but arguable artifacts.

I have the luxury of making shelter for myself.

Picasso Draws with Light: The Story Behind an Iconic Photo  
<https://www.life.com/arts-entertainment/behind-the-picture-picasso-draws-with-light/>

## *On Crow Lake*

*Their song rises  
amplifies over lucent water,  
far-carrying tremolo  
ripens to plangent wail.*

*From remote backwater  
four dark forms appear  
glide past bending reeds.*

*Loons and chicks stalk frogs and fish  
survival practice for the young.  
They dive without warning  
sink without ripple  
echo of a primal scene on  
Eocene lagoon.*

*Dawn-horse stands on ancient shore  
ancestral beavers fell swamp-cypress  
early dolphins swim with loons.  
We have not yet entered time  
to mark the scene in pigment and stone.*

*Aeons removed from that shadowed shore  
I slide into lucent water  
swim with loons on Crow Lake.*

*True Binford*



*City Springing, Photo, Jen Swartout*

*snowcap melts on red holly berries  
spring baptism*

*True Binford*

# Inheritance: Some Departures

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Kim Leith

I was the one who inherited from my parents a tendency to save things, so when sadly the time came for my sister and me to close down our deceased parents' home, she, I, and other relatives who were "helping" had very different ideas about what to save. Decisions were made quickly; we had so much stuff to sort through, and our time back in Michigan was squeezed into busy work and family lives.

One of my cousins braved Dad's garage. I imagined her exploring through decades of expired fertilizers, oily and greasy cans, and indecipherable tools. She brought into the living room a dog dish and shredded leash. "Shall I go ahead and pitch these?" she asked. The consensus from cousins and aunts was that the leash was frayed and useless, and we didn't own a dog any longer (Mom had been so disappointed in my sister and me when we adopted cats).

I wondered if perhaps the leash belonged to our second dog Loki, our white and tan beagle mix, and if Dad had specially saved the leash in a place where Mom wouldn't find it and throw it away to "clean house." Loki had been devoted to Dad, who fed him generous mixes of dog and people food. Loki yapped endlessly by the window when his beagle ears (or nose?) detected Dad's car up the road. I would have voted to save the leash in honor of Loki (and Dad), but I was the lone voice. And it was just days before or after Dad's funeral.

The next item that I would have voted to save, over the practical wisdom of my relatives, was a collection of ticket stubs and candy wrappers Dad had stuffed into a small plastic bag. The candy wrappers were colorful, embellished with foreign scripts and languages, and reminded us of trips to China, Russia, Georgia, Israel, Greece, and Chile. Even more importantly, the ticket stubs held Dad in a certain place and time, even to the minute: a cab fare from the airport near Tel Aviv, a subway ticket in (then) Leningrad, a tour ticket from Athens to Delphi. My sister and I looked at each other and at the pile of papers still waiting on Dad's work

space (translate, Mom's dining room table). Although something nagged at me, I helplessly agreed. Decision made, on to more important things.

I did manage to rescue, at least a little longer, the tomato seeds Dad had left drying on the bookcase in my old bedroom over the winter. Although everyone had always loved Dad's tomatoes--so plentiful and juicy and sweet during late summer, taking over and softening on Mom's kitchen counter--no one seemed to care about saving the seeds. My sister, in fact, confessed that she had always hated tomatoes.

It seemed like a great idea for me to try to plant the seeds, come spring. First, the seeds would live in baked dirt in little paper cups starting around February. Soon they would need to be shifted to different windows to follow the sun while the sprouts grew to junior hairy vines. Dad's dynasty of tomatoes could continue, at least in a small way. I didn't even know what variety these seeds were. Well, my intentions were good, but life back home with a job got in the way, and I did not plant them that season.

Although I assumed the seeds would no longer grow in future seasons, I saved the paper bag with the tomato seeds on the desk in the small orange bedroom far away in my new home in Baltimore; I would feel a pang of guilt when I noticed the crinkled bag. One day, in a determined mood, I cleaned out the room, perhaps in preparation for a cat's after-surgery.

Much later, I realized that I must have thrown away (or recycled?) the unidentifiable old lunch bag while possessed by that cleaning spree. So, while I have failed in my mission to keep Dad's tomatoes alive and thriving in my back yard, I imagine that perhaps somewhere on the outskirts of the Baltimore landfill a vine with the sweetest tomatoes from Michigan may have taken root.

*Laundry Day on the River, Watercolor, Lee Kexel*





# November Afternoon 1963

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Kathy Stone

It had been a hard week: long days of classes, long nights of study. And I had not had much sleep considering the crying baby in my family. I had failed a quiz and was late to class twice because of missing the streetcar. But now my school week was over. It was a brilliant Fall Friday in late November. Thanksgiving was next week. And I was looking forward to the fun weekend ahead. I had big plans.

Exiting Stephens Hall, my Cultural Anthropology, Physical Science, and Medieval History texts cradled in my arms, I walked past the open windows of the basement level chemistry labs. Normally at this time, all that greeted me was the smell of sulfur, wafting by me, as it rose to the sky. But now I slowed my pace, as a cacophonous chorus rose to meet me. I listened as intently as possible, stooping to the ground and pressing my ear to the screen, but I could make out no distinct words. Disappointed and a bit bewildered, I rose and ran down the gravel pathway to catch the No. 8 Walbrook, whose overhead wires I could hear screeching close by. I wanted a window seat and it was going to be crowded, I was sure, as was usually the case on Fridays at this time.

I was in luck and quickly found a seat on the window side. Right away I noticed three passengers standing in the aisle, ears cocked in the direction of a transistor radio perched upon someone's shoulder. This time I clearly heard a reporter say, "I am sad to report that there is no longer any doubt: President Kennedy is dead. The lead surgeon at Parkway Hospital has just appeared in front of cameras and confirmed that his team was unable to save him. I repeat: the President of the United States is dead." Words continued to emanate from the radio, but I no longer heard them. There was a buzzing in my head and a hazy sense of unreality had overcome me. I spent the remainder of my ride looking out at the colorful autumn foliage of York Road, and not seeing it, as the slanting rays of the lowering sun warmed my hands, which rested upon the back of the seat in front of me.

The streetcar lurched, coming to a sliding halt, the conductor calling, "33rd Street! 33rd Street!" and I was jolted into alertness, grabbing my books and hopping off onto the sidewalk in front of The Boulevard Theatre,

where I would be on Saturday night with my boyfriend Ed to see, *To Kill a Mockingbird*. And this is where I connected to the No. 22 Highlandtown bus, my final transport home. I ran across the street and down Greenmount to my usual shop for nylons. I had to have them for the party tonight.

