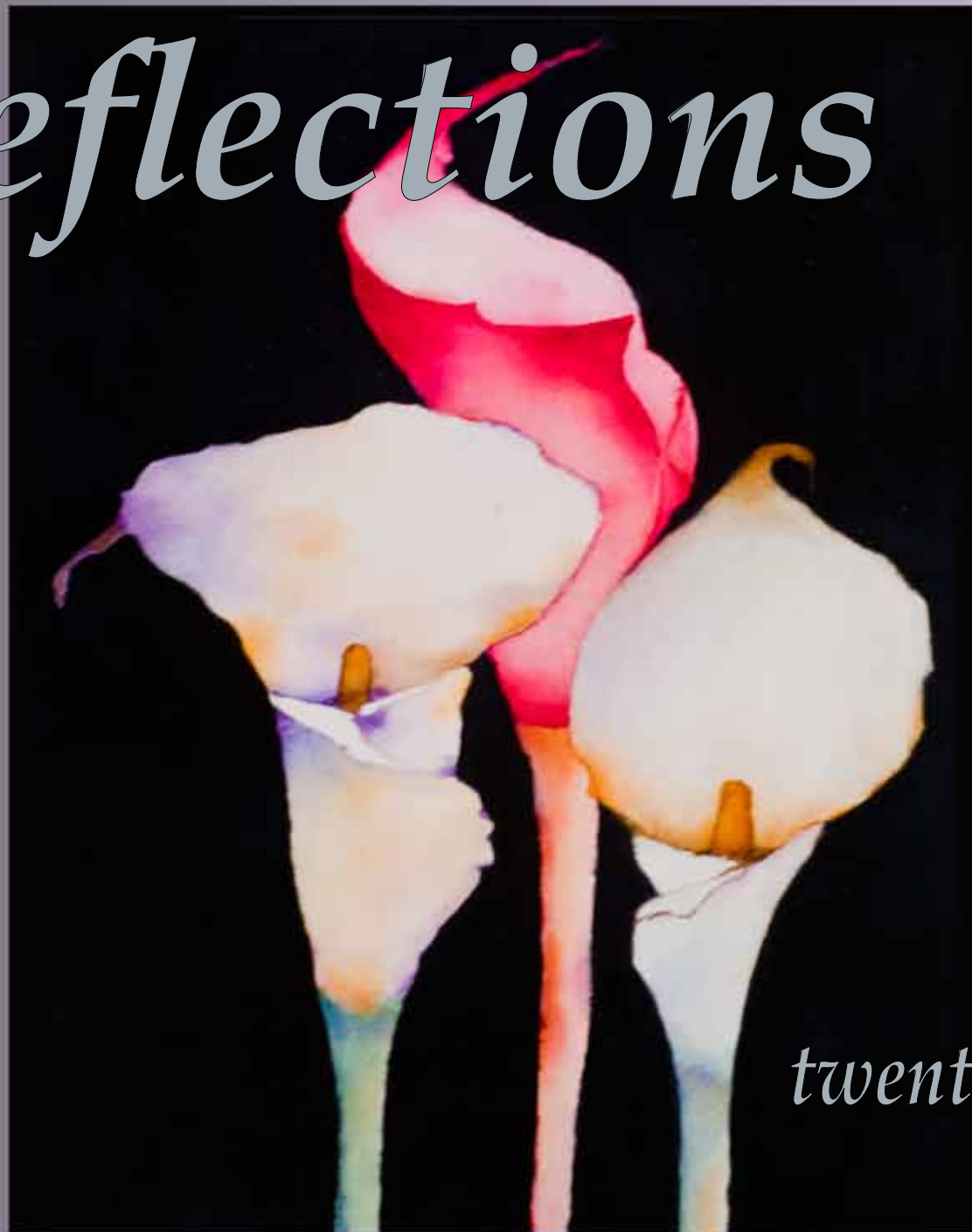


...reflections

2013-14



twenty-fifth year

... *reflections*

2013-14

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FRONT COVER ART: *Fair Ladies* (watercolor) by Loretta Bartolomeo
BACK COVER ART: Adapted from *Fair Ladies*
THIS AND FACING PAGES: *Cherry Dust* (photo) by Pat Poor





The Thanksgiving Family Photograph

Donna Easton

Our house of six people was not a house of many options. One television set in the living room, one black phone in the corner of the dining room near the front hall, one bathroom upstairs, one car out front, and one dinner menu for everyone. No choices and no tolerance for finicky tastes. We limited our individual time on the phone, we agreed on one TV program that we all watched, and most of the time we liked what we ate. Simple as that.

balls and homemade ornaments, but the lights and tinsel were added by Santa Claus after we went to bed. In the morning the tree literally glowed and twinkled, and even as we grew a little older, the beauty still surprised us each year and gave Dad some great shots from his trusty camera.

Thanksgiving had a similar sense of ritual. The dining room table would be set with the good china, one of the very few days in the year when that was allowed to be used. The side dishes had been cooking all morning, and their aromas would spread all through the house. Mashed potatoes, gravy, and candied sweet potatoes, which everyone loved. Oyster dressing for my father. Sauerkraut and stewed tomatoes for my German grandfather. Celery and olives, cranberry sauce, and pumpkin and mince meat pies. And then there was the turkey. It had been roasting for hours, and if we stood back we could watch my mother baste it, her glasses fogging up as soon as she opened the oven door. The smells would be wonderful, trying our childhood patience and tempting us to dip into one pot or another when my mother was away from the stove. No hors d'oeuvres at our house, so we would all be starving by dinner time! Finally, we would be called into the dining room. The adults would take most of the chairs, and at least three of us four children would sit on the piano bench which had been pulled

into special duty. The food would be in bowls and platters all over the table, and we would eagerly take our places. Once Mom sat down, we would bow our heads, bless ourselves and say grace, with Uncle Bob, who was a priest, leading us all in unison. And then.... In any other house, people would be diving into dinner. Plates would be passing and food would be heaping and voices would be rising in delight. But at our house...not so fast!

Because in the hallway, next to the phone table at the corner of the dining room, stood our other traditional Thanksgiving guest: Dad's camera tripod. No one was to touch a bite of food or disturb the beautiful serving dishes until the Thanksgiving family photograph could be taken. This ritual involved considerable focusing, fumbling and fuming. Directions for my grandmother to move ever so slightly left. For my brothers to sit up straight. For my uncle to stop rolling his eyes. For my mother to would-you-please-relax-and-smile? And for everyone to clear some room for my father so he could run around the table, hunker down, put his arm around my mother, smile as if all was well under control, and be captured on film for all posterity before the timer on the camera on the tripod tripped the flash. This required serious choreography that never worked on the first attempt. And very rarely on the second.

One Thanksgiving in particular lives on in memory for all of us, but not for the outcome Dad had planned. He had set up his tripod at the corner of the room but, evidently, more hurriedly than usual to appease the hungry horde. We had all taken our seats. The food had been delivered from the kitchen. The grace had been said over the meal. And then my father ceremoniously rose and reminded everyone not to dare disturb the feast until the annual Thanksgiving family photo had been taken.

The dangerous dance began. The first attempt at using the timer failed, as always, immediately. Dad was undeterred. Surely the second attempt would be the winner. Once again, the race around the table ended with Dad in mid-crouch as the flash flared. "One more time!" he cried, to the ravenous, glowering faces of his beloved family. Children began to fumble, my grandfather began to fume, my grandmother anxiously tried to keep her smile up, fearing explosions from either side. And my mother's glare shot shrapnel from her end of the table across the turkey and straight to my father's eye behind the camera lens. Fidgeters fidgeted, mutterers muttered, and tensions mounted. By this third attempt, facial expressions had frozen into crooked smiles barely masking the mayhem that loomed.

We had one way of doing things, and that mattered most of all on the holidays. For Easter, we dressed up in our best clothes, including hats and gloves for my sister and me, and seersucker suits for our two little brothers. Mom wore a corsage and Dad wore a special tie. We posed for my father as he took the obligatory Easter picture in the front yard near the azalea bush, or in the backyard with the peonies or roses in the background. Every year this tradition was sacred.

And on Christmas, the ritual was paramount. No one – absolutely no one – was to set foot in the living room before my parents had entered and Dad had set up his camera to catch our looks of surprise and joy as we rounded the corner and first laid eyes on the Christmas tree. We four children always helped to trim the tree the night before with colored glass

Finally, finally, the timer was reset. The red light blinked mockingly as Dad raced around the table yet again. Diving into position, he had just enough time to cry out “Smile, dammit!” before the third leg of the tripod began to telescope downward. In a second, but in what would forever be remembered as if in slow motion, the whole tripod and camera began to lurch sideways. Our widening eyes never left the lens as we watched in horror. Suddenly, everyone was rising up and reaching out toward the tipping camera. Hands outstretched. Flying elbows hit adjacent heads. Faces were obscured by lunging bodies. One brother slid off the piano bench as the red light continued to blink, now two feet off the floor. My grandmother leaned to the right to see what was happening, draping her necklace through the cranberries. My grandfather had no idea what was happening, but sensed danger looming and grabbed a fork. My uncle burst into his booming laugh. My mother looked to the ceiling for who-knows-what-possible divine intervention. And my father never moved, smiling determinedly, staring squarely into the falling lens as the flash went off, capturing our family in our full, manic, Thanksgiving glory.

To this day, we all agree. It was the best holiday picture we ever had!

Round And Round, Or How To Catch A Man

*he caught my eye in a swinging door
we went round and round and round some more*

*he got off went in the store
i followed him from floor to floor*

*he stopped at counters did not buy
if he turns around i shall lie*

*i thought you were someone i know
what else could i do*

*he turned around and looked at me
i smiled with glee*

*then he walked right by and caught my eye
not a word was spoken my heart was broken*

*i followed him to the swinging door
it swung around once he was no more*

*i kept going around and around and around some more
and finally entered the store*

*there he was he came toward me his voice was deep
my broken heart took a leap*

*i remember you PS 92 the A course
i nodded my head of course of course*

*his deep voice said shall we talk some more
café with coffee on the second floor*

*actually I had not said a word
afraid my speech would be slurred*

*so I smiled and acted coy
my legs were weak but could jump for joy*

*he took my hand went to the swinging door
we went round and round and round some more*

still holding my hand we went up to the second floor

Virginia Gordon



Appearances

Mary Hom

Winter had just dissolved into spring, with buds peeking out from otherwise barren branches. The air was refreshing – crisp but not biting. It was such a welcome change from the cold. It was on just such a morning that I remembered Carla Whittier and her family.

Although our families lived less than a mile from each other, Carla and I met for the first time at a camp which was a good two-hour drive away. Both of us were in high school; she was sixteen, a year younger than I, and she impressed me as happy and gregarious, with the kind of personality that got along with everybody. She loved playing the guitar. Carla was a PK (aka, Preacher's Kid) along with her younger brother, Daniel, age thirteen. Both had long blond hair, the fashion then. Mrs. Whittier was a large, square-shouldered woman, full faced with small frameless "granny-glasses." Her husband, Reverend Whittier, was also large and exuded confidence, serving the community as pastor of the local United Church of Christ.

The Whittiers set the standard for us as a well adjusted family. Except for the little things that happened now and then. Reverend Whittier seemed preoccupied much of the time. He performed his family and clerical responsibilities but in

a detached way. No one spoke up about it. Must be just a part of his personality, everyone thought.

Time passed. Those of us from the camp group got together now and then. Once we went to a North Carolina folk arts festival, and another time we met at the Maryland State Fair in Timonium for the day. One girl in our group had created a lovely winter coat which had won First Place and was on display there. All of us were so impressed. Carla came to every event we had and shared the enthusiasm of the group. Life was good.

Her father continued as the pastor. There were times that he would be preaching a sermon, suddenly fall silent in the middle of a sentence, and then abruptly walk off the pulpit and disappear. No one knew where he went or why. And no one approached him later to find out. Being the pastor meant that he was in charge and the decisions he made, even if suspicious or inappropriate, were never questioned.

One early spring, sunny day, Reverend Whittier, without a word, walked from his home to the local gas station and purchased a gallon of gasoline. Uncapping it, he thoroughly anointed his entire being. Then silently, calmly, and deliberately, he struck the match.



Hibiscus (Oil) Loretta Bartolomeo

Monhegan

Margareta Horiba

Truly I loved that little world, Monhegan. Small, sea-girt island that it was, a seeming floating speck in the infinitude of sea and sky, one was as though driven to seek refuge from the impendent cosmic immensity in a closer relationship to people and to every living thing.

Rockwell Kent, artist, writer. 1905.

The tour boat is leaving Boothbay Harbor for Monhegan Island making the last trip of the season. The October sun is playing over the water and the anchored vessels, over the shoreline with picture perfect white houses, over evergreens and bright autumn leaves. Outside the harbor we rock gently on the wide swells left from yesterday's storm. We pass the lighthouse and far ahead on the horizon beckons the blue, whale-like shape that is Monhegan twelve miles out, its name meaning 'far-out-to-sea island.' For an hour and a half as we journey the sun and cool winds are washing us clean from any concern and just let us be, suspended and carefree. Porpoises break the surface from time to time playing effortlessly through the water. Seagulls find a school of fish and do their daredevil splashy dives into the sea. Beyond that there are only the myriad color-coded lobster buoys bobbing on the surface and a few fishing boats in the distance.

We pull in at the natural harbor between Monhegan and the

adjacent little barebacked Manana Island and take in the view of the scattered buildings of grey shingles and white trim up the grassy slopes. The graveled roads are free of cars. Time seems to be standing still here. The last guests at the Island Inn are lounging in white Adirondack chairs and looking out to sea. The general store is serving excellent clam chowder in ceramic mugs. Then we are ready to set off to make the best of our few hours on the island.

