

REFLECTIONS 2024-2025





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

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INSIDE FRONT COVER: Coleus, watercolor, Sandy Young

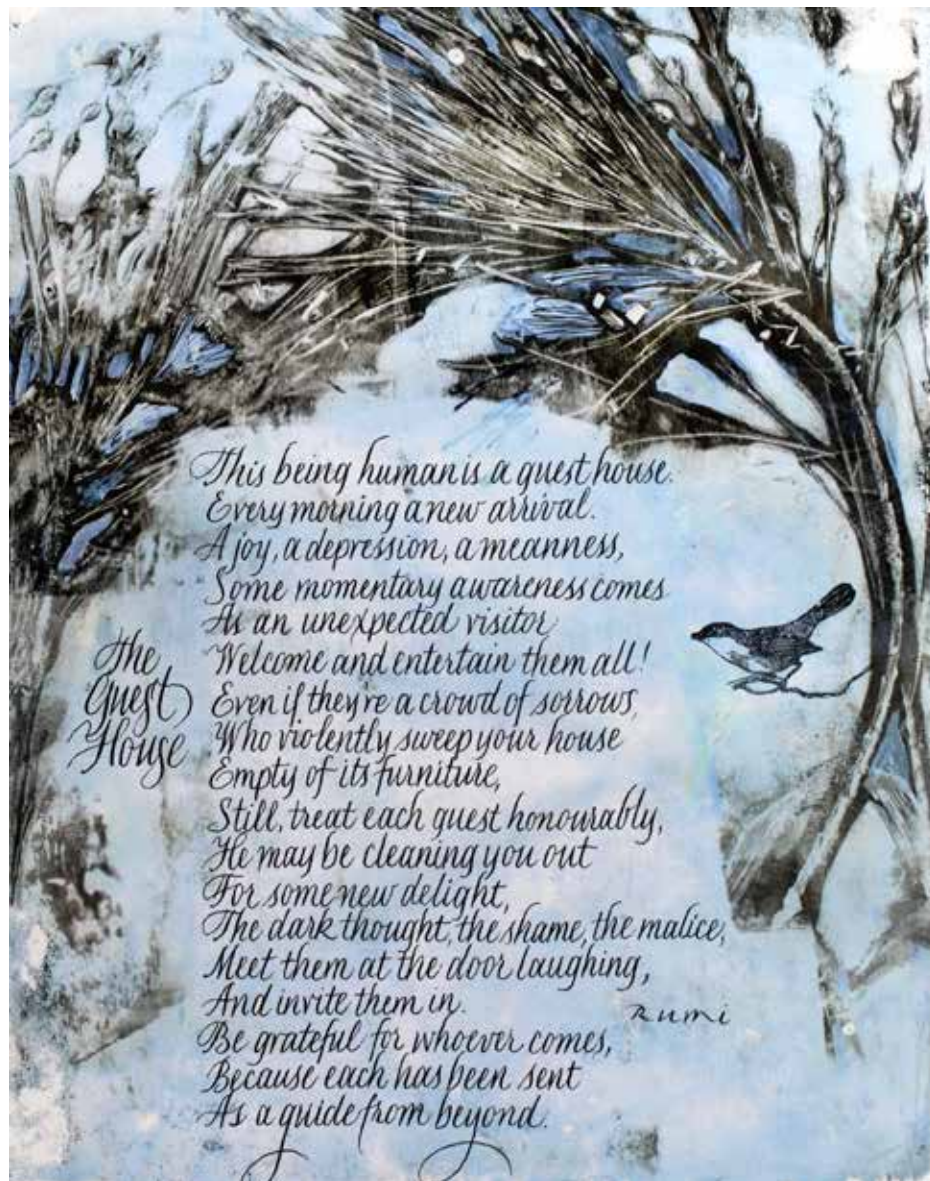
FACING PAGE: Three Peaks, wood, Bruce Rosenberg

BACK COVER: Chinese Proverb, ink, Miriam Rittberg

INSIDE BACK COVER: Mother and Child, digital photo, Elizabeth Fanto

FACING PAGE: Moon Shine, digital photo, Armand Pulcinella





The Guest House, ink with gel plate print, Miriam Rittberg

Bee

*A November bee rests on the step, cold
and sluggish in mere silver sun. I can't
carry him to a safer, warmer hold.*

*There is none. He is out of place, can't slant
faulty fate or favor to his spent side,
work, unreliable relief from want.*

*Hours alone determine his final slide.
Did he hope for more in way of reward
for his season's labor--perhaps a guide*

*into another garden--a summer yard--
a newer day, a body fresh, a spring?
May we not understand the wish to hoard*

*life's sweet honey past our prime, wish to wing
away from wintry shadows—elude that sting?*

Susan Marshall

Breezy Point

*Sometimes I'm there again
and hear the soothing sound
of waves lapping on the shore.
Seagulls calling and swooping.
The smell of salty air, fish,
suntan lotion, hot dogs on a grill.
Digging and building sandcastles.
Sitting on a jetty with my cousins,
catching crabs with string and stale bread.
Jumping off the lifeguard stand at night.
Belly riding waves to shore.
The tide always coming in and going out.
It knows its place in the universe.
Sometimes I've wondered about mine.
But I know our early memories nourish us
when the tides of our lives run low or high.
Our footprints will soon wash away
But the sea will be forever.*

Eileen Gallagher



Through the Sea Oats, oil, Armand Pulcinella

Hope

Deb Maruyama

What is in a child’s name? I have always been fascinated with why and how family members, friends and acquaintances acquired their names. I also wondered how my parents came to name me, Deborah. At home I was called Debbie, sometimes “pidgened” into a part Japanese, part English version, Debbie-ko (-ko usually denotes child/female.) In order to distinguish me from the older Debbie who lived next door, neighborhood parents and children called me Little Debbie. Many of my Japanese American relatives and friends had Japanese names. How then did I end up a Deborah, not an English name, but Hebrew?

During elementary school recess one day, my pals and I pondered how each of us came upon our particular appellations. As we applied our vast world knowledge to the question at hand, my peers mentioned that their parents told them that at that time Deborah or Debra were popular names because we were named after the famous actors Deborah Kerr and native Denverite, Debra Paget. Our group noted it was also common that quite few girls in each grade were Deborah/Debras. It followed then that in the entire school, there surely had to be a lot of Deborahs and Debras. The ad-hoc recess committee then noted that since throughout the school Deborahs and Debras were common girl names, the name was common. This in turn meant each Deborah or Debra must also be quite common.

That night at dinner, I let my folks know I finally knew why my name is Deborah. It was a common name; I was a common kid. My parents immediately set the story straight. They informed me that they very thoughtfully and mindfully chose my name. Deborah is a biblical name; her story appears in the Old Testament book of Judges. Wow! I thought, a JUDGE! That seems important!!! Gosh! My folks must have thought I might do something important and

become someone special!” That moment started a lifelong curiosity in how an individual and their given name may, or may not, meaningfully connect to one’s life and how it is lived.

Eventually, I became a teacher by trade. During the 15 years I lived in Alexandria, VA, I taught math, grades four through seven. There are many moments when something I experience presently brings certain students to mind, some were very bright, others not so much. Some thrived because an eight-hour school day provided a steady, safe environment, as well as two guaranteed meals to help keep hunger at bay. And there were those who nearly daily, questioned and challenged my perception of dedication, courage and empathy. All were precious souls who chased finding a wind beneath their wings.

Through the years I have known many who, although unbeknownst to themselves, at least through my own perception, their names: buoyed, provided for, protected, guided, perhaps even blessed their lives’ journeys. One of those students was named... Hope!

Balance, digital photo, Nadine Yoritomo



Loyalty

Mary Hom

During the spring and summer months, Jerome mowed the lawn every two weeks or so.

Long ago, my mother loved English Ivy and had it planted by a landscaping company along the two small slopes of the lawn we shared. Jerome’s job remained the same, every few weeks. Interestingly enough, he had business cards printed up offering his work as “a landscaper.”

Over time I got to know him better as he talked about the Vietnam War, showing me the scars on his shins left by Agent Orange. I felt badly for him, especially when he described the difficult times he experienced upon his return home trying to obtain Veteran’s benefits. It just wasn’t fair.

At one point Jerome asked me if a friend of his, Henry, could do the mowing while he would deal with the ivy and weeds. I could tell that he was having a difficult time and this was a way I thought I could help, along with a raise in pay. I justified the expense by remembering the rough part of town they lived in.

The time came when Henry showed up alone. The news? Jerome had been crushed to death while making repairs under his truck. Henry believed that it was not an accident, but he couldn’t elaborate. To make matters worse, Jerome’s truck and tools had been stolen, as well.

“Look, Henry, I know you and Jerome were good friends. And I understand if you need some time off from work,” I offered.

“No, but thank you,” he replied. “I’ll feel better if I work like Jerome would if he were here.”

Henry turned out to be a really good worker. He mowed the lawn and was also able, on different days, to keep the ivy and weeds in order without allowing his personal losses to get him down.

It’s been several years since then, during which Henry has made my lawn his pet project; that is, he regularly rides his bicycle past my lawn, then calls me that night to say, “It’s time for a cut!” And he’s right!

I have learned that it is easy for me to find a routine and stick to it without thinking about it much. That was me. After all, my life includes many duties that must be completed, whether convenient or not. That’s life.

As usual, Henry called and came over, needing gas for the lawnmower from a nearby hardware store. An hour later I noticed there was deafening silence when I should have heard the loud mower. I called Henry’s cell phone but got a recording. I then called his wife Shirley but received a recording that was different from her husband’s cell. Shirley, with epilepsy, was always near the phone in case she had an emergency. And someone was always home with her to help her do that. Until now? It was as though Henry and his family had mysteriously disappeared.