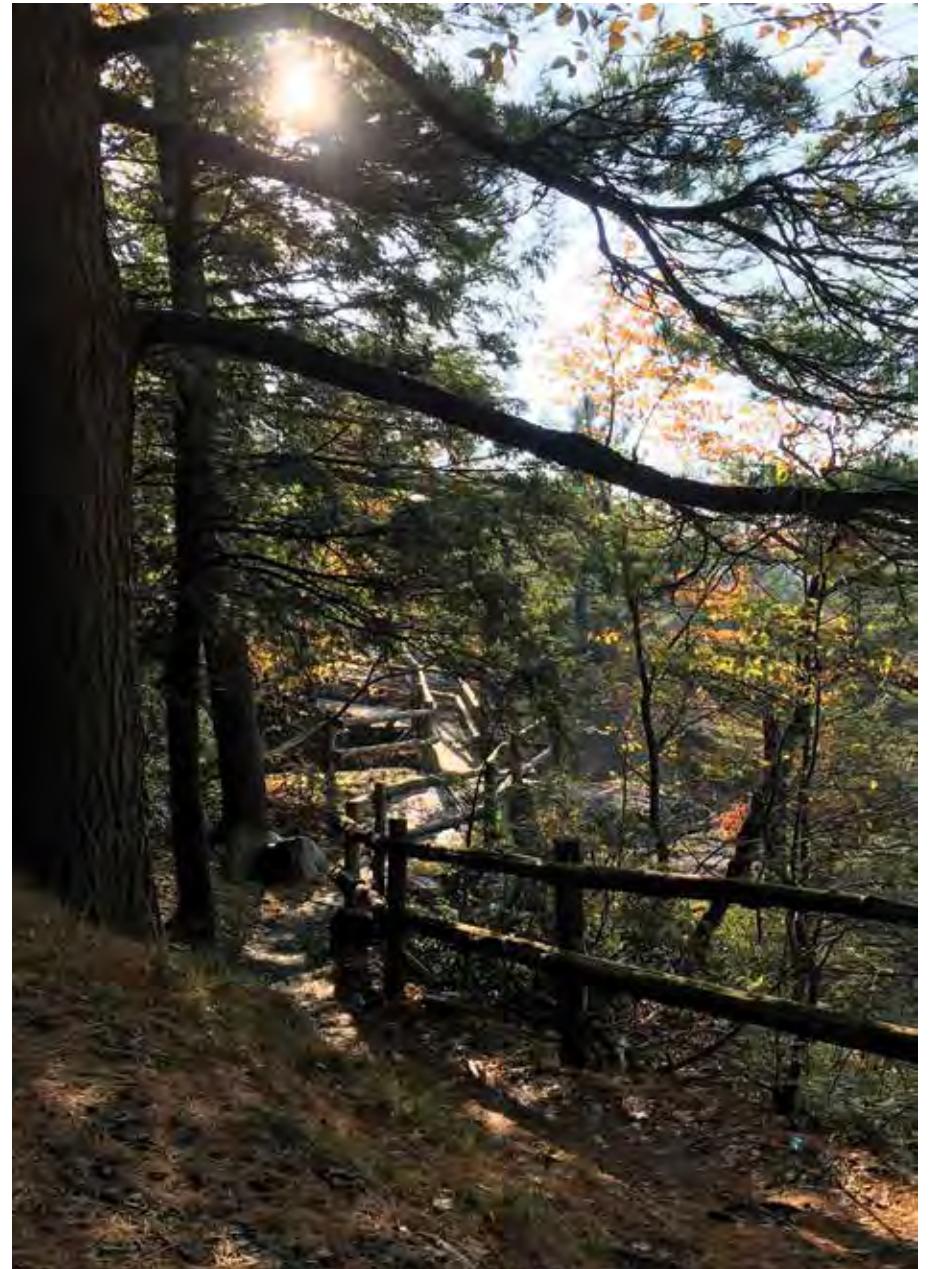
Alice, the proprietor, had tears in her eyes, listening to her radio, which was playing for all who entered to hear the shattering news. A few wide-eyed women stood transfixed before the glass counter of stockings. I paid for my purchase and raced out the door, trying to be on time for the next bus. Grabbing my books and stockings in one arm, I thrust a sweaty hand into a pocket, searched for and found my by now wrinkled ball of a bus transfer. As I ran, expelling short hard breaths, with relief I saw the bus still waiting for its scheduled departure time to push off. I had made it.

The bus was packed, but I found one empty aisle seat and plopped my books and parcel onto my lap. All was quiet around me. There were no radios playing on this bus, and, with a jolt, I realized that I was alone with news that the world had been unalterably changed just a few short hours before. A little distance into my ride, I discovered the top book on my lap, and the paper bag containing my nylons, were splattered with wet drops. I had slowly, unwittingly, and quietly begun to cry. No one seemed to notice, and soon my stop came into view. With blurred vision I exited clumsily and began to climb up Jennifer Street for my short walk home. I wanted desperately to reach my door and enter the only place which could provide me with the comfort and succor I now craved. Once again I ran, glancing behind me at the huge dark shadow cast by the statue of Martin Luther onto the withering fall grasses banking Montebello Reservoir.

A chill wind whipped by me. Once again I began to cry, but this time, all alone, I cried hard - and loudly- running faster all the way until I mounted the steps, opened the heavy, leaded glass door, and dropped everything in my arms onto the foyer floor. I just wanted to feel my mother's arms around me. I knew she knew! And sinking my head into her ample bosom, I stood in the middle of the kitchen floor and we cried together as the sausages sizzled in the cast iron pan upon the stove. She

did not break from me to get my crying baby brother from his crib, nor did she ask me to get him.

Upstairs, alone in the dusk of my bedroom, I noticed the nylons I had laid out on my bed, where they lay awaiting the remainder of the outfit I had days ago chosen for the party tonight. Immediately I had an epiphany: I could NOT attend this party tonight. There was just no WAY. But, then, they would HAVE to cancel it. How could they continue with the plans for this big party – full keg of beer set up in the center of Ed’s best friend Henry’s basement floor? Now it was time to call Ed and explain that I could not go. He would, of course, understand.



*Crookety Path, Photo, Ginny Lipscomb*



# E.O. Wilson - An Appreciation

Judy Floam

I had vaguely heard of Edward O. Wilson but it was only a few months ago that I got around to reading him, and only because it was our book club selection. The book was *Biophilia*, a term I was familiar with and which Wilson popularized, if he didn't actually coin it. Its premise is that humans have an innate attachment to the rest of life on earth, developed over the millennia of human evolution.

The book was one volume in a Wilson trilogy and when I finished *Biophilia*, I read one of the others in the trilogy: *Naturalist*. This is Wilson's autobiographical tale of how he became a naturalist. The book opens when he was seven years old, exploring the swamps and beaches around south-eastern Alabama, where he lived at the time. He describes encounters with snakes, lizards, a jellyfish and other denizens of the natural world. He also describes how, in a freak accident, he pierced one eye with a fishhook, leaving him with only one good eye. As a result, he says, he decided to make insects his life specialty because you look at them up close and that works with one eye. More particularly, his life's work became the study of ants. With a collaborator, he wrote the definitive book on ants (it's called *The Ants*) and he even wrote a novel, *Anthill*.