We climb up the steep hill past the school house and a plaque commemorating Captain John Smith who visited here in 1614. Laundry is hung out to dry in the balmy air. A barrel of green tomatoes are free for the taking. On top of the hill is the lighthouse. A museum is closed but the view is open and free. The buildings are being painted in protection of winter storms soon to come. Trails traverse this forested speck in the sea no more than a mile and a half long and twenty minutes wide. We are soon standing on the high cliffs facing the Atlantic, the surf crashing into the rocks below us. How many artists have been trying to capture this splendor? The gallery by the harbor tells of many attempts. Perhaps in Maine Winslow Homer succeeded the best.

Nature is never still and never dull. On a cliff below us is a colony of cormorants in their silly display spreading wings wide to dry. And now and then one of them takes off flying low across the water, far, far out to sea. An osprey hovers overhead. Rowan berries and blue fall asters light up the dry grasses and the path drops and meanders back through a stretch of spooky woods where no sun reaches the

floor and mushrooms abound. And then we are back in the village and walk on grass under apple trees and come across a white inviting gallery. For a moment we entertain the idea of coming back here, to read, to rest, to walk and observe the wild, to paint maybe, to join the sixty some inhabitants, fisher folk and artists, who make their living in this microcosm of a world.

A Walk Down St. George Street, St. Augustine

*Darkness dares passage along uneven bricks and uprooted sidewalks.
Streetlamps are obscured by thatches of moss, oak and palm.
Dangling serpentine vines touch my shoulder. Shock.
In the night air, brittle curls of oak leaves hiss about my feet.
Palm leaves click and glide like Elvis swaying with a song.
In brushes, something stirs, slithers,
Watches and prepares.
Is that Holly the bashful neighborhood cat who is startled?
Or is it I?
An opening in the royal blue velvet sky.
Orion can be touched.
Slim columns of moonlight
Vibrate across Maria Sanchez Lake,
Brightening the way to Pam's side porch.
Through the oval glass door,
Soft lamplight and the muffled sounds from American Idol on TV
Bring familiarity, safety.
I yearn for the next night passage.*

Susan Pfeiffer Wetzel

Dinner at Six

Sally Kauffman

My parents often referred to it as indigestion hour; nevertheless, for all the years of my childhood, dinner at six was a constant in my life.

After a typical day of ironing, washing, dusting, vacuuming, and, in general, restoring the house to order, my mother, at 4:30 each afternoon, would fold up the ironing board, return the Electrolux to its basement lair, and prepare for my father's arrival. When my Dad emerged from our black 1940s Plymouth sedan at 5:30, my mother, freshly bathed and dressed, looked, to borrow one of her favorite expressions, as though she "had just stepped out of a band box."

When the clock on the living room mantle bonged six times, accompanied by the distant chimes of the clock at State Teachers, my father would drain the last of his National Boh, my mother would hang her apron on the kitchen peg, and my brothers and I were summoned to dinner.

I sat on my mother's right beside my eldest brother and across from my two younger brothers. My father presided at the head of the table facing my mother, who sat with her back to the swinging kitchen door. After we said grace (Bless us

oh Lord for these thy gifts, which we are about to receive from thy bounty...) my father cut the meat, my mother served the vegetables, and my youngest brother, Tony, spilled his milk, pretty much in that order. At that point we scattered in all directions either to save our own dinners or to sop up the mess before it ran to the edge of the table or reached the cracks between the leaves. The offending brother, with his thin face and large solemn eyes, was seldom reprimanded. Some people were forgetful, others were untidy or slothful, but my brother Tony was uncoordinated – it was a fact of life.

Our dining room was papered, above the chair rail, in a swirling, swooping pattern of fruits and flowers. My father did his paper hanging at night while the family slept. Even with my brothers and me out of the way, it could not have been an easy task, for there were three doorways, two windows, a radiator, and a built-in corner cupboard with which he had to contend.

The corner cupboard contained my mother's Spode china, which, accompanied with a cut-work tablecloth, was used about six times each year for holidays and special occasions. Our telephone squatted darkly on a tall chest of

drawers, which held place mats, telephone books, silverware, light bulbs, my mother's Winstons, and, in the bottom drawer, a random assortment of mittens, gloves, hats, and seldom-used scarves.

The largest and most ungainly piece of furniture in the room was a massive oak sideboard with a pink marble top; it was immediately and affectionately dubbed "the monstrosity." My aunt Ethel, who gave, or rather bequeathed it to my mother, considered it a treasure and would have been greatly offended had she known what little respect it was accorded. Nevertheless, after becoming part of the household, the monstrosity filled rapidly with all of our hard-to-stash items, including games, spare glassware and crockery, and outsize items that could not find a home elsewhere. My mother often said that she didn't know how she had ever managed without it.

In spring and summer, the dining room windows, as well as the front door, stood open while we ate. The side window, behind my seat, looked out through lilac bushes and apple trees to the Gill's side yard. Through the front window I could glimpse the cupola and pigeonholes that adorned the Loiseaux's garage. In extreme heat, when the ice tea glasses trickled and puddled and the salt clumped in the shakers, my

mother would pat her face with a paper napkin and ask my father to bring an upstairs fan down to the dining room. My mother perspired on her nose and upper lip as did my brother Joe. The rest of us were less restrained; you might say that we were "regular sweaters."

Our menu was geared to please a meat-and-potatoes family, who did not appreciate creative cooking. None of us, including my father, was fond of culinary surprises. My brothers and I were required to eat all greens, with the exception of brussel sprouts, which were occasionally served to please my father and which even my mother found to be offensive. My two younger brothers were blessed, on their side of the table, with a drawer into which they made regular deposits of food that they had deemed inedible. On Fridays, the menu was often fish sticks, scrambled eggs, waffles, or tuna casserole. Friday night dinner, like my little brother's spilled milk, was a fact of life.

All of us, with the possible exception of my brother Joe, had a raging sweet tooth and, provided that we cleaned our plates, dessert was included with every meal. My mother's hot-milk cake with its crusty sugar and cinnamon glaze was my year-round favorite; in summer it was homemade lemon or

raspberry sherbert frozen in the ice tray compartment of our Frigidaire; in winter it was apple crisp. Even on days that my mother played bridge and was pressed for time, we ate store-bought cookies, ice cream from the A&P, or jello with squirted-on whipped cream. As much as we all loved sweets, my brother John took the cake: the speedy dispatch of his bulging Easter basket was an annual source of amazement to our extended family of grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins.

Following the evening meal and after all the dinner debris had been removed, the dining room, at least during the school year, became a study hall. My brothers and I gathered around the table to reluctantly open text books, nibble our pencils, and grumble over our homework. My father helped us with various math problems and as his patience waned, his voice grew louder, but he was always available to lend a hand. After the table had once more been cleared, my mother, never one to put off what could be done today, arranged placemats, cutlery, and napkins for the next morning's breakfast.

My widower Dad died at age 94. After having lived alone in my childhood home for the last 27 years of his life, he had long ago moved his eating essentials into the kitchen,

nearer the microwave and the plugged-in percolator. It was then that the dining room table assumed a new and final role: its surface slowly became obscured beneath piles of bank statements, utility bill receipts, birthday cards, and various other papers that my Dad could not bear to discard. After his death,

my two remaining brothers and I distributed our memories, along with furniture, dishes, and books among our children. With the exception of a few threadbare rugs and outdated appliances, nothing was discarded or given away to strangers. My mother's Spode and

silverware found new homes with children and grandchildren as did the dining room table. Ironically, the fate of the monstrosity with the pink marble top was decided by drawing straws; it was the item deemed most precious among the grandchildren.



High Hopes (watercolor) Whitney Jacobs



Guardian Angel

Dan Maguire

A November Meditation

I was surprised by its appearance,
so black, especially the eyes, like an
eclipse, without its corona.

I had expected golden eminence,
like on those holy cards the nuns
gave out as presents, or rewards
to their favorites – a face beaming
with a preternatural glow, bright
wings haloing the curly heads of
shiny children perched precariously
on a narrow bridge above a raging
torrent. They are unaware of the
danger they are in. One false
step and ... no matter. They are
protected.

I've always wondered how two
such small children managed to get
into such a wild, lonely place. I've
always tried to avoid such places
myself. Perhaps I just don't have
the inclination to feed my need for
wings.

And it's so small, barely noticeable
from my window. Easy to miss, if
you're not careful. I suppose that
even angels have to scale down, cut
back, to meet decreased belief.
But this – so small, the legs so thin.

I've seen it now for six days straight,
as I emerge to chase the day, always
on my left, black against the green-
brown lawn.

Surely this is an omen, a portent,
more than just the pull of old
beliefs, the stale arcana chanted out
to us as children – surely, this means
more than just November.

It neither flies away nor follows,
merely cocks its tiny head and
watches me.

Tomorrow, I will ask it what it
wants, what intervention, humble
or divine, it signifies.

And yet, it seems to me unfit for
miracles, ill-equipped for hope.

It is the seventh day, and there are
seven. They have fooled me, clever
shadows. There has been a different
one each morning. They are
assembled now, converged upon the
ground beneath a dying locust tree,
their pointy faces pointing straight
at me.

What is it – what! I shout at them,
hoping for an answer, but they only
scatter, mocking back my question
in the harsh tongue of the angels,
flying off in unison, black wings
covering the sun.

Images

HEAVEN

*weary from a long walk
stopped by a stone wall butt-high
just right for resting the butt on*

BALLET DE CHAT

*four velvet pussy-legs
split-second criss-crossed
speeding to cross a busy street*

BARELY TWO

*his left hand safe in his Da-da's grip
his face all glow as he reaches toward the smile
that whispers "Gimme Five"*

BLIND LEADER

*Minding his nose
The unseeing dog tugs—with all his heart—forward
The anxious woman on the leash follows behind*

HYMNING AND HAWING

*Before worship service
Among the small group at the piano singing hymns
I become aware how croaky is my morning voice*

Isaac Rebert

In the Deep Woods

*The stricken tree may lean for years
on a neighbor or two before
finally hitting the ground
Years of silent and steadfast support
silent but for windy creaks
and leafy ruffles, and perhaps tree
talk—reassuring words that the one is
ready, will live on in the lives it hosts
the others promising to always remember
to stand by the fallen forever
which in tree time
might be long enough, indeed*

Susan Marshall

November Tale

*It was late November and fallen leaves
had lost their brilliant colors and shapes
Now they all looked alike as we crunched through
knee-high drifts huddled in windswept piles*

*He was only six, though innately gifted
in ways of childhood wonder,
“They’re cornflakes!” he applauded and lunged head first
into the highest heap he could find...*

*Beauty exploded everywhere at the sound of his voice
The hidden sun pierced through breaking clouds
and laughing leaves shot into the air
like dancers, swirling on wing tipped feet*

JoAnn Burke

For A Moment...

*In a cocoon
Looking outward
Looking inward.*

*The sun rises
The sun sets.*

*Living in my mind
A voice
A gesture
An expression*

*Living in my mind
Birthdays
Holidays
Celebrations*

*Existing in the present
Clinging to the past
Hearing a whisper,
“She’s no longer here.”*

Nancy Voskuhl

Springtime Sonnet: All in Good Time

*A day in March began with blue,
a color lost for months in grey.
The sky became the self-same hue
as precious eggs that robins lay.*

*The air was soft, like silken strands
of babies’ hair, or ducklings’ down.
It stroked our skin like loving hands,
and coaxed a smile from winter’s frown.*

*Then as we stretched to reach for more,
the warmth withdrew and turned to chill.
We hurried homeward, locked the door
against the wind, its voice so shrill*

*all sound was windswept, in and out.
We missed the crocus’ joyful shout.*

Donna Easton



Bangkok Awakes

Marie-Claude McKie

It's 6:00 am. Bangkok awakes! A pinkish light infuses the streets, transforming them into a theater set of soft coral and amber hues.

All along the street, it is a most animated scene. On the one side, vendors open their stalls, one by one, in a daily well-choreographed ballet. Large pots of exotic flowers and green plants seem to grow out of the pavement, while fruits and vegetables, arranged with great artistry offer the eye an abundance of "still lives" worthy of the brush of a Renaissance painter.

Here, a large pineapple yields to the precise sharp knife of the vendor, its golden flesh slices, beautifully displayed on a bed of fresh green leaves. There, a cart hung with paper thin and transparent dried octopuses catches the light, and, as if hung with mother-of pearl necklaces, shimmers. A peanut vendor walks briskly amongst the stalls to keep in perfect balance the two laden baskets which dance in harmony with his footsteps at each end of a bamboo pole slung across his shoulders. Multiple aromas emanating from small and large caldrons scattered along the way, blend their multiple aromas which permeate the air. Only upon close approach, will they reveal their own perfume, some deliciously familiar, others strange and exotic to a foreign nose.

Across the street, the pace is somewhat less turbulent and the noise level lower. Here, small stalls offer the passing clientele simple food for a quick nibble and a short pause on the few chairs scattered on the pavement. It is here that often monks, young boys as well as old men, draped in their saffron robes, scurry at early rise, looking for their only meal of the day. They each hold tight against their chest a round wooden teak mass, their begging bowl. There is no hurry in their step, though the pains of hunger gnaw fiercely their insides. Eventually, one will stop at a stall of his choice. After greeting the vendor in the usual way, with a slight bow and hands gathered at chest level, the monk presents his bowl to the owner, who immediately sinks to his knees thus acknowledging the great honor of being given this opportunity to feed him, a holy man. He takes the bowl, offers his special guest a clean and comfortable place to sit and eat his meal, sometimes on the pavement if he has nowhere else to offer.

Once his guest is settled and a beverage has been offered, the host will scurry to prepare the best meal he can possibly make. He offers it to the monk with humility, gentleness and solemnity and it is accepted in the same spirit. The meal finished, with a simple bow and, once again, hands at chest level, the stall vendor and the monk part ways, each richer from this

humble encounter.