I wasn’t sure what to do. Henry might be tending to his wife in a hospital, or he might have health issues himself. Maybe he had been killed as was his friend Jerome. Or, could he be avoiding me for some unknown reason? I just didn’t know. I did know that Henry needed money.



Prague Castle, pencil, ink and watercolor, Josef Nathanson (after J.A. Hoskaska)

My lawn was quickly growing every which way and that. An overgrown lawn is unsightly. It was obvious to me that I really needed Henry. I hadn’t realized what my lawn looked like if uncared for, because Henry had kept the lawn so beautiful.

I kept calling over two weeks. Reluctantly, I began to wonder if I should look for another person to do Henry’s job. It would be a challenge to find someone as dedicated as Henry had been with the lawn and the ivy. Someone, like Henry, who would take the initiative and never let the grass grow under his feet.

When I was at the point of giving up on Henry ever reappearing, he did. He surprised me by showing up at my door, out of the blue.

“Henry!” I shouted, wide-eyed. “I’ve been trying to reach you for over two weeks! Are you okay? I was worried about you!” I stammered in a froggy voice.

“I’m fine,” he replied in a jovial voice. “You never have to worry about me. I can take care of myself. The phones aren’t working - I tried to call you and couldn’t get through.”

A sigh of relief swept over me.

The lawn is, once again, beautiful. Even in the dog-days of summer, Henry has been dedicated to his work. I realize that no matter the job, we are all important to one another.

And faithful.



Twisted Tree at Cylburn. watercolor, Carol Kurtz-Stack

walk before breakfast

*when the morning is quiet
quiet enough to distinguish
calls of robins to their mates
from the arias of the mockingbirds
the insistent cawing of the crows
from the sharp cries of ravens
that sometimes mimic the cold
sound of human rejection
quiet enough to hear in the distance
the piercing siren of an ambulance
announcing someone else's pain
until these reverberations
converge in a discordant
moment of morning music
reminding me that life
pivots erratically between
peace and disarray
wholeness and harm
still tomorrow
in the quiet of the morning
I will walk before breakfast*

Kathryn Pettus



The Sun's Gift, digital photo, Ginny Lipscomb

Reverie

*Why couldn't I resist?
I picked not the prettiest
but the fiercest horse
its head raised high
legs elevated
ready to run*

*Together we galloped
around and around
on that carousel
music in my ears
a lift to this old spirit*

*Must be the same reason
I couldn't stop myself
from buying that box
taking it home
ripping it open
tasted the caramel popcorn
crunched down on the nuts
savored the sweetness
ate it all in one sitting
always my favorite*

*It must have been you
the child inside of me
who never allows me
to miss these moments
how grateful I am
you are still alive*

Kathryn Pettus



Bridge over Roland Run, digital photo, Susan Steigner

Wedding Gift Guilt

Gerry Serviente

Historian Fernand Braudel wrote of “the weight of the past.” My own past weighs heavily with me as I try to shed the guilt that attaches to the disposal of old wedding presents.

What is it about wedding gifts, both my own and my mother’s that carry a large burden of guilt? As I am trying to downsize, I suddenly realize that lovely – and some not so lovely - articles have been sitting collecting dust for the past 56 years. Or in the case of my mother’s useless wedding gifts, 80 years?

Nothing underlines for me the difference in my life between the early Sixties and the present like these unused articles.

Growing up in Baltimore I knew many classmates who just HAD to have Stieff Sterling Silver table settings. So I followed suit, asked for silver for my wedding presents, and now have service for 12 and associated serving pieces, that I cannot use even for Thanksgiving! Our well water has a lot of sulphur and the silver turns purple after just one washing. I COULD polish each piece after use, but after all, I do have better use for my time...such as starting to bake Christmas cookies. Sigh. I hate to get rid of the silver and the Wedgewood American Clipper but none of my collateral descendants want it. Paper plates are the order of the day for them, even for holidays.



Rock Wren, digital photo,
Peter Whedbee

As for the wedding gifts, there were silver platters, trays, bowls, and other use-less items... many of these have disappeared, and I suspect my husband has given them away to Community Aid, sneaking out a few every time I am in the hospital. Would I dare to dispose of ANY of his fishing stuff?

I still have several serving dishes and vases that were my mother’s wedding presents. She never used them, nor have I. In an attempt to dispose of my lovely but unused items, I have taken photos of them and sent them out to the girls in the next generations to select things they would like to have. Have I gotten any response? You tell me!

Giving money for a wedding present was crass to me. At the wedding of my husband’s Polish/Italian cousin the bride danced around WEARING HER APRON while she danced with every man present. The males stuffed her apron with money. Now I see that this “Apron Dance” was a great idea! If it is cash, one size fits all and you never have to return it or worry if it is on the bride’s registry if she has one!

There are many unwanted and unloved wedding presents that sit in my corner cabinet because I cannot dispose of them without crushing guilt. The weight of my past weighs heavily on me.



Jimmy Carter: A Good Man, watercolor,
Peggy Egan (Damon Winter, NYT)

at one hundred

*of all those I know,
or know of, you’re
the one who must
be the most upset.*

*no, you say in your
gentle southern twang.
let’s say disappointed
yet buoyed by faith.*

*our president is hosting
his successor who accepted
an invitation that was never
given to him. one hopes*

*this will prompt contemplation
by everyone who cast a vote,
perhaps thinking of some way
to strive towards reconciliation.*

*if not,
there are houses still to build.**

**An homage to Jimmy Carter*

Sheila Scriggins

Coquette

Mary Dean Dumais

There she was, all 10 pounds of her, tail wagging, her twinkling blue eyes contradicting her solemn little face. She strained on the leash as we approached from across the park lawn on a beautiful sunny day in Santa Monica. We had just rented an apartment in Woodland Hills, CA, so that we could come and go from New York and have a place to stay on our visits to our three young grandchildren and daughter Maggie. It was she who pointed to the photo of a dog (Fifi) in a flyer from the Forgotten Dog Foundation, and announced, “Here is your dog.”

Al and I needed no persuasion when we saw her that day. However, our conversation with her foster home keeper was worrying. She was a small Bichon Frisé and was found sick and tied the shelter, and about 3 or 4 years old. She was now recovering from surgery for bladder stones. The shelter had found it difficult to place her because of her medical history and age. Undaunted, we bargained with the agency to let us have her seen by a reputable veterinarian and they agreed to count the costs as a donation along with the \$250 adoption fee.

The vet declared her a fun, healthy little dog that we should not hesitate to adopt. Hesitate? We could hardly contain our joy at the news. Thereupon, Fifi became Coquette, and after losing our small rescue poodle a year ago, we now had a dog in residence!



During the agency’s final visit to our CA apartment, they warned us that she was an escape artist, and we should be sure to put netting over the terrace railing that ran outside of the living room doors because she could easily make it through the bars. Several weeks later, that’s just what she did, before we had a chance to do anything. Grabbing my car keys and thinking I’d never find her in this unfamiliar, winding road apartment complex, I flung open the door and rushed out, nearly falling over her as she sat smirking, I swear, on the front steps. It’s a game she seemed to be saying. Run away from a good home? Never!

Now that our children were scattered and we were retired and back in New York, she seemed to thrive on being the center of attention and enjoyed the routine of three walks a day as long as she could determine which way we would go.

She traveled with us to Boston and Baltimore to visit her unruly poodle cousins at my sister, Peggy’s, where, jumping on a chair to claim the high ground, she snapped a few commands and they obeyed. She became an excellent traveler, quietly stretched out in her carrier on flights to California, and claiming the window on car trips to

Maine, Boston, Washington, and beyond. When we traveled to our London or Paris families, we found an agency that provided a sleep-in sitter who walked her three times a day and sent us a picture of her curled up on our bed every night.

In attendance at the Lutheran Church of my son and his wife, Karin, on several occasions, she sat in the back pew, neither making noise nor trying

to escape. In short, she was always a part of our lives and without knowing any of her background, we had to wonder how she managed it all.

Sadly, in October of 2018, my life changed and hers with it. My husband at 91, fell and was hospitalized. For years she had spent part of her day nestled close to him on the couch as he wrote or read in his study. After just a few days of his absence, she jumped on the bottom of his bed, faced the pillow, and gave one long lamenting howl as if she knew he would die of further complications just three weeks later. And thus, we two, lucky enough to be healthy became a ménage a deux.

Eventually, it was necessary to engage dog walkers who came three times a day accompanied by other dogs. Almost always the smallest, she trotted out to join the group without hesitation. Our lives continued in tandem for the next 4 years. She was my first sight in the morning and my last at night.

In December 2023, our lives were about to change again. From walks in the cold and snow that she usually enjoyed, Coquette returned, shaking and shivering. Outside walks were eventually abandoned, and I had to keep her in diapers which really annoyed her.

About six months ago, the vet told me that I should prepare myself as she had lost ground. Her sight, hearing and ability to chew were compromised, and she tended to spin in circles and bump into things, even though she was still as affectionate as ever, still enjoying her food and staying close to me. But in April everything changed for the worst. On April 11th, she stopped eating and on Friday night, April 12th, she began to cough, and even cuddling and singing to her did not seem to relieve her distress. On Saturday, the 13th after a fitful night, my son, David, and grandson, Nicky, came over from Brooklyn and we reluctantly made the decision

that it was time to let her go.

The Animal Hospital on 62nd St. was open 24/7 and we needed no appointment. Instead of making us go to the noisy crowded waiting room, we were ushered into a private little room with chairs and a couch and told that, when we were ready, to let the doctor know. Holding her in my arms with the tears streaming down my face, she looked up at me wearily with her one good eye and we said goodbye. Usually, when I had to leave the apartment without her, I would say, “See you later alligator,” and she knew what that meant. But I didn’t say it now. I felt that she was giving me permission to let her go. David summoned the doctor, a young surgeon, so kind and considerate, who knelt on the floor beside me and gave her the first shot which put her to sleep and her body went limp. All three of us quietly wept as the next shot stopped her heart and she was gone. The doctor folded her into a little blanket and we left.