But while investigating ant colonies in minute detail, and all around the world, he also found time to write books on large topics, including *The Future of Life*, *The Creation: An Appeal to Save Life on Earth* and *The Meaning of Human Existence*, to name a few. He wrote at least 24 books himself and another seven with collaborators. Two of his books won the Pulitzer Prize and he was awarded many academic and other honors. He was on the faculty at Harvard from 1956 until he retired in 1996. He died in December 2021, at the age of 92.

If you are interested in natural history, you will find much to learn in his books (possibly you already know some of them). If you are not interested in natural history, E.O. Wilson might change your mind.



*Summer Pollinator Garden, Photo, Terry Weisser*



# *Loch Raven*

*When you crave ocean waves  
But reservoir ripples  
Are your fate for the day  
And your dog claims all trees  
As he flees from the geese  
And your husband's bad knees  
Slow your ragged retreat  
The brief touch of water  
A few feet of damp sand  
Somehow nearly suffice*

*Susan Marshall*



*Loch Raven Boats, Plein Air Oil Pastel, Linda Stager*



*Kayak Summer at Loch Raven, Plein Air Watercolor, Andrea Naft*



*Loch Raven Boats, Plein Air Watercolor with Ink, Sarah Tateosian*

# The Protector

Mary Dean Dumais

That Mum and Dad loved each other was firmly established in family lore. The evidence was overwhelming: photos, 16mm movies from Dad's ever-present cameras, coupled with dozens of telegrams sent by him admonishing her to please take care of herself and signed "123" which meant "I love you."

What wasn't known outside family circles, was my dad's bizarre obsession with my mother's personal safety from intrusion by other men. Two stories were relished by my brothers: David, a year and a half younger than I and my nemesis, and Tim, four years older and my idol.

The first incident took place at Saint Ignatius church at 82nd and Park in New York City. The church was purely an arbitrary choice because Dad made a practice of calling around on Saturday to learn who was preaching at Sunday mass. It could be Saint Pat's on 50th St. or Saint Vincent Ferrer on 66th or the English mass at "The French Church" on 76th. The choice of pew, however was set in stone: always in the front of the church. On this particular Sunday, Mum, followed by Dad and Dave, genuflected before entering the pew, and as she did, the usher took hold of her elbow although she really needed no help. Wheeling around, my father bellowed, "Take your hands off my wife," which echoed through the hallowed hall. While Mum stepped into the pew with a smile, David fled to safety behind a pillar.

The second incident, which Tim embellished in every telling, involved my mother's engaging a French professor, M. Asatour, for lessons on Saturday mornings. He was tall, nattily dressed, with a bulbous nose and a mouth permanently shaped in the French "eu."

I had just begun *Colette et ses Freres* in the third-grade and Tim participated readily, but Dave would brook no French in his ken. Suffering from undiagnosed dyslexia, he crossed his arms and said "oui" or "non" to all questions with a permanent scowl. Mum sat in sometimes in her longing to learn the language, which would always escape her. My sister, Peggy, who would become the Illuminati of French mastery in the family, was in

God's pocket, where she would remain for another three years. After about six months, M.A. disappeared without explanation or discussion. Years later, Tim, who happened to see the professor as he left the apartment, loved to tell the story. Bowing low, the professor took Mum's hand and kissed it with a loud smack just as Dad came in the door. The stunned prof was unceremoniously shown out, never to be seen again. We always suspected that Mum rather enjoyed Dad's display of chivalry.



*Summer Meadow, Watercolor, Laura Workman*



## *The Eye of the Beholder*

*He was a handsome man,  
Even stunning with his dark hair,  
Curling mustache, dark brown eyes  
That seemed to entice, invite.  
Women loved him.*

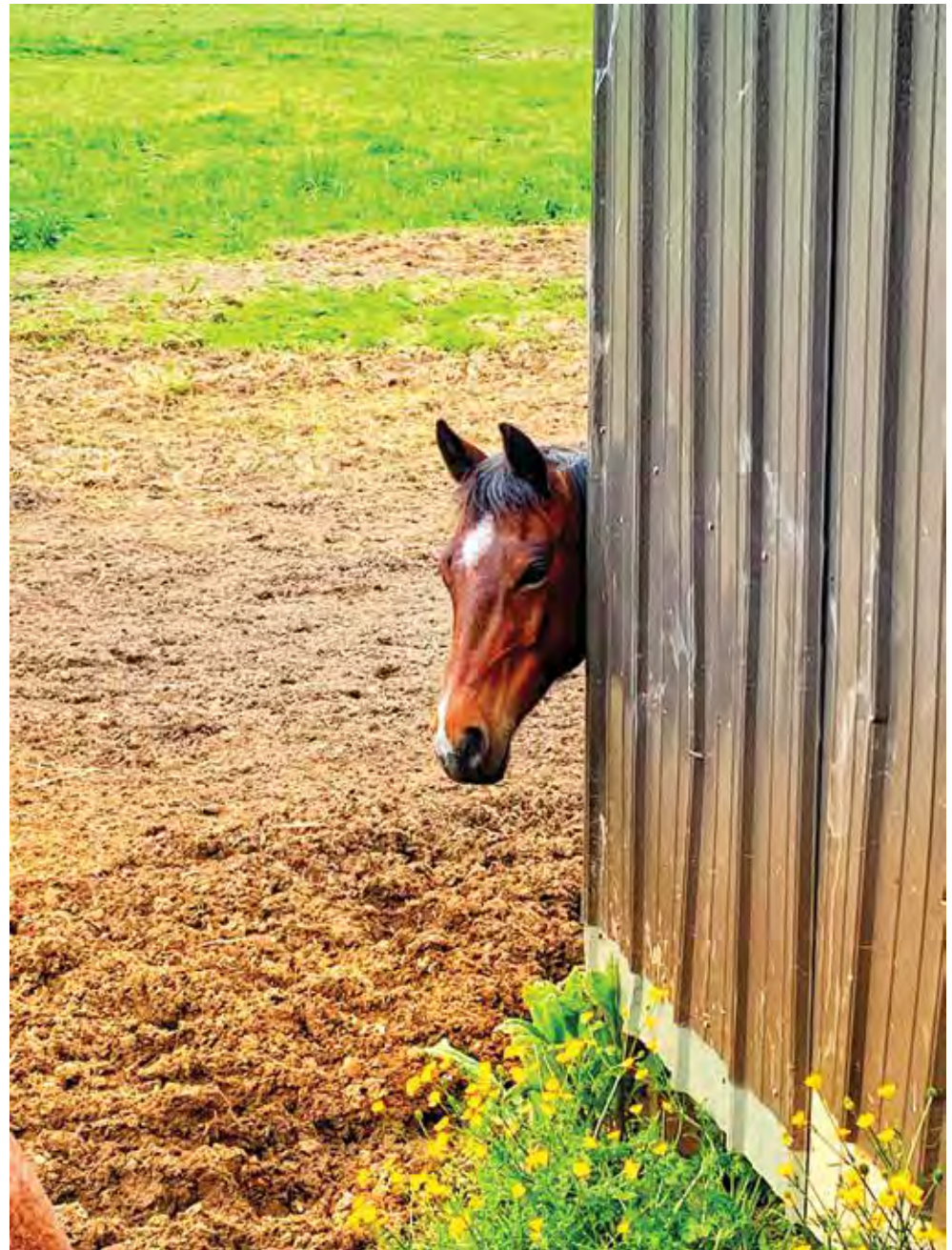
*His wife was not a beauty  
And we were surprised.  
She was plain, almost matronly,  
With twinkling blue eyes  
And a warm smile.*