It is still early, yet, as the old painted wooden houses which line the streets slowly come to life, traffic starts to increase. As if animated by the baton of a different conductor, the little market is now in high gear in an effort to accommodate the crowd going to work. There is no longer time to pause or joke, or pat a friend on the back. Now, the beehive of activity has tripled in intensity, and friendships have temporarily evaporated under the pressure of competition. Almost gone are the gentle sounds of a people living their simple life, now drowned by the cacophony of the harsh reality of daily survival.

7:00 am. Motorcycles roar, while buses, filled to the brim, attempt, at a snail's pace, to take their cargo to work. Cars hoot impatiently, desperately trying to find an empty space to wiggle through, a few feet at a time. It is total chaos – the lights don't work or are totally ignored. Wisely, no police presence is crazy enough to confront this dangerous and uncontrollable situation. The air is now thick with carbon monoxide, forcing people to wear masks in the streets. Philosophically, it is said: "If the cars don't kill you, the air will."

Bangkok has awakened. Survive another day!

Flying into Heaven's Way

*Two birds, fly away—
One, lifting up
To the sky above,
The silvered pond
Reflects below.*

*In the telescope, a luminous body
Lights the sky. Sign of a new world?
Or like the moon, a bleak windswept pattern
In evening space? I'm searching for
The untouched brilliance, marking
Entrance to Heaven's vault.*

Jo Procter

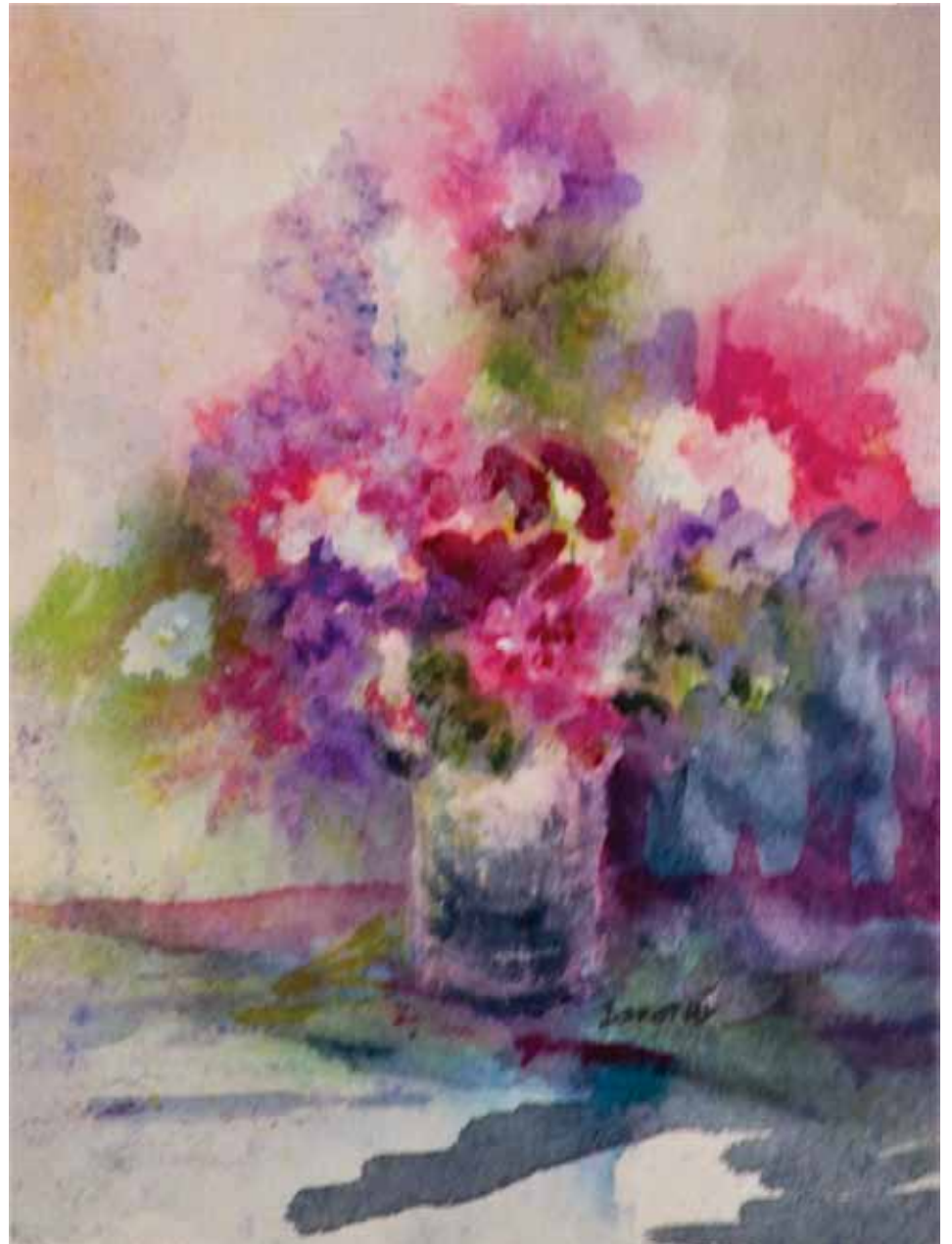


Mekong Delta, Vietnam (photo) Nancy Rouse



Snow Blooms (photo) Elizabeth Fanto

Summer Roses (watercolor) Dorothy Jansen



Dancing in the Sixties

Kathryn Pettus

I can still feel the soft fabric of that little red plaid dress, the only one that I owned that actually fit my petite frame, draping across my shoulder and hugging my hips as I leapt onto my feet and scooted across the gym floor to dance on that Friday afternoon, one of those times when the class schedule had been adjusted to provide us with that rare opportunity, for the donation of a quarter, to dance for fifty minutes in school without giving thought to teachers or tests or homework.

We could frolic without hesitation as long as our behavior stayed within the boundaries of proper decorum; and the songs we younger girls liked best were those that allowed us to dance by ourselves, if necessary. All we had to do was throw ourselves into the mass of moving bodies, swing our arms with rhythm and move our feet lightly from side to side or forward and backward, making sure that they hit the floor definitively on the accented beats.

I had worn the dress for two reasons. First, it made me feel good about the way I looked, comfortable in it and in my own skin. Second, the dress made me feel mature and if by chance the boy was there, he would see me and notice, too, how grown up I was.

And there it was, the song, the one we had been waiting for, the one we loved to dance to, pulling us all toward the dance floor. Chubby Checker urged us to come and dance, come and twist our hips from side to side simply by moving our arms and feet to the strands of the music with a beat so heavy that you couldn't miss it. Enthusiastically, he called to us, come and dance.

*Come on baby let's do the twist
Come on baby let's do the twist
Take me by my little hand and go like this
Ee-oh twist baby baby twist
Ooh-yeah just like this
Come on little miss and do the twist*

And midway through the song, if you were a good dancer, you could twist your way down toward the floor and up again without losing your rhythm or balance. And this was exactly what we did, feeling at ease with this exceptional song.

But the DJ would not favor us little girls, the little misses of the world. During the last twenty minutes, he would play songs with a slower tempo, the ones that only couples would sway to in the middle of the floor while the rest of us stood, watching and humming or even softly singing the lyrics to be heard only because they resonated in our own throats.

*Put your head on my shoulder
Whisper in my ear, baby
Words I like to hear, baby
Tell me, tell me that you love me too*

And through the clearing, I could see the figures of the ninth grade boys hanging close to the bleachers that had been banked to make space for the dance, their slender, unsubstantial bodies leaning into their huddle, their eyes searching, scanning the crowd. And there I saw him and sadly thought that the next time he would see me I would be wearing a blouse, a pleated skirt, folded over twice at the waist for a better fit, and knee socks.

"The Twist," written by Hank Ballard, performed by Chubby Checker

"Put Your Head on My Shoulder," written and performed by Paul Anka

Communion

*we come together
break bread
drink wine*

*from North Carolina, California,
Maryland, Washington
far-flung travelers
close-bound friends
bonds forged half a century ago*

*friendships nurtured in the confines
of a small southern girls school
studied together, played together,
dreamed together, grew up together,
laughed and cried together*

*the elastic of friendship
stretched by distance and years
careers, successes, failures,
births and deaths*

*strong elastic never losing its stretch
contracting periodically
drawing us together yet again
for our annual communion*

Bonny M. Lewis



On the Pleasure of My Books

Marianna Russell

Books give pleasure: but if frequenting them eventually leads to loss of our finest accomplishments, joy and health, then give up your books. I am one who believes that their fruits cannot outweigh a loss such as that.

*Michel de Montaigne,
"On Solitude"*

16
Hard words for a book lover – and Montaigne clearly was a lover of books. He liked to keep his favorite books always at his side, favorite quotations were inscribed on the walls of his library, and he seems to have had a personal relationship with many of his favorite authors, disparaging their faults and praising their virtues. I can relate to such a man, and even to his warning on the dangers of taking excessive pleasure in our books: I once lost a tooth by reading a book a tad too intensely, and that was the least of effects Madame Karenina had on my physical, mental, and emotional state. Nevertheless, I cherish the book, even its bodily presence – hardbacked and blood red – to the extent that I planned to tape the tooth onto the last page, until the tooth got washed down the drain the way wedding rings get lost by careless wives.

I have, on occasion, wondered whether there isn't something ridiculous, even unseemly, in the way we possess our material books. They are, after all, words, thoughts,

emotions which we hold in our hearts, not in our hands. Yet possess them we must: in duplicate and triplicate, lining the walls of our offices, libraries, bedrooms, living rooms, dining rooms, even kitchens and bathrooms. We keep them in our attics and basements – boxed and ready to give away but going nowhere in case we change our minds. We have our most beloved books in multiple editions. I own three different editions of *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare*, including a highly prized, out-of-print Norton Facsimile of *The First Folio*, count eleven copies of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and measure 32 inches of paperback editions of the plays.

We treasure our books for a variety of reasons: for the person who gave them, recommended them, maybe even taught them. We may love them because they belonged to someone we loved. We took them off the shelf before the house was sold and the contents sent to Goodwill, and we sense between the pages the presence of lost lives. Perhaps we bought our books second-hand and love them for the mystery of ownership; or because they are beautiful to hold and behold, with smooth, polished skin, glittering gold tool, and satin ribbons to mark one's place. Maybe we like them because they are the right size and sit well on our shelves as well as in our hands. I have a brother who is

a well-read, serious reader but prefers hardbacks of a certain size and will neither buy nor read any book in paperback.

The best reason to love a book is, of course, for what one finds within, but sometimes we are unable to detach the contents from either the cover or its author. I love Dante I say, but do I mean the man or his divine comedy? I think I mean *The Divine Comedy*, but there are so many associations with both the man – as he lives in his book – and the text for how it came into my consciousness: step by precious step. Those are volumes I could never part with, for I would be parting with my soul. I remember a story told by a professor in Russian Literature about a poet on his way to political exile who chose to leave behind a cherished edition of *The Divine Comedy*. The man feared the book would be taken from him in the camps and he could not bear the thought of such a violent parting from his beloved Dante.

Until I became a student again in the middle of my life, I never thought much about keeping books. My husband was the book-keeper in our household, and, after moving his books six times in the first years of our marriage, I saw them as a lot of cardboard. Now I feel I would be nothing without my books. They, their marginal notations and the

papers I wrote from them, are the history of all my thought. Several years ago I wrote a series of essays inspired by my study of Montaigne. When the course was over, I tucked Montaigne into the space I made for him on a bookshelf in my study. He lives between Thoreau and a series of books and essays on how to write. Every now and then I take him down and thumb his fragile pages looking for some half-remembered inspired passage which seemed to change the course of my life.

Occasionally, I decide I need Montaigne next to my head when I sleep. He would like that, I think. Despite his dire warnings on the dangers of too passionate an attachment, Montaigne knew the solace books could be: "... *for it is impossible to describe what comfort and peace I derive from the thought that they are there beside me, to give me pleasure whenever I want it, or from recognizing how much succour they bring to my life.*" Friends and family take note: If I'm in a coma and you come to visit, read to me from one of my books. I feel certain that something deep within me would stir and flicker at the sound of well-loved words.

With my mind intact I pray, may I not degenerate into squalid senility in which the lyre is wanting. (Horace, as quoted by Montaigne, "On Experience")

Happy Hour

Rosemary Ciaudelli

During the summer in South Carolina, I look forward most afternoons to my “happy hour” – that blissful time at the beach when the sand appears golden and most tourists are packing up and dragging their chairs and umbrellas home. The heat of the day abates a little and the breeze makes the humidity bearable.

Though for some, “happy hour” is a convivial time, my happy hour is blissfully solitary. No one to talk to, and the only sound is the waves. I place my chair at the edge where the water can lap up around my ankles. This is pure heaven; speaking of which, I often pray then.

Even at that late hour of the afternoon, I still slather myself with sunscreen and wear long sleeves. My dermatologist does not know of these forbidden forays into the sun. For a redhead, this is a guilty pleasure.

When my children and grandchildren visit, they bring a tent. Then I might venture to the noonday beach to be with them. They give way so that I can sit in the middle as far away as possible from the rays. They don't have to worry that much about their skin because I married an olive skinned Italian man. The person in the family who has the best tan of all is my

granddaughter, who is half African-American. She refers to the tent as the “Irish tanning booth.”

Now I miss my happy hour terribly, especially the minutes when the setting sun on the foamy top of the waves sparkles like diamonds.



Tabitha (watercolor) Paula Murphy

Alone

Elizabeth Fanto

Charles sits alone on his deck. It's midnight. That lone moon. A soft warm breeze. The ice in the bucket softly settles a bit.