I then made a decision and took everybody to a very good French restaurant in the neighborhood and there in the noisy, cheerful atmosphere we began to recover. We toasted Coquette and were able to talk about her in a warm, welcoming place. It seemed to help us move on a little.

Later, when I entered my apartment for the first time that she was not there, I knew my life would be different and all because of a little dog who, in her own way, embraced us and became a vital part of our family.

Thank you, Coquette, my loving companion. I will miss you as long as I live.

Best Friends, digital photo, Susan Steigner

Turn of the Season

*They come. Stay a while and leave
on arrival we celebrate,
at departure we never grieve.*

*Summer has ceased selling lemonade.
The stand is still there, but her
presence has become erratic.
If there, she may be wrapped
in a sweater, dancing without
sound to stay warm. More
often than not, the stand is silent.
She is absent, no doubt up
in her room addressing
the more pressing problem
of what to pack for the
journey to warmer climes.*

*Now, Fall is more often sighted,
if only from afar. She offers
the promise of winter warmth
by leaving small bundles of
“Wood For Sale” stacked
at road edge. Shy, never
fully present, she depends
on our grateful honor
to place payment
in the can.*

John Russell



First Sign of Spring, digital photo, Terry Weisser



A Sunny Snack, digital photo, Ginny Lipscomb



California Landscape, digital photo, Christine Goglia



Winter Sky, digital photo, Laura Kittel

Kandi’s Village: An Introduction

Amanda Joyce

At first, Arlene thought Ruth must be joking. Quiet and gentle though she was, her neighbor had a sly sense of humor, and you couldn’t always believe her.

“No, Arlene, I’m serious. I was amazed when she told me. But isn’t it marvelous? Right here on our own street!”

But Arlene was not marveling, she was outraged.

“Your favorite author! Living right across from you! And he’s a fella!” Ruth continued.

“Let’s just think about this for a moment. Quietly,” said Arlene. She put another slice of apple cake on Ruth’s plate.

“Well, you’re just determined to make me fat, or should I say, keep me fat,” bubbled Ruth, who then lapsed into silence at the sight of Arlene’s closed eyes.

After a moment, Arlene opened her eyes and announced:

“He’s a pretender.”

“What?”

“Somebody should do something. Greasy hippy.”

Later, walking down the sidewalk toward home, Ruth wondered if it was all worth it. Granted, the apple cake was scrumptious, no one could deny her neighbor’s knack for baking, but two hours at Arlene’s house with no one but Arlene was a strain. She was so needy and nosey and walled-off. (Arlene’s resentful husband was there but he didn’t really count. He stayed in the den and watched that awful news channel day and night.)

Their little neighborhood book club, born in the Covid lockdown, had five members tops; and it had dwindled down to two today, because Lois was on another one of her trips, Fern had a sciatica flare, and Joanne had to take her brother to the doctor.

It was this last situation, Joanne’s brother’s doctor’s visit, that had gotten Arlene so enraged.

When Joanne told Ruth over the back fence that she wouldn’t be coming to book club, she said she hoped the doctor could keep her brother Fergus comfortable so he could finish the book he was writing.

This was big news to Ruth—Joanne’s sickly brother being a writer. He’d recently moved from San Francisco to Baltimore so Joanne could take care of him. Naturally, Ruth wanted more information. What kind of books did he write? Maybe the book club could feature one of his titles!

“You won’t have heard of him,” Joanne replied. “He writes romance novels under a nom de plume.”

“Well then, what’s his...whatsit?”

“Kandi Shire.”

“I nearly fell on the floor,” Ruth told Arlene. “Being that you have every single book by Kandi Shire!” She nodded in the direction of Arlene’s bookshelf, a misnomer since it was mostly populated by Hummel figurines, top and bottom, with only the middle shelf reserved for books—Arlene’s prized Kandi Shire collection, 18 volumes in mint condition.

“I bet you could get ’em signed,” she added.

“No!” sputtered Arlene. “He’s ruined it for me.”

+ + +

Arlene stood in the doorway and watched, as Ruth carefully negotiated the front walk and turned into the sidewalk. She turned around once and waved, as she always did. A sweet old gal, was Ruth. After 53 years of living with Alvin the sourpuss, Arlene had adopted his belief that everybody was a stinker, but Ruth had changed her outlook some.

She and Alvin had always kept to themselves until the lockdown, when Alvin kept shouting at the TV and refused to wear a mask. Easy for

him, since he never left the house anyway, and Arlene had to run all the errands and go to the liquor store too. Arlene got to feeling so nervous and agitated, she had to get her mind on something else.

That’s when Ruth Callahan popped into her mind—Ruth was a widow who lived by herself, across the street and three houses down. Arlene thought about Ruth, all alone in that big house, and felt a rush of envy which she felt guilty about. She decided she was worried about the woman, baked her a peach pie, and deposited it on Ruth’s front porch. A day later Ruth dropped off a nice hand-written thank you note. Arlene would never admit it – who brags about being unpopular – but it was the first real mail she’d gotten in years. She used to get holiday cards from her nieces, but they’d stopped writing and visiting after the unnecessary things Alvin said at that last family roundup. (He wasn’t as bad as that when he was home, but still.)

Joanne across the street was a great pal of Ruth’s, and when the lockdown stretched on and on, they decided to form a little book club, just for neighbors on the block. They met in Joanne’s garage, perching on folding chairs, or sometimes on Ruth’s back porch if it wasn’t too cold. Arlene was startled when Ruth invited her to join, but Alvin told her it was payback for the pie... leave it to him to make it all about the food! Perish the thought that anyone would like her.

“Anyway,” he had joked, glancing at the Kandi Shire collection, “you’ve got your own personal book club. Whatever those gals read is bound to be crap. Have you seen the bumper stickers on that lady’s car?”

Well, that did it. She joined.

City Sunset, watercolor, Lee Kexel





Portuguese Camino

*in the footsteps of St. James
sometimes dreams come to life
yellow arrows show The Way
pilgrim hostels welcome us*

*sometimes dreams come to life
we grow closer with each day
pilgrim hostels welcome us
hearts shine like lemon trees*

*we grow closer with each day
yellow arrows show The Way
hearts shine like lemon trees
in the footsteps of St. James*

Michael Reinsel

Kythera Corona Sun, digital photo, Nancy Caplan

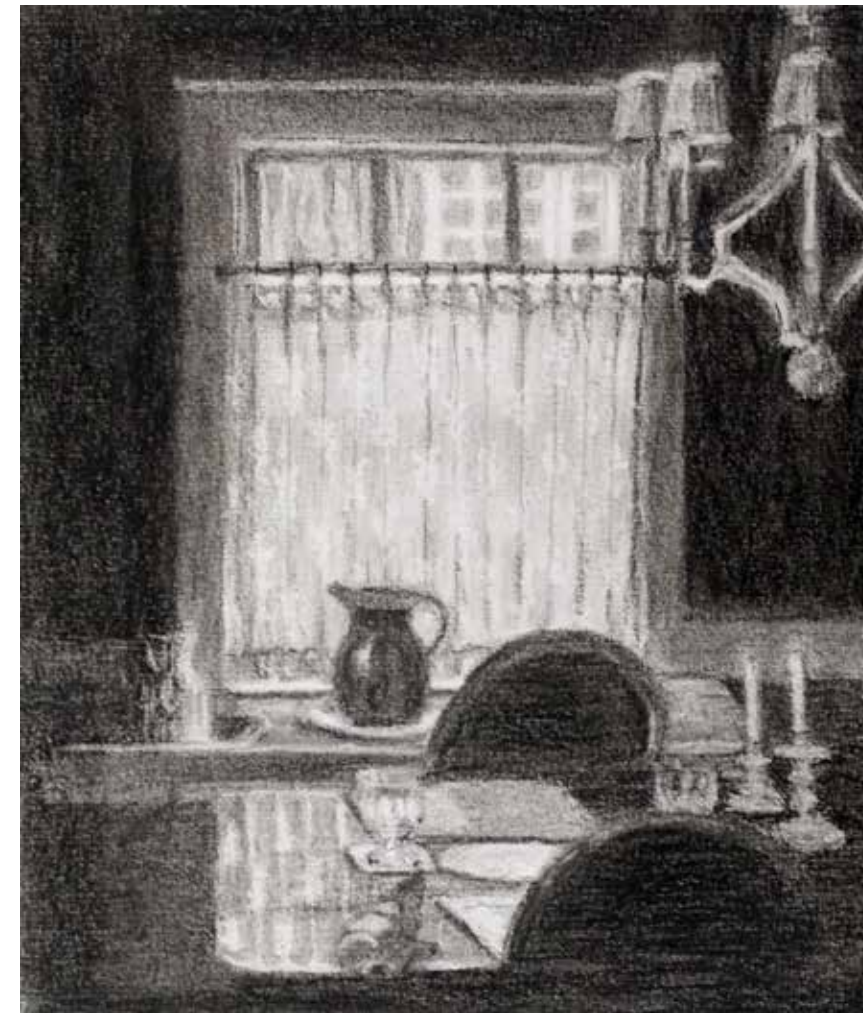
Our Turn Now

*see myself in their faces
set a table full of memories
stir the pot that fed us all
shop for food that brings a smile
these things mom used to do
always with so much love*

*wear dad's worn jacket old hat
rake leaves in the big yard
do small chores around the house
use the tools his caring hands held
sixty years of family times
vanished like melting snow*

*these days just getting up
walking into the next room
is all they can do
bodies slowly broken down
their minds still full of life
our turn now—caring for them*

Michael Reinsel



Dawn, charcoal, Sandy Young

Tomorrow Is A Blind Door

*windowed in glaze
that blurs to dim the dawn
distorts the smile of friend
into frown of foe
discolors the rose of hope
into fractured prisms
It has no lock
just a handle to hold
as it turns itself
into today's opening*

Susan Marshall

Fingers and Eyebrows

Nadine Yoritomo

Colorado or more specifically, Denver, has been a special place for me. I was born there and lived there until I was 3 years old. It was the place my parents would take us on family vacation pretty much every four years during my childhood to be with “our family.” My father would save his vacation time during those four-year intervals in order to take four weeks off to be in Colorado. We would divide our time between the small farming town of Rocky Ford where my mother grew up and Denver where my father’s parents and brother lived, staying with relatives in each location.