*We thought them so mismatched  
When we first met them;  
Surely a man that attractive  
Could find a beauty to match his own?  
Surely he would find another wife.*

*After twenty years,  
We realized he adored her.  
Later, they would celebrate  
Fifty years of marriage.*

*He aged beautifully.  
She aged.  
They loved.  
We were wrong.*

*Elizabeth Fanto*



*Peeking, Photo, Denis Smith*

# A Sunny Day

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Ellen Lindenbaum

My husband and I left Baltimore early Tuesday morning, headed for my hometown 20 miles north of Manhattan. My mother had passed away the night before after being in declining health all summer long. The immediate cause of death was Septic Shock. She was in her 88th year. Quiet and sorrowful as we drove, we turned on the car radio to get a traffic update, and learned of a plane crash in lower Manhattan. There were no details, but it seemed that a small commuter plane had hit a skyscraper. Wrapped up in our own thoughts about families and funerals, we turned off the radio as we headed north on Route 95.

But in a little while, something about the story didn't seem right. Both of us remembered hearing as children about a plane that had crashed into the Empire State Building. But that was at night in heavy rain and fog. This day was beautiful – sunny and clear. Turning on the radio again, tension in the announcer's voice told us that there was some kind of emergency. Soon we heard the shocking news that a large passenger jet had crashed into the North Tower of the World Trade Center. Then an update: a second airliner had just struck the South Tower. Announcers interrupted each other, speaking of possible acts of terror. What was happening? Is this how people felt when they turned on their radios on that long ago Sunday morning of December 7, 1941?

Driving on, we crossed the Delaware Memorial Bridge and onto the New Jersey Turnpike (NJTP). And then the NJTP message boards came to life as the unbelievable became real: George Washington Bridge Closed; Lincoln and Holland Tunnels Closed. And then, All Access to New York City Closed.

Back to the radio: Third airliner hits Pentagon; FAA orders all air traffic in the US grounded; President Bush declares “an apparent terrorist attack on our country;” fourth airliner unaccounted for.

We exit the Turnpike, hoping that we can head a bit west and then north, crossing the Hudson River via the Tappan Zee bridge or at Bear Mountain. As we drive slowly through a lovely residential neighborhood in Princeton on our way to Route 287, I see a couple of students on bikes; a woman walking her dog; a man mowing his lawn.

They don't know.

I have a strong urge to stop the car, approach each of them, and say, as gently as possible, “Go into your house. Sit down. Turn on the radio or TV. You need to know that our world just changed.” But we keep driving. Let them have a few more minutes of everydayness.

The radio continues to spew forth awful facts: The White House and the Capitol have been evacuated, the South Tower has collapsed. The fourth airliner has crashed in Shanksville, PA. The North Tower has collapsed. Mayor Giuliani has ordered the complete evacuation of lower Manhattan.

We keep on. Now the Tappan Zee and Bear Mountain Bridges are closed. We cannot reach my hometown today. We end up at my sister-in-law's house in northern New Jersey.

All afternoon we watch film clips of what we had only heard about in the morning- the same nightmare images, over and over again – still unbelievable. It is unnaturally quiet outside. No passenger jets head into and out of Newark International Airport, but squadrons of fighter jets fly overhead several times, unnerving us. There is very little traffic on nearby Garden State Parkway. Probably everyone is home, thankful to be there, watching and waiting for some shred of news that sanity will be restored. Fearful thousands make increasingly frantic phone calls, trying to find out where their loved ones are, hoping and praying that they were not in that area that is now hell on earth. Number Seven World Trade Center collapses. The Navy dispatches missile destroyers around New York City and Washington, DC. The U.S. Military is put on high alert worldwide. When will this end? And how? We spend an uneasy night, exhausted, but unable to sleep.

The next afternoon the Tappan Zee reopens. As we cross over the Hudson River, traffic slows. Everyone is looking south, down the river at the monstrous pall of dark gray smoke over the city. Finally we are able to reach my childhood home. Funeral arrangements are made. The Priest, anticipating many funerals in the next days, limits us to one five-minute eulogy. No one knows

yet that no bodies will ever be recovered, and there will be no traditional funerals.

Only local family and friends can come to honor my mother, and comfort us. All air traffic is still grounded. No family members can fly in from other states, and no flower arrangements can be wired as expressions of sympathy. So we sit in church, we small group of shocked and sorrowful people, and shed tears for the soul of my sweet mother, and also for the 2,996 other innocent souls who have perished.

Margaret Robinson  
July 28, 1913 – September 10, 2001



*Arch, Photo, Gail Kramer*

# Stranger than Life

Mary Hom

Since the cemetery was close to home, I used to walk past my family gravesite regularly. My mother had explained to me how the family gravesite was spacious enough for all four of us (my parents and my brother). Theoretically, I would be the fourth and last.

Although I had explicitly insisted to the funeral director that I did not want to be buried in the family plot, I sensed my wishes would get neglected and my ashes dispersed in the wind of time. It was my idea to have my ashes scattered throughout the camp I had attended as a kid, the place where summers focused on fun. I was happiest there.

Seasons came and went. The weather turned cold. My walks tapered down to few. It occurred to me that I had never noticed anyone visiting loved ones' graves in this old churchyard.

Except for one. A haggard looking old man wearing baggy clothing, which appeared to be well past their usefulness, knelt in front of my family's headstone. I moved closer, shivering. This stranger, apparently oblivious to the weather, wore no coat and appeared to be patiently engraving something on my family's headstone.

I inched even closer to read the message he was chiseling. I hadn't placed an order for this. The stranger paused, as if he heard my thoughts.

"Excuse me, sir. Who hired you for this?" I demanded.

He said not a word but turned and looked at me, a warm smile on his face. By golly, it almost made me like him! He stood back to examine his work. As I scrutinized my family's headstone, I stood aghast at the addition of my name, birthdate, followed by the current date.