Nearby the Jacuzzi bubbles invitation, but tonight, Charles feels fine being alone. He thinks about putting on music, but this night is velvety silent and he wants to savor it. He can almost taste this night.

Feeling fine, he sips his scotch. Earlier, he had a martini, wine for dinner. Something to eat, of course, but nothing memorable. He will finish his scotch and wait. He hopes she might still call. She didn't come for the martinis. She missed the wine. And now, she will miss the Jacuzzi, the scotch, this lovely night.

Later, he will awake. The moon will be gone. The Jacuzzi will still bubble. The scotch will be gone. The ice will have melted. And he will mind being alone.



Comeuppance

Elaine Logan

It happened like a flash,” people have told Hester over the years. “Quick as that!” and they snap their fingers. Then their eyes get wide as they describe a fall they’ve had – as incredulous as if it occurred by magic.

She wants to snort with impatience, and tell them, “You simply fell down, for Pete’s sake.” Good, old-fashioned gravity. Begging for sympathy, she imagines. “You just stumbled over your own clumsy feet.”

Then she did the very same thing. She was walking along, enjoying the nip in the air, thinking about the things she needed to pick up at the market on the way home, when, wham, she went down. She can’t believe how fast it happened – in a flash, like everyone says. One minute she’s upright, in full stride, and the next she finds herself in a scattered heap of bumped elbows, skinned knees, twisted feet, bruised palms, bleeding forehead, askew glasses. Keys, purse, tote bag, pens, papers, everything skittering across the pavement and a sharp pain screaming into her brain. She hears a moan, then realizes that the cry is coming from her.

“Are you all right?” someone asks. Hester can see young feet in platform sandals, burnished tan

legs, toenails lacquered in bright fuchsia. The young woman’s hand on her shoulder is gentle and solid. “Can you get up? Did you break anything?”

Hester wants only to pick herself up, to keep going as if nothing at all has happened. She certainly doesn’t want some slip of a ninny making a fuss, helping her to her feet. If she moves, she might faint, or even worse, she might throw up. Maybe if she can wait a minute, breathe deeply, just let the shock subside. “I’ll be fine,” Hester says and tries to wave the girl away. “Really. Just need a minute to catch my breath.”

The young woman won’t go away. “Did you trip?” she asks, and Hester doesn’t have the energy to explain that she doesn’t know – just down, in that proverbial flash. Hester assumes the girl wonders if she’s had a stroke or a seizure, if she should call 911. So she says, “Yes, a stumble. There on the uneven pavement.”

Hester still doesn’t look at her. If she raises her head she knows she’ll black out. She leans over on her side and stretches out a leg, the only leg that she can move, and sees a rip in her pants at the knee with dirt streaked along the fabric and spots of blood soaking through. “Oh, shit,” she fumes, thinking of the

price of a new pair of khakis.

The young woman gathers Hester’s papers and sticks them in the tote bag. She finds a Kleenex and hands it to Hester for her forehead. Hester rallies a bit and props herself on an elbow, dabbing at the goose egg above her eye. She tries to adjust her glasses so she can see.

Embarrassment replaces the shock of pain and the surprise of landing on the ground. “Thank you,” she tells the girl, hoping she will leave. “It’s sweet of you to help.” Hester picks up her car keys and bleeps the lock on the car, further along the parking lot. “If you want to do something, you can put the bag in the car for me.”

“Do you think you should drive?” the young woman asks. Somehow, Hester knows it would come to this, questioning her ability, flaunting her youth, her skill at teetering around on those foolish shoes.

Hester musters all her grit and pretends she is, indeed, intact. She brushes dirt from her hands and shirt, sets the combs back in her hair, and tries to ignore the fact that she’s sitting gracelessly, smack on the ground in the middle of an asphalt parking lot. “Really,” she speaks slowly to control the trembling she feels. “Really, it’s just a matter of

gravity. People trip, they fall. In another minute, I’ll be on my way – with only these pants to show for all the trouble.”

The young woman tells Hester about her grandmother who fell, and didn’t have a doctor check her out. She ended up in the hospital with a blood clot. “Thank God, though,” she goes on, “they dissolved it in the nick of time. You should have someone look you over.” Her earnestness makes Hester want to scream.

“I will,” she promises her. “Really. You’ve been very kind.”

The young woman takes Hester’s purse and tote bag to the car, and turns back. For one dreadful minute, Hester thinks she is going to try to lift her to her feet. On the other hand, Hester doesn’t know if she can get up without help. She figures she’ll roll onto her side, get to her knees, place her hands down and push her rump up in the air. Somehow, she’ll get onto one foot, the right one, the good one. Maybe she can lean on a parked car to support her weight while she tests the other foot. Then she imagines that she can limp or hop to her car and fall into the seat. She knows she can only do this if the young woman isn’t watching – isn’t seeing her ungainly maneuvers, isn’t



seeing her pretend to be stoic, isn't seeing her swallow the pain of what must surely be broken foot or ankle bones.

The young woman suggests that she go get her own car. "When I swing by," she says, "you can let me know whether you're OK, or if you want a ride to the emergency room."

"Great." Hester smiles and grits her teeth at the same time. "You've been wonderful," she says and gives a chipper wave. As soon as the young woman turns her back, Hester groans and begins to get up from the pavement. Slowly, carefully, salvaging bits of dignity, she hobbles along and swings the car door open. So much for plans, she thinks. She tells herself to forget about stopping at the market – there's an emergency room a few miles up the road in the opposite direction.

A Life Told in Lists

*The latest Cosmopolitan
white tapers for the table
two T-bones and potatoes
a box of brownie mix
a bottle of Peach Ripple
a refill on "the Pill"
A can of Reddi-Whip?*

*Pick up Parents Magazine
a giant box of Pampers
some Gerber's Peas and Carrots
ground beef and frozen fries
we're out of instant coffee
some baby vitamins
An economy size bottle of bubble bath?*

*The Fall Preview of TV Guide
a loaf of Wonder Bread
smooth Skippy and grape jelly
lunch bags and plastic wrap
a gallon of skim milk
I'll try Hamburger Helper
Buy Kwell again for head lice?*

*Look for Mother Earth News
get a tub of tofu
organic apples for a pie
a sack of whole wheat flour
alfalfa seeds for sprouting
beeswax for making candles
Pick up a yoga mat?*

*Do they still sell Ms. Magazine?
a bag of chips and dip
a single steak, potato
or just a TV Dinner
a vat of Ben and Jerry's
some vodka and vermouth
Will they re-fill my Valium?*

*Martha Stewart Magazine
a quiche to serve at book club
pick up a case of cabernet
a baguette and some brie
the kids are home from college,
so a giant box of Tide
A pound box of Godiva's?*

*The newest Netflix just arrived
a box of scented candles
we'll split a steak
get salad stuff
a bottle of Glenlivet
my hair dye, his Viagra
And a can of Reddi-Whip!*

Marjorie Chenoweth



Agincourt

*Here at the wild course's flowing
under the moss bed dark
no one to notice its moaning
no one except the lark*

*Long since was Agincourt dwindling
suffered the years at war
waiting the Dauphin's enkindling
Harry his youth explore*

*Great was the pride of her honor
heavy in armor bright
soft was the meadow's October
drowning them in mid-flight*

*So on the day of Saint Crispin
armed in their jerkins light
Sharpshooting bowmen sent shafts in
covered the fields with blight*

*Here at the wild course's flowing
under the moss bed dark
no one to notice its moaning
no one except the lark*

Only is heard the lark

Jim Butzow

Year

*left behind
book no longer read
worst fears still in pockets
best hopes split up spilt out
already almost all forgotten
almost already meaningless*

*faced with winters hard white face
remember pink and yellow spring
fecund summer
buzzing nights and songbird mornings
autumn's colored lies
mud frozen to your boots*

*what to do with everything
things that can no longer occupy your space
voices that no longer call your name
faces that no longer mean your face*

*now it all just sits there
scattered scrapbook
things we threw away
things we kept and lost
all the changes made
we are the same*

*perhaps it is not gone
just hard to find
search reflections
stare hard into shinings
soft enough that you might still be there
among those near few moments*

*breathe
again
again*

Dan Maguire

Anniversary

*It was my birthday
I know where I was
when it was around noon in Dallas
Reborn into a new weeping world*

*I know where I was
in time's inefficient clock
Reborn into a weeping world
where the cogs slip, unfixedly, back*

*in time. Inefficient clock
for fifty years, a moment away as the limo turns,
the cogs slip unfixedly back
to the sun, his smiles and the auburn hair*

*Fifty years. A moment away as the limo turns
to the sun, his smiles and the auburn hair
when it was around noon in Dallas
It was my birthday*

Susan Marshall



Iris In My Garden (watercolor) Virginia Gordon



Fall Leaves (watercolor) Whitney Jacobs



Prairie Sunset (watercolor) Betty Evans



Winter Sunset (watercolor) Al Ulfohn

Brain Works

Gil French

Most humans have brains. Actually, all humans have brains but there are some people I know whose brains are so weak and who annoy me so much that I like to think that they are brainless. There are a few folks, however, whose brains were so enormous that they have gone down in history as somewhat super humans: Albert Einstein, for example, or Sir Isaac Newton, Bach, Shakespeare, Archimedes, Michelangelo, and maybe a few others whose names I either can't remember or don't know how to spell. It just shows what any one of us could have become if only we had been born geniuses.

Nature has seen fit to equip its favored species with a rather well developed and serviceable brain. It doesn't just fill our heads with warm, gooey matter but has some very fine uses. For example, it controls not only our speech and vision but also our hearing, smelling and feeling. Because of our brains we are able to talk, walk, feed ourselves, identify colors although some of us are not able to do this without a little timely help from our wives, argue, play Frisbee and other senseless games, listen to stupid talk radio shows, solve problems, calculate cosines and do many other things that begin with verbs. Because of our brains, we have come up with a number of startling inventions like airplanes,

wheels, Twinkies, nuclear weapons, alphabets, sun visors, comic books, toothpicks and razor blades. The list could go on but my fingers are getting tired. There seems to be no limit to the things that the human brain can fashion.

It appears that some very brilliant scientists have determined that the brain consists of as many as one hundred billion thinking cells, called neurons. They do not explain how or why some underworked member of their group had nothing better to do than count to such an outrageous number but I will take their word that it has been done. These cells are not an inactive lot. They are constantly firing electrical charges at one another at the speed of light. When one of these charges hits its angry target the target takes sweet revenge by bearing a thought. What becomes of the thought depends on whose head the charge and target lie in. They could become brilliant words in a brain like Shakespeare's, or breath-taking notes in Bach's brain or hideously evil plots in the brain of someone like Caligula. Or maybe they could be nothing but idle moments in some of the rest of us.

Human brains were not always the marvelous powerhouses they are in today's species members. The earliest human ancestors had rather small, uncertain brains that enabled them

to eat, sleep, breathe, reproduce, avoid, for the most part, hungry, sharp toothed predators with nasty dispositions and a few other things necessary to sustain life. They had to wait for nature's help in evolving into the fancy creatures that they later became. One of the reasons that our thinking power grew to such an extent is that, forgive my saying so, we humans are so weak compared to other animals. In a one-on-one battle between a man and a wild animal larger than a jackrabbit, the man would almost certainly be the loser. So we could only compete if we fought dirty, a skill at which we excelled. By using weapons, humans became dominant and could begin thinking about becoming civilized. At that time, "civilized" meant sending their spouses out into the fields to search for food while the men sat around the fire, drank fermented beverages, told dumb jokes and laughed so hard that they peed their loin cloths. In this way their brains developed.

Now nature, which allowed our brains to become formidable thinking organs, has no stomach for perfection. Indeed, the human brain has a distinct propensity for including imperfections. It is our lot as humans to have to live with such imperfections. For example, our brains have become extremely adept at forgetting things. At least my brain has. Sometimes, my

wife marvels at my natural ability in practicing this skill. She is not similarly highly developed and, in fact, forgets nothing, much to my eternal embarrassment. In general, my memory is accurate and retentive for a few microseconds, after which all traces of the memory fade forever from my mind until my wife reminds me with an ill-concealed look of mild displeasure. Likewise if I am talking to someone or engaged in any vocal activity, I tend to forget the name of the person to whom I speak, even though I may have known them for decades. The same thing happens with common nouns, even those that I have used with frequency and accuracy all my life. I wonder if other people have the same problem but I always forget to ask. I sometimes think that my brain spends much of its time rehearsing death.

Brains have other imperfections, too. Sometimes they come up with a simple, inane tune, like "Pop Goes the Weasel", that you never really liked and don't really want to listen to but will not let you forget it. Not only will it infest your waking hours but will infect your dreams. This is the brain's idea of entertainment. The brain has a great sense of humor, vastly different from that of the creature that it inhabits. Who knows, maybe this is nature reminding us who is really the boss.

The Way it Was

Jane Hennegar

"I can't relax," said Mrs. Sachs

"Oh, yes you can," said Mrs. Glenn

"Because I've seen how Miles' Nervine

Has brought relief to Mrs. Green!"

This was advertising in the 1940s and 50s. We don't hear about Miles' Nervine any more. Its popularity was no doubt overshadowed by the advent of tranquilizers, but when I was growing up, it apparently brought relief not only to Mrs. Green, but to countless other jittery females.

Remember Spencer Corsets? The ads featured "Before" and "After" photographs; one of a miserable looking lady wearing an inferior "foundation garment," that revealed myriad unsightly bulges. Even her stockings, held up by garters, drooped unappealingly. Alongside was a photo of a lady smiling confidently into the future, gloriously encased in a Spencer! Not a sag or a bulge to be seen. And, at church, when we sang that grand old hymn, "How Firm a Foundation," my thoughts turned not to things of the Spirit but to the lady in the Spencer Corset.