Those early memories in Colorado were magical! As an eight-year-old child, it was the first time it occurred to me that I was a Japanese-American. Until then, like many young children, I had entertained the fantasy that perhaps I was adopted! It was only when I was in the company of my extended family that I realized I really looked like them – not just overall, but, that my specific physical features were similar – I could see Yoritomo fingers, Maruyama eyebrows, similar vocal inflections and even laughter, mine and my cousins’. There were real Japanese meals! There would be the familiar aromas of rice, soy sauce and rice vinegar floating from the kitchens. My father’s mother, Naka, in preparation for day trips to the mountains would soak and marinate various vegetables for hours and then create types of sushi I only ate while in Denver. My parents would become relaxed in a manner unlike anywhere else while in the company of their brothers and sisters, cousins and friends. These same individuals had a shared youth experience. They all grew up in somewhat similar Issei (first generation) Japanese-American rural communities during the Great Depression. Became young adults who went to the “big

city” (Denver) to seek education and jobs. They remained a pretty tight insular group, mostly socializing with other Nisei (second generation) Japanese-Americans.

Then during WWII, some of my relatives, including their Nisei friends, joined the Army and were a part of the 442 Army Infantry Regiment “Go for Broke” unit (the most decorated for its size and duration of service). My father was too young to join the Army during the war, so he joined the MIS, Military Intelligence Service – and during the Reconstruction period was able to visit his father’s small ancestral village in Japan for the first and only time. Those who were fortunate returned to civilian life and were for the most part able to take advantage of all the same financial and educational opportunities as their Caucasian acquaintances. They were able to have a prosperous life far beyond what their parents had or even what they might have dreamed.

Decades later, after having heeded the persistent and resonant inner voice to return to Colorado, I live near the foothills of the Rocky Mountains. Sitting under a Ponderosa Pine tree while on a family vacation near Pikes Peak, I ponder with wonder and gratitude the opportunity to see Yoritomo fingers, Maruyama eyebrows, familiar vocal inflections and relaxed laughter in my adult children and grandchildren.

*Crabshack Dock in the Chesapeake,
watercolor, Paula Murphy (Getty Images)*



English Sounds

Elizabeth Howard

I watch a lot of television from other English-speaking countries, and sometimes straying from the plot, I think about what I hear. I’m fluent in British pronunciation, barely competent in the Irish brogue, and an abject failure in understanding what Scottish speakers call English. My research sample is largely made up of “Midsomer Murders,” “Clark-son’s Farm,” and “24 Hours in A and E” in England. I also enjoy reality shows like border immigration and quarantine security checkpoints – Britain, Canada, and Australia.

Australia makes me kind of crazy. They change the pitch of the last syllable of most declarative sentences to an upswing, like a question. “We have decided to cancel your visa?” and “You will be sent home on the next plane? And don’t come back for three years?”

Canadian English offers special delights: the vowel combination /ow/ sounds like a long /o/. Down is “doan;” town is “tone;” but downtown is “city center.” Eh?

My favorite English dialect is New Zealand’s, where they have switched the short /i/ and /e/ sounds. Asked what hurt after a traffic accident, the victim groaned, “Ma heps and ma nick.” Approaching a body by the side of the road, diteaktives [detectives] inquired, “Is he did?” Six is /sex/, and sex is /seeks/. Michael McIntyre performs a standup routine on New Zealand’s English. Find it on YouTube.

Texas English, the dialect I speak and understand, has pronounced /r/s. Across the United States, we teach a concept in phonics called /r/-controlled vowels. British and Boston Englishes do not allow the /r/ to control anything. In fact, when it combines with a vowel, /r/ keeps its mouth shut. They say pot for part and mock for mark. “He’s in the cah.” You get the idea. Australians say he for here, deciding to avoid all questions of /r/ controlling anything..

Some American English phonemes, the smallest units of sound, have voiced and unvoiced variations. When the sounds are made in the same way with tongue, teeth, and mouth, like /d/ and /t/and /b/ and /p/, the breath makes the difference between them. Indians and Pakistanis don’t always make the voiced/unvoiced distinctions: a /t/ becomes /d/, /k/ turns into /g/, and /p/ is pronounced /b/. “Yes, I’m from Bagisdan. I need an abbointment Duesday.”

There are a few exceptions to the voiced/unvoiced rules. In East Texas there is a beautiful young television anchor who speaks only voiced. Her name is Katie Pratt, which she pronounces Gatie Bratt.

A man in Phoenix advertised on television on behalf of a plaintiff-attorney’s law firm named Goldberg and Osborne. Unfortunately, the auto accident severely injured his mouth, so he pronounced it Goldderg and Osdorne. You can’t say /b/s and /p/s without lips.

I try to be accepting of everyone’s dialect. Some of it even makes me laugh, like the British elimination of the /h/ in their speech. I love, “Bloody-el.” God knows, I want the same acceptance for my Texas twang. However, I must draw the line when the British pronounce the digraph /th/ as /f/ and its voiced partner as /v/. This throws me into -- I don’t fink so.

It is time summer ends and I get back to writing. Streaming movies and television shows has done nothing good for me. I intend to continue to read instead of watch and to write instead of criticize. God help me.



Feathered Friend, watercolor, Gail Kramer



Whoo! watercolor, Sharon Rabb (after Mary Rumble)



Nest of Steel, watercolor, Gail Kramer

Earl was a farrier

Peter Whedbee

He drove his small truck up our stone lane and parked it under the tall, tall walnut trees, between the sunken springhouse and the paddock outside the stalls of the barn built with no nails. He usually came early in the morning, when the scent of the honeysuckle was still on the dew, shifting against the earthiness of mucked out stalls.

As we led our horses out to be shod, shoulder close by their front shoulder, taking in the smell of grain and hay, and their nervousness, Earl heated up the forge set in the rear of the truck, next to the anvil bolted to the bed. Turning the blower handle, its whirring lending an urgency to the effort, brought the coals to life.

All fire and iron, a leather apron tied to his waist, Earl was calm and deliberate with the animals, and kindly mischief with the gaggle of kids gathered around.

He first smoothed a flat palm across the tremulous flank before sliding his hand down the leg, gently bending the last joint, to lift and grip the hoof between his knees, leaning ever so slightly against their body, drawing them in close to his frame.

Pulling the nails, he removed the old shoe.

Then, with a sharp curved knife, he cleared the mud, gravel and manure caked on the underside, careful not to cut "the frog" a tender part at the rear of the hoof.

Trading his knife for pincers, he trimmed the edges back, careful of the quick, and rasped it all flat, like polishing a stone.

Fitting a new horseshoe often required heating it in the forge and hammering the glowing curve on the anvil to shape it. A hissing dunk in the bucket to cool it enough to lay on the hoof, then again in the coals for another adjustment.

Once satisfied, Earl was quick to drive the nails through the hard outer rim of the hoof, fastening the still-warm shoe, twisting and cutting off the nail ends where they came through on the wall of the hoof, smoothing the rough tips and edges with a quick one-two-three of the rasp.

Then, freeing the hoof to let its owner get a feel for it, he would straighten up and tell us a bit of a story, or confer with the adults about the temperaments of the different animals. We were fascinated by his thumb missing from one hand, cut clean off at the second joint.

"Native Dancer bit it off."

That was enough. We knew to be wary of the strong jaws we moved around every day and could imagine the danger surrounding a high-spirited race horse.

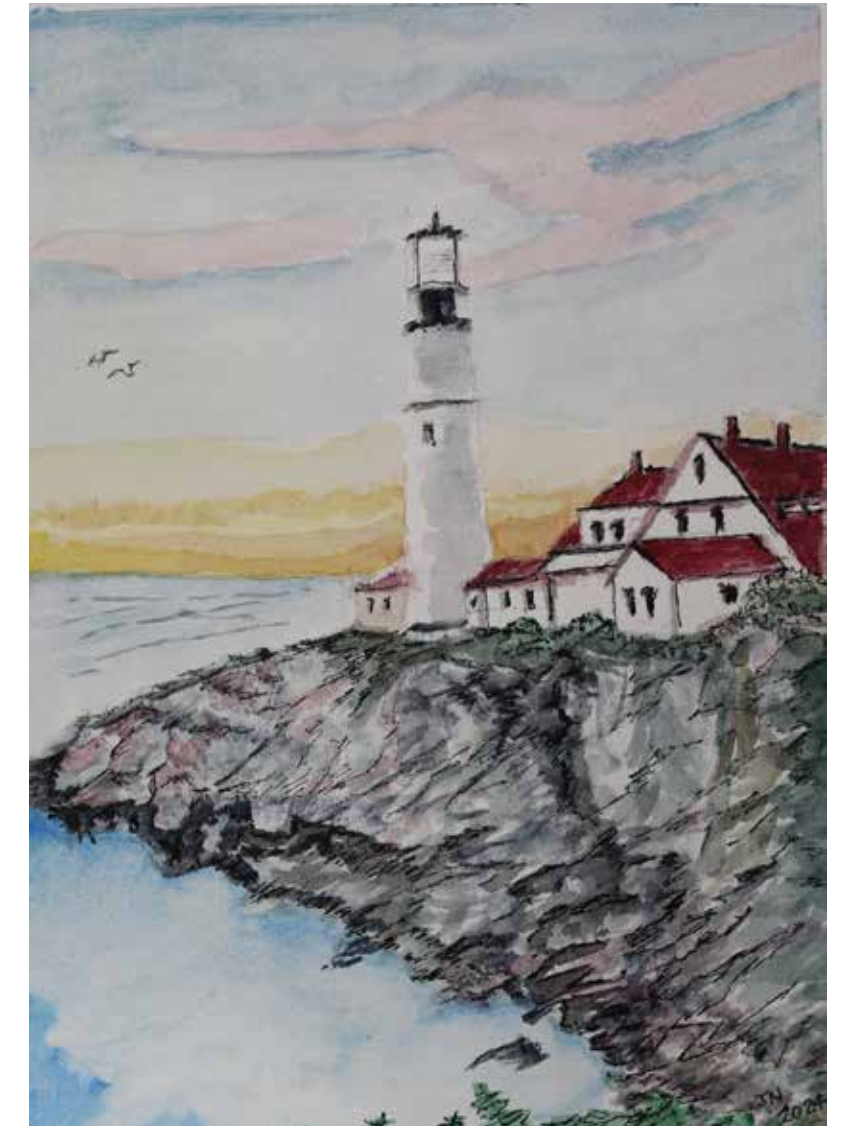
Whether it was blossoming spring or a windy autumn day, a visit with Earl was a part of our seasons.