Suddenly angry, I shouted at him.

"You have no right to be here tampering with my family's headstone! It's not even accurate - the final date is today! Hah! I'm calling the police, you vandal!"

The stranger stood and smiled, kindly, as if, in his silence, he understood.

I whipped out my cell phone, focusing on dialing, as I began to cross the street.

At that moment, a speeding car appeared out of nowhere...

Upon impact, a scream could be heard during the flight and landing on the crosswalk.

An eerie silence took hold of the scene. The old engraver stood on the curb nearby, nodding. With the fourth space in the family plot now accounted for, his work was complete.



*Heart Rock, Photo, Gail Kramer*



# The Box

Phil Fretz

When I was four, I got my first box, left for me by my grandmother when she passed away. It was a wooden box, one she brought with her when she and my mother immigrated to Philadelphia after WWI. It was made by my grandfather, who died in that war. (Austrian army, killed at the age of 36, one week after he was drafted and deployed to fight off the Russians.) But I didn't know the significance or the history of the box. All I knew is that it came from him and now it was mine. In it went the things that little boys save. Trinkets, key chains, marbles, and a rabbit's foot. I guarded it from my older sisters. I hid it in places I thought they would never go, in a bottom dresser drawer under my underwear.

When this box was overflowing, I begged for another. My dad gave me an old wooden cigar box. I didn't care if it stunk of cigar tobacco. It was a place to put more of my treasures. I learned to be a pack rat.

By the time I went to college, there was a shelf full of boxes of all sizes. I stopped hiding them when my sisters found other interests than harassing their only brother. One box was full of postcards, another of stamps, one for old coins from my dad's father's collection. It was only when my mother died, and my dad wanted to move, that I had to confront what to do with this collection. I was then in my late 20's and my interests, too, had wandered to other things. I only kept the stamps and the coins. My dad gave the others to his new step-nephews when he remarried.

But I still have my grandfather's box. I can imagine him wondering what happened to it and asking me:

“Was hast du mit meinem Kasten gemacht?” Perhaps questioned with a sad smile.

I answer, “Grandpop, I am so sorry not to have known you. But every time I open the box, I know you're with me.”



*Sea Still Life, Photo, Armand Pulcinella*

# Joey

Andrea Wilson

It was the worst of times. I was a newly divorced woman with two young children and a high school diploma, no skills and no money. We were on welfare and food stamps plus the meager salary I made at my part-time secretarial job. Then a miracle occurred. The City University of New York, for a brief period of time, offered a free college education on two conditions: you had to graduate from high school with decent grades and maintain at least a B- average. I enrolled immediately.

My schedule changed to getting the kids off to school, riding downtown to my job, getting home to make supper and call the babysitter, go to classes, and come home to spend a little time with my children and do homework until bedtime.

Somewhere in this crazy time, I met Joey. He was a very cute blond, not very tall, which was good because I'm short, working toward a Ph.D. in physical education. It's such a long time ago that I don't remember when or how we met, but we saw each other frequently over the next year or so. He was my boyfriend, even though I didn't have much time for him.

He gradually told me his story. It was in the context of whatever we

were talking about, each episode revealed one story at a time.

Here is the synopsis of what he told me: He wrote a song in high school that was a big hit. He went on a tour with a famous rock group over summer vacation. When he graduated, he joined the military (I don't remember which branch). He was sent to Vietnam, where he was assigned to helicopter rescue. He would be lowered by bungee cord to rescue wounded soldiers and carry them up to safety. He held this position until his left arm was almost blown off in a rescue attempt. He was flown to a VA hospital in California where

he spent six months. When he was released from the hospital, he joined the Oakland Hells Angels, supposedly the most notorious of the gangs. He worked in the chop shop, turning stolen motorcycles into the choppers that the Angels rode. When the shop was raided, Joey escaped to his home state, New York, and started college.

I didn't believe a word of it.

No, that's not quite true. The huge starburst scar that covered most of his upper left arm between his elbow and shoulder recalled his Vietnam experience, but I still

had my doubts about the rest. I still don't know about writing the song and going on tour. I searched and found a name for a songwriter that was the same as his, but I'm not sure that was him.

Finally, there was his story about the Hells Angels. So far, I had one verification and one wash-out. This was the final mystery.

One evening after dinner, I was washing the dishes when my children started yelling enthusiastically, "Mommy, Mommy, Joey's on TV!"

Dish towel in hand, I rushed into the living room. Why they were watching *Gimme Shelter* is something I'll never know, but there was Joey in his Hells Angel leather jacket sitting at the edge of the stage swinging his legs in time with the Rolling Stones as they blasted out their music and Mick Jagger danced and sang.

I had to give him that one. That, and the scar, told me he was telling the truth. Maybe he wrote a hit song. Maybe he didn't. Two out of three was good enough for me.



*Windmill, Watercolor, Joe Nathanson (Pixabay)*





*Summer Mist, West Stone Lake, Oil, Peggy Egan*



*Old Log Near Lake Williams, York, PA,  
Plein Air Watercolor & Ink, Sarah Tateosian*

# Leave a Message

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Elizabeth Fanto

Hey, Nan. It's yer Cuzzin Ruthie. Guess I will have to leave a message. Seems like you are never home when I call!

I just wanted to call and catch you up on our doings. John is in a cast again, so I am stuck here at home taking care of him. He fell out of the big oak tree. I wanted him to get the cat down. I don't like the cat, but it was stuck, and John finally agreed to try. But the cat got down all right and John, well, John fell.

The ambulance people remembered him from last week when he tried to fix my car. But I told you about that one. He still blames me; can you believe it? I didn't know it would drift like that.

But his foot was just bruised a little.

Well, Cousin Henry wrote me, and I thought you might want to send him a card. And his mother's second husband is ill. I don't think you have ever met her, but I know Henry would love to get a card from you. I talked to him for over an hour, so I won't be sending one.

Did I tell you that Jim, our genius son, found his fireworks had gotten a little damp last month? He thought he would dry them off in the microwave and Nan, that was one big bang! John is making him pay for the repairs. I think that is so funny, because Jim is still paying for the renovation he did last month. We should never have gone away for a week and left him home. But I can understand what he was thinking. Putting a hole in the ceiling of his room was a creative thing to do, and the hammock he hung was fun. But... John just doesn't see it.

You know I like to keep in touch with everyone. And John and I are going to Florida to stay in his aunt's house in October. I think I told you about Carolyn. She is a free spirit, not really religious, but I don't hold that against her. But some of the X-rated statues and pictures in her place... please! But they are tastefully done, and I only had to cover up

a few. Well, we will be there for two months. And, if you and Bob would like to come and visit after your Elderhostel, we would love that. I can easily pro-rate the cost by the days you can stay. It would be so good to see you and visit.