If you were a young mother during that era, chances are you spooned Fletcher's Castoria into your cranky pre-schooler. Fletcher's print ads were always photographic essays with catch phrases such as, "Mommy, please don't let Daddy

spank me again!" Daddy was threatening Bobby with a hairbrush because he refused to swallow an evil-tasting laxative. In the next photograph, Fletcher's came to the rescue, restoring Bobby's sunny disposition and the family's harmony.

Did your mother ever corner you when you had a cold, and, wielding a dropper, squirt something called Argyrol into your nasal passages? It was an ugly brown liquid in an ugly brown bottle, and made you feel as if a bee had found its way into your nose and done its work. Argyrol, I learned years later, was the invention of Dr. Alfred Barnes, better known nowadays as the founder of an impressive art collection displayed in its own venue in Philadelphia. I wasn't surprised when I read that Dr. Barnes had a reputation for being irascible and short-tempered. Only a human devil could have invented Argyrol!

I can't close without mentioning a product called PAZO, a competitor of Preparation H. I believe "Pazo... for Piles" was its straightforward slogan. Not long ago an upscale restaurant opened in downtown Baltimore. Its name – PAZO. I don't believe I'll be having dinner there.

Tapestry Maker

*For The Canterbury Tales
Courtesy Of Geoffrey Chaucer*

*I am a tapestry-maker,
An easy choice for me,
My father and my grandfather
Their skills for all to see.
I have a goal in mind as I work among my peers:
To see a unicorn one day,
As hard-pressed as that appears.
Born in Brussels, key city for our trade,
I've not seen one unicorn,
Though I'd like to know
They dance, cavort, parade.
Therefore, I decide on England,
I've heard that they live there.
I'm sure I'll get to see my treasure
Alone or by the pair.
On board ship – Constantinople!
Too late to go ashore,
I try my hand at gambling
And play for weeks, for months, and more.
Finally, I find my place in London,
A conclave there years old,
Tapestries for kings, for all,
In odd amounts of gold.
I settle on a floral shape, so tiny and so gay,
The light, light blue forget-me-not,
Staid work and stately pay.
So I continue on
But my search is wending down.
I walk the country-side,
I weave the loom-held fabric,
But in my heart I hear a voice,
"Unicorn?"
If I were you,
I wouldn't gamble on it."*

Roberta Wolfe



Papa's Table

Donna Bertling

I never met Papa but I feel I know him. There's a lot to be learned about a man from what he eats, and the meal I had just consumed had been Papa's favorite in one of his regular haunts. It spoke volumes in a single course.

With high expectations, my friends and I made reservations at the restaurant. After all, we'd traveled thirty-seven hundred miles for this dinner that Papa had told us about more than once.

When we arrived at Casa Botin in the heart of Madrid, I entered excited and anxious. I feared disappointment. The four-story restaurant, founded in 1725, boasted Papa's own table for two in a dark corner but, since I traveled with a group, I was unable to sit there. Instead, we were led to the cavernous lower level, hiding several small rooms. Wood beams loomed like an antagonist. Rounded arches and time-worn bricks made the walls look skeletal, like a gnawed carcass. It was obvious that the ambiance had been shaped over centuries by the sharing of ideas, intense conversations, and the bold pronouncements of bohemian society. John Dos Passos, F. Scott Fitzgerald, and Graham Greene had all spoken their minds here by morsel and mouthful.

Casa Botin showed its age like the treasured first edition of a century-old novel.

I didn't need to look at the menu. I wanted Papa's meal, the one he had put into words... "We lunched upstairs at Botin's. It is one of the best restaurants in the world. We had roast suckling pig and drank Rioja Alta."

A round, white plate appeared, overpowered by two masculine cuts of pork so tender and juicy I could have drunk them. Loose pages of crisp skin covered the meat, a reminder that this had once been a live animal. Large, golden potatoes peeked from the edges of the plate like well-chosen adverbs. There were no greens, garnishes or gravies, just straight-talking meat and potatoes. Rioja Alta... a robust, oaky wine, punctuated the feast. I was not disappointed.

It was a hunter's meal, a hearty man's meal.

As I ate, I grew to understand Papa, probably for the first time. I never had a desire to shoot animals. I never found entertainment in the brutality of bullfighting. But I could see why Papa made these themes resound in his writing. He walked a fine line between the hunter and the hunted and portrayed his respect

for both in a manner as simple and honest as this meal. Yet it spoke volumes... about man's hierarchy over other animals, and reaping the rewards of a hard-fought battle, and just "the way things are," to copy Papa's often-used epigraph, when he was a reporter.

As I sipped the wine, I grew to understand Papa's indulgence, because the fruits of his own labor had become so deeply rooted in the

Spanish earth when it drank the sangre of war, and in the gnarls of vine growing in Papa's mind.

Decades have passed since that feast and so has he. But his words remain, sometimes bitter, like the aftertaste of a delicious meal. I've savored many a dinner over the years. But, as Papa Hemingway put it himself... "I would prefer to dine on suckling pig at Botin..."



Cock-a-doodle-doo (watercolor) Al Ulfohn

Blueberry Bliss

Marjorie Chenoweth

Krishna taught me how to eat a blueberry!”

My friend Lakshmi, formerly known as Pauline, greeted me at her front door with that earth-shattering revelation. Pauline – excuse me – Lakshmi had been studying tantra for about four months with Krishna, formerly known as William Grey Eagle, formerly known as Estuary, formerly known as Billy Bob Johnson. I had become accustomed to her flashing enthusiasms in our fifteen years of friendship, so I allowed her to drag me to the dining room, toward a dainty, porcelain berry bowl which held a small pyramid of blueberries.

“Let me show you!”

In her evanescent zeal she didn’t hear me mutter that I already knew how to eat blueberries. She reached down, plucked a single berry, and popped it into her mouth. She stood with a blissful expression on her face, rolling the berry around her mouth. Eventually, she was able to speak again.

“You just let it melt and dissolve, taking in its vital essence. You can just feel the life force being absorbed into your body – into your being!”

Now this was a chilly February morning in Baltimore. If that

blueberry ever had any “vital essence” it had been sapped away long ago. The berry had probably been grown somewhere in South America, picked by a monstrous machine, separated from leaves and stems, blown into a berry box, crated with dozens of other berry boxes, flown to the United States, stored in a warehouse, and finally shipped to a Baltimore supermarket.

I grew up in Northern Indiana, where the sandy soil around Lake Michigan is perfect for growing blueberries. After my father passed away, I would drive back to Indiana to spend my mother’s birthday with her. She and I would celebrate each year by going to a local farm to pick berries. I would fetch the pails from the garage, rinse them out, and load them into the car. At the farm stand, the ladies would weigh them and carefully chalk the weight on the side of the buckets, ignoring the ghost marks from previous years’ excursions. They would always direct us to a row that had been recently picked over by machine. My mother would dutifully head in the appropriate direction, but after a quick sneer at the slim pickings, would head off on her own. I had been raised by that very woman to obey rules, so it was always a momentary shock to watch the moral standard of my childhood flagrantly toss the rules aside.

My mother was a master at picking. I would still be deciding where to start, and she would have her pail a quarter filled. She didn’t waste a lot of time chatting or sampling, she just concentrated on the job at hand. When Lakshmi claimed she knew how to eat a blueberry, I would think about my mother’s total concentration on her task, her ability to live “in the moment.” My mother was clearly a Zen master.

I would use this annual outing to savor the blueberries. This was when I became the blueberry-eating authority that sneered at Lakshmi’s naïve sense of accomplishment. I might start by picking what appeared to be the supreme, ultimate blueberry – the quintessential blueberry – the paragon that all blueberries would aspire to become. I would pop it into my mouth, bite down, and savor the burst of juice. I might take a small handful of blueberries and gaze at the satisfying assortment ranging from the largest, perfect spheres to small, barely ripe berries. I would shovel them into my mouth and relish the blend of sour to cloyingly sweet, the texture from squishy to firm, the totality of blueberriness. I might bury my face in the blueberry bush, inhaling the perfume, enjoying the sun on the back of my neck. Eventually gripping a single berry between my teeth, I would gently pull it from

its stem. It was about this time I would become aware of my mother standing behind me and pouring the contents of her nearly-full pail into mine. Red-faced, I would then return to the task at hand and we would quickly fill our buckets.

One year my visit coincided with the annual Blueberry Daze Festival in a nearby town. We detoured to the town square to savor the local “specialties.” The assortment was astounding. We had our choice of blueberry pancakes with blueberry syrup, blueberry muffins, blueberry bread, blueberry scones, blueberry shortcake, blueberry pie, blueberry Danish, blueberry cookies, blueberry teacake and blueberry fudge. We could select trail mix or granola stuffed with berries. There was freshly-made ice cream which could be eaten plain or made into blueberry milkshakes or sodas. And of course you could buy fresh berries by the pound or dried berries packed for travel. Mom told me that one year a cannery from Indianapolis had set up a booth that offered to can your berries and ship them to you, but I was sure she was joking. How could outsiders compete with the local Methodist Women’s group that offered you a choice of home-canned blueberry preserves, jam, sweet blueberry pickles, relish or salsa? If we wanted, we could have stopped at the Lions Club booth for blueberry barbecued chicken or pork

sandwiches, or simple burgers and hotdogs served with their unique blueberry ketchup. They were all served on blueberry-studded rolls baked just for the occasion by a local woman, Mrs. Barry Wilson. I spotted a small group of men sidling into a tent behind the Lions Club Lair. I asked my mom what that was all about, and she whispered “Blueshine.” Apparently a local farmer had finally perfected a vodka made with the local crop of choice.

Needless to say, everyone was wearing blue jeans. We stopped to look over the official tee shirts available as souvenirs of the great occasion. The local elementary school had a tent set up to display the children’s artwork honoring the king of berries, but after viewing the fourteenth clay ball adorned with blue poster paint, we slipped under the canvas and escaped. We decided to avoid the kiddie blueberry beauty pageant, where the contestants did their best to emulate Violet from *Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory*. We didn’t wish to see an array of little girls wearing blue make-up on their faces and hands and dressed in old pumpkin costumes that had been spray-painted blue for the occasion.

We bought blueberry jam and scones and headed for the car. By now we were temporarily blueberried out,

so we forswore blueberry barbecue in favor of fish and chips at the Kountry Kitchen on our way home. There was not a trace of a blueberry in the tartar sauce.

When we reached my mother’s home, I was kicked out of the kitchen while she set to work. She whipped up a quick crust and had a cobbler in the oven within moments. No birthday cake for her! By three-thirty the family started arriving. Her great-grandchildren were first through the door, still perfumed with chlorine from a nearby water park. Their grandparents trailed behind, dazed by the sun-stupor of a day attempting to corral small children drunk on summer vacation. Last to arrive were my nieces and nephews-in-law, tired after a long day’s work, but looking surprisingly rested compared to their child-beleaguered, baby-sitting parents. They had picked up KFC on the way, but the whole family rushed through the chicken wings and drumsticks. Soon the kids were clamoring for dessert. Mom began dishing out the cobbler while I fetched the ice cream – plain vanilla – and the whipped cream from the refrigerator.

After my mother opened her pile of birthday presents, the children and grandchildren went on their annual lightning bug safari in the

meadow across the street. The mason jars stood ready at the front door. My sisters, mom and I took up our usual places in deck chairs to watch and listen in the gathering dusk, blitzed out on blueberries and birthday memories. After a few minutes I slipped away from my clan and snuck into the kitchen. The last few quarts of berries sat on

the counter, waiting to be sorted for baking, freezing, or nibbling. I pawed through the bowls until I found the largest, bluest berry. I gazed at it a moment, inhaled the sweet, rich odor, and popped into my mouth. I stood and slowly rolled it around my mouth, allowing it to melt and dissolve into pure essence of blueberry.

Recipe for “Gumbo of Trust”

- 1 part S&S (smart & saucy) Mary Jo
- 1 part C&D (creatively determined) Berry
- Stirrings of real words, real trust, feelings they know
- In black & white, with touch of red, to make love peppery

*Cook young ingredients in lifetime saucepan
Mixed with all the rich old stuff of Southern gumbo—
Shrimp and sausage. Okra and sweet onion.
Stock of the sea. Garlic. Thyme. And chopped tomato.*

*Keep stove going through all years—on high, medium, low
So wedded young lovers baste well-done into life’s best friends
And from your oven, your trusting children come to know
That upon giving, never-quitting, the good life depends.*

Berry Reece

Porting in Algeria

Renee Conway

Sitting in the chair of the Captain's suite, within the 936 foot LNG (Liquid Natural Gas) vessel, I gazed cautiously at the Muslim Algerian pilots, military men. They spoke only French, as did, unbeknownst to them, the Captain's wife, Elaine. The business, the bribes, the condescending remarks began as I quietly observed, with fear and curiosity. This is how the transactions unfold at sea. These men were not pirates but certainly wished to make the exchange of LNG to their port more complicated than need be.

The highest ranked man was expelling derogatory remarks about the two women in the room. In their country, a woman has no power and is a second-class citizen. The poverty is far beyond our imagination as are their attitudes about a woman's place. As the remarks unfolded, I observed Elaine's facial expressions, turning, twisting into anger, offense being taken at their remarks. They still did not realize she was French. She began to serve them coffee, but gazed sourly upon their faces. The situation for me as a passive observer began to unfold. I began to engage an Algerian man who was the agent, a go-between, into conversation. He was speaking English, and to some degree seemed very different from the rest of the men. When I asked how he learned

his English, he replied, "I listened to Neil Diamond tapes." This was the year 1996, and there were no CD's available and certainly not in Algeria. I continued to engage with this man until the ship's business was completed. Somehow, Elaine managed to keep her temper in check until they all departed from the room. When they left, she burst out with rage telling me how derogatory their remarks had been and stated a few French cuss words. She was relieved these awful men had taken their arrogance and bile and departed the ship. She only secretly wished to give them a push over the side, into the deep waters.