Paris - Discarded French Bananas Along the Seine, watercolor, Paula Murphy



Tree in Winter, oil, Peggy Egan



Portland Head Light, pencil, ink and watercolor, Josef Nathanson (Road Scholar)

My Path of Stitches

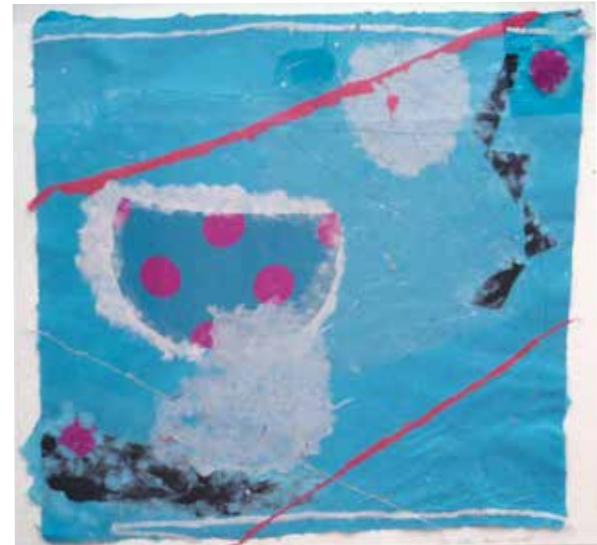
Words and images by Carlene Moscott

“How much more time Mommy?”
“I’m mostly done dear. Have to get this hem right.”
“I’m tired.” Mother was fitting me for an Easter outfit she had sewn. I think I was about eight years old.

It was a lovely pale pink wool skirt and jacket - something I would wear with a white blouse underneath. In those days of the forties and early fifties Easter was a big deal. It meant a new outfit every year and sometimes a hat as well.

I think my earliest interest in clothes and fashion was when I was about ten years old. My mother and I were walking from downtown Bridgeport back to my grandfather’s house on Tunxis Hill Road. We passed a small shop, and the window displayed a blue smocked dress with a small print. I could see myself in it. “Please, Mom, can we get it?” She said no and I was sad, very sad, about it but we continued on. The next day she asked if I really wanted it – she knew the answer – such a wonderful mother. We went out and purchased it.

As a preteen I got the magazine for young girls called *Polly Pigtales*. Once in a while a contest was advertised to design an item of clothing. The prizes were



to have the winning design published in the magazine and you would receive in the mail a suitable to frame graphic drawing by a fashion artist. I was thrilled that my raincoat design won that year.

I remember as a teenager I was beginning to love fashion and dutifully got the magazine *Seventeen* every month. In one issue I saw a picture of a yellow cotton dress in the current

adaptation of a Victorian style. It had tucks in the bodice, a prim high neckline, a black ribbon tie at the collar, matching belt and a flared skirt. I was thinking of my Easter outfit and wanted it badly so we looked up where we could buy it locally. We succeeded, and I was happy to be in style for Easter.

With these influences I began to pay attention to fabrics. In high school I began to sew some of my own clothes – a skirt, a brown corduroy jacket, an iridescent blue/pink dress of taffeta that I wore to a dance. My mother was an excellent teacher and she was a perfectionist which was a difficult thing for me at times. I learned patience so well that when I once put a sleeve in backwards, I had to rip it out and put it back right. Ripping out goes with the territory until the lesson is learned.

In my mid-twenties I worked in New York City in the fashion district as a weaver of woolen swatches for a high-end fabric company. There was a Danish woman in the company who taught us how to work the loom and produce the swatches. It was only for nine months at sixty dollars a week.

Then I moved on to another job. By then I had acquired a portable sewing machine and was making more complex things, bathrobes for my father and brother, a woolen coat for myself, an off -white brocade sheath dress.

During my early marriage I made a variety of clothes for myself, my husband, baby clothes, and prom dresses. But the job I went to in my mid-twenties was a turning point. It was at the Museum of Modern Art in Manhattan. I was in the world of Fine Arts and working amidst world class paintings, drawings, prints, sculptures, etc. My path forward became clearer – I wanted to become an artist. I went on to complete my education and got a BFA degree in Painting from the Rhode Island School of Design.



The First Time

Andrea Wilson

I stood on the sidewalk and watched my daughter, Donna, walk up the steps with her 3-year-old daughter, Becca. Becca just left her crib for a big girl bed and didn’t have to wear diapers anymore. She had been to many places like the grocery store, the doctor’s office, Grandma’s house and the playground, but this was something new. She didn’t remember ever going for a walk when it was dark outside. She trusted her mommy to take her to only safe places, and this was going to be another one.

Still, the steps were hard to manage. She held her mother’s hand, and her other hand held the handle of an empty plastic orange pumpkin with a big hole in the top. She tried to not step on the hem of the long fluffy skirt but stumbled a couple of times anyway. Becca was curious about what was happening but felt a little anxious about this strange experience.

When they reached the top and Donna knocked on the door, a smiling woman appeared with a big bowl in her arms.

“What do we have here?” the woman said. “Oh, so cute! Are you a princess today?” Becca was confused but nodded her head anyway. She didn’t know why she was a princess. All of this was a little scary, but interesting

“What do you say now, Becca?” Mommy said.

“Hi”

“Yes, but what words have we been practicing?”

Becca had to think about that for a minute. Then she remembered. “trickertreat.”

The woman with the bowl laughed. She put her hand into her bowl and put something into the orange pumpkin. Becca looked into the pumpkin. Something in there looked like a brown stick. That only added to the mystery.

This scenario repeated itself as they went from house to house. Each place had something to put in the pumpkin when she remembered to say “trickertreat.” She had no idea what the word meant, but it must be magic because when she said it, she always got something in her pumpkin.

I followed them along, relishing the opportunity of watching my grandchild doing something for the first time. It wasn’t long before Becca became very tired. All those steps had worn her out, and that fluffy pink skirt kept making her stumble. I carried Becca back home while she fell asleep with

her head on my shoulder. This had been a very new experience, and she hadn’t decided if she liked it or not. Donna had the half-full pumpkin.

Becca woke up when she was back in her house. She was glad to take off that frilly skirt that had given her so much trouble. Donna said, “Come look at what you got tonight,” and summarily dumped the pumpkin’s content on the floor. There was a pile of many colored sticks like the one she got at the first house.

“You can pick one to have now,” Becca picked the prettiest red and brown one still not quite certain about what was happening. Donna unwrapped the candy bar and gave it to her. It was a little sticky, and she didn’t quite know what to do with it having never had a candy bar before. Donna told her that she was supposed to eat it.

She took a bite.

Her blue eyes became wide and bright as she had her first taste of a Hershey bar. She took another bite. She looked at her mother with a big smile and chocolate on her face and said, “Can we go again amorrow?”



Ready for Halloween, digital photo, Bruce Rosenberg

Wallace Line

*The cockatoo — from islands where the belly of the earth
bends over itself and explodes, leaving its stain
of fiery lava and tidal waves--wears on its head a delicately
curved yellow crest, for our admiration.*

Kim Leith

War

*The missile fledged into their tower of schoolbooks,
bulbous amid the conflagration. The window reverberated,
with specks of vermilion. A rustling across the floor;
and the cat, soft as moss, escaped through the wall
holding her from the pungence of outside.
The atmosphere misted: no wondrous
respite, only a brief ripple in the press.*

Kim Leith



Serenity, digital photo, Armand Pulcinella



Snakelike Structure, wood, Bruce Rosenberg

Colin’s Night Out at Age 8

Bill Bennett

The other day, I was thinking about the times when our three sons were growing up and whether I had fulfilled my duties as a parent. An April evening, when Craig was 13, Jeff, 11, and Colin, 8, came to mind.

Our friends, Iris and Bill, had invited Kathleen and me to go out to dinner with them at the Blue Bell Restaurant in Bel Air. We decided to do without a sitter. Recently, we had let Mrs. McClelland, our regular day-time sitter, go to another job. Craig, who was a mature and dependable 13, was now taking charge of his brothers after school, until we got home from work.

On this Saturday evening, we decided it would be safe for Craig to be responsible for keeping his bothers in line while we went to dinner. We were a little nervous because Bel Air was the farthest we had ever gone (19 miles), leaving the boys alone in our Loch Raven Village townhouse. Actually, most of the available sitters were only a year or two older than Craig. After giving him instructions and phone numbers to call if any problem should arise, we explained to the other two boys that they were expected to behave and obey Craig’s instructions. Then we said goodnight to them as they went to the basement club room to watch TV.