I am taking the neighbor and her dog up the road to the vet's on Saturday. Last week I took her and then ran some errands. Darned if I didn't forget all about her and I came on home. Her vet is so far away... but John got a call while I was gone, and he had to go and get her. And he hates that dog! I don't know where my mind goes sometimes. I was so focused on buying flowers for the church and it turned out this isn't my week to do that. Now the living and dining rooms are full of flowers. I was going to invite some friends in to see them, but then John had to fall out of that tree.

I am sorry I missed you. I'd better hang up before the message thing stops, like it did the last time I called. Don't call back. I still have a lot more to tell you, but John is upset that I haven't moved the vacuum cleaner out of the doorway so that he can hobble to the bathroom. There is just no pleasing that man. Love you!

*Girl Face, Watercolor,  
Robin Ujcic-Snyder (Pixabay)*







# *Running with Fireflies*

*Am I among the last  
to have the privilege  
of rushing out after dinner  
into the summer night  
to run with fireflies  
catching one with my sticky  
fingers and feeling the thrill  
of holding light in my hands?*

*Now I celebrate each one  
that shared its light with me  
a little girl who could  
not have known  
that fireflies would almost  
disappear from her life  
their mating signals diminished  
by a constantly lit human world*

*Kathryn Pettus*



*Bass Rocks (top),  
Seaside Reflections (bottom),  
Photos, Laurie Rosenberg*

# *That Beach Feeling*

Pat Piechocki

*The time at the beach is always time well spent and felt deeply since the coarseness of the sand between my toes is touching nature in a small way. The sun beating down, the gentle breeze, and the ocean - more of God's creations.*

*The sun warming my skin seems to open up my very being to life. It is relaxing, exhilarating and rejuvenating all at the same time.*

*It is like a potpourri of feelings overlapping and at the same time being felt individually.*

*I enjoy the renewed me.*



*Path to Happiness,  
Photo, Armand Pulcinella*



# Is This the Home I Remembered?

Bill Bennett

I returned home to Salisbury, having spent a year at the Army Language School West Coast at Presidio of Monterey, California, which included six months of Spanish language classes. I thought I had become quite sophisticated as an Army PFC, from viewing the art treasures and attending the New Wave films in Monterey and Carmel. Surely my family would enjoy the changes I would bring home to them.

One Sunday afternoon, there was a thrilling concert on the front lawn of the Naval Postgraduate School at Monterey. The weather was perfect, with a gentle breeze through the tall pine trees. The women officers in the audience were all in dress uniform and white gloves. The beautiful blonde opera soprano, Mary Costa, wearing a green gown, stepped out to a round of applause. I was completely floating on air through her many songs and arias.

My buddy Bob and I went to San Francisco on a number of weekends and saw stage shows like *110 in the Shade* (We met the star Ray Danton in a restaurant) and *Kiss Me Kate* (We also met Patrice Munsel buying supplies for a cast party before the show). In addition, we enjoyed a performance by Miriam Makeba and the Chad Mitchell Trio.

While having dinner in the Crown Room at the Fairmont Hotel, Joan Baez brought two friends over to the window nearest our table to point out certain sights. We didn't interfere. We just enjoyed being so close to her.

Bob and I also discovered new drinks like Metaxa, which Melina Mercouri claimed as her favorite drink. Then there was wine with every dinner in restaurants on the Monterey Wharf and Cannery Row. Blue Nun was the beginner's wine. After dinner there was Green Chartreuse or Pernod.

How did we enjoy so many activities on \$68 a month? 1964 dollars would have the buying power of \$649.40 today. Mother and Aunt Lola also sent some cash. What? Who's spoiled?

When I got home, I attempted to enrich my family's lives by introducing some of the changes I felt they needed.

I installed candles for candlelight dining.

Mother: "I can't see what I'm eating. Turn on some lights."

I bought rosé wine, which was sipped without enthusiasm.

I played background music for leisurely dining.

Aunt Lola: "Please turn that thing down. I can't hear what your father is saying about the Candy Cupboard salesman who asked for me in the store today."

For after dinner, I had Green Chartreuse and little glasses to serve it in.

Dad: "This stuff tastes like fly spray. How much did you pay for it?"

I was soon leaving for 18 months in the Panama Canal Zone and new experiences which I probably shouldn't bring home.



*Loch Raven Boat Dock,  
July 12, 2022  
Plein Air Oil Pastel,  
Linda Stager*

# One Ugly American

Marion Knipp

The luscious golden yolk gleamed like a beacon in its snowy porcelain cup. Three pairs of bright blue eyes gazed longingly at it, while the pair immediately above it seemed indifferent.

The setting was the dining room table in a London house a couple of years after the end of World War II. The person with the egg was a middle-aged woman, Mrs. S. and the gazers were the three children of the household.

I have no idea what brought Mrs. S. from the United States to England. She was a friend of one of my many aunts, the only aunt my siblings and I couldn't stand. Considering this, we were not surprised by her friend's lack of sensitivity. Even my kindly tolerant parents admitted relief when she left after a couple of days.

For some reason unknown to me, food was much scarcer in early peacetime than when the war was raging. At one point, my mother had to resort to whale meat to feed the family. It tasted disgusting and left the whole house smelling like cod liver oil, a detested supplement forced upon children every day.

A fresh egg was manna from heaven, so it was blasphemy when Mrs. S. took a couple of bites and then pushed her plate away. Because she slept in much later than the family, she was the only person still eating. She had no idea what a sin she was committing, and probably wouldn't have regretted it if she did.

It must have been a relief to my parents that she didn't ask for coffee, as that was virtually unobtainable. As a substitute, some people drank a bitter chicory extract, but mostly people made do with tea. This, though tightly rationed, was readily available in the thriving black market or the ubiquitous bartering system. I remember a lot of laughter and bantering as people worked out their deals. Our milkman, Bill, was the go-between in our neighborhood.

Bill made his rounds in a horse-drawn cart. When his horse, Sally, would deposit droppings on the street, there would be a rush with buckets and shovels, as neighbors merrily competed for manure for their vegetable gardens.

Looking back on those days of scarcity and hardship, I am in awe of the cheerful spirit that prevailed. People who were normally model citizens happily broke the rationing laws and felt no remorse. The mischievous humor of those mid-century Brits rendered them indomitable.



*Neila Fedorova & Daughter Yelyzaveta Gavenk, Ukraine, September, 2022, Graphite, Peggy Egan*



*Old Woman Pond, Ink and Watercolor, Deborah Slawson*

## *May Snow*

*we might learn something  
from trees made bigger  
by their bowing  
under the snowfall  
leafy glory  
blossoming downwards*

*Peter Whedbee*

## *City/Autumn*

*In October's quiet morning light  
I borrow the beauty of the glowing maple tree  
In my neighbor's yard  
No cost  
Nothing lost*

*Jay Brodie*





*Snowy Way, Photo, Howard Saltzman*



# Attachments

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Amanda Joyce

I was packing up my suitcase, it was time to fly home, and the others were waiting for me down by the entrance. I could have looked out my window and seen them, down where the airport shuttles were picking up passengers. But I wasn't looking out the window, I was getting everything into my suitcase. It was important to get everything. Adding my dream pillow and my bag of toiletries, I thought I was done, but then I was alarmed because the suitcase wasn't full enough, not nearly full enough, when I left home I had to sit on it. Where's the rest of it? I wondered, not panicked but concerned and keeping in mind, they were waiting for me.