Life in a country like Algeria is so unlike the life of Americans. We live in so much abundance and have many rights and freedoms which these folks do not enjoy, especially their women. There has been and was then, much violence taking place in the smaller villages. Unspeakable acts which one cannot imagine. The main pilot, who brought the ship to port, spoke to me on the bridge, telling me of his house, with bars on all the windows, for safety. He stated he was up every few hours during the night, checking for unusual sounds, trying to protect his family. His four children had only one pair of shoes and supplies were low on all necessities. Whether he was

exaggerating or not, I proceeded to collect all the belongings, plus soaps, coca colas, and any other thing I could spare and place them into a plastic bag to give to his family. Their needs were so obviously more than any of mine. This act brought a smile to his face as he left the bridge of the ship.

I will never forget the experiences and perspectives of life manifested in me from the trip into Algeria. Since this time I have come to view the gifts of life in a whole new light, to treasure the simplicities of hot running water, feeling safe in my bed at night, having rights as a woman and choices which other women do not. There is also a certain disdain in me for greediness, wasted wealth, the materialism of some people. We live like Kings and Queens in comparison to the Algerian culture and compared to many other cultures. I am grateful to be born and live in America.

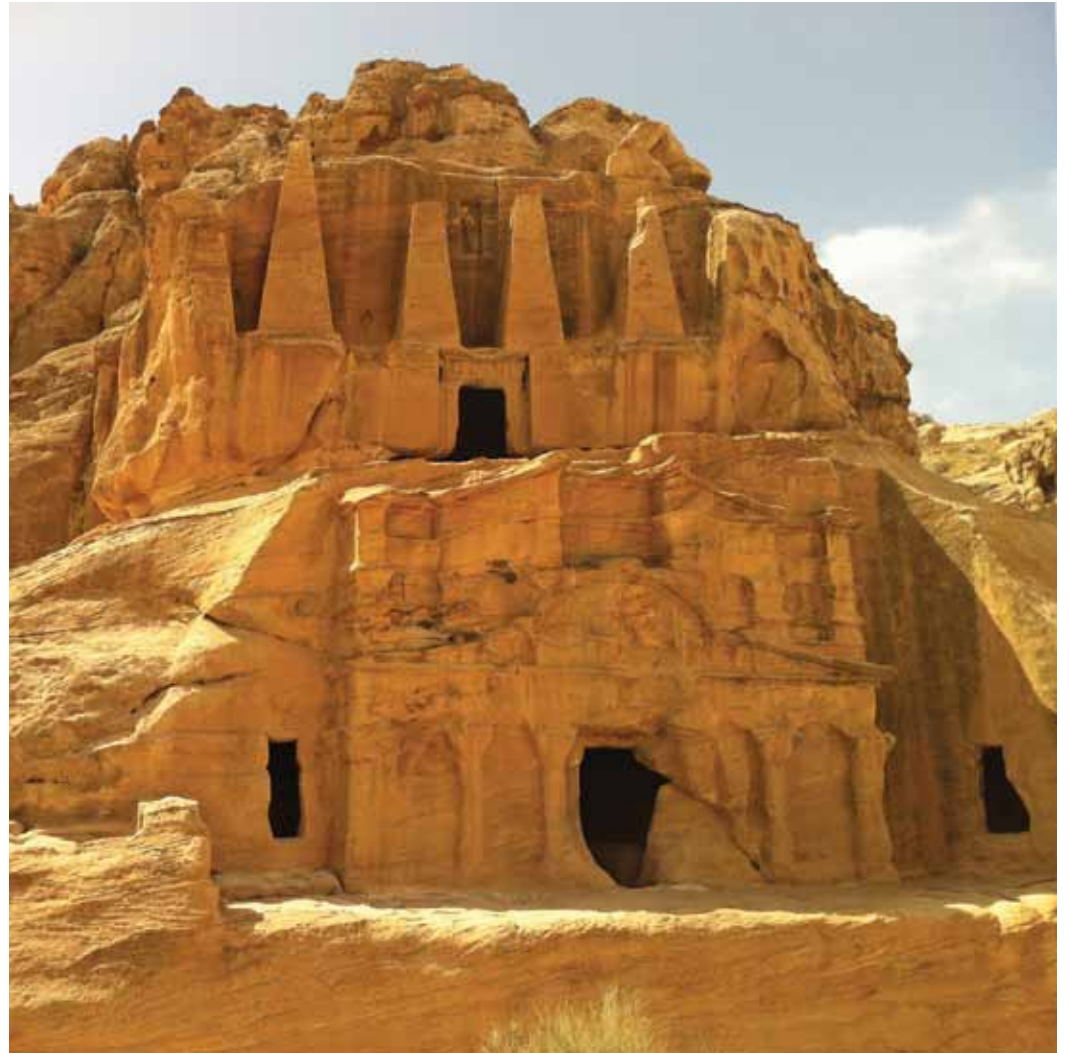
On the Edge

*You sit there on
the edge
soft and moist.
Your skin darkens
yellows into reds
foretelling a touch of brown
dimpling
almost dipping into
early wrinkles so that when
it pulls from your meat
juice oozes
sweet
wet
bountiful
drenching my tongue
dripping from my lips and chin.
You, my perfect peach,
sit there at
your ripest
a day or two from
decay.
But today you are
most luscious
most succulent
waiting there on the
edge.*

Kathryn Pettus



Autumn (watercolor) Steve Knipp



Petra - Jordan (photo) Mary Grossman

Stone Mask - Tuscany (Photo) William Miller

An Episode at the Mall

Edith Davis

Getting to the mall is a real problem for me these days without a car. Sometimes my son Bill takes me and drops me off, when his work allows it—but he is a busy person and can't always do that. So, one day I decided to call a cab and planned to return home in a cab (which is not the most pleasant experience).

I had a good time shopping, and in the later afternoon, I called for the cab. Then I waited outside the back of the shopping center – and waited and waited and waited.

The security man came by, stopped his van, stared, and then spoke to me: “Is something wrong, lady?”

I replied, “No, I am waiting for a cab.”

He said, “You’re supposed to get a cab in the front of the building.”

I replied, “but I didn’t know that.”

He digested that, then went into the parking area, sat, looked at me some more, then drove away. In a few minutes, he was back again.

In the meantime, a man was hanging around and finally felt obliged to tell me he was waiting for his wife, who was in the mall shopping. When she came out, he

made a point of introducing her to me.

I called the cab company again, to see if a driver was on his way. I couldn’t hear the reply, so I hung up.

I went inside the mall and called Bill. He said he could come but it would take him about 20 minutes to get there. He suggested I sit in the mall until it was time for him to arrive.

When I went back outside, a lady came out, walked over to me, and this conversation ensued:

“Are you okay, ma’am?”

“Yes, I’m waiting for my son to pick me up.”

“Do you mind if I stand with you until he gets here?”

“No, but I’m sure I don’t need help.”

“Why don’t we hold hands and have a prayer together?”

“Okay, but my son will be here soon.”

We held hands, and she began a long, endless prayer. I knew Bill would be there momentarily, so I kept half an eye open for him.

She went on and on. I didn’t feel right to spoil her prayer, but sneakily kept one eye open, waiting for Bill.

Bill pulled up, got out of the van, and then reverently stood at the curb, waiting for the prayer to end. I finally interrupted the lady (politely

as I could) and told her that my son had arrived. She left hurriedly.

This whole event remained in my head for quite a while and became funnier each time I told about it. I would sit up in bed in the middle of the night and start laughing.

Kids vs. Plants

Plants don't get you up in the middle of the night.

Plants don't talk back.

Plants, for the most part, stay where they are put.

Plants don't drive, go out on dates or apply to colleges.

It is easier when you go away to get care coverage for plants.

Both kids and plants come in different sizes, colors and shapes.

Both kids and plants flourish with love and nourishment.

Both kids and plants require protection.

Both kids and plants tend to increase in size.

Just when you think they have left, they show back up again.

Kids give wonderful hugs.

Kids can bring sunshine into a day with just a smile or a giggle

Kids, at the most unexpected moments, show they have been listening.

Kids, if you are lucky, give you grandchildren.

Just when you think you can't go on, they say, "I love you."

Plants may tug less hard on your heartstrings, but they are replaceable.

Kids aren't.

Ginny Ryan



The Highwayman's Tale

Mary Loafmann

Homage à Geoffrey Chaucer

Now it is my turn to convey to you the tale of my life. I'll tell you of my youth and the twists and turns that brought me to this journey. Pray remember I am no story teller and 'twas you that asked me to speak. So 'tis you that must forgive my tongue's ignorance and the words that are mis-spoken. Thus do I embark on the story of my life's adventure with humility but little approbation.

In the spring, when leaves do first burst forth, when the birds do call upon their mates for the gathering of twigs and twine, when the sheep bleat in the meadows and all the vale is full of sounds from barn to hollow, then also do the dreams of youths, both lads and lasses turn from seeds and plows to love and lust.

And so it was with me that spring. All the winter had I lived with joy so nonexistent and light so noninvasive, that spring did seem a wondrous thing and I did see myself a gay adventurer.

Yet something was amiss. For though my heart was filled with zeal, my hands were not so readily employed. My hands became the object of my family's scoffing, they would not grasp the tools as they were intended. My eyes should

focus on the ground and work, but more oft were seen in search of clouds or any other omen sent from Heaven foretelling of some pleasure.

Thus did those early spring days pass with me in rapture and my family in states of agitation and exhaustion. But then when my mind, and body, reached the zenith of dissatisfaction did fate step in with remedy most marvelous. I did believe that Cupid had flung my dreams to the ends of the earth, but suddenly these dreams did appear most possible. And I...I burned with a flame unlike any other lover.

For at my gate a stranger stood, a shadow to be welcomed surely. For while I wasted the day in dreams and rapture, untired by meager labors, my father, who had grown weary of hearing my despair, had gone to town to save us both. Oh what a father, the best in all of earth and heaven, he had such insight and saw my misery and was about to end it. To town he had hither gone and fetched a person of remarkable beauty and merit. 'Twas surely his intention that this person I should woo and wed.

But now, dear pilgrims, my story grows sad. Next did I discover that my dear father, whom I had known for all my life, must have suffered always from an unknown malady.

As I gazed at the person at the gate, I now beheld my father must be blind.

The figure at the gate, the potential conqueror of my heart, was not a winsome, lithe youth, but gray and old beyond belief, beyond a person's pleasure. Now how may I describe this person at the gate? The hair was neither blonde nor black, but gray and frazzled. It had no part or shape, but went in any way, it withered. The body had not shape or form, but looked oddly like a species not formed by human invention.

As I beheld this vision, no words could I form, but stood and moaned in little sounds that called not Father's attention. How could my Father not have seen a face so filled with lines and warts? Did my father notice not the eyes not blue or brown, but seemingly to lack any coloration? And as for wit, those eyes did hold a blankness that made it sure as night, no thought had passed on through that head no thoughts of contemplation. The best a mate of this soul could hope, was that no words would pass from out that mouth and bore one to distraction.

Yet with all these faults so obvious, my father stood so filled with self-satisfaction that even the greatest fool could see he thought this the

best of catches ever made, proud that he had accomplished this with very little deception and hardly any exaggerated pretensions.

My words, so filled with protestation, went unheard. My objections were quickly uncoupled from his thinking, words that floundered in his sea of pride and misapprehensions. All my shouts were as whimpers, for I was quite beyond redemption. My wants went unheeded and soon I fell mute in desperation.

Action on my part was needed, but what could I do? Escape this fate, I must and soon. I could not willingly join in matrimony to a person who was not of heaven's invention or I'd be doomed to life all filled with ugliness and mad cohabitation.

It was then a vision came to me. I saw a life of freedom and adventure. The cost mattered little, for now I was filled with hope, replacing consternation. To flee was easy for little did I own. To the open road I flew with never another thought and so before the sun had set many miles had I passed, miles between me and that figure at the gate, my intended relation.

So started my life's adventure, misdirection or blind ambition, I leave it to you to decide. All this

is preamble to my reasons for this journey to St. Thomas Becket's bones. Now comes the reason for my seeking of salvation. My life has been more good than bad, for me at least. I have slept and eaten well most nights. My comfort has been ever near and I have laughed and sung with many a man. Most of my companions have been travelers like yourselves. With them have I walked a while and enjoyed our time. They enjoyed me too, though oft surprised to find their purses lighter e'er we parted.

Many a reaction have I encountered at the parting, some were mild, others chose words of God not usually used in churches. I feel no guilt concerning those whose money came from ways no less questionable than my own. For the few whom I had relieved of savings, who could not spare a farthing, I sometimes feel some guilt. In those instances I keep a flask by my side which quickly helps me overcome the nagging that guilt doth provide. I feel content, not condescension.

But now I feel the time is right to seek some dispensation, lest the dealings of my trade should lead to excommunication. I doubt that I shall change my ways, they bring too much satisfaction. But 'tis always well to look like one is working toward expiation.

Am I sorry for this life, you ask. I have not seen my family for many years, for all I know that person still stands at the gate in expectation. I have traded family love for an open road and wild adventure. Is that a cost too high? I leave that for your contemplation.

But this I will admit, when nights are long and roads are rough, I sometimes dream that I am home and Mother has made for me a new dress of yellow and blue, that I would love to dance beneath the trees with a lad who kisses me so true.

But as you see that is surely not to be.