We arrived at Iris and Bill’s home in Bel Air and had some drinks while catching up on one another’s recent activities. Then we went on to the nearby restaurant in a relaxed mood. It was turning out to be a great evening.

While we were finishing the entrée course, the waiter came to the table and said there was a call for me, and he would take me to the phone. The only phone was on the other side of the restaurant, and we had to go through the crowded, busy kitchen to get to it. Several of the large kitchen workers in their white aprons and white caps had to step back to allow me to awkwardly pass through the preparation area. Craig was on the phone.

“Craig, what’s wrong?”

“Colin got out of bed in his pajamas and walked out the front door and up to the end house where our church deacon lives. They were having a party, and he went right in the open door. He told Deacon Rexford that there were robbers in his house, so they came down here to check to see if we were alright. They took Colin back to their house.”

Then I remembered that Colin had had occasional fevers and would be talking and not making sense. Although he was fine when we left, Colin must have developed another high fever, I thought.

“Craig, do you think he had a fever?

“Gee, I don’t know.”

“Well please go up there and bring Colin back home. Be sure to thank the Deacon and his wife for their trouble. Your mother and I will leave for home right now.”

“Okay, I will.”

Whipping through the kitchen chaos, and back to the table, I told Kathleen the news. Knowing that I often over reacted to stress, she attempted to calm me by saying, “Sit down and finish your dinner. A few more minutes won’t make any difference.”

Then the waiter appeared at the table again. “There is another call for you, Mr. Bennett, please follow me.” Back through the kitchen we went, weaving through a sea of disgruntled faces.

Deacon Rexford was on the line. “Please don’t rush home. Enjoy your evening. We have a nurse here at the party. We put socks on Colin and put him to bed. He will be here when you get home. Now please go back and enjoy your evening.”

Back at the table, I delivered the message. “Deacon and Mrs. Rexford said to enjoy the evening and Colin will be waiting for us, asleep in their bed. The deacon sounded very understanding.”

“I think we’re ready to go anyway,” replied Kathleen. We said our goodnights and drove off.

On the ride home, I worried what the deacon was thinking of us as parents. “He probably thinks that we’re the worst parents in the world,” I said to Kathleen as I drove a little faster.

“Don’t worry so much, Bill. He has children. I’m pretty sure he won’t judge us unfairly.”

We arrived at the door. I was expecting some kind of lecture on proper parenting. Instead, we were welcomed with smiles and taken up to the bedroom where Colin was sleeping in his pajamas and big white socks.

Deacon and Mrs. Rexford were both very cordial and friendly and seemed genuinely understanding. After we got home and put Colin to bed, we asked Craig, “How could you let Colin go out the door?”

“He went up to bed. Jeff and I were in the basement. You know how we like the TV loud. We just didn’t hear him leave.”

I said to Kathleen, “I don’t think I can ever go out again without hiring a sitter.” She laughed, “Yes, I can picture it. Craig will be 16 and the sitter will be 15. It will be like a date for them. I think the time for sitters is just about over. Otherwise, there might be worse problems.”



Different Lens on Evening, digital photo, Deb Maruyama

Culture Shock

Wally Lippencott Jr.

I had been intimate with Julie for many years. It was very occasional, every couple of months, and in a classy place. My wife at the time said I should see someone else – she never liked the way Julie cut my hair.

Like my father I stick with people and over time maintain these casual relationships which then become sort of a commitment. A million years ago when I first starting working, I went to the Hair Cuttery in the mall. I went to Joey but when he left, he recommended Julie. I felt a debt to these guys because both had found a discrete way of cutting one of my kid’s hair or lack of because of alopecia (hair loss). The Hair Cuttery closed and I followed Julie to a salon. It was in retrospect a very feminine place. A well-appointed relaxing lobby, welcoming receptionist, soft colors, shelves of “product” and many barber chairs “manned” by women. I could even get a cup of wine if Julie was delayed in getting to me.

I got a message from Julie that she had moved to a new salon. I decided it was time to get a cut and went on line to make an appointment. Things started to go downhill from there. The list of services went on and on and I could not find a simple “men’s cut”. The closest thing was a “men’s designer cut” for \$50. I just wanted a haircut. I called Julie and she said to just sign up for an appointment and she would charge me the same fee I had been paying. I made the appointment for later in the week.

On the day of my appointment I thought I knew the location so I did not use my GPS. I was mistaken. I went to the wrong location and ended up at a Mattress Warehouse. I called the salon and the receptionist gave me vague directions. Once again, I thought I knew the location. I was wrong – again. Lately, I have trying to be more philosophical about the big things but I still get wound up about the little things. I was frustrated and I hate being late. I called Julie and said I was going to miss the appointment. She was understanding and offered a free cut next time.

On the way home, it occurred to me to stop at a barbershop that a former colleague of mine would go to near where we worked at the time. I stepped in the door and inquired whether I could get a cut. The barber in the first chair kind of gruffly told me the next opening was several hours later in the day. Leaving the shop, I reflected that the barber’s arms were covered with tattoos and the shop was small and cluttered and the sign outside said “expert tonsorial services.” I decided to go home where I would look up “tonsorial services” and so long as it did not have anything to do with my tonsils make an appointment for a haircut.

My tonsils were secure. The word “tonsorial” derives from the Latin verb “tondere”. It means “to shear, clip or crop.” An old-fashioned term for a barbershop that includes cutting and trimming beards. How appropriate and consistent with the shop having one of those old-fashioned candy-cane barber signs.

When I arrived at the barber shop for my appointment, I immediately noticed that everything about it could not have been more different then the salon where I had been getting my hair cut. I could practically smell the testosterone when I sat down on the old leather couch to wait. There were three barbers working the chairs cramped up against a large mirror. They all had tattoos, many tattoos and were big guys. The small shop was cluttered with posters and magazines of guitars and motorcycles. Other clients arrived. They were mostly big guys. I mean big (I am 5’11”). One had biceps bigger than my thighs and they all had beards. We are not talking about the wimpy 5 o’clock shadows that seem so hip right now. I am talking thick Paul Bunyan beards. I was in a different universe. This was a “real” man’s barber shop! To top it off instead of having white wine like the salon, I noticed a bottle of whiskey by the mini-fridge.

The conversation was about manly stuff and the latest action movie with a debate over whether it was historically correct that the Roman Coliseum was filled with water and crocodiles for fighting. I did not say a word the whole time, particularly when my barber said something to the effect of “Thank God we do not have that woman for four years.” At that moment he was using the razor on the sides and back of my neck. So much for my post-election resolution to “speak the truth and protect the vulnerable.” Given my situation at the time I think I qualified for “vulnerable.”

I left the barber shop thinking how different this “man’s” world was from Julie’s salon I had frequented for so long. I thought that my experience bore witness to some of the explanations of why men and women voted so divergently in the election. I am not going back to the salon and I may or may not go back to the “man’s” haberdashery, but I do like my haircut.

Intimidating Lion, watercolor, Pat Peichocki (after David Smith)



Smooth Sailing

Elizabeth Fanto

The boat was rocking, rocking. She sat on the deck, thinking about her situation.

She married late, in her early 40s. She was his second wife and he proposed to her by taking her to see his new boat—which he had named “The Second Wife.” She was thrilled. She immediately took lessons on sailing and loved working on that boat.

Regret came in five years. He was controlling, verbally abusive, and becoming physically abusive. Gone was the charming man who had first wooed her. She began to wonder about his first wife. They had met at the funeral home where she attended a friend’s viewing and he, his wife’s. They ended up chatting and he invited her to have a drink, saying he could use some company at this sad time. His wife died of an overdose, and he said he was in shock. He had no idea she took drugs. He was charming, so sad and needy. That began their relationship. They married within a year.



Gradually, he changed, belittling her every comment or action, making veiled threats, and today he joked about feeding her to the sharks that infested these waters. She felt a frisson of fear. He had control of all their finances, their home, everything, including this boat. She didn’t feel safe on it anymore. As the boat rocked, she wondered how she had allowed this to happen to her.

Taking a deep sigh, she thought about her decision. In cleaning the cabin, she found he had a bottle of a strong prescription drug tucked into his street shoes. He had pushed a sock in to cover it, and she was checking to see if the sock needed washing. She shook her head in dismay, then took some, secreting them in her pocket, remembering his first wife’s death.

He said they would be making the return trip back tomorrow and they would celebrate this great trip. He would fix his famous, spicy barbeque dish tomorrow. His mood, suddenly elated, brought her new terror. That mood shift! She had to act first, and she did, offering to fix this evening’s dinner with an extra-special dessert.

He underestimated her.

She managed to feed his heavy body to the sharks along with all their meat supplies as extra bait. She sailed away to report his falling overboard. There would be inquires, but she felt ready and able. She was back to her own independent self, and she felt relief.

She would change one letter on the boat. It would read: “The Second Life.”