The room was spacious but no nooks or crannies, just a closet and drawers, but then I looked under the bed and found my slippers and they took up space because of the poodles but still not a full suitcase and so, back to the bathroom, wouldn't you know it, my bathrobe hanging on the back of the door, how could I forget, so I folded it, not as carefully as I ordinarily would because they were waiting for me, and now the suitcase looked full the way it looked before, when I had to sit on it, but there was something lacking and I was flummoxed so I had to sit down and think about it, and then I looked in the mirror to see if I looked uncouth when I'm thinking, and it was a good thing I looked in the mirror because I could see I was wearing that big wooly fisherman's sweater that I packed when I journeyed here, so all was well; mystery solved; now it was time to sit on the suitcase, click it shut and depart because they were downstairs waiting, down by the entrance that is, I could look down from my window and see them if I could spare the time, which I could not. I sat on the thing and almost snapped it shut when I realized the fisherman's sweater was all wrong, I would roast on the plane, roast like a Christmas goose. I had to take off the sweater, open the suitcase and fold it, quickly quickly, on top of the robe.

I swung the heavy suitcase off the bed and smoothed out the paper money I left for the chambermaid, then I saw the bills weren't all facing the same direction so I stopped and fixed that little problem—no sense

upsetting the maid—then ignored whatever scuff marks I might have made on the way out, on the thick beige carpet, because they were waiting for me.

I took the elevator down and walked briskly into the lobby, out of breath but satisfied somehow. No time to waste, so I hurried to the entrance and watched the shuttle pull away. They were not waiting for me.

Five alarm fire! I didn't have my ticket; they were waiting for me and the tickets would be passed out to everybody, all at once. Except they weren't waiting for me. Well I couldn't stay here, I knew no one in this place, didn't know how to get from A to B, really. I would have to go to the airport and try to find them. Me and my big full suitcase, nothing missing, nothing at all, so I jumped into the next shuttle and found my way to the airport, and would you believe it, as soon as I walked in, I saw them and then we were all together, looking at those screens that show you planes coming and going, the times and the places to find the one plane you need, the one plane out of all the planes. So I looked up whenever they looked up; we all looked up together. When I glanced at the ground, I saw that my suitcase was gone. Somebody stole it, that's what the consensus was, and what could I do. Nothing ventured nothing gained, so I looked all over the concourse, under seats, on top of tables, and even in the toilets. I did so quickly, because they were waiting for me, but when I got back to the spot where together we all looked at the screens, they were gone.

So now I have nothing, no ticket, no suitcase and I feel naked because I don't really know the territory. I can't stay at the airport, that's no way to live, so I'll just pop out into the wide world, naked. No worries, I suppose. Babies do it.

*Sculpture at the Lakes, Photo, Terry Weisser*



## *Homebound with Silky*

*We take good care of my darling cat  
Silky Mae (but you may call her Silky)  
Whose thyroid and kidneys are rebelling  
As she tries so very hard  
To live a normal feline's life  
Doing what comes naturally  
To a cat*

*We feel her distress  
Her struggle is ours  
We want her to be with us  
For as long as possible*

*The beach lures us in our wistful wishes  
We can almost taste the salty sea air*

*My friend and I relish each precious moment with her  
Present and past  
We feel unable to bear her suffering  
Calmly and quietly  
As Silky does so well  
Maintaining a sense of  
Dignity and poise  
While she struts through the house  
Seeking the warmest lap*

*And so we enjoy our staycations  
With adorable Silky...  
Perhaps they will be our  
Best moments  
Yet*

*Mary Hom*



# My Tchotchke Box

Joyce Dennison

For years I have kept a vintage cigar box on top of my bedroom dresser. It is a beautifully decorated box, made for me by a very close friend as a birthday gift. If burglars should break into my home and steal the box, they would be very disappointed in the contents. There is no money, no jewels, no stock certificates, only a few items that have value only for me.

The Bulova wristwatch was given to me by my parents in 1960, as a high school graduation gift. The watch is yellow gold, with a sweeping second hand and sparkling gold-colored Arabic numbers on the face. You may wonder why I don't keep it in my everyday jewelry box, ready to wear. I treasure it, especially when I realize that my parents must have bought it from our local jeweler on the layaway plan. Unfortunately, when I wear it, it stops keeping time.

The magnetism in my body (for lack of a better term), does not allow any watch other than a plain Timex to function on my wrist. Therefore, there is no reason for my Bulova to occupy the jewel box, bumping and jostling with baubles, bangles, and beads. In the comfort and safety of the cigar box, it has now kept perfect time for 62 years.

Also in the box is the military brass I wore on my left shoulder as a proud member of the Women's Army Corps. The symbol is that of Pallas Athena, the Greek goddess associated with wisdom, handicraft, and warfare. The brass has long since been retired, as there is no longer a Women's Army Corps; men and women both serve in the U.S. Army. But I take great pride in having once been in the WACs; our service, we thought, demonstrated that no one should ever short-change what a woman can do.

The remaining keepsakes are both ribbons, one red and one yellow. The red ribbon represents the blood, sweat and tears shed during the HIV/AIDS pandemic, with so many people lost in their prime. It brings back memories of going to endless funerals and memorial services; fighting for researchers and government agencies to notice and take action; and learning to sew in order to make panels to add to the vast AIDS Quilt, displayed in memory and celebration of those who died.

The yellow ribbon represents support for our troops in Desert Storm. The kind of support my family practiced was not just spending a dollar on a bumper sticker. Each month a monthly care package was assembled, which included toiletries, ChapStick, sun screen, reading materials, and silly string. You may wonder about that last item—the silly string was used to detect trip wire connected to IEDs (improvised explosive devices). These packages were not addressed to a specific person, but were dropped off for shipment at a local American Legion or VFW post.

A tchotchke, by the way is a Yiddish term for a trinket, or a miscellaneous item. It is usually neither functional, valuable, or decorative. But the items in my box are priceless nonetheless, as they represent love, service, and tribute. I imagine you have a tchotchke box too, tucked away in a drawer, a chest, or perhaps simply in the shelter of your memory.