For My Renaissance Muse, Margaret

*The moon rises over the lea
bringing inspirations to me,
as you did too all these years:
led me away from silly fears
pulled me from my shell
to pluck poems from the well
of long stored signs and visions
buried deep inside my self derision
called me forth to form into lines
ever so many precarious rhymes.
The moon still rises ever on time
though you have left this earthly climb
alone now I conjure your smiling face
while longing for your heartening grace.*

Sharon Wharton

Teacher

*I have sat by this window many other springs
seeking in the white blossoms, suddenly greened
trees, and smiling sky, inspiration
for yet another poem of inevitable praise*

*Today I attend a memorial for my friend and mentor,
a poet who gazed thoughtfully at so many spring
miracles, so many seasonal reasons to write*

*Are you enough sated with dogwoods and daffodils,
Margaret, to travel eternity and never be emptied?*

Susan Marshall

*These two poems are dedicated
to Margaret Doyle, poet
and long-time coordinator
of the RI poetry workshop.*



Now Hear This

MaryLu McNeal

It was the second visit to audiology at Greater Baltimore Medical Center. After a long wait and a chance to observe three young children and their ever-so-patient mother. I was ushered into the office by the audiologist. She seemed even more attractive than I recalled, more like the typical drug salesperson one encounters in doctors' offices than a doctor – blonde, slim, dressed in a well-tailored black suit, pretty enough to be a model. She exuded an air of competence and restrained concern. Once seated in the inner office. I was presented with the set of hearing aids. What followed was a lengthy explanation of the inner workings of these miniature microphones and the colorless tubes that would extend from them with plugs into my ears. This marvel of technology would greatly improve my hearing. Into an attractive white paper bag with fabric handles (looking more like a gift from Nordstrom's than a medical device) went a booklet of instructions and a tiny brush to remove dust particles from the little plugs (only as needed, of course).

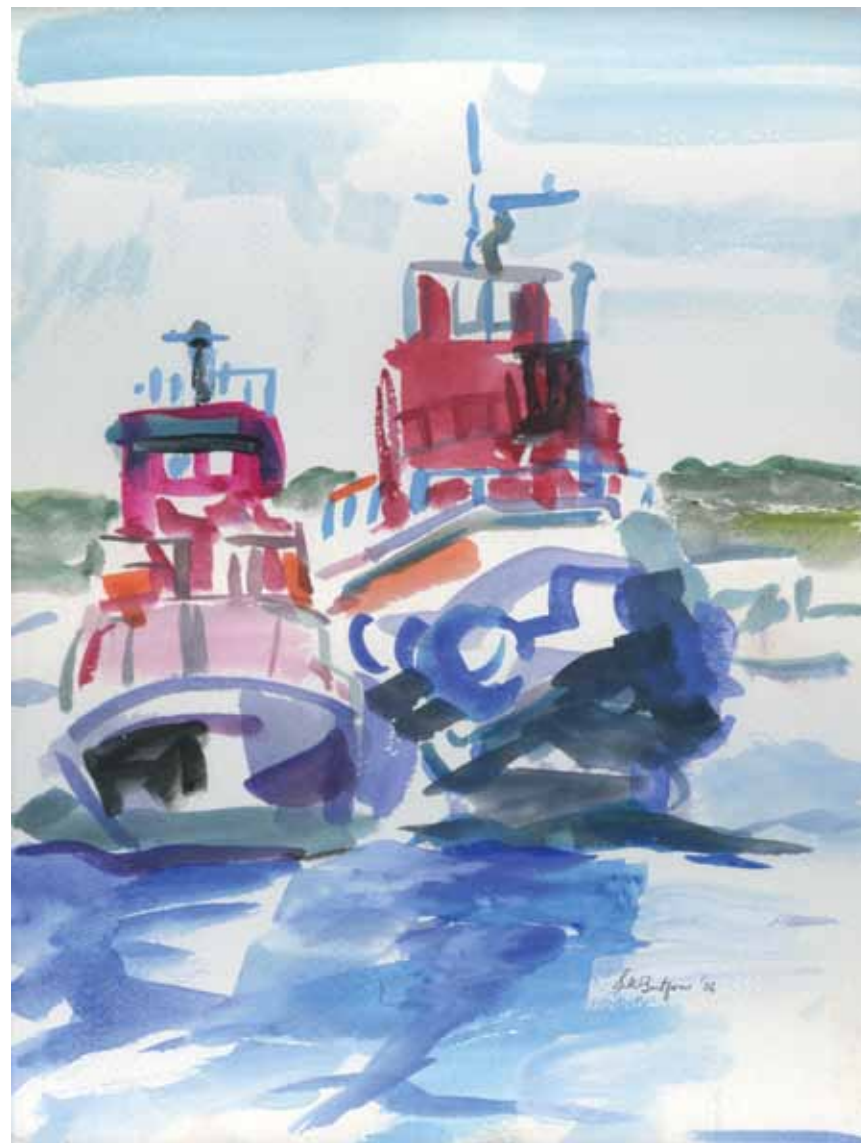
The period of time allotted to the attachment of the hearing aids, an explanation of their function and the bestowal of the white bag was interspersed with pleasant conversation and left me feeling satisfied and somewhat proud that I had taken this important step

in self-care. I felt that I was being well-handled by an expert in the field. Of course this was followed by the presentation of the bill and my presentation of my credit card. (Medicare covered only the testing procedure.)

Well, the time of departure having arrived, I was so aware of the fact that one of my five senses would be operating closer to normal that a tune began to reverberate in my head. I was reminded of other steps that I had taken recently: improving sight by a cataract operation, improving dental ability by two implants, and improving walking comfort by a visit to a podiatrist. The urge to sing aloud a camp song from bygone days was irresistible. Assuming this up-to-date audiologist (did I say psychologist?) would see the humor of it all, I began to sing to the tune of "After The Ball Was Over":

*After the ball was over
Katie took out her glass eye
Put her false teeth in water
Hung up her hair to dry.
Put her wooden leg in the corner
Da ta da tad a ta
After the ball was over
There wasn't much left of Katie
At all.*

A friend asked, "Did she (the audiologist) appreciate it?" I answered, "She was totally nonplussed."



Tugboats (watercolor) Sandy Butzow

Old Time Radio

Ted Kasckow

An announcer with a tanned complexion, sporting a thin black moustache and a shock of wavy black hair, stepped up to a microphone on a stand. Dressed in a double-breasted black tuxedo with satin lapels, he waited as the orchestra, assembled on the stage behind him, played their theme song. Four cup-muted trombones grouped in front of a second microphone were playing "Smoke Rings" very softly, while the orchestra accompanied in whispered sounds. A tall broad shouldered leader in a white tuxedo directed the ensemble with a long, slim conductor's baton.

The announcer's deep musical voice resonated as he intoned from a prepared script, "The Chesterfield Cigarette Show with Glen Gray and the Casa Loma & Orchestra." The conductor's beat widened as the brass swelled into a magnificent concluding fanfare. The lights on stage changed from a subdued blue to a warm white and the theater lights dimmed into semi-darkness.

A stage director prompted the jubilant audience to applaud, moving his hands up above his head while his fingers motioned, "More." The audience responded and the invisible audience somewhere out in radioland were cheered by the

sounds of applause coming from this marvelous new medium – radio. The first announcer with the deep voice was replaced by another announcer with a higher voice to announce, "The Chesterfield Cigarette company is proud to be in the forefront of America's smoking habits. For a smooth smoke try the new Chesterfield Long – at the same price – an added pleasure to your smoking. And now ... here's Glen and the band, with their latest hit recorded by Decca, 'No Name Jive'."

The three young spectators sitting in Row AA seats 02-04-06 had traveled a long distance to hear this show. Ninety minutes ago they were crossing the George Washington Bridge. Larry was the lucky one who received the three tickets for the show from George Shaffer, a cigarette salesman. Bill and Ted were contacted immediately and it didn't take long for them to be barreling down the 9W in Larry's car.

They got to the Empire Theater where the Chesterfield broadcasts were produced. Larry spotted Jack Pearson ushering in the last few people in line. Jack was an employee of CBS radio, and Larry's high school buddy. Upon recognizing Larry, he managed to squeeze the three of them in just before the

doors were closed. It was Jack who led the three of them to the choice seats in Row AA.

After "No Name Jive," the announcer with the higher pitched voice read a commercial about the superiority of Chesterfield cigarettes compared with other brands. When this was completed, the band was cued by Glen into the introduction of "Deep Purple." Kenny Sargent, Glen's vocalist stepped up to another microphone and crooned "When the deep purple falls over sleepy garden walls..." The next number brought the jazz trumpeter Sonny Dunham to the front of the stage where he played Eubie Blake's great hit "Memories of You." He finished the song with a brilliant high F above high C that had the audience applauding enthusiastically.

The program ended on the half hour with the Casa Loma playing their theme "Smoke Rings." Filing out of the ornate theater, each person received a mini-packet of six Chesterfield cigarettes handed to them by smiling usherettes.

The three friends met with Jack after the show. To their surprise, Jack gave them three passes for another show in April. "Next time," he said, when the boys insisted that he join them for a sandwich and a cup of coffee.

Saying their goodbyes, the three headed for the Times Square subway station. High above they spotted the Chesterfield sign blowing smoke rings over the "Great White Way." The theme reverberated endlessly in their heads as they retraced their steps back home. They wondered aloud if they could get tickets for the Lucky Strike show starring Larry Clinton and his orchestra. They decided to work on it. Ted laughed, "But that was NBC, hey – let's get jobs as ushers!" For a few moments after, the car rocked with laughter, as they sped up 9W to return home.



Doris

JoAnn Burke

Before she opened the door to Benter the familiar café, she peered through the glass to look for the face of her friend. Relief seemed to cross over to her when she spotted the waving hand motioning her inside.

Their twenty-year friendship encompassed many of the usual activities working women fit into their busy schedules as their children became independent and started moving from home-movies, theater, concerts, dinners, shopping adventures...

Occasionally, they, along with their mutual friends, travelled together on short vacations, mostly in the US or on an irresistible island cruise. Once, taking advantage of an off season reduced rate trip, they ventured to Mexico during hurricane season and experienced the first destructive hurricane to hit Puerto Vallarta in one hundred years. Blocks of the streets downtown had to be closed as buildings cracked and tumbled to the ground, debris strewn everywhere. Fortunately, their hotel was located miles away and suffered mostly beach damage, uprooted palm trees, sand either washed back into the Pacific or blown into tall mounds surrounding the ground level of the hotel. Their week was nearly over, but they still had time to visit villages in the almost

untouched area beyond the city. Thoughts of returning home with a memorable tale to share with their families took some of the sting out of their situation. It had been a vacation like no other.

Over the years, the group had also celebrated their families' keepsake moments as their collective nine children married. Laughter and high-pitched excitement dominated their children's engagement parties and bridal showers. Weddings, after massive planning and bursting expense accounts, were Cinderella-inspired fantasies sprinkled with a few salty drops of human tears that couldn't be kept hidden under emotional tugs of parental loss. And then the baby showers began. One by one they experienced the fears and joys of birth and grandparenting. They didn't miss much.

When she entered the café, the two friends hugged and were led to a table and seated. They spoke briefly about the weather that was much too cold and windy that day. They looked forward to April when two of their friends would return from Florida.

Sarah asked her if she knew what she wanted to order for lunch so they would be ready when the server came over to their table. Doris

smiled but hesitated. Sarah asked if she would like the sandwich she usually ordered.

Doris nodded yes; she loved that sandwich.

"That's the chicken salad sandwich on flax seed bread," Sarah reminded her. "And do you want your usual ice tea?"

"Yes. This is my favorite restaurant. I just love their food. I wish I could come here everyday. Everybody is so nice here."

The server took their orders and brought the beverages to the table. Sarah noticed Doris' beautifully manicured nails. Perfectly groomed nails were an essential part of Doris' identity. Her hair, some combination of black and white clothing, and perfect nails...that was timeless Doris. Sarah observed, however, that Doris had chosen a plum shade that week, not her usual red. Perhaps they could small talk about that.

Her daughter had driven her to the café as she had been doing since Doris' son made the devastating, and, to Doris, unforgivable decision that it wasn't safe for Doris to drive anymore. Though she felt angry and victimized, she also felt isolated enough that she reluctantly moved

into her daughter's home where her daughter could more conveniently look after her and provide transportation.

When they were nearly finished eating, Sarah called Doris' daughter to let her know Doris was ready to be taken home. As usual, Doris had ordered her favorite chocolate bar to take with her when she left the café. She realized it would be a while until she returned.

As Doris climbed into her daughter's car, Sarah gave Doris a hug, and suggested they go shopping next week to look for something new to wear. It would be spring and black and white fashions were already displayed in all her favorite shops.



Heart Lake at Sunset (photo) Virginia Lipscomb



Santa Monica Pier at Dusk (photo) Carole Kennedy

You Are Beautiful

Nancy Martel

Mayor Bloomberg of New York has launched a campaign to boost the image of adolescent girls, according to the New York Times. The NYC Girls Project is sponsoring bus and subway ads as well as videos in taxis, which celebrate young girls in all their myriad forms – tall, short, round, but not too thin. The posters present photos of real New York girls of all races, the daughters of city workers – playing sports, running, laughing, and proclaiming, “I’m beautiful the way I am.”

New York, the epicenter of style, has thrust upon the world impossibly thin models for adolescents to emulate. Hollywood reinforced this unrealistic view of the ideal female body. Young teens are surrounded in film and magazines with emaciated models and stars. Little girls play with Barbie dolls with impossibly perfect figures. While shopping, I noticed padded bras for first graders. Is there a connection?

Feminism claims to have freed women from the restrictions of early times. Women are no longer limited to teaching and nursing. They are judges, doctors, lawyers, and CEO’s. They scoff at pictures from the 18th and 19th century – Scarlett O’Hara corsets and busks carved from whalebone to create wasp waists. Voluminous skirts impeded women’s ability to run or even get through a doorway. Bustles, hoops and girdles are all things of the

past. Imagine trying to run in a hoop skirt!