In a Canoe at Sunset, acrylic, Babs Bierman

Primitive Speech

*Now and then I recall
how your hands whispered
beautiful, beautiful*

*and I, awash in your caress
felt that flush-green surge
of sinewy strength*

*a primitive speech
made only of touch and breath
rising, rushing, rising, rushing.*

*If only we’d kept all other tongues
from our lips we’d have had
some soaring conversations.*

sb sōwbel



Profile of a Woman, pastel pencil, Babs Bierman

Disillusionment

*Marriages are made in heaven, or so they tell.
Why then for me do they assume the qualities of hell?
Is it because I never learned to swallow my strong pride
As properly befits they say
The good wife at his side?*

*I’m told that living all alone’s a problem time will “cure.”
I seem to think the status takes no effort to endure.
I like it fine and when I’m old
I’ll like it still I’m sure.*

*For marriage can but snuff the stuff that loving lives require
And I for one have come at last to mean when I retire
To be enough to fill my days
With all that I desire.*

*I sound so cold. In retrospect, ‘tis true there will be room
For secrets shared and bosoms bared twixt here and my cold tomb.
But realize...tell me I’m wise...I know myself so well
That love of mine will ne’er be doomed
By toll of nuptial bell.*

Kathy Stone

The Spice of Life

*The cinnamon on her breath
always aroused him—sharp,
sentimental, sweet, the reminder
of morning breakfasts near the bed
that were somewhat illicit, and would
remain that way for years.*

*Early, they strolled to Viennese
coffee shops, arm in arm, and coaxed
one another to breathe in and drink
down the secure richness
and satisfaction of spiced cinnamon
and steamed coffee.*

*Years from then, they remained
that special couple, and prepared
cinnamon toast and instant coffees—
Café Au Lait and Café Vienna—
proffered in those less expensive
market tins, for their shared daily ritual.*

*The cold, formica-topped table
placed by the apartment window
gave them that sense of the sidewalk café,
their physical nearness so exquisite
like the bite of fresh cinnamon
and a morning full of coffee.*

Stephen Sutton



Düsseldorf Altstadt, digital photo, Nancy Caplan

Train Magic

*The magic of riding in a train
Soothes your body & your brain.
Almost like when you're in utero
rumbling on like there's no tomorrow.*

*Your life and routine are in the past
as you ponder the landscape vast.
And when your seatmate is from Peru
You have a whole different view.*

*The world is an amazing place
when you meet a new face,
a new culture, another tongue.
We rejoice and feel forever young.*

Barbara Sheffer Rooney

Remington's Palette

*It had puzzled him, evaded him
for an answer over some years,
no matter where or how he traveled.
By horseback? He could certainly paint horses,
especially in action, horses that galloped,
raced, kicked, sauntered, or stood
just plain still at a watering hole or hitching post.
Some said he painted horses, even riding horseback,
better than the Frenchman Delacroix.*

*He could harness most of the Western landscape:
the filtered dust of the land with its yellows,
ochres, red raspberry hues, and a silvery green
belonging to sagebrush. With eyes shut
he could envision the gray of campfire
and signal fire smoke, the rich browns
or the varied whites, yellows, reds,
maybe spotted, horses loafing in the sun.*

*But the ever changing blues high above
vexed him even further. The mystery
of that color followed him across country—
East to West and back to the East again.
That color was a merry prankster,
one hue in the East, other shades in the West,
until the time he finally decided,
fixed his palette, that color wheel of success,
and settled on Cerulean Blue.*

Stephen Sutton



Fort Huachuca, digital photo, Peter Whedbee

For Johnny

Betty Kansler

Sometimes tiny insights reveal themselves when we least expect them.

Johnny was our school entry in the district Dramatic Reading Contest. When he won the school contest for fifth graders, Johnny was both thrilled and surprised, and because he was an amiable boy who had a desire to please, he answered my comments about preparing for the district contest with, “Sure. Anytime. I’ll work as hard as I can.” And I knew that he meant it.

Johnny’s selection was from *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* and was filled with contrasts in tone and mood. “Just the passage to highlight interpretation to full advantage,” I thought. “Because it contains many different moods it will surely appeal to the children in the audience as well as the adult judges,” I told Johnny. I was brimming over with confidence in his ability to dramatize the piece to full advantage.

So, for three weeks we worked. Oh, how we worked! It seemed best to practice in short segments and so we spent about 20 minutes preparing each day. Again and again, Johnny read aloud his four-minute selection as we dissected the passage, discussed its meaning, and tried various approaches.

Even though we were working diligently, I wanted to minimize the importance of this contest, trying instead to emphasize the fun of participating, the new friends he would make, and just the experience of being on stage. “Oh, I know,” Johnny casually remarked as I tried to make this just another fun time. But I could tell that deep down, inside where it counted, Johnny wanted to win.

When the big day arrive, Johnny and I were to meet in our school lobby at 8:00 am for the drive to the contest. In the car and on our way, I asked, “Are you nervous?”

With a shake in his voice, he replied, “A little.”

“That’s natural,” I said, hoping to sound nonchalant. But suddenly I knew that I was as nervous as Johnny. And what’s more I dearly wanted him to win, not only for himself but also for me. My work those past few weeks had not been as altruistic as I first believed and with that realization came panic. This sweet, blond, gentle ten-year-old had read, reread, and done everything I asked and suggested. He trusted me who had been sure that what I was asking was the best possible way to read the selection and win and now I wasn’t so sure. Perhaps he could have done it better by himself.

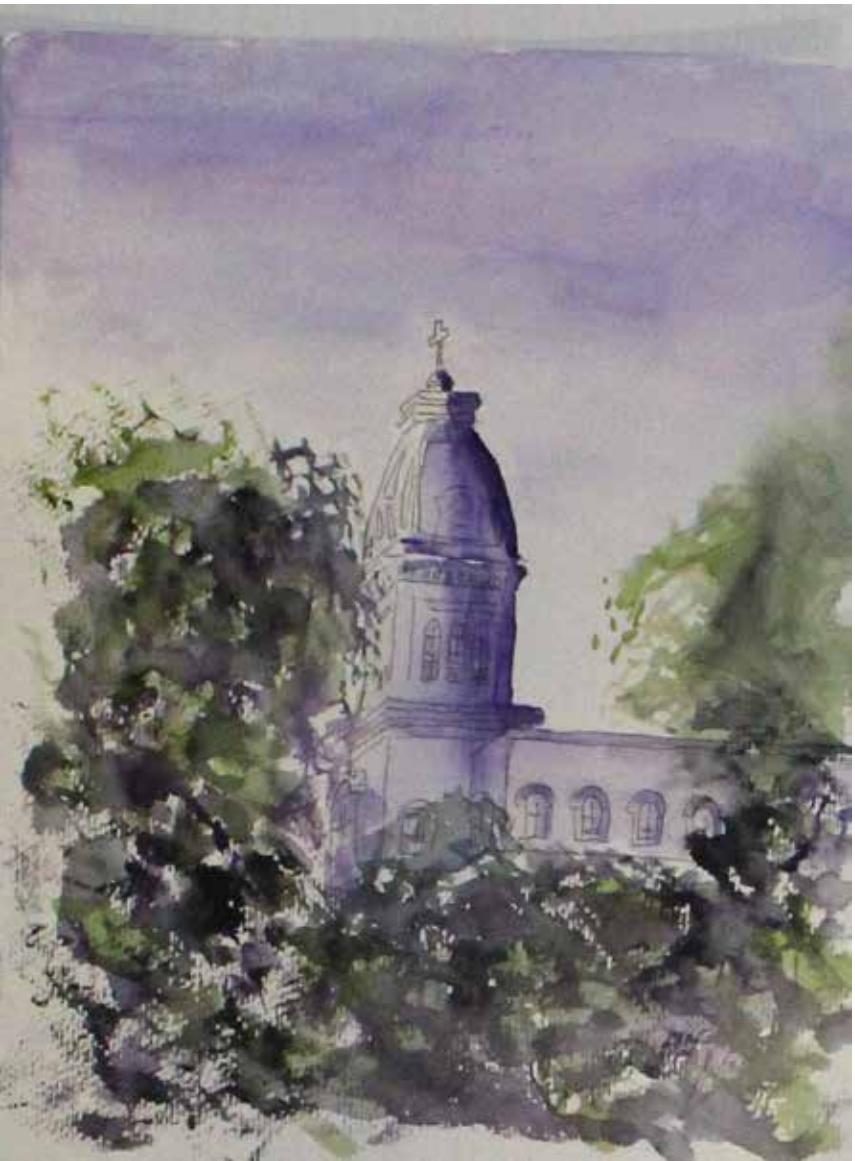
Johnny was listed to read fifth out of 26 participants. The first four readers were less than good: poor selections, bad pacing, too loud, little expression. Then it was up to Johnny. I sat frozen in my seat, my nails digging into my palms, feeling nearly faint. With breathless anticipation I watched as he began the words that we had practiced for what seemed to be hundreds of times, and after the first minute I knew.

Later, when the readings had been completed, the judges deliberated, and the winner had been announced, the participants mingled with the audience, searching for family and friends, and preparing to leave. “Well, Johnny, it’s all over,” I said brightly. “You did your best and I am proud of you.”

Johnny smiled at me, trying hard to be brave. He hurt and I hurt, too. I felt so sad for him as he had wanted to win, and he had trusted me to help make that happen. No matter how unreasonable it seemed, I had let him down. No matter that he had been so nervous that his voice cracked, and he read in a monotone. No matter that he lost his self-confidence on the stage. I had failed.

Somehow, over time, having shared in this event made it easier and may have helped both of us. Slowly I realized that teaching is not a solo journey and sometimes one’s successes and attempts are tied to another’s.

No matter how aloof one tries to be, to teach is to be bound to others. When working with students so much is linked. Students and teachers are together on the journey. And sometimes sharing the experience can produce a success of its own. This child and I will review the reading, celebrate the experience, and relish the good times as we plan, knowing that we learn from the past and look together to the future, student and teacher together.



Notre Dame, watercolor, Pat Piechocki

Gentleman Farmer

Sheila Scriggins

At the age of six my family moved from the East Coast to the West Coast. In Seattle, my dad had a vegetable garden in our large back yard, and over time it grew to be rather large. One Saturday, my parents, two older brothers and I took a road trip to a chicken farm where my dad bought about 20 chicks and makings of a hen house. It wasn't long before we had all had an egg every day, and a lot of chicken dinners.

I came to learn later in life that my dad was referred to as a gentleman farmer, even though we were far from rich when it started. He had a regular job in downtown Seattle and took the bus every weekday morning.

Important lessons were learned from having a gentleman farmer as a father. There is nothing better than truly fresh eggs, cooked in a variety of ways. Ditto for fresh vegetables and chicken. Beware of apricots that might have insects next to the pits. Never have a favorite chick and never, ever name it.