*In the Holy Land, Hand-made Paper, Carlene Moscatt*



*Sarasota Jungle Garden, Watercolor, Laura Workman*



*Maine Woods, Early Winter, Watercolor, Sharon Rabb*



# *Ghostly Transport*

*Four '56 Chevys rusted brown  
forever atop a 1950 Cab-Over transport,  
once verdant green, now covered with dust,  
all parked among trees in Indiana.*

*Forever atop a 1950 Cab-Over transport,  
surrounded by a field holding secrets,  
all parked among trees in Indiana  
with scant histories and no clear titles.*

*Surrounded by a field holding secrets,  
once verdant green, now covered with dust,  
with scant histories and no clear titles,  
four '56 Chevys rusted brown.*

*Stephen Sutton*



*Golden Prairie, Photo, Nadine Yorimoto*

*Minneapolis Protest after Murder of George Floyd, May 28, 2020  
(John Minchillo, AP, detail) Watercolor, Paula Murphy*



# Again

*Again, we failed to pursue peace so  
we're left to squat here on our heels  
like most species, we humans  
can't seem to get beyond  
using force to end  
conflict – anger  
unaddressed  
incites  
war*

*Kathryn Pettus*



May 28, 2020  
Minneapolis, Minnesota  
Pettus July 14





# Taste Buds Aflame

Susan Serrote

My husband, Neal, and I are “live to eat” people – as opposed to folks who consume enough to sustain life, without caring much about the food they ingest. On long road trips, from Austin, Texas to New York, we would stave off fatigue or boredom by dreaming aloud about the delicacies we looked forward to relishing, while in “the city.”

At that time, in the early 1970s, Austin restaurants offered mouth-watering barbecue and Tex-Mex selections. But there was only one Chinese restaurant, a small family-run operation, that served white bread on the table! The hostess must have been the family matriarch, a gracious Chinese grandmother, who folded her hands and bowed to us as we left, saying, “Y’all come back now.” We never did. The chef’s creations were nothing like the Chinese dishes we were missing.

By the mid-70s, we had settled in Baltimore, where the many ethnic neighborhoods and restaurants had completely charmed us – and had

enhanced our food exploration. After a few years, new Asian eateries began to appear, dishing up more than the old Cantonese staples. We loved sampling the spicy Szechuan cooking at Uncle Lee’s and other local spots. On one occasion, we were trying a variety of visually beautiful and tasty entrees, when Neal noticed an unfamiliar ingredient – shiny red, crescent-shaped vegetables. He popped one into his mouth, and BOOM! – his eyes bulged, he grabbed his throat, and made a sound that would have been a scream, had he been able to breathe. He rushed from our table, leaving me more than a bit alarmed, until he returned – mouth and throat adequately rinsed. When a waiter walked by, we asked what the little red things were. He shouted, “Don’t eat those!”

We have since learned that Chinese red peppers are used for the spicy flavor they add to certain dishes. They are not meant to be eaten. But they are pretty, and they certainly created a fiery memory.

*San Gimignano, Watercolor, Joe Nathanson (source: Road Scholar)*





*Aweigh, Photo, Denis Smith*



*Sunset on the Lake, photo, Kevin Schnupp*



# A Moment in Time

Saul Lindenbaum

To look at an old photograph is perhaps as close as we can come to time-travel. This is especially true if you are in the picture, because then you may find yourself alternating between long forgotten emotions, impressions and thoughts, and your current understanding of that distant moment.

Right now, I am looking at a photograph that was taken in February, 1943. Seven people are standing on an elevated (i.e., above ground) subway platform. It is the downtown side of the Elder Avenue Station in the Bronx, a stop on the Pelham Bay line. The sun is shining

brightly and, judging from how people are dressed, it is quite cold.

My Uncle Milt, my mother's younger brother, is on the left, with my mother and father next to him. I am standing in front of my parents. My grandmother is behind me, the fingers of her gloved right hand rest lightly on my left shoulder. Next to her is my grandfather, and then Aunt Sylvia, my mother's older sister on the far right. The unseen cameraman is her husband, Irving, the family photographer.

Our destination is Pennsylvania Station, on 34th street, in Manhattan.

Milt, who is a private first class in the Army Air Corps, has been home on leave, and today he is going back to his base in a southern state. He is in uniform and, to me, he looks magnificent. I am four years old, and well aware that there is a war going on, but oblivious to the implications of that. Milt is my hero, and I long for the day when I, too, can wear a uniform. I'm excited about this excursion, thrilled to be seen in public with Milt, and I can't understand the somber mood of the adults.

That is only the tip of the iceberg of what I don't know and don't understand. I don't know that my grandmother is the long-time step-mother of Sylvia and my mom, and that there is no love lost between them. I only know that Grandma's hand on my shoulder is an indicator of our mutual affection.

I also don't know that Grandpa had a third child, a little boy, with his first wife. When she died, six months after his birth, the boy, Joseph, who had severe physical handicaps, was placed in a state institution. Milt does not know

about Joseph and, therefore, is ignorant of his death, a year earlier. Surely, Grandpa is very afraid that now he will lose his second son, too.

Grandma must have similar fears. And of course, though I am unaware of it, she must be worried about her family in Hungary, who are living under the rule of a country allied with Nazi Germany. Her concerns are justified. Her parents, and all of her siblings, save one, will be murdered in Auschwitz one year later.

Our little group takes the train to Times Square, the shuttle to the West Side, and the 7th Avenue local one stop to 34th Street. Penn Station is crowded, and I am excited to see many soldiers, sailors and Marines in their splendid uniforms. Suddenly, I am lost in a forest of legs, and I can't locate my father. Then I see him in front of me. I grab his coat and a strange man turns around to look at me. To this day, I can recall that moment of panic. But my father is actually right behind me, and he takes my hand. I am flooded with relief.



*Fruit Vendor, Watercolor, Lee Kexel (Pixabay)*



*Black Hill Regional Park, Photo, Peter Whedbee*

At last, we arrive at the track for Milt's train, and people begin to say goodbye. I am startled to see that my mother, aunt, Grandma and even Grandpa are crying! I can't comprehend their tears. This is the most exciting event I've ever taken part in. Why are they crying? I view this as another example of grown-up's ability to ruin any occasion.

The train pulls out, and Milt begins the journey that will take him from North Africa, to Sicily and, finally, to an air base in England. He had wanted to be a pilot, but was prevented from that because of poor eyesight. Instead, he is a clerk, and comes through the war without injury.

A world of memories, stimulated by a single photograph, taken on a subway platform eighty years ago.

## *As We Move into Fall*

*We clear away what we do not need  
Faint memories  
Things of summer  
As we move into fall  
We consider our next move  
Unsought but lurking  
We may calmly discuss if and when  
Because we are only moving into fall  
And it is not yet winter*

*Susan Marshall*



*Window, Watercolor, Robin Ujeic-Snyder (Pixabay)*





*Winter Beauty, Photo, Ginny Lipscomb*

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*Hornsjo Fall Marsh, Norway, Oil Pastel, Deborah Slawson*



# Renaissance Institute

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stay for the friendships.