Yet many believe that feminism has failed because modern society has invented more torture for the female body. Magazines advertise cosmetic surgery – face lifts, tummy tucks, liposuction, Botox, bust reduction or augmentation. Gyms with treadmills, weights, stationary bikes offer a modern form of misery. Corsets and girdles have been replaced by Spanx. Women force their feet into impossibly high heels with pointed toes. They bleach their hair, curl it under hot driers, or pull it painfully through hair straighteners. Hot rollers scorch their scalps. Ears and sometimes noses are pierced with sharp needles.

Why is Mayor Bloomberg so interested in the self-esteem of young girls? He knows that the pressures of achieving a perfect body at a young age lead to bullying and eating disorders, such as bulimia and anorexia. Polls show that 80% of 10-year-olds worry about getting fat. I think it is fair to say that most parents do not want their young daughters to be concerned about body image.

“I’m a girl. I’m funny, playful, daring, strong, curious, smart, brave, healthy, friendly and caring.” One smiling 12-year-old announced in a bus poster. “I’m beautiful the way I am.”

Leisure, Urban Style

*What is this life, full of urban care
If we just have time to dream and stare*

*At memories from a bucolic past
That maybe was—and certainly didn’t last.*

*Let’s stare at strong kids on scooters and bikes
Knapsacks with books and tweeters and mikes.*

*Enjoy our steel needles like Jack’s beanstalk towers
Piercing the heavens to brighten up clouded hours.*

*Theaters that show us our lives in a mirror
The good the bad the loving the horror.*

*Let’s welcome green parks to recall past days rustic
And women’s lib to teach what’s currently domestic.*

*Sure, life is poor when there’s nothing but care.
But let’s not go back—let’s stand right here and stare.*

Isaac Rebert



The Tutors

Betty Scott

Sergeant-Major had come to their stable at the Pengo Club. Neither Beth nor Marie had met him. He had a reputation for strictness. A man of the book, not the Bible, but Army regulations. Both girls were twenty-one year old code-clerks at the American Legation, Budapest. They were posted after their June, 1945, graduations. Hungary was occupied by Russian, British, French and American military. Three sergeants, Frank, John, and Jimmy were their hosts at the Enlisted Men's Club that night.

Sergeant-Major stiffly introduced himself to them, and asked Marie and the three men to excuse "Miss Beth". He asked her to join him, because he had a request to make. Beth was surprised, but accepted. They went over to his usual table.

"I have taken a Hungarian family under my protection. The family is a young couple, Marie-Ange, her husband Pauli, their three young children, and her parents. Marie-Ange is having her 28th Saints' Day. I asked her what gift she wanted. She wants you to visit her, in her family's apartment. She's never been in my apartment. She tutors me in hers."

"I don't remember ever meeting her. Have you any idea why she wants to talk to me?"

"Marie-Ange's family has always been close to your painting teacher, Foeldes Peter. Both his parents specialized in tuberculosis. The Nazis requisitioned their skills, rather than deport them."

"Peter told us it was why he'd been placed in a concentration camp near Budapest. They were allowed to bring him warm clothing, painting supplies and food. He's not just a gifted painter, but an excellent teacher."

"Yes. Well he has told both families about his afternoons in Buda at your Taragota Utca home."

"I've met Peter's parents. His mother described our Saturday afternoons as a 'salon.' Of course, it's hardly that, but each of us has something to contribute and none of us is the least bit bashful."

"What do you and Marie offer in these conversations?"

"Marie is our 'brain.' Her passions are economics and political science. I'm our generalist. I know a little bit about some things. Along with Peter's contribution, those afternoons are enormous fun. In fact, three of your sergeants and Peter the painter, are the foundation of our group. Frank Tyler's strength is history, a great help in sorting out

Balkan wars. John Grossman's our poet. He introduced us to analyzing poetry, including his own poems. Jimmy Pugh's our musician. He started studying when he was four. We have a decent piano. Peter takes us to galleries and museums. I've just learned to comprehend Cubism, thanks to him."

"Let me get to my request from Marie-Ange. She is not my mistress. She's my tutor. A lawyer from the Allied Control Commission drew up a contract, signed by her entire family. She has never appeared with me in public, nor visited my apartment. I protect her reputation, as I would my own sister's. You need to know my childhood circumstances to begin to appreciate what her family has given me. I left school in the third grade. My parents died in a truck crash, and I chose to raise my siblings. I didn't do too good a job. It just was the best I knew."

"How many children were there?"

"We were six. I took responsibility for them. We were very strictly reared, and even the babies had chores. They folded and matched socks by color and size. My parents had trained all of us to do our share of the farm chores. We never had much money, but I remember how loved we all felt."

"How old were you when they died?"

"Almost ten, but tall for my age. The county social workers gave me two months to prove we could manage. All the kids cooperated, and we passed that hurdle and every other later one. I had always been a feisty kid, and my parents were my heroes. We had no family, except each other. Ten years later they're all in public schools. My sister's nineteen, a perfect gem. Without telling me, she worried about my ever getting a decent job, with no schooling. She offered to take over my role, and suggested that I join the army. By then our family was a great team. I leapt at the chance. She wrote often, and so did the rest. I got more letters than any man in my unit. I went right up in the ranks. I needed the pay to support them. Everyone of them is going to go to high school. Imagine my sister taking over my job and still keeping up in school. I've just sent her the first semester tuition, for junior college."

Beth was sympathetic and congratulated his record. He interrupted her,

"I'm not bragging. Well okay, I guess I am. But my parents showed me how to do it. They worked so hard. My sister and I managed."



Miss Beth, nobody has any idea of my background. I chose to lie about never finishing grammar school. My only regret is that in raising my family, I failed them. I never bought books, or even showed them the pleasure of reading. In the Army, now my gifts to them have always been books. They write their reactions to the stories. But I've failed them by not setting an example. I've taken every course the Army offered. I will be the very first to sign-up for the G.I. bill."

"What a background! You've been a parent, while still a child."

"That's why I need your help. Some day I dream of having my own family, but I want to be a better father than I was to them. The best practical information I've gotten is through watching Marie-Ange handling her three children. And the men have shown me how to behave as a father. The Foeldes family described Peter's American friends. Marie-Ange parents have known the Doctors Foeldes, since before Peter was born. When Marie heard that two of the girls at the Legation had what she described as a mini-salon, she wanted to meet you."

"Where did you two meet?"

I was walking down Vaci Utsa and saw a young mother with two children. I could tell from the way they listened to her, and more importantly she to them, that I needed that parenting skill. You probably don't know Sgt. Bilar..."

"But I do! He's the one who gets us tickets to operas, symphonies, chamber music, and ballets. For three evenings, at the University, he translated the lectures on Marxist Aesthetics. We had to stop going, because he's incapable of whispering quietly. We were disturbing the students. What a generous man!"

"I described exactly what I needed to learn from that family. He found her. I wanted several hours a day or evening, watching her with her kids. I wasn't looking for a companion, but a model for parenting."

"Did Sgt. Bilar respond with that wonderful loud laugh of his?"

"Of course. However, he did arrange everything. Bilar said that if she was teaching me, she needed a formal contract. He and I went to her apartment, met her family. I suggested sending them fuel, food and the offer of security from marauding Russian rapists. That very evening we posted the

American flag and the notices warning anyone from trespassing that protected apartment."

The following Saturday Sgt. Bilar took Beth to Marie-Ange's apartment. Every inch a beautiful, gentlewoman, she was wearing a pearl-grey cardigan set, with a muted plaid tweed skirt, and a single strand of pearls. She lead the way into the salon, where her mother held her year-old baby. Her father walked in with the four and five-year-olds. When introduced, Beth received a curtsy and a bow from them.

As Marie-Ange poured tea, her mother asked. "Did you find Master Sergeant's request bizarre?"

"Sergeant-Major's life-story is so heart-warming. His contract so thoughtful and protective of you, Marie-Ange. I wanted to meet all of you."

Marie-Ange's husband and father came in to inquire, "Did he tell you about questions for himself." Father handed Beth a typed list:

HOW TO

- 1)Handle the silverware around my plate.
- 2)Seat a lady at table.

3)When not to wear a tie. Is an Ascot a possibility?

4)Who gets introduced first? Depending on rank?

5) How to talk to an older lady.

6) How to select civilian clothing.

The two men quietly showed him, by their example and with explanations.

Marie-Ange's only request was to ask Beth to try to tell him what a comfort his contract and presence had been to them.

Seriously, she added, "He gave us the necessities of life, heat, food and protection, without offering us money. That is the most graceful gift he could possibly have given us. He made our family feel that we had something to offer him, in return."



Dishes With the DJ

Janet Neer

The ceremonial clearing of the table and rhythmic scraping of dishes set the stage for a nightly production in our knotty pine kitchen. My brother Tom, age 12, and I, age 14, were the lead performers. Tom preferred the role of dishwasher; and I, dish dryer, thus we averted our usual sibling squabbles over shared tasks. Mom and Dad exited stage left to the living room to read the St. Louis Post-Dispatch, while eight-year-old Kathy paged through a book within earshot of the activity.

dance to *Rock Around the Clock*, while Tom rolled his eyes in disgust, and flicked soapy water our way. From the living room Mom would occasionally chime in to *Stranger in Paradise* or other romantic ballads. “And now, Tennessee Ernie Ford singing *Sixteen Tons*” or “Frankie Laine with *Cool Water*” would be Tom’s cue to tame the soapsuds and return to script. Strolling on stage, Dad would be singing along to these tunes and reviewing the scene.

With the grand finale of water loudly gurgling down the drain, Mom would make her entrance to critique the condition of the kitchen. Once she had checked that all props had been returned to drawers and cabinets, she expressed approval or offered suggestions for future performances. By then the DJ had spun the long-awaited NUMBER ONE, and the program had come to THE END.

Program note: Our automatic dishwasher recently died, necessitating a period of manual dishwashing. When my hands plunged into the sudsy water, these memories bubbled up!

The glass I was drying would become a microphone for my swooning along with the Four Aces to *Love is a Many-Splendored Thing*. Kathy would join in to

A Therapist's Coming of Age

*I used to write poems, sort of,
about people who suffered
in matters of the brain
and of the people, including me,
who tried to help them
to reclaim, repair or
(not so) simply sustain their lives
outside an institution*

*Now I work at plumping up
my own brain,
exercising,
taking new kinds of information
into these labyrinthine folds
figuring out the puzzles
of my life
nurturing old friendships
while delighting in new*

*Bridging delays
in what used to be
quick thinking
with humor
and learning
and relearning
humility*

Valerie Watkins Kolosek

I Remember Daddy

Dorothy Levinson

I really can't remember ages one, two, three, four, but I do remember age five – in all its glory. I remember it vividly – in 3-D – in Technicolor – a moving picture on the big screen with loud, loud sound effects.

My uncle and my father left our home and went off to war – WAR-RAW, leaving only the women and my blind grandfather behind. The men were going to save America and liberate the world and make it a safe place to live and grow up.

I really don't remember my father leaving. It seemed he was just "away", but when my 18-year-old uncle left, my grandmother, a.k.a. Mom, fainted at the front porch door, and my mother and I, with great difficulty, pulled her to the living room sofa. The three of us cried.

I remember evenings sitting around the breakfast room table, listening to the radio news show. I remember the adults looking into each other's eyes with fear and then telling the children everything was A-OK. I remember my Sunday Sailor Suit, my "official" uniform. My Daddy said that I was a First Lieutenant and if I was a very good little girl, listened to my mother and teachers, I would be promoted to a Lieutenant Commander.

I remember Via Air Mail letters addressed to me – addressed just to me about how much he loved me and that he would come home soon. The envelopes were hand-stamped and initialed "passed by Naval Censor." I remember scrap metal drives, flag-raising drives, U. S bond drives, Victory Book Collection drives by the American Library Association to send good used books to the armed forces overseas.

I remember ration stamps, saving aluminum foil, Oleo margarine, air-raid drills, the U. S. O., the two blue stars in our window. I remember the term "Japanazes" and giving rides to hitchhiking servicemen and driving them wherever they wanted to go. I remember the Clean Plate Club and my Gold Star Chart that my mother tacked to the wall and all her stories about the poor starving children in war-torn Europe.

I remember making and coloring greeting cards and drawing pretty pictures and mailing them along with my Gold Star Charts to my uncle and my daddy. But most of all, I remember my Daddy –

*Photographer's Mate, First Class
Harry Levin
U.S.N*



Bird and Buoy (photo) Jim Butzow

My Treasure

Bill Bennett

My Standard Dictionary of Facts, 1914 Edition, covered in tattered leather, was presented to my father by Viola B. Howke in gratitude for the kindness he had shown her.

Viola lived in an old trailer in a somewhat rundown trailer park near Delmar, Maryland. She was at least in her late 70's about 1954 when she presented this leather bound volume to me.

Standard Dictionary of Facts, 1914 edition, for me, as well as a similarly important book inscribed to my brother Tom.

As the years have passed, I have come to realize that this is a gift to be treasured.

It also reminds me that I value my father's goodness as he lived his life. This is but one example of how he made time for someone who was neglected and in need of some human kindness. He treated her as all of us would always hope to be treated no matter how far we may fall in value as measured by most of the world.

Thank you, Dad.

Many times I heard my Great Aunt Lola or my mother say, "Oh Charles, you're not going all the way out there tonight." Or, on his return, "Where have you been? That old woman is wasting your time."

My father treated this probably lonely old woman with kindness and respect and let her talk over whatever was on her mind. She appreciated his time. That's why she gave him perhaps the most valuable thing that she had, this

Flow (watercolor) Ginny Ryan





Play of Circles (oil)
Fernanda Zopf



renaissance

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