When I was twelve, our family moved to Bethesda where my dad had a more demanding job, so only a few vegetables and flowers were grown. When I was going to college, my parents moved to Chappaqua, NY, where my dad commuted to NYC. There was a smaller garden and no chickens.

My parents retired to Maine, where they both were deep into cultivation and farming. My mother had a greenhouse where she grew all manner of things from seed. She then planted a stunning rock garden. My dad planted her vegetable seedlings, and again he had chickens. He would sell eggs at a low price or give them to anyone who was in need. I cringed when he proudly told me he was able to double egg laying by keeping the light on all night.

Every time I have asparagus at home or a restaurant, I always compare it to my father's. Nothing has been as good so far. Every time I nurture my indoor plants and compare them to my mother's rock garden, a smile comes, knowing nothing could compare. And every time I eat chicken, I try not to think about the one I named.



First Harvest, digital photo, Terry Weisser

How to Handle Cold

*You said:
A cold shoulder
seldom sates
the heated thigh.*

*But...
a hard wood
or tight-laced tinder
will burn
and well.*

*A chill wind
can whip an ember
to flame
so hot and seething
all ignite*

*Till resistance
is but a smoky kiss
and desire...*

quiet ash.

sb sōwbel



Fire Dragon, watercolor, Lee Kexel

A Grave Matter

Kathy Stone

I am the oldest of six. We live in five states. It had been a festive few days celebrating my eightieth birthday. As of today, three had returned to their homes – by plane, by train, and by automobile – and three of us had found ourselves with a free afternoon. What to do? A hike around Loch Raven to take in the waning but still beautiful fall foliage of Maryland? A Szechuan lunch? A hot game of Scrabble?

The hostess (c’est moi), has a “brainchild”: a drive down to our father’s county of birth, Anne Arundel, to visit Asbury Methodist Church (1859) cemetery (“churchyard” sounds better, I think, more poetic). This is the final resting place of our father’s forebears. The three of us, current residents of Arizona, New Jersey, and Maryland, have never visited this site together. I hold the only remaining deed to the family plot. It is and has been my intention to one day use it. I have told everyone this. There is nowhere I would rather be for “the long haul.”

We call the church office, get no response, decide to just give it a go, and proceed to embark upon the hour-long drive south on this midday weekday afternoon to Arnold, MD. We find the church with the help of some friendly locals. No office in site, we climb the steps of the pre-school, which at this time is disgorging its small occupants for the day. They head to the playground and hills behind the school and church to run wild and let out their pent-up energy waiting for their parents to pick them up. Shortly I am greeted by a church official who is happy to direct us to parking and then walk with us to our family plot. This accomplished, she bids us farewell.

It has been more than twenty years since any of us has been here. The tall and sprawling hickory tree, which is now providing almost total shade and privacy for the gravestones and benches, had then been very small, allowing lots of light to illuminate all. The effect of this shaded, private space was to put me in a quieter, more reflective frame of mind on this day.



Cylburn Tree Sketch, pencil, Carol Kurtz-Stack

We three separate, strolling the burial ground individually, perusing each family grave marker slowly, remembering the lives if we had known them, their times if we had not. I wandered a distance to discover on some stones the names of several of the friends of my grandfather (Horace Carson, b. 1886), realizing how observant a child I had been to remember these names. It seemed much like a friendly gathering. He had taken us kids, two at a time, around to see his world of the Magothy and Severn Rivers, to show his precious grandchildren off to the proprietors of these “resorts,” showing us kids how he had important friends. I remembered my summers spent with him, how these men would always give us ice cream and popsicles, and invite us to put on our bathing suits and take a dip in the river. I was eleven when my grandfather died, but I knew he was a popular, erudite, and gregarious gentleman who loved us, who taught us, who defended us.

I returned to the family plot. Next to Horace’s stone was that of Grace, my grandmother. Born in 1889, she was the middle of three daughters of Theodore and Annie Jones, proprietors of the largest general store for miles around. The passenger train station of The Baltimore and Annapolis Railroad, directly in front of it, and the bus stop at the same place, were called Jones Station, as was (and is to this day) the road adjacent, called Jones Station Road.

At the age of five, each morning after breakfast, my grandmother would give me a nickel. I would walk the path through the tall tobacco field over to the store. There I would peer through curved glass cases holding every confection of which a child could dream. A large, blue-veined wrinkled hand would reach into the case and retrieve my five selections, dropping them into a tiny brown paper bag. That same hand would then be held out in expectation of my nickel. It was all quite wonderful!

I do not know what ran through the minds of my sisters as they wended their ways through this same burial ground. We were quiet as we left the graveyard. They are two and three years younger than I, and, thus, had no real memory of their great grandparents Theodore and Annie, only what our grandmother would share with us in the dark as we each got a turn to sleep with her on our visits. They never knew the feelings I had as I traipsed through those emerald green tobacco leaves, which formed a ceiling over my head on my brief journeys to “candy land,” my sweaty little hand grasping my nickel. I never knew Annie, who died before I was born. Papa, as my grandmother called him, died when I was five.

My sisters’ memories of our grandparents, however, were almost as keen as mine, having been nine and seven when Horace died on the operating table at Mercy hospital on Christmas day at the age of sixty-nine. We were in our middle and late twenties when Grace, sitting in her rocker above the heater grate, with her blue shawl wrapped around her bony shoulders, closed her eyes for the last time at eighty-nine. She had never stepped foot into a hospital or a doctor’s office.

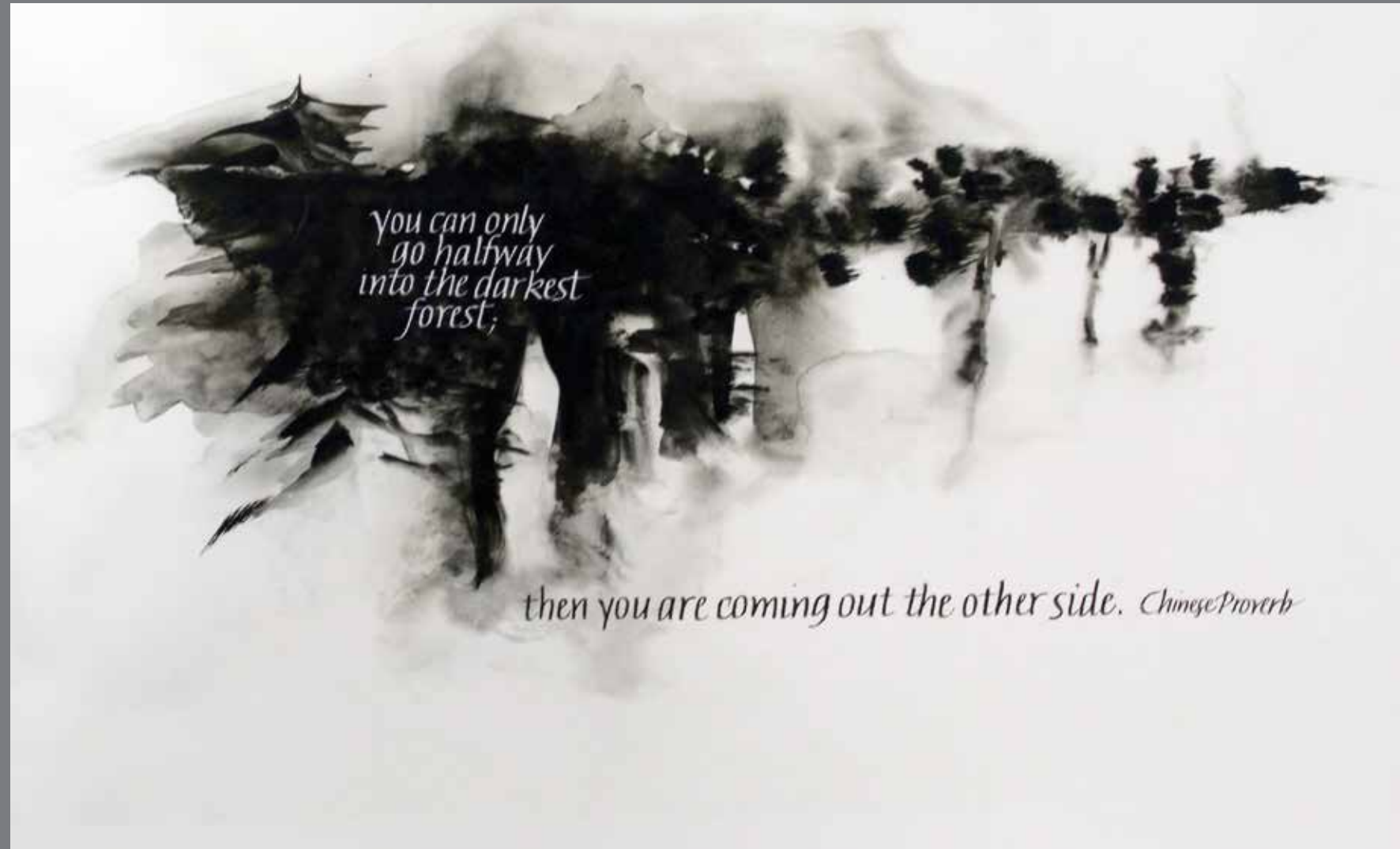
As I walked out of the churchyard, I smiled as I thought of one day joining my ancestors there. Who knew when? The sights and sounds of the children running free on the hills left me with peace.

Afterwards, as we sat in a booth at a nearby pub, we recounted many events, both happy and sad, about our times with our grandparents. On our ride home, our quiet attitudes returned. We were all full of feeling for its duration. Certainly, the strongest emotions I felt were brought forth by focusing on those in my family plot, shaded in the privacy of the looming tree. Beyond this, I was swept up by thinking of what I had carried with me from my time spent with these ancestors into my world today and passed on to my children.

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